

# Telling Children About Adoption

A guide for social workers and foster carers to complete life story and adoption preparation work with children in care



By Stephanie McGuire and Rachel Neeve

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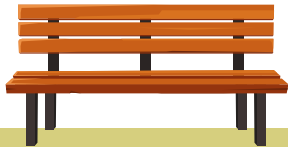
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# Contents

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All resources featured in this book are available for you to download online, making it easy to access and use them whenever you need support. Simply scan the QR code below or visit the Adopt London website to explore the full range of materials and guidance available to you.



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# Introduction

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We are Steph and Rachel, social workers from Adopt London. With the help of our team, and clinical psychologist Dr Megan Hollett, we have created this guide to help social workers and foster carers support children through the beginning of their adoption journey.

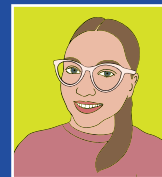
We recognise that life story conversations can feel complicated, and that often we can feel apprehensive about telling children difficult and painful things, however it's really important that this work takes place for all children. The quality of early adoption conversations, and preparation for children will have a life-long impact on their sense of identity, self-esteem, and relationships with others.

The goal is for all children to understand what is happening in their lives as decisions are being made. This helps them to make sense of their world, to experience their feelings being held and validated by adults, and to know why things are changing. It creates an environment where children feel safe to talk about anything and know that there is no topic that is off limits.

This work is emotional for everyone involved and so supporting each other is really important. We encourage you to check in more often with your manager or supervising social worker during this time.

Life story work is very personal and should be tailored to each child. Throughout this book we have interchangeably used the terms 'forever family' and 'adoptive family'. We know that what works for one child, may not work for another, and that you will know which language will work best for the children you are working with.

We hope this book helps you feel more confident in having these important conversations with the children we look after.



All the best,  
Rachel and Steph x

# Key messages

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This is a practical step-by-step guide to support social workers and foster carers who are working with a child whose care plan is adoption.

It is intended for use with children in care aged 18 months+.

The social worker and foster carer should both have a copy of the book, with the work being led by the social worker and supported by the foster carer.

Whilst this work is happening, social workers will need to visit children more often than usual and supervising social workers should check in to support foster carers more frequently.

The book breaks down life story conversations into five steps to be shared as the child's journey progresses.

There are helpful resources to be used in each step, and book recommendations to help children with their feelings on this journey. The resources are also available online by scanning the QR codes in the book.

We encourage you to be creative. Life story conversations often work well if children can regulate through movement and connect through reciprocal play such as throw and catch games.

For children with developmental delay, disabilities, or neurodiversity, this work can feel more complex but is just as important. Your family finding social worker can support you to think about your child's individual needs.



# The stages of work

Telling children about adoption is split into five main steps over a period of time:

STEP 1



Why the child can't live with their birth family

STEP 2

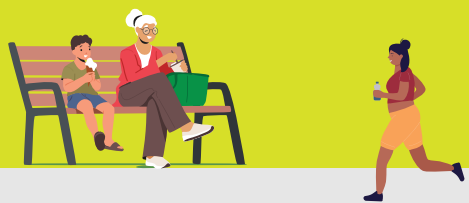


Explaining that they are not returning to their birth family

STEP 3



Telling the child their plan is adoption, and we will look for an adoptive family



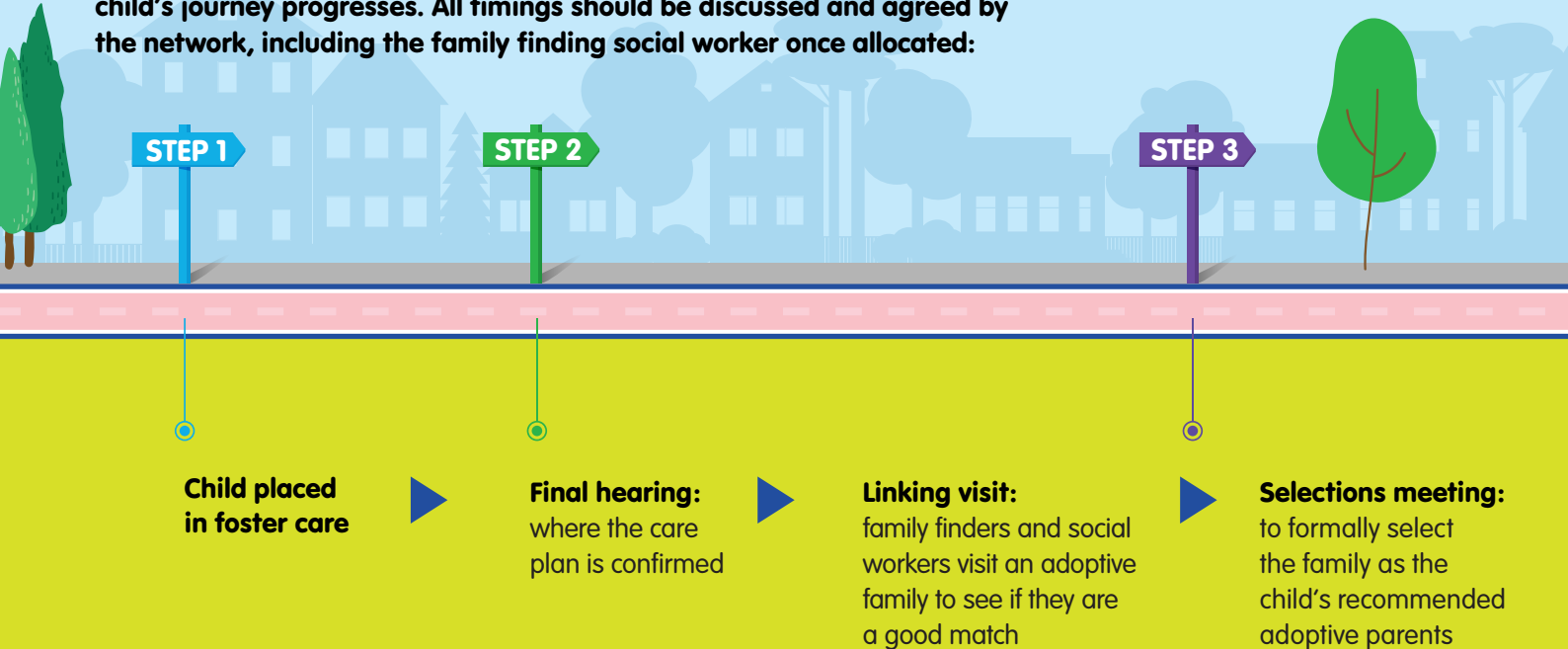
Telling the child their forever family has been found and they will be moving

