



For children, social care staff  
and families living in Bournemouth,  
Christchurch and Poole & Dorset

# How to use this guide

This **children's guide to adoption** is designed to be used in a number of ways so that it can be relevant for children of different ages and different levels of understanding.

You can read this with your foster carer, social worker, teacher or share it with people who are special to you.



## What can I find in this booklet?

This booklet is to help you to understand what adoption is all about and to answer some of the questions that you may have. You can read this with your foster carers or your social worker and ask them about anything that you don't understand, or tell them about how you feel.



# What is adoption?

**We were all babies once and we all have a family, or a person that we were born to.**

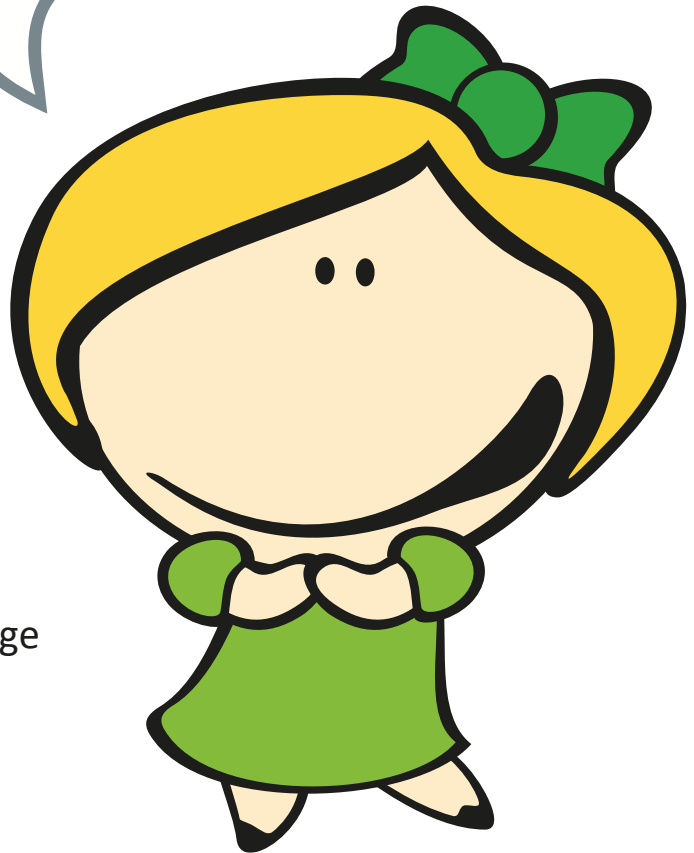
We call this our 'birth family' and this might include mum, dad, brothers and sisters, grandparents, aunties, uncles and cousins.

Sometimes the families that children are born into cannot look after them.

Some parents find it difficult to manage to look after children properly.

Some parents hurt their children in different ways and it is important that children do not get hurt.

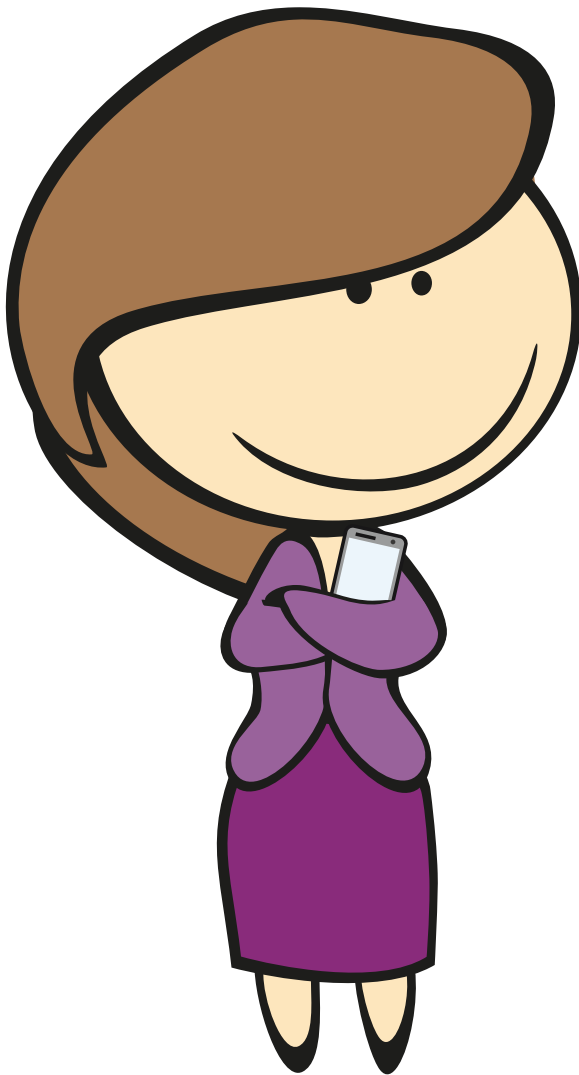
Some birth families might understand that they can't look after their child properly and agree that it would be better for their child not to live with them. Some birth families don't want their children to stop living with them even though they can't look after them properly or keep them safe. A social worker will then go and see the judge who will decide whether the child can still live with their birth family.



