

Adopting with Together for Children



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Adopting with Together for Children

Together for Childrens Adoption Service works on behalf of Sunderland City Council to help local children who need new families find the care they need for the rest of their childhood and into adult life. We aim to recruit 'Families for Life'.

There are many reasons why children may need care away from their own families, and there are many types of care that can meet their needs.

First and foremost our responsibility is to the children who need new families. But we could not meet our responsibility without your help and that's one of the reasons why we have produced this pack. It sets out our partnership approach with families who want to adopt and aims to give you the essential facts about what adoption means, the procedures, the service itself and about the commitment you are thinking of making.

We welcome your interest in adoption and assure you that we will treat your enquiry fairly, openly and with respect throughout the process.

Making the commitment

Adoption can be a wonderful and fulfilling experience.

It is important to realise that welcoming a child into your family is a major decision. You, your own children if you have them, the social work team, the child (if old enough) and, where possible, the birth parents and family will all need to be partners in the decision making process.

Who are the children?

There are many reasons why children might need an adoptive family.

A parent might ask for their child to be adopted if they feel unable to care for their child themselves, however the more common scenario is when the Local Authority, or a company acting on its behalf, needs to remove a child from their home (by agreement of a Court) if there is evidence of neglect or abuse of some kind.

Adoption into a new family can give these children the security and stability they need. Many of these children will have experienced difficulties in their birth family, including neglect, physical or sexual abuse and some of their parents may have mental health problems, learning difficulties or may have experience of drug and alcohol dependency.

Many children will have memories of their birth family – good and bad and all children requiring adoption will have had more than one change of care giver. They therefore need time to gain trust and develop an emotional bond with adoptive parents.

Some children may have special needs such as a physical or learning disability and some parents may be unable to provide the care the child needs.

Most children who require an adoptive family will have lived within a foster home whilst plans for their future and legal proceedings are finalised.

The children waiting for adoption are as varied as the people who care for them. Most children waiting for adoption are aged from 0 to 8 years but they all have one thing in common, they want to be part of a loving home, a 'forever family'.

When possible, we try to keep brothers and sisters together. So we are always looking for people who are interested in adopting, two, three or maybe even more children from the same family. As an adopter you will never be on your own, we have a range of support available to you, based on a child's individual needs.

Who can adopt?

All children are different and we are looking for a wide range of people from different life experiences who can adopt a child. You could be married, in a civil partnership, divorced, single or living together.

We don't have set criteria for what makes a good adoptive family, however to adopt with us you will need to:

- Be 21 years and over
- Have the space to accommodate a child
- Be in good health to support a child into adulthood

There are a lot of myths about who can adopt! The reality is that there is no such thing as a 'typical' or 'ideal' adoptive parent. Being a parent to a child who has not been born to you gives an extra dimension to family life. You will need to have understanding, patience and commitment to the task, all things which every parent should have – and a bit extra as well.

We are looking for people who have something to offer to the children we are looking after. This means you will probably be the sort of person who is flexible, adaptable, and resilient, a good communicator and willing to develop new skills.

This is more important than whether you are married, single, in a same sex relationship, divorced or widowed, with children of your own, step-children or childless, working or not working, a home owner or a tenant.

Sunderland adopters tell their story

Adopters of two sisters:

“When we first started to look into adoption, my expectation based on all of the things you see and hear from what you read in the papers and online and watch on TV was that it would be a very long and intrusive process which we would no doubt fail to pass. I am really pleased to type this now saying it wasn't any of that – our beautiful little girls moved in with us on the 29th July 2013, that day will be etched in our minds for the rest of our lives as the day we fulfilled our dreams.

We, like most others applied to adopt as that was our way of having children of our own, but the training you are provided with as part of the process actually completely turns that round to you wanting to adopt to give a child a safe and stable environment to call home and to give them the chances in life that anyone deserves. The fact that at the same time you are able to have children of your own becomes an added bonus rather than the burning desire.