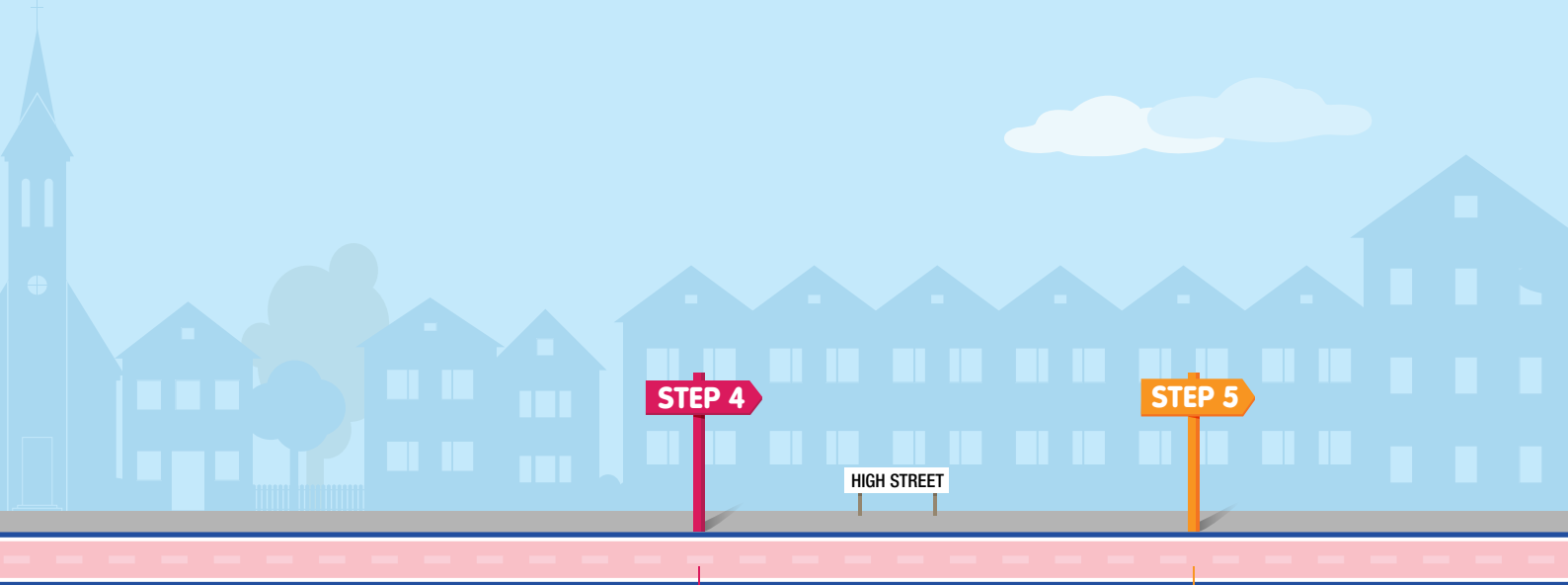
Introducing their adoptive family



# Timeline

Here is a timeline to show when each message should be given, as the child's journey progresses. All timings should be discussed and agreed by the network, including the family finding social worker once allocated:





**STEP 4**

HIGH STREET

**STEP 5**



**Matching panel:**

a panel of independent members to decide whether to recommend the match or not



**ADM**

the local authority Agency Decision Maker gives final approval for the match



**Adopters' welcome book is shared**

# STEP 1

## Why the child can't live with their birth family

### The message

The first message children should be given is why they are not living with their birth family, and that a judge is going to make a decision about where they will live.

### Why is this work needed?

This first message sets the foundation for work to come. When the child enters foster care, social work visits should be planned with a view to exploring why they

can't live with their birth family. Every child should know why they are in foster care, regardless of what their long-term plan might be.

Sometimes children are told they are going to be adopted but the first message of why they can't live with their birth family hasn't been clearly explained. It's really important that we don't miss this step as we see that children who haven't had this message consciously or unconsciously expect they will return home.

After adoption, children will build fantasies about their birth families (either frightening or idealised), if they don't have an understanding of their birth parent's strengths and struggles.

If this message wasn't given at the time the child entered care, it should still be shared as the first step in talking to the child about their adoption.

These conversations will likely happen over a series of social work visits with the foster carer supporting the child's understanding and feelings in between.

## When should this work take place?

If the child does not know at the point they are removed from their birth family and placed into foster care, then they need to be told as soon as possible. If you are a new social worker to the child, it is good to check in with them to see what their understanding is about why they are in care.

## Who needs to be involved?

The social worker and foster carer should both be present, but it's important that the social worker is the one who delivers the message. If you are a new social

worker to the child, you might need to spend a couple of visits getting to know them and building relational safety before talking about potentially difficult and painful things. This would involve more frequent visits so as not to cause delay in this message being shared.

Supervising social workers should also be aware of plans so they are able to provide more support to foster carers, as holding children's big feelings can feel difficult.

## Where should this happen?

In the foster carer's home / the child's safe space.

## What needs to be considered?

- The age of the child needs to be considered, but the work should always take place for children aged 18 months+. You will need to plan different work for siblings of different ages. For very young children, a simple photo album can be used.
- This work helps build up a child's sense of identity and should include family trees, talking about siblings (even if they have never met each other), ethnicity, heritage, and religion.

- What is the birth families' narrative about why the child is in care? Is this different from the local authority's position? Depending on the child's age, they might need to know this.
- When is the child next seeing their birth family? Consider the timing of your visit and if this is immediately before or after a family time session as these could be emotionally unsettling experiences.
- If there are half siblings outside of their household, or siblings remaining in the care of birth family, it's important to be transparent about this.
- It's important that everyone involved is supported during this time, and adults should keep in touch to share how life story work is going and how the child is responding.

## Example:

This message should be given by the social worker in three easy to understand points:

### 1 Reason

*"You couldn't stay at home because Daddy hit Mummy a lot and hurt her."*

## Explain that they will stay in foster care for now

*"You will stay here with your foster carer for now."*

Depending on the child's age, this might also be an opportunity to explain court processes to older children.

### 2 Acknowledge feelings

*"This might feel really sad and confusing and a bit scary. It's okay if you miss your mummy/daddy."*

It's important to acknowledge the child's sadness of being removed from their birth family.

### 3 Reassurance

*"It's okay to feel like that. We are here to help you, and you can ask us questions anytime."*

It can feel difficult to explicitly name what happened to the child, but it is important to be clear and honest.

If a child becomes upset when we talk about these experiences, it can be hard for the social worker and foster carer, however we need to remember that being upset is an appropriate emotional response. By sitting with these feelings, we are helping them to make sense of what happened. It is good for the child to be able to

express emotions of sadness / anger etc. and for this to be validated by their social worker and foster carer.

The reason needs to be clear, specific and simple, based on the child's circumstances.

Some examples of this might be:

"Sometimes Daddy would hit Mummy. When you saw or heard Mummy get hurt, you would have felt very scared. When children are scared a lot, sometimes they feel scared even in safe places like nursery."

"You had lots of bruises and we were worried it was Mummy or Daddy who made them. When parents hit children a lot, children feel confused and sad a lot of the time."

"Mummy drank a lot of alcohol, and it meant she couldn't always look after you properly. You wouldn't always know what to expect, and this would have made it hard for you to feel relaxed and safe."

"Daddy struggles to learn new things, and couldn't remember how to look after you. You were left alone a lot and this makes children feel sad and scared."

"Daddy's friends kept coming in the night and it was very loud and you couldn't sleep. The police kept having to come because of all the shouting. You would have felt very frightened and tired a lot of the time."



## Resources

### Children's needs wall

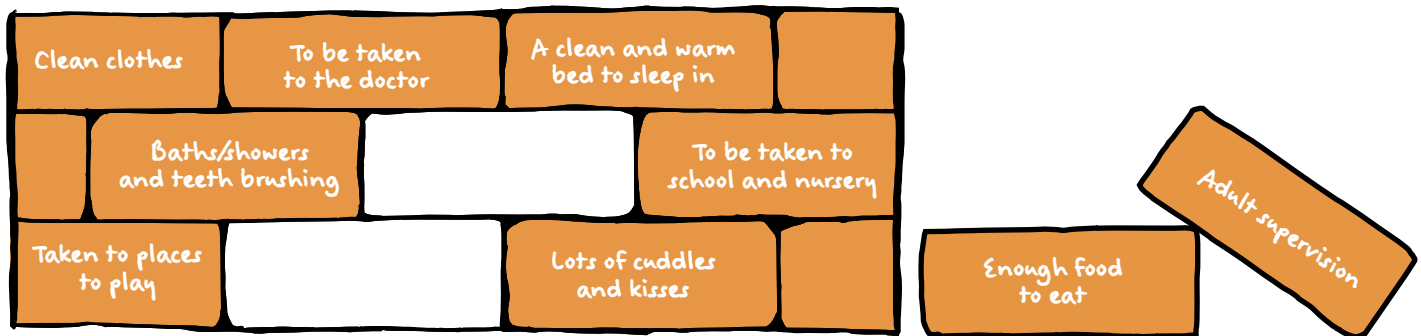
The children's needs wall is a tool you can use to help children understand why they were removed from their birth families' care.