# What is a social worker?

**A social worker is someone whose job it is to help people when they have problems.**

Sometimes they have to help families if they are worried about the children or think that the family needs help. They may find a foster family for the child to live in, just like the family you are living with now, until they decide what is best for the child or children.



# What is a judge?

**A judge works in a court where all sorts of decisions are made.**

He or she is the person who makes the decisions. Courts can also help to try and solve problems, particularly in families. They can make decisions about children, to make sure that they are looked after and safe.

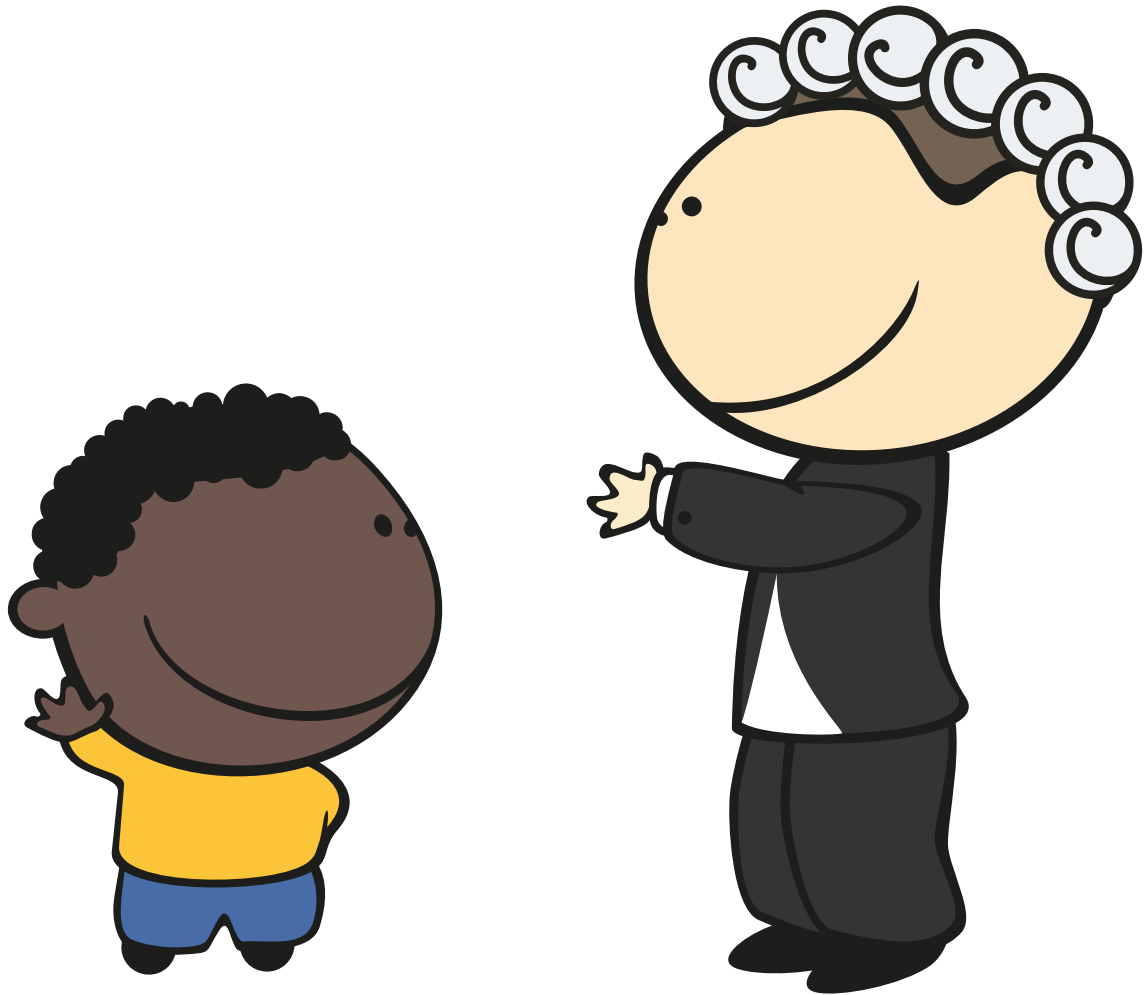
One of the decisions made in a court, by a judge, is whether or not you should live with your birth family.