We decided to take a sibling group so we went from no children to two all at once. In our initial forms we said we would take two children aged 0-5. During the time we were applying we got lots of comments from people we knew. They were I suppose just vocalising the fears that were in our heads but we are so pleased we didn't let our fears limit what we did! We both were part of sibling groups of two in our own childhoods and if we had been able to have children naturally we definitely think we would have had two. But let me answer each of those points individually to what we think now:

- **How will you cope with two children at the same time**

We do more than cope having both of them in our life and having that extra joy knowing that sometimes sibling groups get separated to assist with adoption placements definitely makes it extra rewarding – the thought of our girls not being together breaks our hearts

- **Are you not worried that they will be so close they won't let you in?**

We actually think this helped the bond between us all establish rather than hinder it and seeing the love they then grew for us to be at the same level that they had for each other was breath-taking

- **What if the older one has too many memories of their past?**

Our oldest daughter was 5 ½ years when placed with us and therefore does have memories. These really help her understand why she was placed for adoption and the training you receive means that we can support her through them

- **What about all the things you will miss like first day at school etc with taking an older child?**

We didn't miss a thing! All the “firsts” we experienced together were just as special, the first day our eldest daughter started her new school to us was just as special as a first day in reception for other parents.

Let's talk about home assessments now – we were so scared that we would feel like we were being grilled, what if we answered the questions wrong, what if our social worker doesn't like us or our house. There honestly wasn't one question that we were asked where we thought, what's that got to do with anything, the assessment visits after the first couple felt like a friend coming round for a cuppa and a catch up. And I don't think any answer would be considered wrong it might just be that some answers lead to more questions to further clarify something.

And the now the big one the panels! We can't lie it was one of the most scary things we have done in our life, nothing helps, not even the constant reassurance from your social worker that they wouldn't be taking you to panel if they didn't think you would be approved. So the best advice we can give is the nerves are normal, but don't let them overcome you and change who you are or how you react.

The last thing we would say is just be you all the way through the process. The reason you want to adopt is because you think you could offer a child a loving and stable family. Together for Children therefore need to assess you to make sure they find the perfect match for you and the child, so not being you won't let you fulfil your dreams.

We both wish you every success in your journey, just imagine in 18 months' time you could be writing an article like this for the next update of the information pack.”

Adopters of an older child:

“We decided from the start of the Adoption process that we would like to adopt a child of school age. We already had an eight-year-old biological daughter and thought that a child aged 4-6 would be ideally suited to our family.

The training was excellent and extremely relevant. We covered all subjects from a child being placed into care to being matched with an adopter.

I found meeting the Adoptive Parent and Foster Carer fascinating. It was good to hear first-hand about their experiences of having a child being placed with them. They were both very honest and explained some of the challenges that you may encounter when a child is placed.

After the course we then started on Home Study. We had already met our social worker on our training course and felt at ease with her straight away. The home study was quite intrusive, asking questions about past experiences and how you coped with them as a family or an individual. Our daughter enjoyed the one to one time with our worker, she is a chatterbox and was able to speak openly and freely about her feelings towards adoption and was able to address her concerns. As I mentioned earlier, we got to know our social worker very well, so it felt more like having a chat with a friend than a formal meeting.

We attended the 'Families' evening with my parents and any questions/concerns they had had been addressed throughout the evening. It was also nice for them to meet other 'Grandparents/family members'.

The next part of the process was the 'Opening Minds event'. Although, we had said we would like a boy, we would have considered a girl, if we felt drawn to her. We first went into the room that was showing the videos, we watched the videos and afterwards, we both said that we felt drawn to a little boy. We went to meet his Social Worker and talked about him for some time and then went on to meet other Foster Carers and Social Workers but found that we were drawn back to this little boy.

After Opening Minds we then went to Panel to be approved. We sat down in a room with our social worker and went through the questions that the panel had set for us. I'll admit I was nervous about the panel but they really do put you at ease. We then went into the Panel with our Social Worker, I think I started to waffle towards the end but hopefully they knew what I was trying to say! Afterwards the head of the panel came to see us and said that we had been approved by panel to adopt and that they would be recommending us to the Agency Decision Maker.

