



Facts 4 U 2: I'm going to be adopted – what does it mean? A children's guide to adoption (For under 11s)

This fact sheet can be made available in other languages or formats on request by contacting 0161 770 6666. For further information please see our detailed fact sheet - **Information for all.**

This fact sheet has been written to tell you a bit more about what adoption is. If you like you might want to ask an adult, such as your foster carer (if you have one) or your social worker, to read this fact sheet with you.

What does adoption mean?

Adoption is when you go to live with another family forever when you cannot live with your own family because of problems at home. When you are adopted you will belong to and grow up with a new family.

How is adoption different from fostering?

Adoption is different from fostering. Fostering is when you go to stay with a foster family for a while whilst problems at home are being sorted out. Foster families do not usually look after children until they grow up, but just until they can move back home, or sometimes children are adopted after leaving foster care.

Who adopts children?

Children are adopted by all kinds of families. It may be a family with a mum and dad or two mums or two dads, or just one mum or dad. It may be a family where there are other children or a family where you are the only child.

Who says you should be adopted?

Being adopted is a really big thing because it will change your life forever. We want to make sure that it is the right thing for you so your social worker will talk to you about it. Your social worker will also talk to mum, dad and perhaps other people in your family like nanna or granddad. We will also talk about if you should be adopted at special meetings, called reviews, when we talk about what is going to happen to you.

It is really important that you say what you think and what you feel. You can ask questions and tell the social worker what you would like to happen. A court may also be involved in deciding if they should let the social worker find an adoptive family for you. If you are not happy or do not want to be adopted you must tell your social worker straight away. Your social worker might be able to find you someone else you could live with.

If I want to be adopted what happens next?

A group of adults called an adoption panel will meet to decide if they think adoption is right for you. Your social worker will tell them about everybody's views, including yours, and they will think about if being adopted really is the best thing for you.

If everyone agrees your social worker will then talk to you about adoption and try to find what kind of family you would like to live with and what kind of family can best look after you. The social worker will then start looking for a family for you.

How long does adoption take?

Decisions and plans about your future should be made once you have been 'looked after' for 4 months.

Some of these decisions could be:

- You will return home.
- You will go to live with another member of your family.
- You will go to live with a new family, an adoptive, forever family.

All these things should be discussed at your review meetings. You will be part of the discussions and will be asked how you feel about any plans that concern your future. Your views will be written down.

If you and the important people in your life, decide that adoption is best for you, then a report is written for the Adoption Panel to read. This report is about you, your past, your health and culture, your education, interests and hobbies.

This report should be written by your social worker in the six weeks following the review, where it was decided that Adoption would be best for you. You will be able to read this report if you are old enough to understand it and your views will be included in it's you cannot read it, your Social Worker will explain it to you.

This report is then given to the Adoption panel 2 months after the review meeting. Your Social Worker will be at the panel meeting and you can attend if you wish. If you don't wish to attend, your Social Worker will tell you what has been agreed.

Once the Adoption panel has decided that adoption is best for you, we try to find a family within six months. Sometimes it is sooner than this and sometimes it can take a little longer especially if it is important for you to live with your brothers and sisters.

So, altogether from when you are first looked after, it can take about a year before you find a new forever family.

Often during this time, a Court (where magistrates and judges work) will have to read the reports written by your social worker as well as listening to you, to your parents and to the Children's Guardian. Courts have to make their decision within 40 weeks. This is included in the time mentioned above (1year).

This is because they need to find out all about you.

The court's job is to decide whether Adoption is best for you.

Sometimes it's hard 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 something, please **ask us**, we will be happy to explain things to you.

How will the Social Worker find the right family for me?

There are lots of families who want to adopt a child or young person. Your social worker will do their best to find a family that's right for you. They will be looking for a family who speaks the same language and who celebrates the same special days. If your social worker cannot find a family like this they will tell you.

Your social worker will get information on families who want to adopt someone like you. Sometimes they may put information about you in special magazines and papers, which are sent to families thinking about adoption. Your social worker will go to meet different families to find out about them. After holding a meeting they will choose one that they think will be right for you.

Your social worker will tell the adoption panel about this family.

If they also think this family is right for you then you and the family get to meet. You will be able to ask any questions about the adopters and they might also send you some information about themselves such as a book or even a video.

What happens when I meet my new family?

Your social worker will arrange for you and the family to meet. This is usually at your foster carer's house (if you are being fostered) .You will also be able to go to visit them at their house with your social worker or foster carer. You will be given time to get to know each other. When everyone is ready you will go and live with them. Don't worry; your social worker will visit you regularly to see how you are getting on.

