



Support for Birth Families

**Independent advice and support
for birth families**



0303 333 1216



adoptioncumbria.org.uk



What is adoption?

Adoption is a way of providing a new family for a child when living with their own family is not possible. Cumberland and Westmorland & Furness Councils, Children's Services Adoption Agency can move children who have a care plan of adoption to live with adoptive families. However, only a Court can make the Adoption Order which ends the legal relationship between birth parents and their children and gives the child new legal parents.

If a child is adopted birth parents will no longer have any legal rights over them although there may be some form of keeping in touch, usually by letter between birth parents and adoptive parents.

Visit: adoptioncumbria.org.uk

What happens when Children's Services decide the plan for my child should be adoption?

The social worker needs to complete a Child's Permanence Report (CPR). This is a report the social worker writes so a decision can be made about whether adoption is in a child's best interests. The social worker will need to ask you a lot of questions about your child and your family's background. The report is confidential but will be provided to your child's adopters as it is important that they have important about you and your family which they can then share with the child. This will help them understand your child's background and to be able to support them in the best way possible. Sometimes social workers will talk about 'twin tracking'. This means they are completing enquiries and compiling reports to establish whether the child can return to the care of your family, but also plans for adoption are being made should this the court decide this is not possible. This is done to prevent children living with approved alternative families for longer than necessary.

If you are unhappy with the plan for adoption you need to speak to a solicitor. You can ask the social worker working with you about this.





Choosing the adoptive family

Children's Services are required by law to make very thorough enquiries about adopters. A detailed report is completed and lots of checks are made. An adoption panel scrutinises the adopter's completed report and their match with a young person to make sure they can meet the needs of a particular child. All adopters have to go through this process prior to adopting a child. Please tell your social worker if there is anything special you would like them to have in mind when choosing a family for your child. You might request for them to be Cared For in a family that practise a particular religion, or where they will not be an only child or where they will encourage a particular talent of theirs. Your wishes regarding contact should also be considered. Children's Services cannot guarantee everything you wish as they must put the child's interests first when choosing a family but they will take your wishes into account.

If you are unhappy about the idea of your child being adopted?

You need to talk to a solicitor right away. You may be able to get publicly funded legal advice and representation in Court. Your solicitor will advise you of this.

The Court will decide if your rights as a parent should be taken away so your child can be adopted. They can grant a Placement Order which the Local Authority need before they can place your child with adopters. During the court process you will have the opportunity to see any written information (which is called evidence) which you should discuss with your solicitor.

The Court will also appoint a Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) social worker. They are independent of Children's Services and their job is to safeguard / ensure that the child's best interests are cared for on behalf of the Court. They will ask for your views and you will have the opportunity to go to Court and explain why you are not agreeing with the plan for adoption.



Placing your child with their adopters

The social worker will search for a family who can best meet the needs of the child. Once a possible family is identified for a child with selected adopters, the Adoption Panel scrutinises this match and recommends whether it is the right family for the child. A senior member of Children's



Services called an 'Agency Decision Maker' will make a final decision based on the recommendation from the Adoption Panel. You will receive notification of this decision in writing.

The child will gradually be introduced to their adopters so they can build up a relationship. This involves the adopters spending time at the home of their current care learning about the child and the child visiting the home of the adopters. Meetings are held to make sure these introductions go at a pace that is right for the child and to agree a date for the move.

In some circumstances the social worker may arrange for birth parents and adoptive parents to meet. Although you may feel this could be difficult it can be reassuring for you to visualise who your child will be living with and be reassured, they will be well cared for. The adopters can talk more easily to the child about you and their birth family having met you. Letter writing can also be easier if you have met the person you are writing to. Also, once the child has lived with the adopters for a few weeks we will ask for a letter to be written so that you know how your child has settled with the adoptive family.

Once the child is living in their adoptive family the social workers continue to visit for a while to make sure their needs are being met and they are settling into their new home. The adopters can then apply for an Adoption Order. You will receive notification of this and again you have the opportunity to go to Court separately from the adopters to give your view.