If it is decided that a child cannot live with his or her birth family, it is sometimes agreed that the child should have a chance to belong to a new family – and this is what adoption is. Adoption means that you will go to live with a family that will look after you and to whom you will belong. They will become your parents and any children in the family will become your brother or your sister.

This doesn't mean that you have to forget about your birth family. Sometimes it is okay for children to keep in touch with some members of their birth family, if it is safe, and if that's what they want.

This might mean that they can see them now and then, or it might mean that they can send letters.





Sometimes the grown-ups will make the decision that it is better for you not to stay in touch with people. They will talk to you about this and explain the reasons.

Even if it is decided that you should not stay in touch with your birth family, you can always ask questions about them.

**Birth parents can still love their child even if they can't look after them properly or keep them safe.**



# What is an I.R.O.

**An IRO means Independent Reviewing Officer.**

IROs are people who make sure that your review meetings are run properly, they make sure that your views are listened to, and that everything being done is the best thing for you.





# What about my brothers and sisters?

**Sometimes your brothers and sisters may be in foster care with you.**

Although the social workers try very hard to keep brothers and sisters together, that is not always possible. If you had to go to a different foster family than your brothers or sisters, your social worker will have tried to keep you in touch with one another. If you cannot go to the same new family the social worker will try to make sure that you can stay in touch with one another, though again, that it is not always possible.