Use Lego, blocks, or Jenga, and write on each brick the things that children need. You can include the child by asking them what children need and writing these on the blocks too.

Build the wall using all the bricks you have made together. Talk through each brick with the child.

Acknowledge the things that their parents did well, and remove the bricks that the parent struggled with.

Show the child how the wall falls down if all the bricks aren't in place. Talk about how even though their parents were good at some things, it was not safe for them to stay at home.



## Important people booklet

This is created by the social worker and tailored for each child. You can include photos of the child, their birth family, their foster carer and social worker. You can use this to talk about court and that a judge will make a decision about where they should live.

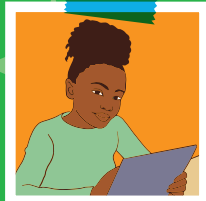
The narrative is to be adapted for the age and circumstances of each child.



Oli's birth family



Oli's mum



Oli's sisters

Sometimes  
children can't  
live with their  
birth family.

Oli doesn't live with his birth family. He lives with his foster family.

Oli's foster carer



Claudette is Oli's foster carer

A foster family is a 'for now' family, who look after children who can't be looked after by their birth family. Sometimes foster families are for a long time, and sometimes they are for a short time.

Oli's social worker



Ben is Oli's social worker

Ben makes sure that Oli has everything he needs in his foster home. Social workers like Ben help when it is not safe for children to stay with their birth family. They go to speak to someone called a judge who makes decisions about where children should live so they will be healthy and safe.

## The judge



A judge is a clever person who knows all about what is right for children. They listen to lots of different people and make decisions about where children should live.

Oli's judge will hear all about him and his birth family and think really hard about where Oli should live.



Judge



Claudette, foster carer

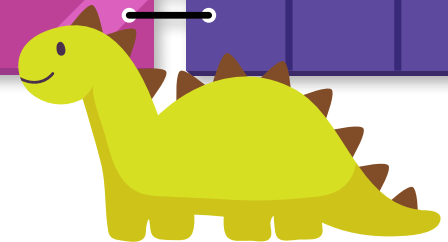


Ben, social worker

It takes judges lots of time to make this big decision. Oli will stay with Claudette while the judge is thinking.

Ben will tell Oli when the judge has made her decision.

Oli can ask questions anytime and Ben will do his best to answer them.

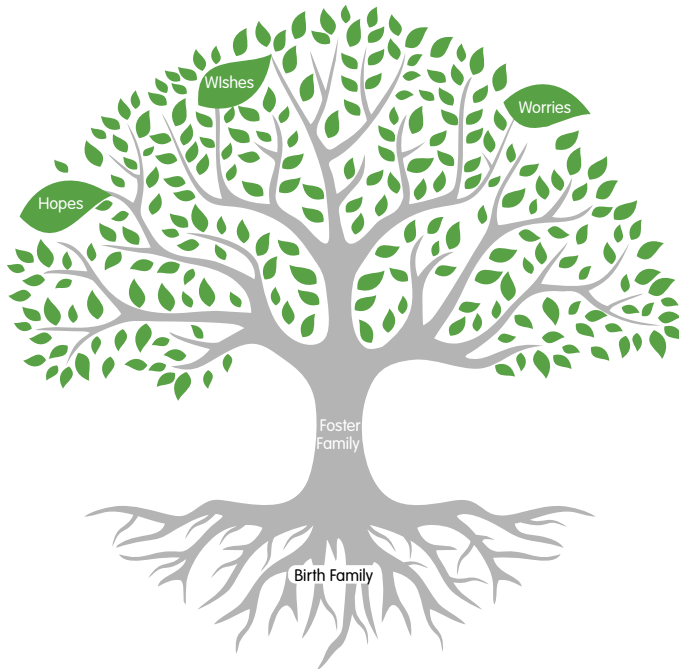


This booklet can then be revisited when court proceedings are over to explain the judge's decision, and explain other roles such as the children's court Guardian if needed.

## Family tree

Use the printable version of this tree or draw your own to talk to children about who is in their birth family.

In this exercise, birth family are represented as the roots, the foster family as the trunk, and the leaves are for the child's hopes, wishes and worries.

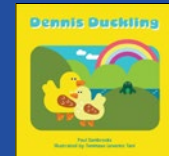


If the child has siblings or half-siblings that they don't know about, or haven't met, it is important to talk about them. You might need to revisit this work over several sessions, sharing what information you do have and being honest about what you don't know.



This book recommendation is to help foster carers talk to children about leaving their birth family and being in care.

**Dennis Duckling**  
by Paul Sambrooks  
(Author),  
Tommaso Levente  
Tani (Illustrator)



## STEP 2

# Explaining that the child is not going back to their birth family

### Why is this work needed?

When court proceedings have concluded it's time to tell children that the decision has been made that they are not going home to their birth family. They need to know that this significant decision has been made and what this means for them and their birth family, including how they will keep in touch.

### When should this work take place?

As soon as possible after the final court hearing.

### Who needs to be involved?

The child's social worker and foster carer should be present, and the social worker should lead the conversation.

The supervising social worker should be aware of these plans so they are able to support the foster carer.

### Where should this happen?

In the foster carer's home / the child's safe space.

## What needs to be considered?

- This can be very difficult news for children to hear, and for social workers and foster carers to share. It's really important for social workers and foster carers to plan for this carefully, and to seek support from their managers and supervising social workers.
- The timing of this needs to be planned so there is space afterwards for the foster carer to be with the child and provide comfort.
- At this point, we would not recommend telling the child their care plan is adoption, to allow them to process their feelings of loss.
- Often children worry about when and how they will see their birth family again. It's important to let them know the plans for this. This can include them having worries about what will happen to other special people in their lives like friends or their pet.
- Sometimes children can appear neutral when given this news and will not give an outward emotional response straight away. This doesn't mean they are 'fine' or have accepted this information, they may just need some more time to process. You can use the feelings cards in the resources section to help you talk to children and 'wonder' with them about how they are feeling.



## Example:

### 1 Revisit reason for being in foster care

“Remember how we talked about you living with your foster carer because...”

### 2 Explain decision

“We went to see the judge – and they decided that you can’t go back to live with Mummy and Daddy. The judge said you should live with your foster carer for now.”

You can use different ways of helping the child to understand this based on their age such as using toys to act out a court scenario or using pictures.

### 3 Talk about keeping connections with birth family

“You will still see Mummy and Daddy at the contact centre like you’re used to.”

### 4 Validate feelings and provide comfort

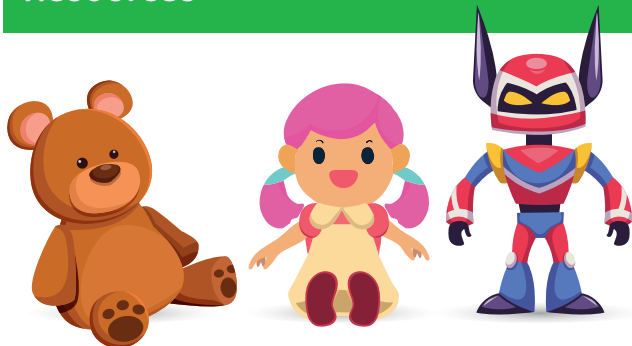
Notice the child’s feeling and name the feeling for them.

“I wonder if you are feeling frightened? This is really hard. I am here with you. We can sit together for as long as you need.”

