

**Herefordshire
Council**

Children's Guide to Adoption

The pledge

The councillors on the corporate parenting panel and other people worked with children and young people who are looked after to agree a pledge. This is a promise to make sure that plans for your care include the things that are important to you.

The pledge says we will:

- ◇ Listen to you
- ◇ Understand who you are and what you want
- ◇ Offer you support when you need it

We hope this information will help you understand what adoption means.

It will tell you

- ◇ What adoption means
- ◇ How long the process of adoption takes
- ◇ What your adoptive family may be like
- ◇ About seeing birth family
- ◇ Who makes decisions
- ◇ About your life story book
- ◇ About the adoption service
- ◇ People you can speak to
- ◇ People who can help you

What does adoption mean?

For lots of different reasons, some children can't live with their birth family. If you can't live with your birth family, then another family is found for you. Some children are adopted when they are babies and some when they are older



Adoption is a legal thing. This means the law says it's right and no-one can change it, so the decision about adoption has to be agreed in court.

Adoption means that you will be part of your new family forever

Why do I need a new family?



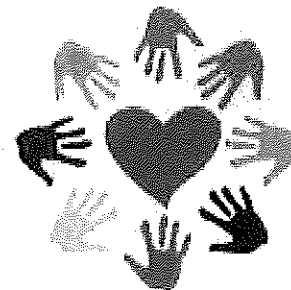
A lot of the time it's because your birth family have not been able to look after you. Or it may be that they have not kept you safe.

All children need to grow up feeling safe, secure and loved.

Who makes the decisions about this?

Lots of different people can be involved in making a decision that means you cannot live with your birth family. People like:

- ◇ A judge or magistrate who works in a court, who knows all about what is best and good for children.
- ◇ Your social worker.
- ◇ Your birth family.
- ◇ Yourself if you are old enough to say what you want.
- ◇ A children's guardian (someone who finds out what you want and how you feel and let the court know what they think is best)



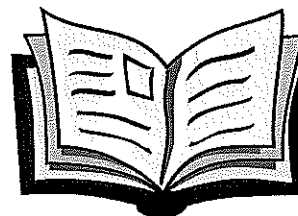
So how long does it all take?



When you are 'looked after' plans about your future should be made within 4 months. Some of these decisions could be:

- ◇ you will go back home
- ◇ you will go to live with another member of your family
- ◇ you will go to live with a foster family,
- ◇ we will find you an adoptive family

All these things will be discussed at your review meetings. You may be part of the discussions or you can talk to your independent reviewing officer or social worker and your views will be written down.



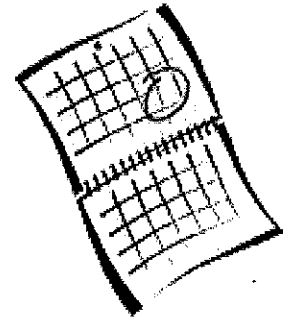
If it is decided that adoption is best for you, then a report is written about all the things that are important about you - your past, your family, your health and culture, race, religion, education, interests and hobbies.



You will be able to read this report if you are old enough to understand it and your views will be included. If you cannot understand it, your social worker will explain it to you.

If adoption is best for you, we try to find a new family to adopt you within 6 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.



Sometimes it is hard to understand why adoption takes so long, Because it's forever it is very important and needs to be done properly.

You can talk to your social worker or foster carer if you don't understand what is happening.

After the judge agrees to your adoption, you will get a new birth certificate.

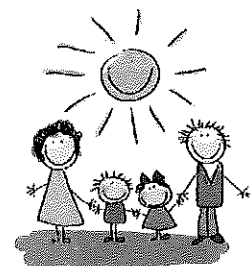
You will usually still have the name your birth family gave you and then have a new last name which will be the same as your new family. This shows that you will always be part of two families.



What will my new adoptive family be like?

There are many different kinds of families waiting to adopt a child or children. Here are some examples:

- ◇ Some families may be a mum, or a dad, or a mum and a dad.
- ◇ Some families may be 2 mums or 2 dads.
- ◇ Some families may already have children who were born to them or who they have adopted.
- ◇ Some may not have any children.



We try to find the best possible family for you. To do this, we find out all about them.

When you become part of your adoptive family, if there are brothers and sisters, they become your brothers and sisters.

If there are uncles, aunts, cousins and grandparents they will also become part of your adoptive family.





Will I see my birth family if I am adopted?

This depends on the reasons why you are being adopted. If it is decided it's right for you to continue to see people in your birth family then this will continue.

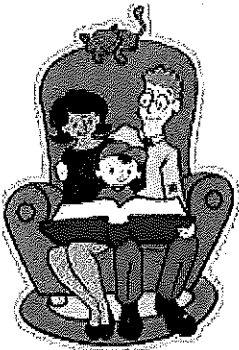
Sometimes it's decided that children should not see relatives face-to-face, but may receive letters, photographs or information from them.

Your lifestory

Your social worker will make sure that you are given a book that will help you understand who your birth family are and why you cannot live with them.

This book may have photographs and other important things from when you lived with your birth family and your foster carers.

Your social worker, birth family and adoptive family will help make this book and you can help too.



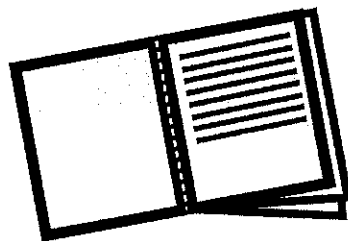
You and your adoptive family will look at your life story book together.



The national adoption standards and Herefordshire adoption agency's statement of purpose—what are they?

The national adoption standards are rules that make sure you are looked after properly.

The statement of purpose tells you what Herefordshire adoption agency does to make sure that everything happens as it should.



Who will help in Herefordshire

Your Social Worker

Name:

Tel:

Email:

Your Independent Reviewing Officer

Name:

Tel:

Email:

Herefordshire Children's Complaints Officer

Name: Lin Hitchman

Tel: 01432 383738

Email: Lin.Hitchman@herefordshire.gov.uk

Herefordshire Adoption Agency Service Manager

Name: Hilary Hale

Tel: 01432 383432

Email: hhale@herefordshire.gov.uk

Other people that can help

Contact an Independent Advocate

You can get help from an independent advocate who can speak up on your behalf. The National Youth Advocacy Service will provide you with an adult (who does not work for the Adoption Agency) to help you.

Telephone: 0808 808 1001 (Freephone number)

Email: help@nyas.net

Website: www.nyas.net

Childline

Need to talk?

Calls are free & confidential

Telephone: 0800 1111

Website: www.childline.org.uk

Contact the Children's Rights Director for England

The Children's Rights Director for England, Roger Morgan, is responsible for listening to the views of children who live away from home. If you wish, you have the right to complain directly to him and he will make sure your complaint is passed onto the right person and taken seriously.

He can be contacted at:

Address: Office of the Children's Rights Director, 33 Kingsway, London, WC2B 6SE

Telephone: 0800 528 0731 (Freephone number)

Website: www.rights4me.org.uk

Who checks the work of my adoption agency?

Ofsted

This organisation checks the work of adoption agencies in England and Wales.

They can be contacted at:

Address: National Business Unit, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231 (Mon-Fri—8 to 6.45 pm (except Bank Holidays))

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Children's Commissioner

The Children's Commissioner for England, Maggie Atkinson, makes sure that adults in charge listen to your views. She can be contacted at:

Address: The Office of the Children's Commissioner, 33 Greycoat Street, London, SW1P 2QF

Telephone: 020 7783 8330

Email: info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk