



I'm going to be adopted – what does this mean?

**A guide to adoption
for children**



7. If the Judge decides that I should be adopted, my Social Worker will talk to me about this and about looking for the right family for me.

8. The Judge and the court listen to everyone and to what I want to happen and decide what is best for me.

9. When my new family and I feel comfortable together, I move into my new home.

10. My Social Worker comes to visit me to make sure that I'm alright. My Independent Reviewing Officer continues to see me at reviews.

11. When we all feel ready, I will go with my new family to see the judge and I will be adopted.

12. My social worker will now say goodbye to me as I have a 'forever family'.

I may still hear from my birth family and I can talk about adoption with my new family as they will understand that I may have lots of questions.

My journey to adoption

1. I can't live at home.

2. I go to live with foster carers.

3. My Social Worker, my Independent Reviewing Officer and my guardian think about and talk to me about where I will go to live.

4. The Adoption Panel consider whether I should be placed for adoption.

5. I meet my new family and get to know them.

6. When my Social Worker finds the family, the adoption panel will consider whether this is right for me.

This booklet will tell you more about adoption. You might want to read it with an adult such as your social worker or your carer. You can ask them any questions you may have.

What is adoption?

Adoption means living with another family forever when you can't live with the family where you were born.

When you are adopted you will belong to and grow up with a new family.

Being adopted means you are not 'in care' or 'looked after' any more but you are part of your new family.

How is adoption different from fostering?

Foster families usually look after children until they can move back home or on to a new adoptive family. Sometimes a foster family will look after a child until he or she is grown up.

Sometimes a foster family will adopt a child they are looking after. However, foster families do not usually look after children until they have grown up. They sometimes keep in touch with their foster children, even when they move on to their new families.

Who adopts children?

Children are adopted by all sorts of families. It may be a family with a mum and a 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 decides if I 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 right for you. Your social worker will talk to you about it. It is important that you tell them what you are thinking and feeling. Your social worker will also talk to mum, dad and perhaps other people in your life like your nan, granddad and your carer. At special meetings called reviews we will also talk about whether you should be adopted.

When social workers, the court and maybe your mum and dad have decided that it isn't possible for you to grow up in the family where you were born, your social worker will tell an adoption panel all about you and ask them whether they think that adoption is right for you.

The panel is a group of people who understand how important it is for children to grow up in a family who loves them and where they are safe and can belong.

Addresses

Here are some people who can help you:

Independent Reviewing Officer:

My Independent Reviewing Officer is:

Name: _____

Contact details

Lewisham Council Complaints Officer

3rd Floor Laurence House

1 Catford Road

London SE6 4RU

Tel: 020 8314 8276/020 8314 8298

Fax: 020 8314 3151

Email: cyp.casework@lewisham.gov.uk

Adoption Support Team

Lewisham Council

1st Floor Laurence House

1 Catford Road

Catford

London SE6 4RU

Freephone: 0800 587 7392

Ofsted

Ofsted National Business Unit

Royal Exchange Buildings,

St Ann's Square

Manchester, M2 7LA

Tel: 0300 123 4666

Email: enquires@ofsted.gov.uk

Online: www.rights4me.org

Other contacts

Or you can contact the Children's Commissioner for England who will help to sort things out and can also offer help and advice.

Children's Commissioner

Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

If you are really unhappy and want to complain you can contact:

Care Quality Commission

(formerly the National Care Standards Commission)

National Correspondence
Citygate
Gallowgate
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne
NE1 4PA

Telephone: 0300 061 6161
Email: enquiries@cqc.gov.uk
Online: www.cqc.org.uk

Or you can contact Lewisham Council's Complaints Office

Senior Complaints Officer
Complaints Unit
Children's Social Care
Lewisham Council
3rd Floor Laurence House
Catford
London SE6 4SW
Telephone:
020 8314 6131/8660

How will they 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 is 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 that 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 then 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 your social worker will talk to you about them. 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 or DVD.

Making your adoptive family your legal family

Once you have lived with your family for a while they will ask the court, which is where judges make decisions, to make an adoption order. An adoption order means that you will legally belong in your new family. During this time a children's guardian may come to talk to you about how you are feeling.

If the judge decides that being adopted is the best thing for you, your adoptive parents will always be your legal parents and have full responsibility for you, just as if you were born to them.

What about my birth family?

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 that 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 arrange for you to write from time to time or see your old family if everyone says it is ok.

Even if you don't see your old family there may be 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, where you go to school, or your new family name.

What if I'm not happy?

If you are not happy or have 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 can talk to you about your worries or problems and who will try to sort things out.

If you would like an independent advocate, this organisation can find one for you. 

Independent Advocate Worker

Coram Voice Advocacy Service

0800 800 5792

Email: help@coramvoice.org.uk

Online: www.coramvoice.org.uk