If after meeting them you feel you would not be happy living with them you must tell your social worker, the people you are living with or another adult you trust. It's very normal to feel like this. You may feel muddled up or confused because a lot of things are changing. Talk to your social worker about this. They will help you to sort out your feelings and make sure that you don't have to do anything you don't want to.

Making your adoptive family your proper family

Once you have lived with your new family for a while it is time for you and your new family to go to court to make them your proper family. After you have been to court you will belong to your new family forever.

At the court you will get the chance to meet the judge. The judge is the person who will make the final decision whether or not you should be adopted and who should

adopt you. The judge will listen to what you and the adults think about you being adopted.

Before it is finally agreed to make your new family your proper family forever, the social workers, the adoption panel and the court will need to know what your old family think and how they feel about you being adopted.

Some families agree to adoption because they know that it is best for their child, others say no because they find it hard to accept that they cannot look after their children safely themselves. Either way it is important to remember that your family can still love you even if it not safe for you to live with them or they cannot look after you.

When parents say no to their child's adoption the court will ask another social worker called a Children's Guardian to decide. The Children's Guardian will talk to you about you feelings and views to find out what will be best for you. They will give that information to the judge so the judge can decide.

If the judge decides being adopted is the best thing for you, you will become a proper member of your new family forever and will use their family name. Your first name will usually be the same but, if you like, you can add a middle name.

Will I see my old family after I'm adopted?

Adoption means belonging to a new family, but it doesn't mean forgetting the people that you know and love. For some children it may be good to stay in touch with certain members of their old family. For others this might not be possible or be too upsetting. If you don't want to stay in touch with your old family that's ok too.

If there are people from your old family you would like to see or write to, talk to your social worker who will decide if this is possible. The social worker will talk to your new family about this and will help arrange for you to write from time to time or see your old family if everyone says it's ok.

Even if you don't see your old family there maybe an arrangement for them and your new family to send a letter to each other. This would give your old family your news and give you news about them. Your old family will not be told where you live now or your new name.

What if I am not happy?

If you are not happy or have any problems or worries you must say so. As well as your social worker, there are lots of people you can talk to who can help you sort things out. You can talk to another person who is called an independent advocate. An independent advocate is someone who you can talk to about your worries or problems and who will try to sort things out.

If you would like an independent advocate these organisations can find one for you

Voice of the Child in Care

Freephone 0808 800 5792

Email: help@vcc-uk.org

National Youth Advocacy Service

Freephone: 0800 616 101

Telephone: 0151 649 8700

Email: help@nyas.net

Children's Legal Centre

Telephone: 01206 873 820

Email: clc@essex.ac.uk

Spurgeons

Telephone: 0161 621 9325

You can also contact another adult called the Children's Rights Officer who will help you to sort things out and can offer other help and advice.

Children's Rights Officer

Telephone: 0161 621 9325

Or you can contact the **Children's Rights Director**, who is called Roger Morgan. He will help you to sort things out and can also offer help and advice.

Write to:

Roger Morgan (Children's Rights Director)

NCSC

St Nicholas Building, St Nicholas Street

Newcastle Upon Tyne NE1 1NB

Freephone: 0800 528 0731

Email: CRD@ncsc.gsi.gov.uk

If you are really unhappy and want to complain you can either talk or write to an adult called a Complaints and Representations Officer. They will take your complaint seriously and will write to you to say how they have arranged to have it sorted out as soon as they can.

Write to:

Freepost

Children Young People and Families
Complaints and Representations Officer
Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council

PO BOX 4

Civic Centre

Level 8

West Street

Oldham

OL1 1UL

Tel: 0101 770 1129

Fax: 0161 770 3222

E-mail: cypf.complaints@oldham.gov.uk

The Complaints & Representation Officer only speaks English however if you wish we can arrange to visit you with an interpreter.

Or you can complain to the **National Care Standards Commission**

Write to:

National Care Standards Commission

2nd Floor, Heritage Wharf

Portland Place

Ashton Under Lyne OL7 0QD

Telephone: 0161 214 8120

Fax: 0161 214 8156

Email: Enquiries.Ashton@ncsc.gsi

How can I contact the Adoption Team?

Write to:

The Adoption Team

Unit 10, Whitney Court

Southlink Business Park

Tel: 0161 770 6605

Fax: 0161 770 6683

Email: socs.family.placement@oldham.gov.uk

January 2007 OCFS-CHILD-FACTS4U16S (Version 10) PID160 CB