This can be difficult for social workers and foster carers because we don’t want to upset children. If the child becomes upset, it is okay and is a very natural and appropriate response. Their sadness should be acknowledged, validated, and held by their social worker and foster carer.

After the social worker has left, foster carers will need to give lots of reassurance and comfort by telling the child you are there with them and continue to notice and help name their feelings as they change and develop. Sometimes children will not show their feelings straight away, and when this happens it can be helpful to ‘wonder with’ the child – e.g. “I wonder if you are having lots of mixed up feelings?” or “I wonder if you are feeling shocked about what your social worker shared?”

## Resources



### 'Teddy bear' court

Use toys (teddies, action figures, dolls, etc.) to represent different people and where they sat in court. Asking the child to pick the toy to represent each person can tell you a lot about their feelings. Use the toys to act out what each person said to the judge about what they felt would be best for the child.

E.g. Mummy stood up and said to the judge, "I really love my child and I really want them to live with me."

Then the social worker stood up and said, "I know Mummy really loves their child and wants them to live

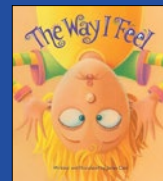
with her. Because of the fighting at home, I think the child should live with their foster carer for now, and still see Mummy and Daddy at family time."

Conclude with the judge considering everything they have heard, and knowing that the best place for the child is in foster care 'for now'.



This book is recommended for foster carers to help them talk to children about their feelings.

**The Way I Feel**  
by Janan Cain  
(Author and  
Illustrator)



See p40 for more information about this book.

p40

Important  
people  
booklet:  
part 2

**The judge's decision:** Revisit the booklet you did previously and add the following section to explain the decision.

## The judge's decision



It has been a long time, but the judge has made a decision about where Oli should live.

Oli's mum, social worker, and guardian, went to court to talk to the judge.

The judge listened carefully to what everyone had to say, and decided that Oli should stay in foster care with Claudette for now.

Oli will get to see his mum and sisters at the contact centre.

## STEP 3

# Telling the child their plan is adoption

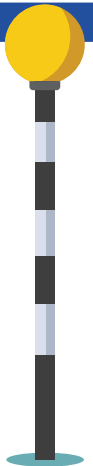
### Why is this work needed?

The child needs to know they are going to have another move from their foster family to their adoptive family.

### When should this work take place?

This will be specific to each child, and we recognise that for some children, holding this uncertainty for a long time would be too difficult.

Considerations about the best time to tell children this should include the child's age, developmental progress, and how long it might take to find a family. Telling children they will be adopted without knowing when or by who can feel hard to do, and can bring up difficult feelings for the child which social workers and foster carers will need to support them with.



Holding big feelings for children is therapeutic for the child, but can also feel hard for adults, so it's important to use the support available to you.

If an adoptive family has already been identified when this message is being given to the child, it's really important that we don't show the child any photos or tell them about their adopters. It's important for children to have space to express and process feelings of loss around leaving their foster family before they are introduced to their adoptive family.

Additionally, we must wait for the Agency Decision Maker to agree the match before any introductions take place.

## Who needs to be involved?

The allocated social worker and foster carer should be present, and the social worker should lead the conversation.

Supervising social workers should be aware of the plans so they can support the foster carer.



## Where should this happen?

In the foster carer's home / the child's safe space.

## What needs to be considered?

- It is important to consider what language to use and what would make the most sense for the child. You might want to use terms such as 'adoptive family' or 'forever family'. We would recommend avoiding use of the term 'new family/new parents', as this can imply 'replacement' parents yet, it is important that children know that their birth parents are not being replaced.
- It is important to emphasise to the child that we are finding parents that are not just any parents, but the right parents for them.
- It can be helpful to use the word 'adoption' explicitly at this stage.
- Social workers and foster carers should discuss in advance so you are both aligned and understand what needs to be said. This should be done in consultation with your family finding social worker.

## Example:

- 1 Revisit the decision that the child cannot return home and that foster families are 'for now' families

"Remember how we talked about the judge deciding that you can't go back to live with Mummy and Daddy, and that your foster carer is looking after you for now."

- 2 Explain the move to a forever family

"The next step is that we are going to find a forever family for you. This is called adoption."

"Your adoptive family will be specially chosen for you and will be able to look after you and keep you safe."

- 3 Validate feelings and reassure that the foster carer will be with them on their journey

"I wonder if you're feeling scared or confused? It's OK, me and your foster carer are here with you."

It is important to accept any emotions that come up for the child, and they may feel excited or happy about this news. Noticing how the child is presenting and reflecting this back to them is important.

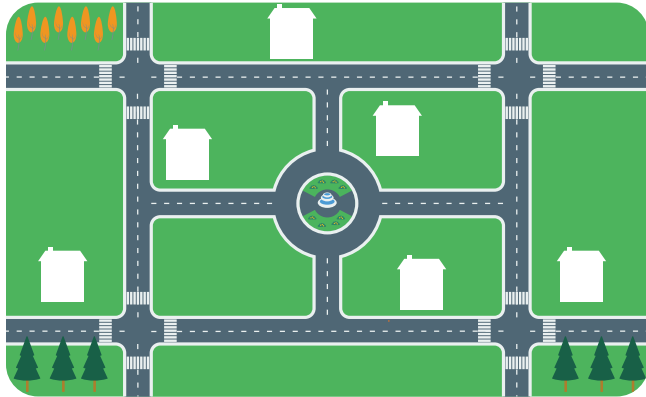
It is also natural for children to feel apprehensive and sad about having to leave their safe place to go somewhere new. There is no right way for children to respond.



## Resources

### Journey to adoption map

This helps illustrate to a child that they have lived with their birth family, then foster family, and will be moving on to a forever family.

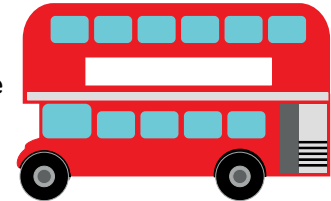


This could be done using a drawing of a road and a toy car travelling the child's journey. You could draw pictures of houses on the road and include photos of their birth family and foster family to show who they lived with. Talk to the child about why they had to move from their

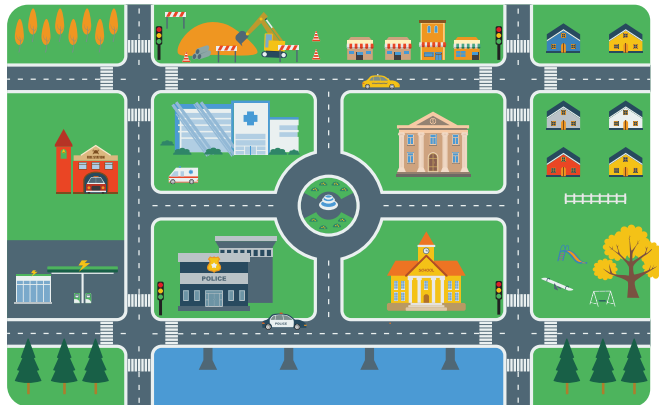
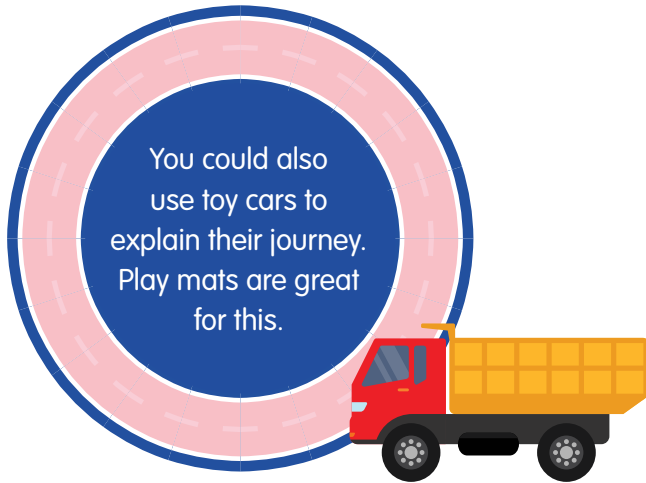
birth family and that they will move again to their adoptive family.

