

Adoption

YOU could make a difference to a child in need



What is Adoption?

Adoption is a legal process, which gives a child or young person the legal status of a birth child in relation to the adopter. It is a way of providing new families for children who cannot be brought up by their own parents.

The Adopters

- Adopters become the child's legal parent(s). They hold all the responsibilities and decision making rights of birth parents.
- Adopters take on full care of a child into early adulthood and beyond, with support from Social Services and other services.
- Adopters act, treat and accept the child or young person as a member of their family into early adulthood and beyond.

The Children

- The child or young person usually takes the adoption family's surname and will inherit from the family just as if he or she were born to the family.
- The child or young person loses any legal ties to their birth parents.
- The child or young person may retain contact with the birth family beyond adoption.
- The child or young person can access their adoption records at the age of 18.



Who Can Adopt?

- People from all ethnic origins and religions are needed. We will always try to match racial and cultural background of the child and adoptive parents.
- Disabled people are not excluded and sometimes experience of disability will be positively welcomed.
- Everyone has to have a medical examination and health issues will need to be explored.
- A record of offences will need to be carefully looked into but, apart from some offences against children, will not necessarily rule someone out.
- Adopters must be 21 years of age or over. Although there is no upper age limit, we would not usually expect there to be more than about a 40 year age gap between the child and their adoptive parents. However, any age gap will be considered in the context of the needs of the individual child.
- A single person, or one partner in an unmarried couple - heterosexual, lesbian or gay - can adopt. From September 2005 unmarried couples in England and Wales will be able to apply to adopt jointly.
- There are far more people wanting to adopt white babies without disabilities than there are such babies needing homes. Because of this, we may not be recruiting for these at any given time.

The Adoption Process at a Glance

Information gathering

- Information pack
- Information session
- Home Visit



Prepare Application

- Formal application
- Assessment report
- Home study
- Preparation groups



Presenting your Application to the panel

- Assessment Report to Panel
- Panel may approve/not approve or defer your application



Matching

- Child identified
- Visit from social worker
- If match considered suitable Matching Report prepared and presented to Panel



Placement of Children

- Planning meeting
- Introductions
- Placement of child/children into family



Adoption

- Adoption application lodged
- Reports prepared
- Court hearing
- Adoption order granted

The Adoption Process in Detail

Information gathering

■ Information evening

If after reading this leaflet you are still interested in adoption in Richmond, please return the slip in the letter you received to us, and we will invite you to our next information evening. The information evening will include a talk about all aspects of adoption and a question and answer session.

■ Initial home visit

If after attending the Information Evening, you want to pursue your interest in adoption, you need to let us know. We will then arrange with you a date when an adoption social worker can visit you and your family at home.

The aim of this visit is to discuss your personal circumstances, and why you want to become an adoptive parent.

This informal visit is another opportunity for you to find out more about becoming an adoptive parent.

Your discussion with the social worker will then be presented to the Adoption Team, who will make a decision about whether we are able to advance your interest further. You will be informed in writing, with reasons for our decision.

Application

■ Formal Application

If we are able to proceed with your interest, we will send you an application pack. We will carry out a number of statutory checks on you and your family:

- Criminal Records Bureau (CRB)

- NSPCC

- Medical check with GP

- Local Authority (Social Services)

We also need three personal references and a reference from your current employer.

■ Preparation training groups

All applicants are expected to attend these. They will be several evening sessions run by social workers from the Adoption Team.

The aim of these sessions is to inform you and prepare you to deal with issues that are common to adoption. For example, learning about children's early experiences and the effects these have on their behaviour and attachment ability.

We try to answer your questions and prepare you to deal with all aspects of adoption such as children's early experiences, legal and medical issues. This is a further opportunity for you to decide whether adoption is right for you.

■ Home Study

Once you have joined the preparation groups, an assessing social worker will be allocated to you. Together you will work on a home study to prepare an in-depth report about your application.

The home study consists of a series of interviews with you and your family.

We will want to know about your family background, the lifestyle you and your family lead, your support network, your thoughts and views on caring for a child, what you would be able to offer the child/children and so on.

We will describe your strengths and identify any areas for development.

■ Assessment Report

The information gathered in the home study, along with the statutory checks and references, will form an assessment report, which will be presented to the Adoption and Permanency Panel.

You will have the opportunity to see your assessment report and make any comments about it before it goes to the Panel meeting.

■ Adoption and Permanency Panel

The Adoption and Permanency Panel is a group of people who meet once a month.

The job of the Panel is to make independent recommendations to the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames on the following:

- Whether adoption/permanency is in the best interest of the child/children
- Approval of prospective adopters/permanent carers
- Approval of the linking between the prospective adopters/permanent carers and the child/children
- Advice on adoption support



We aim to complete the assessment report and present it to the panel within 6 months of your formal application to adopt.

The Adoption Panel will recommend approving, deferring or not approving your application to be adopters/permanent carers.

Linking

■ Child is identified

Your assessing social worker will now be your adoption link worker and will inform you of children awaiting placements in Richmond.

You will be consulted about any child identified as a possible match.

Your assessment report will be sent to the child's social worker and detailed information about the child will be sent to your adoption link worker, who will share this with you.

If no suitable match between you and a child in Richmond is identified within six months, you will be referred to the National Adoption Register if you want.

■ Visit from child's social worker

The child's social worker and family finder will visit you and other families who may also be a possible match for the child. They will select the family who is considered to be the most suitable match.

■ Linking report to panel

A linking report is prepared and presented to the Adoption/Permanency Panel who will make recommendations to approve or not approve the match.