We then met with the little boy's social worker, with our worker there. After this we met his foster carer. They were able to give us more detailed information on the little boy, like his personality, about the things that he likes to do, things that he likes to eat (a lot as we have found out since!) and also what upsets him and the best way of dealing with it.

We received official notice that we had been approved to adopt and then shortly after we attended the Matching panel. It was the same members as the original panel and again we were put at ease.

A couple of weeks later our worker called to say we had officially been matched with the little boy and a date would be set for introductions.

On the first day of the Introductions we had a meeting first. We went through various documents and then we went on to meet the little boy at the foster carer's house. He was amazing, such a lovely happy boy and he called us Mummy and Daddy straight away and had no problems at all opening up to us. We spent about an hour with him and then went back home to collect his big sister. As soon as they met they got on straight away. We spent the next ten days with him either at his foster placement or our house or out and about.

After the introduction period was over he came to live with us and was very keen to get into his own bed. Everything seemed to be going perfectly well until what we call the 'Weekend from Hell' happened. All of a sudden he and our daughter went from being the best of friends to arch enemies. It was constant bickering from the second they got up until they went to bed. He seemed to be testing both myself and my husband constantly.

We would have to deal with tantrums and crying fits if he didn't get what he wanted and cries of I want my foster carers back. We dealt with his behaviour as best as we could acknowledging that he was upset and missed his foster carers and that it was strange to be living with us now. He responds well to time out and if this was needed he would be placed on it, but we would always talk about why he was placed on it afterwards.

By Sunday evening we were all exhausted. The kids were worn out by all the bickering and we were worn out by all the refereeing and dealing with his behaviour. I have to admit we didn't sleep very well that night and were wondering if we had done the right thing by adopting him and whether this is how it was going to be from now on. We decided to call his social worker and arranged for her to come over the following day.

When we got up the next day, things did seem to be a lot calmer and the kids had settled down. When we spoke to his social worker we realised that it wouldn't be like that forever and that it was an accumulation of him testing boundaries, sibling rivalry and lack of sleep that made us doubt our decision to adopt. Something we have never thought since.

Our little boy loves male company and bonded almost straightaway with my husband. He never really came to me and would ignore me if he wasn't interested in what I was saying to him and at one point literally climbed over me to get to his dad. I tried not to let this get to me but it was hard to see them enjoying each other's company and that he didn't seem to have any feelings like that towards me. We worked on building the attachment between us and spent lots of one to one time with each other.

My husband works as a Royal Navy Submariner and eventually his 3 months adoption leave was over. We did wonder how our little boy would react to his dad going back to work, but he amazed us by how well he coped with it. He said his goodbyes to him and said that he would see him the following weekend. After about 5 minutes of his dad leaving he stood still and just stared out the window. I asked if he was ok and he said he was sad about his Daddy leaving and that he wanted him to come back. I explained that we all missed Daddy but he has to go to work and will be back soon. He seemed to accept this and just got on with what he was doing.

Since my husband went back to work we have all slipped back into our normal routines. If anything him going back to work has worked really well for mine and my son's attachment. I get lots of kisses and cuddles now and I believe every day that goes by our attachment grows stronger. We still have a few issues with his behaviour at times but nowhere near as the 'Weekend from Hell' and we look forward to the future as a family of four, plus a cat and a dog!"

Adopters of a baby:

"We first looked into Adoption by attending an open evening on Adoption and Fostering. My husband and I felt like we needed more information before we could consider if adoption was right for us. Of the group of people attending only two couples, including ourselves were there about adoption. I remember it made me feel sad and shocked as I assumed that there would be more people interested in adopting.

We were then invited on a week's training which started in the September. This seemed like forever. Even though we still "only wanted more information" I knew deep down we are all frightened of rejection, we all know our families are not perfect and we all have something we would like to pretend never happened or admit to. No one likes to be judged.

The adoption staff were brilliant; the course is very generic which gives you enough information not to scare you but enough to make you mindful. I personally found that it's the type of training that you get out of it what you put into it. Fortunately we had a good group, we all got on really well, which helps as until that point not many people can fully understand the emotions and situation you are in.