Once an Adoption Order has been made children traditionally take their adoptive family's surname. The adopters get an Adoption Certificate from the General Registrar which shows the child's new name. This takes the place of the original birth certificate for all legal purposes.

What can you do to help your child?

It is important that children go to their adoptive home with information about their birth family. Their social worker will prepare a Life Story Book and you can help by giving lots of information and photographs about your family and your child.

You may want to prepare a small memory box with things that will be precious to your child, for example their identity bracelet from hospital, christening certificates, cards and small gifts they received, first teeth or anything you feel will be important to your child. You may want to write a letter that can be kept on file for your child for when they are older. If you have been seeing your child regularly whilst decisions are being made, this family time will come to an end. Final family time can be difficult for birth parents. It is important you have support so you can ensure the last visit is a positive experience for your child.

Speak to your Social Worker or the Independent Support Worker for Birth Parents about support for this final family time session.



Having another child

Some parents whose children were adopted go on to parent children successfully when their lives are more stable. It's important to be open and honest with professionals. Support should be available to help you do this.

Will my child be able to find me after adoption?

From the age of 18 your child has the right to apply for their original birth certificate which will show the child's full birth name, their parent's names and the address they were living at when the birth was registered. At the time of the adoption information about the child's background and birth family should have been given to the adoptive parents to share with them as they were growing up. When the child turns eighteen, they can approach the adoption agency to request further information from their adoption file. The young person may wish to trace and make contact with their birth family. They can either do this themselves or request support from an adoption agency.

There is an register which the adopted adult/child can register their details with, this is called the Adoption Register. If you have registered your details the Register will put you in contact with one another.

The details for the Adoption Contact Register are below:

General Register Office
Adoption Section
Contact Register
Trafalgar Road, Birkdale
Southport PR8 2HH
Tel: 0300 123 1837
www.gov.uk/adoption-records/the-adoption-contact-register



If either the adopted adult or birth parents do not want to be contacted they can register this request with the Adoption Agency.

How can we help you deal with your child's adoption?

Grief, loss and anger are often felt at various stages following your child's adoption. It can be difficult to understand and deal with these feelings. It may be helpful for you to talk about this with the Affected by Adoption Worker for birth parents or get in touch with organisations that may help or be able to put you in touch with other parents whose children have been adopted. Please see the back page for more details.

Keeping in touch

In the past there was a lot of secrecy about adoptions. This has changed and it is considered better for the child to grow up knowing about their birth family and their adoption. Adopters should now be aware of the importance of helping a child understand this.

The most common arrangement is for letters to be exchanged between birth family and adoptive family. The frequency of the Keeping In Touch Letter Exchange will be based upon the child's needs. The Keeping in Touch Letter Exchange is important in keeping you informed of your child's progress and also letting the child get an update about your birth family. The letters are sent through a secure Keeping In Touch Letter Exchange system so addresses and identifying information are not shared and letters are checked to make sure they are appropriate.

Writing these letters can be very difficult, particularly the first letter. Ask the Affected by Adoption Worker for support with this if you are unsure what to write. In some circumstances there are arrangements for face to face family time between a child and members of their birth family but this is only when it is considered to be in the child's best interest. A written agreement will be completed at the time of the adoption which will clarify the Keeping in Touch Letter Exchange arrangements.

This should be explained to you by the child's social worker. To ask for a meeting to look at the Keeping In Touch arrangements you should contact the Keeping In Touch /Letterbox Co-ordinator on 0303 333 1216 or by emailing AdoptionSupportTeam@cumbria.gov.uk. Any changes to agreed contact arrangements would be based on the child's needs.





Find out more

Who can I speak to?

Adoption Support Team
Children's Services
Cumbria House
117 Botchergate
Carlisle
CA1 1RD
t: 03033 331216
w: cumbria.gov.uk/adoption