Placement of Children

■ Planning meeting

If the match is approved a planning meeting is held to plan introduction of the child/children to you and their move into your family.

■ Introductions

Introduction of a child/children to you begins, helping you all get used to each other, leading to the child moving into your home.

■ Placement of children

When the child/children moves into your home your adoption link worker will continue to visit and support you.

The child's social worker will continue to visit the child and statutory reviews will continue until an adoption order is made.



Adoption

■ Adoption application lodged

Together with your adoption link worker, you will agree when to lodge your adoption application with the court. Your application to the court will not be heard until after three months of the child's placement with your family.

■ Reports prepared

A comprehensive background report, known as a Schedule 2 Report, is prepared by the social workers involved.

You will be informed of the hearing date after all the reports have been submitted to the court.

Court Hearing

Everyone involved, including the child/children, is invited to attend Court. You will be supported by your adoption link worker and an appointed legal representative if necessary.

Adoption Order Granted

You become the legal parent(s).

Money matters

What is the cost to me?

You will not have to pay for any of the costs involved in your application to adopt, apart from when you lodge your adoption application to the court, when you will have to pay an application fee. We will pay for any other legal costs.

Will I get financial support?

Richmond's Adoption Allowance Scheme provides a financial allowance to help in the adoption of children whose needs may involve additional costs. It is not applicable to all children. There are eligibility criteria based on the child's needs. If an allowance is applicable to a child, receipt of the allowance will be based on a financial assessment. Your adoption link worker will advise you if an allowance is applicable. Adoption Allowance is means tested and a financial assessment is carried out each year.

After Adoption

What support will be available to me after adoption is completed?

Your adoption link worker will continue to support you throughout the period until an Adoption Order is made and beyond. This will be negotiated to meet your needs. A post adoption service is provided by the Adoption team who are available to work with families, giving support and advice to families as well as individuals who need or request it.

Do birth parents and other relatives have any contact with the child after adoption?

The birth family and the adoptive family may exchange photos and letters by mutual agreement. This takes place via a service called Letterbox. For some children it is important that direct contact with birth relatives is maintained. Decisions for contact will always be based on the best interests of the child.

Where can I find out more information?

There are various organisations that can give you more information about adoption and long-term fostering.

British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF)

Skyline House
200 Union Street
London SE1 0LX

Tel: 020 7593 2060

www.baaf.org.uk

Produce Be My Parent, a bi-monthly newspaper featuring children of all ages and backgrounds who need permanent families. You do not need to be an approved adopter to subscribe.

Adoption UK

Manor Farm
Appletree Road
Chipping Warden
Banbury, Oxon,
OX17 1LH

Tel: 0870 7700 450

www.adoptionuk.com

A self-help and information service for adoptive and prospective adoptive parents. Publishes quarterly magazine, Adoption UK.

Fostering Network

87 Blackfriars Road
London
SE1 8HA

www.thefostering.net

Information about fostering and also produces a profile supplement of children awaiting long-term foster placements.

If you have more adoption questions about adoption after reading this booklet, please phone us on :

020 8891 7754

What did you think of this leaflet? If you have any feedback, please contact the Public Information Officer on 020 8891 7677

Nese keni veshtersi per te kuptuar kete botim, ju lutemi ejani ne recepcionin ne adresen e shenuar me poshte ku ne mund te organizojme perkthime nepermjet telefonit.

إذا كانت لديك صعوبة في فهم هذا المنشور، فنرجو زيارة الإستقبال في العنوان المعطى أدناه حيث بإمكاننا أن نرتب لخدمة ترجمة شفوية هاتفية.

এই প্রকাশনার অর্থ বুঝতে পারায় যদি আপনার কোন সমস্যা হয়, নিচে দেওয়া ঠিকানায় রিসেপশন-এ চলে আসুন যেখানে আমরা আপনাকে টেলিফোনে দোভাষীর সেবা প্রদানের ব্যবস্থা করতে পারবো।

જો તમને આ પુસ્તિકાની વિગતો સમજવામાં મુશ્કેલી પડતી હોય તો, કૃપયા નીચે જણાવેલ સ્થળના વિશેષાન પર આવો, જ્યાં અમે ટેલિફોન પર ગુજરાતીમાં ઇન્ટરપ્રિટિંગ સેવાની ગોઠવણ કરી આપીશું.

اگر در فهمیدن این نشریه مشکلی دارید لطفاً به میز پذیرش در آدرس قید شده در زیر مراجعه نمایید تا ترتیب ترجمه تلفنی برایتان فراهم آورده شود:

اگر آپ کو اس اشاعت کو سمجھنے میں کوئی مشکل ہے تو، براؤزر مہیچے دیئے ہوئے ایڈریس کے اشتباہے پر جا کر ملیئے، جہاں ہم آپ کیلئے ٹیلیفون انٹرپریٹنگ سروس (ٹیلیفون پترجمانی کی سروس) کا انتظام کر سکتے ہیں۔

નેકર ઝુહાનું ઇસ પરચે નું સમઝઠ વિઠ મુસકલ પેસ આઉઠી રૈ ઝાં હેઠાં દિંઝે ગઠે પઝે ઉપર રિસેપશન 'ઝે આઉ જિંઝે અસીં ટૈલીફોન ઝે ગૈલ્લઝાઝ વરઠન ઇઠી ઇન્ટરપ્રિટર ઠા પૂઘપ વર સઠવે ઠાં।

Social Services, 42 York Street, Twickenham, TW1 3BW

Please contact the Public Information Officer on 020 8891 7677 if you need this document in Braille, large print, audio tape or another language

Visit us online at www.richmond.gov.uk

November 2004