We met adopters and a foster carer which really brings it home. You could see the love these people had for their adopted children and they brimmed with pride at their children's achievements. Reading our notes back from the sessions, we were filled with hope, dreams which all seemed to outweigh some of the, shall we say "not so nice stuff" about adoption.

It changed my views on contact with the post-box even to say I said I would have been willing to meet our child's birth mother and grandmother face to face. It showed me it's not all about us but it's about the child.

I know that our child will not love us less but will love us more, that his past is his past but it is a part of him that does not define or limit him.

The whole process has been a great journey which does surprise you, how strong you can be and how you see another side of your relationship develop.

I can honestly say that we had a brilliant social worker and that helped us along. You need to be honest with yourself and your partner as well as your social worker. You need to be honest about your limitations and expectations. We were approved and the same week we were given two profiles of children to consider, Dilemma!! Two how do you decide? We met the paediatrician to discuss both children but we had already really decided that we wanted the little boy. I think you know inside straight away but you are frightened to say just in case something happens or someone else is a better match.

I knew our little boys profile inside out, I felt I knew his mother, felt for what she went through and did not judge her or her family in any way and when our little boy can understand we will explain to him with compassion and empathy towards them.

Our little boy moved in with us in aged 10 ½ months old and our lives have changed so much. He gives us so much joy. Do I feel like I have missed out on any aspect of motherhood? No. Would I do it again? Yes.

The staff at Sunderland throughout the process have been brilliant, we can't thank them enough for the support they have given us, both before and after the adoption and we always know they are there if we need them in the future."

Your Questions Answered

Q What is adoption?

A It is a legal way for a child/young person (up to 18 years) to leave one set of parents and by law get new parents. Legally, it is as if they had been born to their new parents once an adoption order has been granted in court.

Q Who can adopt?

A Anyone over 21 years can adopt. Married and unmarried couples (including same-sex couples and those in a civil partnership) both over 21 years can adopt jointly. You (or one of you if you are a couple) must be domiciled in the British Isles (the other must be habitually resident in the British Isles). Certain criminal convictions, (mostly offences against children) prohibit people adopting. There is not a right to apply though, and adoption agencies can decide that they won't accept an application from an enquirer - usually because they think that enquirer won't be able to meet the needs of a child that the agency wishes to place.

Q What is an Adoption Agency?

A Adoption Agencies are allowed by the Government to arrange adoptions for children. All Local Authorities are Adoption Agencies – (Together for Children are the Sunderland City Council Adoption Agency) and some voluntary agencies are too. Trying to adopt a child without using an adoption agency is against the law unless the child is a close relative or has been placed with you as a foster carer for more than a year.

Q Will you only accept applications from those who have had infertility problems?

A Many people who go on to adopt children have had infertility problems but by no means all. Some people adopt after having birth children or some adopt instead of having birth children even if they technically could. If you are undergoing infertility tests or treatment, we ask that you finish those before going through the adoption process. Trying to do both is very stressful and taxing for applicants and we want to concentrate our efforts on people who have made a definite decision that they want to consider adoption as the way to have children join their family. You will get the most out of the counselling process and preparation for adoption if you can really concentrate on it. Sometimes, later in the process, we may ask applicants who have normal fertility or unexplained infertility to ensure via contraceptive precautions that they won't get pregnant around the time of placement of a child to ensure that the child can settle before any more children arrive. This is because all the children that are placed for adoption have extra needs regarding stability and security and they may not be emotionally well equipped to deal with 'competition' early in their new family life.

Q What qualities do adopters need to have?

A Adopters don't have to be super heroes! But they do have to have some special extras! They need to be patient, flexible, child centred, warm and kind, have a sense of humour and lots of determination to stick to their commitment to a child even when there are difficulties. In short, just like most parents need to be, but with an added dimension that helps them

commit totally to a child not born to them. (Sometimes, it does take time for the love to grow though, so don't expect too much too soon!).

Q I have heard there is a Stage 1 and Stage 2 Process, what does this mean?