If there were additional moves, e.g. mother and baby unit, or different foster placements, then talk about these too and why each place they lived came to an end.

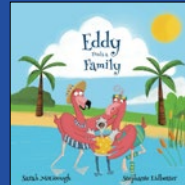
This work can be tailored to the child's interests e.g. do they love getting on the bus? You could use a toy bus/picture of a bus and have different bus stops.



You could use a picture or a toy Spiderman leaping from building to building to show the moves the child has had since their birth.



These books are recommended for foster carers to help them talk to children about their plan for adoption.



### **Eddy Finds a Family**

By Sarah McGeough (Author), Stephanie Lidbetter (Illustrator)

p46



### **The Whatifs**

By Emily Kilgore (Author), Zoe Persico (Illustrator)

p40



### **The Forever Family**

By Sue Banner

p45

# STEP 4

## Telling the child their adoptive family has been found and they will be moving

### Why is this work needed?

The child needs to know their adoptive family have been found and they are going to move soon, and that this is going to mean a lot of change, including most likely a change in school for older children.

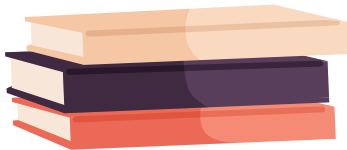


## When should this work take place?

Again, there is not an exact time that this work needs to be done, and the timing of this step and Step 5 should be agreed in advance between the local authority social worker and the family finding social worker.

When we tell children this news, we want to be able to give them specific information about their forever family very soon, but not on the same visit. Social workers will need to visit the child again within the next couple of days to share more specific information.

It can feel hard to leave the child with this sense of unknown about who the adoptive family will be when the professional network has this information, but it is important to give the child a bit of space and time to process that they are moving away from their foster carer, school and friends, before introducing who the adopters are.



## What needs to be considered?

- It is important to be clear that this means the child will move away from their foster home and, for older children, that they will have a new school. This is likely to be upsetting for the child, but it is important that they know. The journey to adoption is full of lots of emotions, and loss and grief are important parts of that.
- At this point, the identity of the adopters is not shared with the child, and this cannot happen until the Agency Decision Maker has agreed the match.

In the resources section we have included books on different types of families. At this stage, it could be helpful to choose some books which reflect the adoptive family structure to read to the child, e.g. *My Two Dads*, etc.

If there are worries about the child struggling to hold the uncertainty for a few days, discuss this with the family finding social worker as plans may need to be adapted to suit the needs of individual children.

## Example:

- 1 Remind the child about the search for their adoptive family

“Remember how we talked about finding your forever family..”

- 2 Explain that their adoptive family has been found

“We have found a very special family who are just right for you.”

“They know all about you and the things you like and don’t like.”

- 3 Clarify that this means they will be moving on from their foster home and changing school, etc.

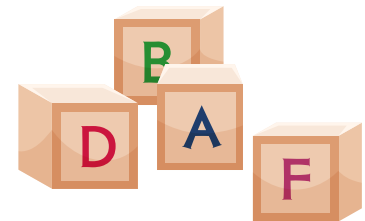
“This means you will leave your foster carer soon and you will have a new school to go to.”

- 4 Validate feelings and provide comfort

“Change can be scary. It is okay to feel sad. I am here with you.”

- 5 Reassure the child you will come back soon to tell them about their forever family

“I can see how hard this has been for you. I will come back in two days, and we can talk some more to help you understand.”



## Resources

This is where you can revisit some of your previous work, such as the journey to adoption map (or the river, bus stops, Spiderman, etc.) to illustrate the child moving on to their forever family.

The foster carer should continue reading the books recommended in Step 3 with the child and talk to them about different types of families.



These books are recommended for foster carers to help them talk to children about an adoptive family being found.

See relevant pages for more information.



**Love Makes a Family**  
by Sophie Beer

p42



**All Kinds of Families**  
by Suzanne Lang (Author),  
Max Lang (Illustrator)

p44

# STEP 5

## Introducing the adoptive family

### Why is this work needed?

To allow the child to see their forever family and ask questions before they meet for the first time. The child will be shown a welcome book full of photos of their adoptive family and their new home. Often the adopters will make a welcome video for the children to see too.

### When should this work take place?

The network including the family finding social worker should decide together a good time to do this, but usually a few days after sharing the Step 4 message.

### Who needs to be involved?

The child's social worker and foster carer. The social worker should lead the conversation.

## Where should this happen?

In the foster carer's home / the child's safe space.

## What needs to be considered?

- The adopters will have prepared a welcome video and a welcome book for each child. These will include photographs of themselves, their home and their pets.
- Children can be really excited to see the welcome book and see their new bedroom. It is important (and fun!) for social workers and foster carers to join in and validate exciting feelings as well as the more difficult ones.
- Give space for all feelings, including the child being excited, or expressing that they don't want to go.

## Example:

### 1 Introduce the adopters

*"I can tell you some more about your adoptive family now. We told them all about you, and they are very excited to meet you. They made a book to say hello to you, let's have a look together."*

### 2 Validate feelings. Notice how the child is feeling and name it for them.

*"I can see you're feeling...."*

In this discussion, it is important to explicitly reassure children that foster carers won't just suddenly disappear and moves won't happen suddenly.

It is helpful for the social worker and the foster family to be positive about the adopters, but also to give the child permission to feel however they feel. It is normal and appropriate for children to have lots of mixed feelings, and they might need you to help them make sense of this.

Children will have lots and lots of questions for their foster carers after the social worker leaves, and often want to look at their welcome book many times.

This can also be a difficult time for foster carers as the child they have loved and supported is preparing to move on. It is important that supervising social workers are checking in with carers and that they are also supported.



# Additional advice

**Keep things simple**

## **Be honest but sensitive**

Reassure about things you can. For example, that their foster carer will be there to help them get to know their adoptive family / their sibling is coming with them, etc. We cannot and should not make false promises even if well intentioned. For example, telling the children that everything will be okay as there could be some real challenges and this invalidates some of their more complex feelings. But we can help them know they will be supported through this time of change.

## **Working together**

It is important that messages about the child's life story are delivered by the social worker, but this should be done with foster carers present so they are aware of what the child knows and so the child is alongside their primary carer. Foster carers spend the most time with the children and will be reinforcing the messages given by the social worker and answering questions as and when they come up.

It is important to remember that adoption transitions are a deeply emotional process for everyone involved, regardless of level of experience. We ask foster carers to love and care for children, and then to let them go, which can feel enormously difficult. It is important that all professionals have a space to talk about how they are feeling during the adoption process and that we all support each other.



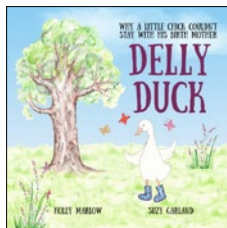
# Book recommendations



These are book recommendations (some with read along YouTube links) that social workers and foster carers can use to help children understand their adoption journey. This section includes books about living with foster carers, finding a forever family, different family makeups, and books to help children to express their feelings.

Please visit your local library or High Street book shop or ask them to order a copy. Alternatively, you can purchase these books online.

## ABOUT FOSTER CARE

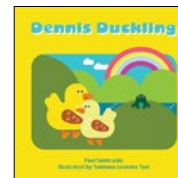


### **Delly Duck**

by Holly Marlow (Author),  
Suzy Garland (Illustrator)

Why a little chick couldn't stay with her birth mother. This book can be used to help answer difficult questions, such as, 'why can't I live with my mum?'