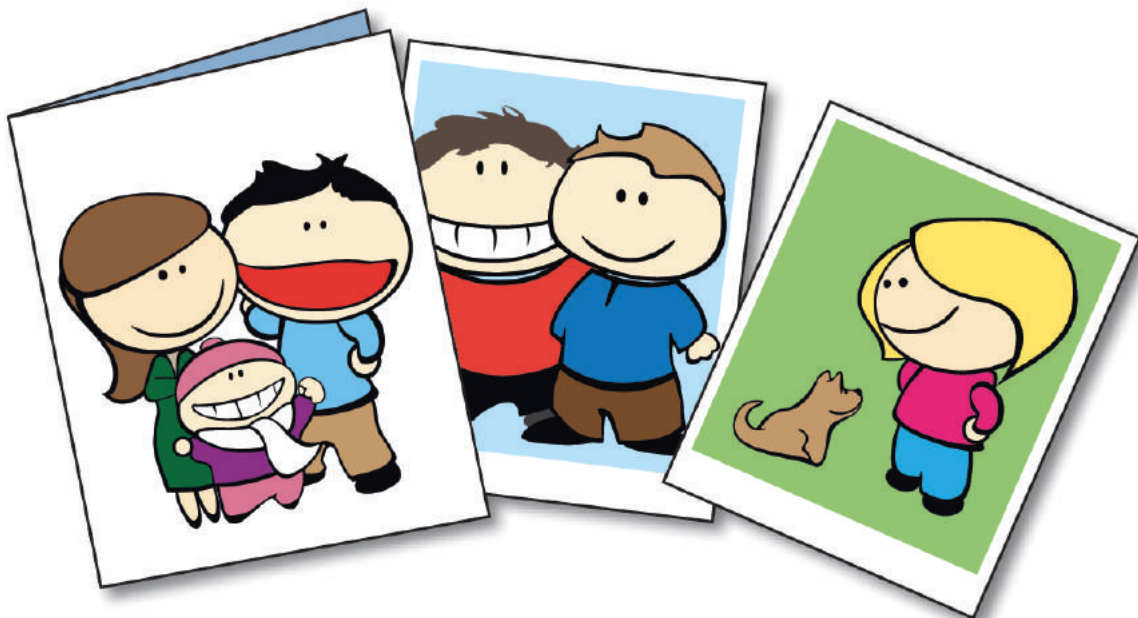


# Where do adopters come from?

**There are some families who would like to have a child to come to live with them and belong to them.**

Some of these families might not have had any children born to them; some may have children; some may have grown up children; some may have adopted before. Before they can have a child come to live with them, a lot of time is spent by social workers getting to know them and they have to show that they can look after children properly and keep them safe.

Social workers will try to find the right family for you. Your social worker will talk to you about how they are looking for a family and you can talk to them about what is important for you about a family. When they think that they have found the right family for you, your social worker will tell you all about them and maybe show you some pictures or a DVD. They will then arrange for the family to come and visit you so they you can start to get to know them and they can start to get to know you. You will have the chance to spend some time with them, perhaps having some days out and doing things together, so that you can get to know them more and more.



# When can I live with my new family?

Your social worker will visit you and see how you are getting on and how you feel about what's happening. When you and everyone else feel that you know each other enough and are happy to take the next step, you will go and live with them.

If you feel unhappy you should talk to your social worker, foster carer, teacher or someone special to you. Sometimes children feel a bit muddled with all that is going on and talking to someone makes them feel better. It is important that you try and say, or draw, what you feel.



# Once I go and live with them am I adopted?

**No. Not straight away. Your social worker will visit you in your new family and talk to you about how you are settling in and see if you have any worries.**

When you have lived with your new family for a while and everyone feels that it is right to take the next step, your new parents will ask a court if they can adopt you.

A judge at the court will set a date when you and your new family and your social worker can go and meet him or her, to talk about how things have been going. If everything seems fine, the judge makes something called an Adoption Order and that is when you legally become a part of your new family.

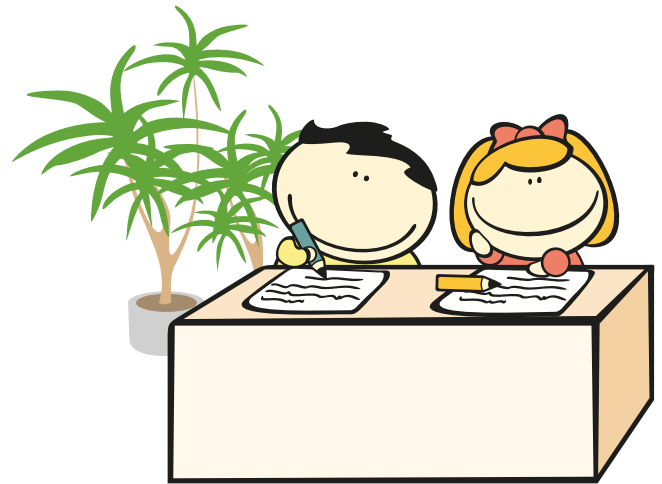
That means that you belong to them and they belong to you, but it still doesn't mean that you have to forget about your birth family or that they have to forget about you. You can ask questions and talk about them with your new family.



# Will I still go to the same school?

**It really depends on how far away from your school that your new family lives.**

You may have to change schools but everyone will try to help you, to make sure that you settle in well.



## Can I still see my friends?

**Again, it depends on where your new family lives.**

But they will do all they can to help you to stay in touch with your friends and to help you to make new ones.



# What if I don't feel happy about what is happening?

**Sometimes children, when they are first told about being adopted, can feel a bit sad or a bit worried.**

You might feel like that. You might feel quite happy and settled with your foster carers and don't want to move. Or you might feel you are losing your birth family.