A The Government wishes to speed up adoption so new regulations mean all Adoption Agencies work to two stages in the approval process – see steps to Adoption later in this pack.

Q I am a foster carer/have adopted previously, do I need to follow the whole Stage 1 and 2?

A You will usually enter the process at Stage 2 but may need to complete aspects of Stage 1 too depending on how recently you completed the approval process.

Q How long does it take to adopt?

A To be approved as an adopter takes about six months, two months for stage one of the process (initial training and preparation) and then a further four months in the assessment stage of the process.

After approval as an adopter, you may have to wait for a short or perhaps longer time for a child to be placed. Once a child is placed it will be at least ten weeks before you can apply for the Adoption Order and usually three months or sometimes longer before the Order is granted.

Q What happens after approval?

A Bear in mind that you can sometimes wait a little after approval before being matched to a child. It is not simply a matter of waiting until you come to the "top of the list", as there is careful matching to the child's needs and often two or three families are considered for each child placed. Nevertheless, most approved adopters have a placement within a few months of their approval.

Waiting adopters are invited to a monthly group called Waiting Adopters Group (WAG) which is organised by a group of adoption agencies in the Tyne and Wear area to help keep in touch and use the waiting time constructively.

This group is also available to adopters within their first year of placement should they require any further help or support. Sessions might be held on various topics of relevance.

You will also be invited to other training opportunities if they weren't available during the preparation/assessment period.

Q How does an Adoption Order get granted?

A Adoption Orders are made by a Court of Law e.g. by Magistrates in the Family Proceedings Court, or by Judges in the Family Court or sometimes the High Court.

Q Can I choose which child to adopt?

A During your preparation and home study after you have formally applied, you will discuss with your worker the sort of child you can take for example, age, gender and the sort of background and behaviour you can cope with. Once initial checks are back which include a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check, you will be able to attend an Opening Minds event or an adoption activity day. We do have people who were in the assessment stage and found their child this way. We do know people have attended an adoption activity day with an age and gender in mind and this has totally changed after the event. You will also have access to Be My Parent and Children Who Wait publications prior to approval. Once approved, a possible child or children will be discussed with you and if a possible match is found and you will be given all the available information to help you decide if you want to put yourself forward for that child.

Q Can I choose the child's name?

A When you legally adopt, you can choose a new last name for the child and most adopted children like to be given the family name/last name of their new parents. In the past often first names were changed on adoption too. But for most children who need new families, their first name(s) are important as part of their identity and they wouldn't want to lose them. No child who is 'in care' on a Care Order or Placement Order can have their name changed without the permission of the Head of Service.

Q Do we have to tell the child they are adopted?

A Many children we place are of an age to know what is happening and so will remember coming to live in a new family or going to Court. If they are too young to remember, it is better to start explaining about adoption early and keep the subject open so they can't remember a time of "being sat down and told" they were adopted.

In the past adoption was a secret (sometimes a bit of a shameful secret) that was often hidden from the child. Today we encourage adopters to be open with the child and their other family members from the beginning, don't hide it, celebrate it! Most adopted adults say they would have preferred their adoptive parents to be honest and open with them about their past and their adoption. It is easier to deal with things in the open than those that are hidden.

Q We don't live in Sunderland, can we still apply to Sunderland as adopters?

A Yes, if you can potentially meet the needs of a child from Sunderland. It does not matter where you live as long as you are not too far away for us to do your home study, give you support and for you to come to information sessions and preparation courses.

If you do not wish to continue with your interest to adopt in Sunderland then a list of other local Adoption Agencies is enclosed in the pack to help you to make enquiries elsewhere. You can also check out the first4adoption website (the national gateway for adoption).

Q Can we adopt from overseas?

A Yes, if you live in Sunderland, we are responsible for assessing adopters for overseas adoption too and will give you more detailed advice about this if you ask. The approval process is the same but the Adoption Agency does make a charge for this service as the Council Tax in Sunderland funds the Adoption Service primarily to provide a service for children from Sunderland. However, once you were approved and brought a child into the country, then all the services normally available to adopters and adopted children in Sunderland will be open to you too. If you do not live in Sunderland you would need to approach your own Local Authority.