Suitable for ages 2 years+  
ISBN: 978-1739916800



### **Dennis Duckling**

by Paul Sambrooks (Author),  
Tommaso Levente Tani (Illustrator)

Dennis is sad because he must leave his mum and dad as they can no longer look after him. Dennis goes to live on a river where he makes new friends and is cared for in foster care. This book helps children express the emotions associated with upsetting and confusing events.

Suitable for ages 2 years+  
ISBN: 978-1905664771

# FEELINGS



## **I Love You When You're Angry**

by Erin Winters (Author),  
Kaitin Bucher (Illustrator)

This heartwarming book affirms that a parent or caregiver's love is unconditional with practical activities at the end of the book.

Suitable for very young children and activities for ages 4 years+  
ISBN: 978-1734346459



.....  
YouTube read along  
[I Love You When You're Angry - Bedtime story read aloud with lesson](#)



## **The Whatifs**

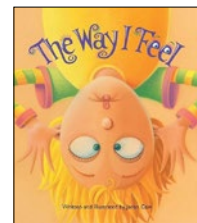
by Emily Kilgore (Author),  
Zoe Persico (Illustrator)

A story that can help open up conversations with children about their worries and help children talk about anxiety.

Suitable for ages 4 years+  
ISBN: 978-1499810295



.....  
YouTube read along  
[The Whatifs/ A book to help kids overcome anxiety](#)



## **The Way I Feel**

By Janan Cain  
(Author and Illustrator)

A fun and engaging YouTube read aloud story helping children identify and name feelings.

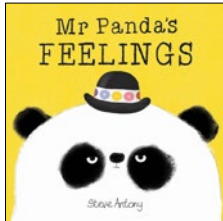
Suitable for ages 3 years+  
ISBN: 978-1641604987



.....  
YouTube read along  
[The Way I Feel - animated read aloud book](#)



## GRIEF AND LOSS



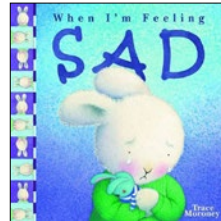
### **Mr Panda's Feelings Board Book** by Steve Antony

Lemur is happy and Swan is scared.  
But how is Mr Panda feeling?

Suitable for ages 12 months+  
ISBN: 978-1444932317



.....  
You Tube read along  
[Mr Pandas Feelings](#)



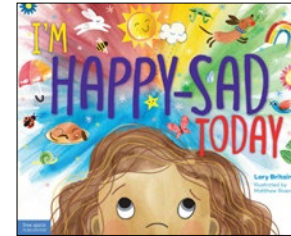
### **When I'm Feeling Sad** by Trace Moroney

A story helping children recognise  
and talk about sadness. Even  
though it's not nice, it's okay to feel  
sad. Everyone feels sad sometimes.

Suitable for ages 3 years+  
ISBN: 978-1741245042



.....  
You Tube read along [When  
I'm Feeling Sad | By Trace  
Moroney \[stories read  
aloud\]](#)



### **I'm Feeling Happy-Sad Today** by Lory Britain (Author), Matthew Rivera (Illustrator)

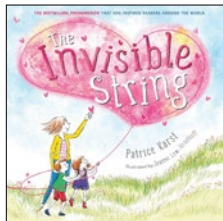
Helping children make sense of  
mixed-up feelings.

Suitable for ages 4 years+  
ISBN: 978-1631983054



.....  
You Tube read along [Kids  
Book Read Aloud I I'm  
Happy-Sad Today: Making  
Sense of Mixed](#)

## GRIEF AND LOSS



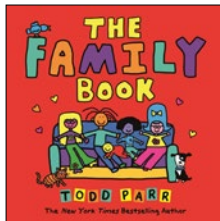
### **The Invisible String**

by Patrice Karst (Author),  
Joanne Lew-Vriethoff (Illustrator)

A book to help children cope with separation, loss and grief. An Invisible String made of love. Even though you can't see it with your eyes, you can feel it deep in your heart, and know that you are always connected to the ones you love.

Suitable for ages 3 years+  
ISBN: 978-0316486231

## FAMILY DIVERSITY



### **The Family Book**

by Todd Parr

A celebration of different types of families. Whether you have two mums or two dads, a big family or a small family, a tidy family or a messy one, no matter what kind of family you have, every family is special in its own unique way.

Suitable for ages 12 months+  
ISBN: 978-0316070409



YouTube read along [Story Books I Read Aloud: The Family Book by Todd Parr](#)



### **Love Makes a Family**

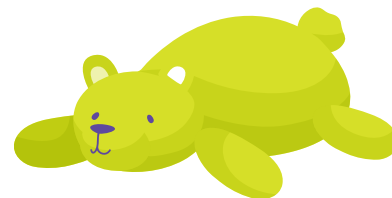
by Sophie Beer

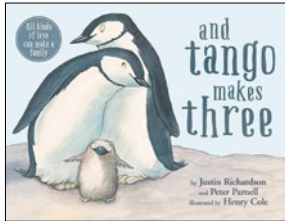
A bright, happy board book about different types of family.

Suitable for ages 12 months+  
ISBN: 978-1838910679



YouTube read along [Love Makes A Family I Read aloud storytime for kids](#)





### **And Tango Makes Three**

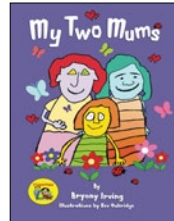
by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell (Authors), Henry Cole (Illustrator)

Penguins Roy and Silo create a non-traditional family and become adoptive parents. With the help of a kindly zookeeper, Roy and Silo get the chance to welcome a baby penguin of their very own. Based on a true story.

Suitable for ages 4 years+  
ISBN: 978-1847381484



YouTube read along [And Tango Makes Three](#)

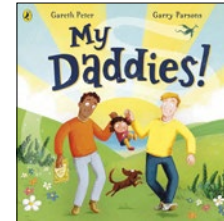


### **My Two Mums**

by Bryony Irving (Author), Kev Oubridge (Illustrator)

My Two Mums is a sweet story-poem book with beautiful illustrations celebrating having two adoptive mums. The author has worked therapeutically with adopted children for 20 years.

Suitable for ages 3 years+  
ISBN: 978-1999339685



### **My Daddies!**

by Gareth Peter (Author), Gary Parsons (Illustrator)

A board book championing same-sex parents and inclusive families. Incredible family adventures as the stories they read burst into life. Dragons, dinosaurs and exploring the world in a hot-air balloon all feature before winding down with a cosy bedtime ending.

Suitable for ages 2 years+  
ISBN: 978-0241405772



YouTube read along [My Daddies by Gareth Peter and Gary Parsons](#)

## FAMILY DIVERSITY



### Heather Has Two Mummies

by Lesléa Newman (Author),  
Laura Cornell (Illustrator)

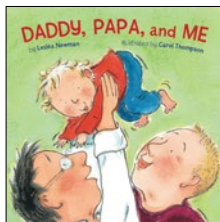
A book about Heather and her two mummies. Heather and her classmates discover, it doesn't matter who makes up a loving family.

Suitable for ages 5 years+  
ISBN: 978-1406365559



.....  
YouTube read along

[Heather Has Two Mummies by Lesléa Newman and Laura Cornell / Children's Story Time Read Aloud](#)



### Daddy, Papa and Me

by Leslea Newman (Author),  
Carol Thompson (Illustrator)

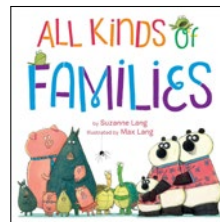
This heartwarming board book is about gay parents. The rhythmic text and illustrations show a toddler spending the day with its daddies. From hide-and-seek to dress-up, then bath time and a kiss goodnight.