If you feel unhappy you should, in the first place, talk to your social worker. You can also talk to your foster carers. If you feel unhappy after you have moved to your new family you might feel able to talk to them about how you feel. You could also talk to the social workers who work in the adoption team, who will be visiting your new family to see how things are going.





**My thoughts  
on what's  
happening?**

**These next pages are for you, to  
say any of the things that you want  
to say. You can say what you think  
about adoption.**

You can write any questions that you have.  
You can draw pictures. You can say the things  
that you would and wouldn't like in your new  
family. You can say the things that you would  
like your new family to know about you.



# This is what I think about adoption





# Here are some of my questions



# Your chance to say what you would like



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**These are the things that I would like in my new family**

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**These are the people that I would like to stay in touch with**

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# About me

I like to go to bed with my door:

☐

closed

☐

open

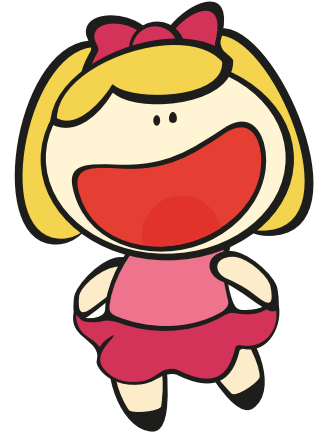
I like to sleep with my light:

☐

on

☐

off



These are some of the things that I like to do...

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These are the things that I don't like doing...

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These are some of the things that I like to eat...

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These are the foods that I don't like...

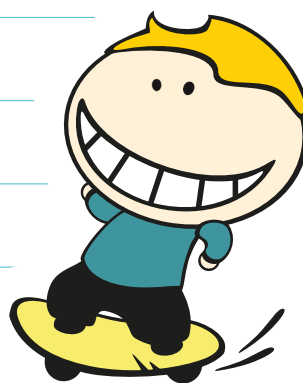
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Other things that I want them to know...



# My timetable

When plans have been made for me I can use this timetable to help me know when things are going to happen.



Day/date	What's happening	How I feel You can draw a picture or write something



Day/date	What's happening	How I feel You can draw a picture or write something



# Names and contact details of people I can talk to

## **Your social worker:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**If you are not happy about something your social worker has said or done you can contact their boss who is:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Your social worker in the adoption team:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**If you are not happy about something your social worker in the adoption team has said or done, you can contact their boss who is:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Your Independent Reviewing Officer:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_



# Our promise to you

**Your local authority social worker and the Aspire adoption team all want to help children and young people.**

**We promise that:**

- We must find a family that is best for you
- We must make sure that your new family will keep you safe and make sure you are well looked after
- We must listen to your wishes and feelings about being adopted
- We will make sure your new family is helped to look after you now and all the time you are growing up.





# Useful Information

## Coram Children's Legal Centre

Coram Children's Legal Centre, part of the Coram group of charities, promotes and protects the rights of children in the UK and internationally in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**Telephone:** 020 7713 0089

**Address:** 1 Brunswick Square, London WC1N 1AZ

**Website:** [www.childrenslegalcentre.com](http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com)

## National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)

The NYAS advocacy service gives children and young people information about their rights. They can help you make complaints if you are not happy and they can also help you to have a voice and be heard when decisions are made about you.

**Telephone:** 0808 808 1001

**Website:** [www.nyas.net](http://www.nyas.net)

## Office of the Children's Commissioner

The Children's Commissioner's role is to protect the rights of all children in England, and to make sure that children and young people have a say and are listened to when adults are making big decisions about things that affect them.

**Freephone:** 0800 528 0731

**Address:** Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street London SW1P 3BT

**Email:** [advice.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:advice.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk)

**Website:** [www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

## ChildLine

ChildLine counsellors are trained staff and volunteers who all have experience of listening and talking to children and young people about their worries or problems.

**Freephone:** 0800 1111

**Website:** [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

## Ofsted

Ofsted can be contacted via:

**Telephone:** 0300 123 1231

**email:** [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

## Cafcass

A useful website about adoption and your rights:

**Website:** [www.cafcass.gov.uk](http://www.cafcass.gov.uk)