Q What is Open Adoption? Does it mean adopted children still see their birth family?

A Openness in adoption is more about being open to help a child understand their past and being willing to talk about their history. Sometimes children do see birth family members after adoption if it will help them to feel happy in their new family. More often though indirect contact is arranged through our After Adoption Post Box Service. You will hear much more about this subject if you go through the application process.

Q What is Foster to Adopt?

A There may be cases where a local authority identifies that based on evidence available, the plan for a child is likely to be adoption. Where this is the case, the local authority can place the child with approved adopters under the fostering regulations until the court process is secured. This enables children to be placed much earlier with a permanent family, however there is a risk that the court does not agree a plan of adoption.

Q If I am approved can my name go on the National Adoption Register?

A Yes of course – if you want it to. We would like you to let us try and find the right child for you locally or in the region for about three months before you look nationwide for a child though, unless it is really unlikely that you will get a local match. We will make a ‘matching agreement’ with you once you are approved to agree this.

Introductions and placements are very hard work anyway but more so when they are not close to home. Travelling long distances can add to the strain but can work well if you are prepared for the extra issues.

Q What support will I get if I adopt?

A You will get an assessment for adoption support when you are matched with a child, which is reviewed regularly until the child is adopted. You will usually receive help with mileage during introductions, court costs, and, for some children, settling in money can be paid, if there is an assessed need.

Once you have adopted a child from Sunderland we have an After Adoption Service that provides a number of different forms of adoption support, including adoption parties and parenting support groups.

You can ask for an assessment for adoption support at any time from Sunderland or from your home local authority (if you live elsewhere) if it is three years after the adoption order was granted. Again more information will be provided on this very important topic during the Information and Counselling Course and the subsequent preparation.

Q If I have more questions?

A Please feel free to get in touch with us.

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Email: adopt.foster@togetherforchildren.org.uk

Adoption Step by Step

The two stage adoption process aims to reduce delay for children and their prospective adopters. The aim is to help you learn about adoption within the first stage and then move through the approval in Stage Two. The process of becoming approved as an adoptive parent should take six months to complete, with stage one taking two months and stage two taking four months.

Enquiry stage

If you're thinking about adoption, complete the Enquiry Form in the back of this pack and return it to us. Once we have received your form, a member of the Adoption Team will contact you to help answer some of your questions and explain what's involved in becoming an adoptive parent.

Stage one – initial training and preparation

- Stage one begins when you submit your Registration of Interest form, this tells us more information about you and your family
- Once we have received your form we will contact you within five working days to talk further about adoption
- During stage one you will be invited to attend our Preparation to Adopt course, this will help you learn more about adoption and the children who are waiting for an adoptive family
- We will also need to carry out some checks to ensure there are no concerns about you caring for a child, these include Police, medical and references from your friends
- Once stage one is complete we will talk to you about progressing to the next stage
- Stage one should take two months to complete
- You will also be given tasks to help your social worker get to know you and your family

Stage two – assessment

- Stage two begins when you let us know that you would like to continue with your application to adopt
- An adoption social worker will contact you to begin your Prospective Adopters Report (PAR). This will involve your allocated social worker visiting you regularly to assess and help you prepare for adoption
- Once your Prospective Adopters Report is completed, your report will be presented to the Adoption Panel, who will make a recommendation on your suitability to become an adoptive parent. You will be invited to attend this panel
- Stage two should take four months to complete

How do we support adopters?

At the Adoption Service we are trying to make sure that all children who need to be placed for adoption can enter adulthood with the same chance of success and happiness as any other child. That's why we do all we can to support our adopters through regular contact, advice, training and other means of support.

Support

When you are approved as an adopter, a member of our staff will become your personal Adoption Officer. Often this is the person who has worked with you on your home study. Their role is to support you through the waiting period and into the adoptive placement. When you are matched with a child there will be a formal assessment of your need for support. This will be reviewed at regular intervals. The child's Social Worker will also be there to help once a child is placed.

In short, you are not on your own.