Suitable for ages 18 months+  
ISBN: 978-1582462622



.....  
YouTube read along

[Daddy, Papa, and Me by Lesléa Newman Illustrated by Carol Thompson - Read Aloud](#)



### All Kinds of Families

by Suzanne Lang (Author),  
Max Lang (Illustrator)

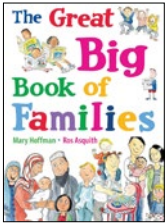
Lots of non-traditional family structures are celebrated in this super-fun and super-accessible board book! Children will enjoy looking at the images and identifying the different kinds of families.

Suitable for ages 12 months+  
ISBN: 978-0553499407



.....  
YouTube read along [All Kinds of Families! Suzanne Lang, Toddler Book](#)

# ADOPTION



**The Great Big Book of Families**  
by Mary Hoffman (Author),  
Ros Asquith (Illustrator)

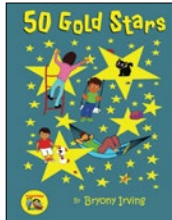
A lovely story celebrating difference. This book introduces children to the fact that not all families look the same. Featuring funny artwork and wonderfully accessible text, presenting each family in its own unique and wonderful way.

Suitable for ages 2 years+  
ISBN: 978-1847805874

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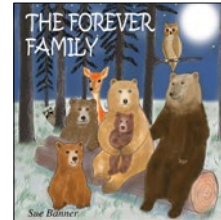
YouTube read along [The Great Big Book Of Families](#) by Mary Hoffman | Read Aloud



**50 Gold Stars**  
by Bryony Irving

This is a reassuring, funny story about Jayden and Ziggy who are adopted. The boys and their pets tell their friend Maisy all about the 50 gold stars that all adopters must get before they are allowed to adopt, as Maisy is worried that her new parents may not know how to look after her. A story book for adopted and soon to be adopted children.

Suitable for ages 4 years+  
ISBN: 978-1916042841



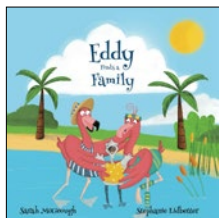
**The Forever Family**  
by Sue Banner

Mama Bear explains that there are many reasons why some mamas and papas may not be able to care for their young. When a little baby bear was found alone, all of the forest creatures came together to search for a forever family who would care and protect, feed, tickle, cuddle ... and especially give lots of love.

Suitable for ages 2 years+  
ISBN: 978-1838252120



## ADOPTION



### **Eddy Finds a Family**

By Sarah McGeough (Author),  
Stephanie Lidbetter (Illustrator)

The story all about how Eddy the  
flamingo finds his family through  
adoption.

Suitable for ages 3 years+  
ISBN: 978-1838276744



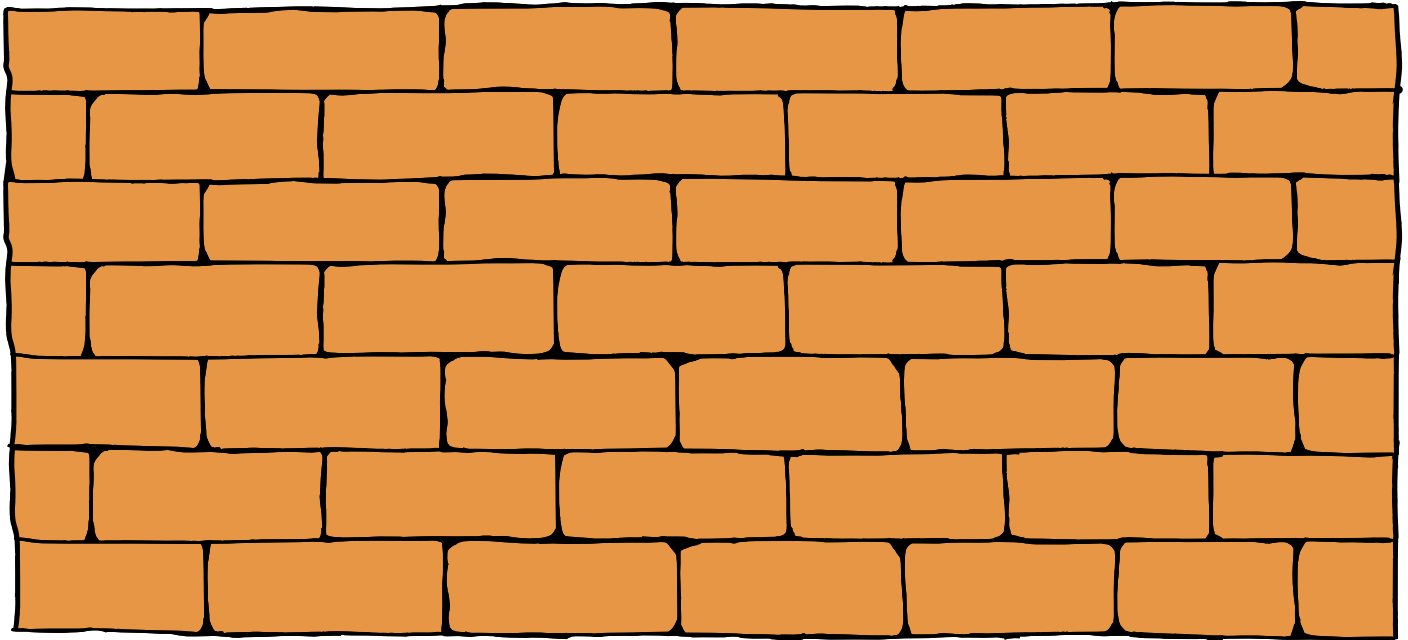
Youtube read along  
[Kids Book Read Aloud:  
Eddy Finds A Family by](#)

[Sarah McGeough and Stephanie  
Lidbetter](#)

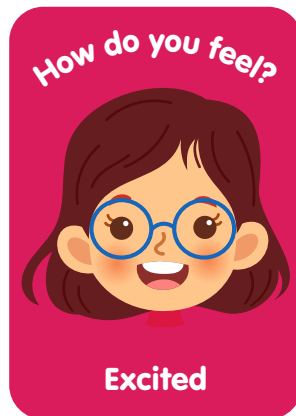
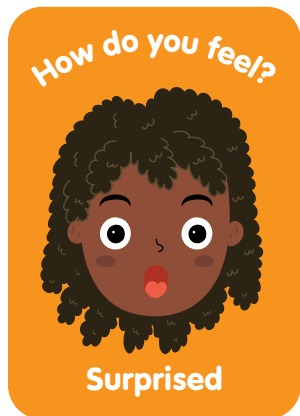
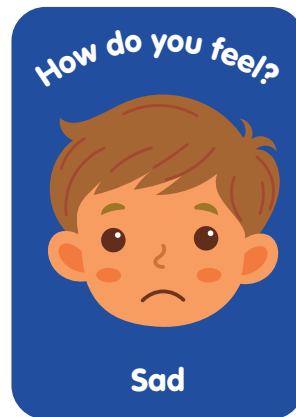
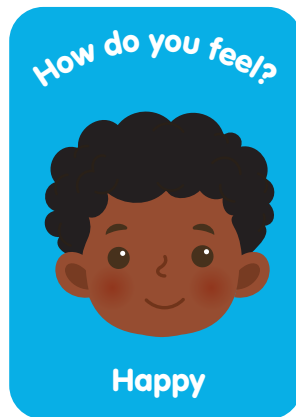
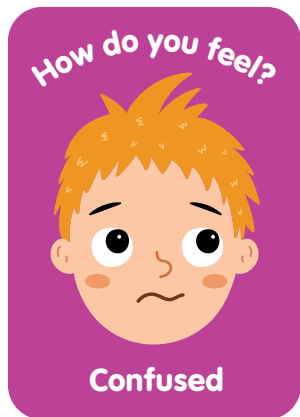
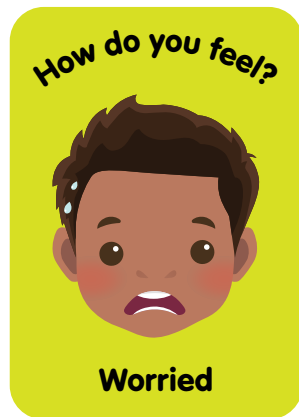


# Additional resources

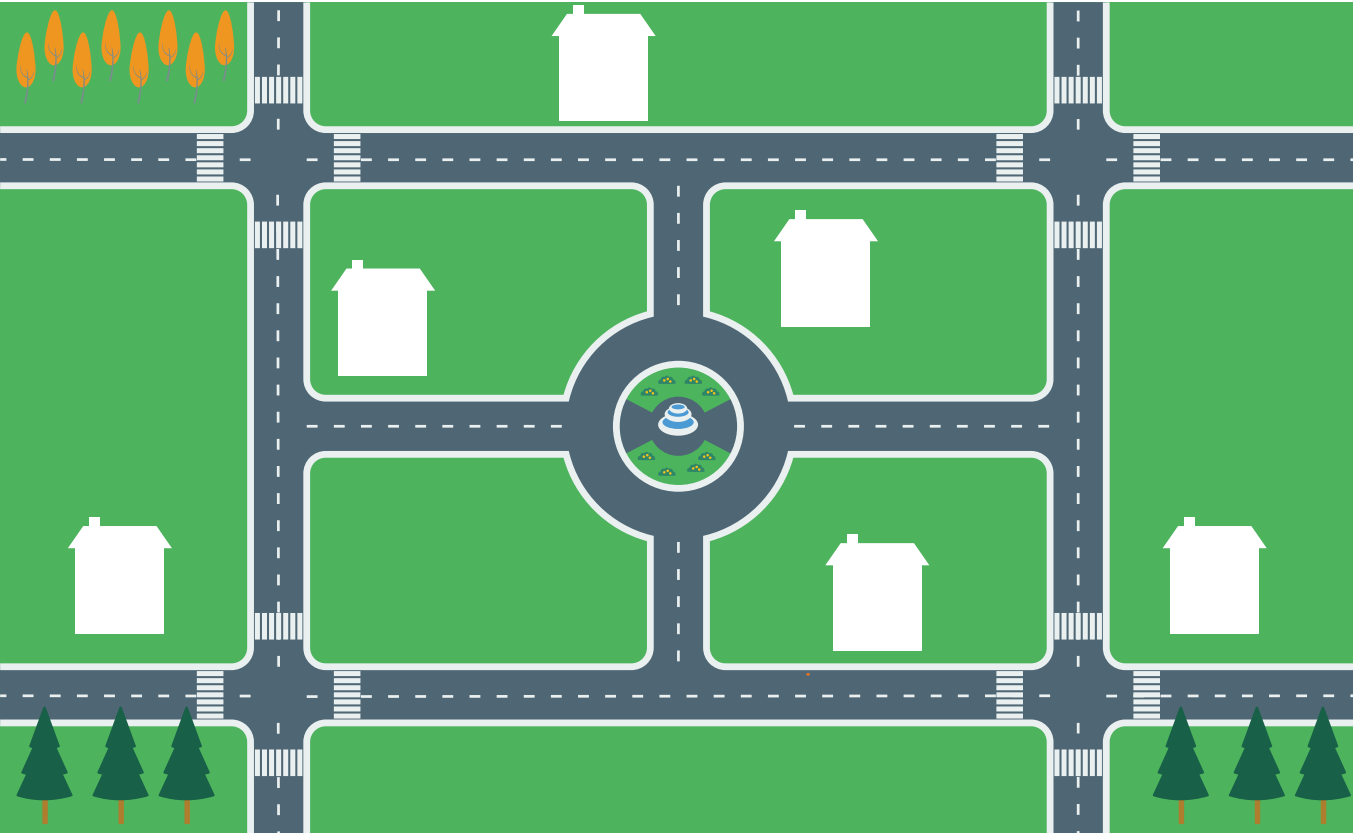
Children's needs wall



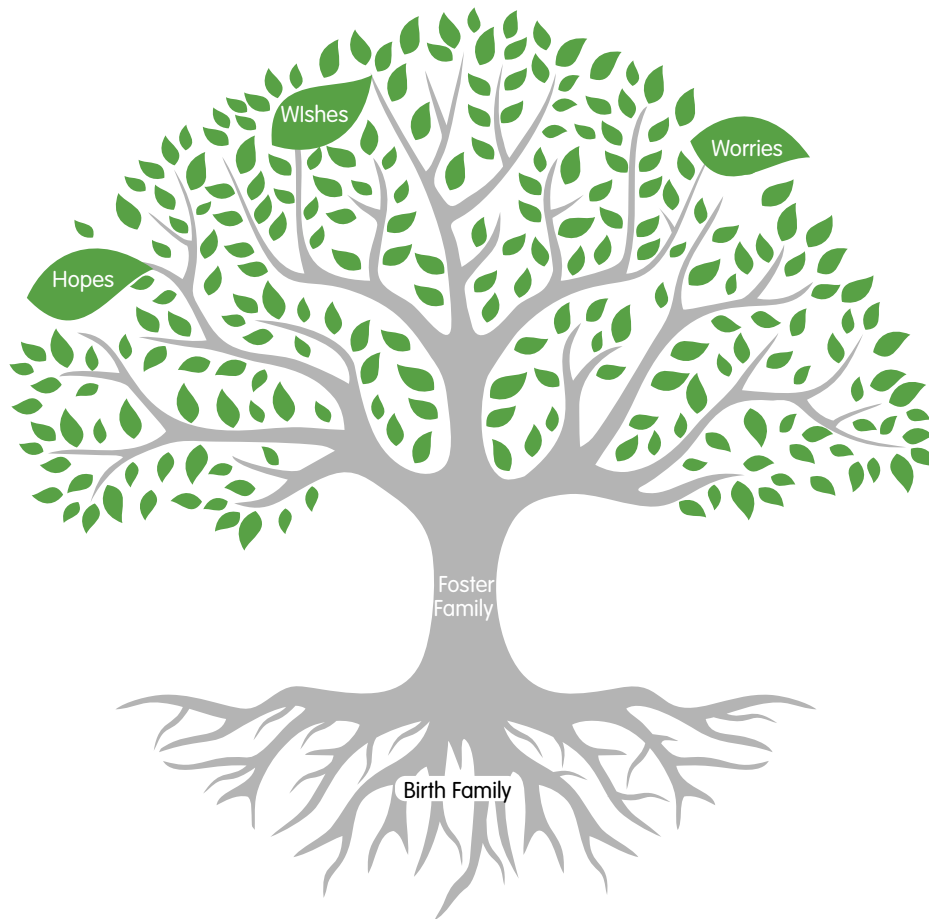
## How do you feel? Maybe you feel a mixture of these feelings



# Journey to adoption map



## Family tree





Thank you for using this book. We hope it supports you in your work with children. Please scan the QR code to leave your feedback. This means a lot to us and helps us improve future editions.

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Telling Children About Adoption is an essential companion for children's social workers and foster carers supporting children through the adoption process.

A unique guide created by two Adopt London social workers, the book supports direct work with children to help them understand why they are in foster care and what this means, why they cannot live with their birth family, what a care plan of adoption is and who their adoptive family are.

**Edition 2 | June 2026 | [adoptlondon.org.uk](https://adoptlondon.org.uk)**

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