Part of your Adoption Officer's role will be to make sure you have all the training you need. There are many training courses available for adopters. Some are specific and might focus on one area, such as managing difficult behaviours. Others are more wide-ranging and aim to give you a greater understanding of general child development, psychology, parenting skills and other topics which can enhance your caring capability.

Sometimes there is financial support available based on assessed needs of you as an adopter and the assessed needs of the child.

Group support/Buddy system

Many adoptive families feel a real need to share their experiences with others, not just to gain advice or insight, but simply to have people who can share their ups and downs and who understand their position and problems through their own first hand experience.

Informal groups are available for adopters to share their feelings and they meet regularly.

We also have guest speakers who cover different topics for example: internet safety or the education premium.

After Adoption Service

We continue to offer support after the Adoption Order is made for up to six months by your designated Adoption Officer if necessary and afterwards if required with our dedicated After Adoption workers. There is a newsletter sent twice a year with information, hints and helpful advice. After Adoption staff at the Adoption Service will also respond to enquiries from you about adoption in general or your child in particular. A support group is available and family events, such as a Christmas party, will be held so your adopted child can meet other children who are adopted. Seminars and training events are also available.

The After Adoption staff also maintain the After Adoption Post Box to facilitate indirect contact to birth family members. They are on hand to offer advice or support in making this system work. Where there are direct contact arrangements, the After Adoption workers will assist in receiving and acting as intermediaries where necessary.

Whatever issues arise about adoption after your Adoption Order, we will try to help. It is now part of government regulations that Adopters can ask for a support assessment at any point before or after the adoption of a child.

If you live outside of the City of Sunderland that assessment would be provided by the adoption service in your home local authority if it is more than three years after you adopted a Sunderland child.

However we will be able to assist your home local authority if you would like us to.

Foster to adopt

Traditionally people have come forward to adopt children who are ready and available for adoption. This means that the children are in foster care and the children's adoption plans have been agreed in court and there are court orders in place so that the local authority can place children from foster care with approved adoptive parents.

This means that a child has to move from their birth family to a foster family and then on to an adoptive family. These moves mean that children have to deal with a lot of change and uncertainty. Sometimes this situation is unavoidable, however, like many other local authorities, we are keen to make sure where we can that children don't have to have all of these moves.

We are looking for people who would be approved as adopters primarily but when a child is placed this would be initially under fostering regulations as there will be no Placement Order in place.

We would only do this kind of placement when we were fairly confident that the Court would agree the plan of adoption. However, it does come with some risks as the Court may not agree the plan or a birth family member might come forward and be positively assessed.

We appreciate that this isn't for everyone, but if you feel that this is something you can consider we will be pleased to talk to you further about this.

Data protection act 1998 - fair processing notice

Together for Children, working on behalf of Sunderland City Council, needs to collect and record certain information from you to allow us to deliver Children's Services to you. This information will usually be collected when we have contact with you or your family, and will form a record of what is discussed and what we then do. Our records will be held in paper or computer files, sometimes a mix of the two.

We are responsible for collecting and using the information you give us properly and will always ensure that we use the information following the requirements of The Data Protection Act 1998.

Sometimes, we need to share some of your information with partner organisations to be able to complete or improve the service you receive. If we do need to use or share your information, we will make sure that only the information needed to be able to complete or improve your service is used. We will also ensure that the partner organisations we work with will do the same.

Occasionally, we may need to use some customer's records for research or statistical studies. Where we need to do this, we will ensure that information that might identify individuals is removed to ensure your privacy is protected.

Under the Data Protection Act, you have the right -

- to see the personal information we hold about you,
- to have the information corrected if it is wrong or incomplete and
- to complain or challenge how we have used your information.

This authority is under a duty to protect the public funds it administers, and to this end may use the information you have provided on this form for the prevention and detection of fraud. It may also share the information with other bodies responsible for auditing or administering public funds for these purposes.

You can get more information from www.sunderland.gov.uk (Data Protection – Access to Records) or by writing to the Data Protection Team at the address below. Alternatively please email dataprotectionofficer@sunderland.gov.uk

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