



# Potential Adopters



Adoption is a legal decision that permanently transfers parental responsibility for a child from one family to another. This factsheet provides information about Cafcass' role in adoption proceedings, for those looking to adopt. If you are looking to adopt your partner's child you should see our factsheet on partner adoptions on our website.

## Applying for adoption

In order to legally adopt a child, you must apply for an adoption order. You can only do this when the child has been living with you for a certain amount of time. You can apply for this order anonymously if you wish, and the child's birth parents will not be able to oppose the order unless they have permission to do so from the court.

An adoption order cuts all legal ties between an adopted child and their birth parents, and creates a new legal relationship between the child and the adoptive parents.

There are two types of adoption where Cafcass may be involved,

- Agency adoptions – where the child was placed for adoption by an adoption agency.
- Non-agency adoption – where the child was not placed for adoption by an agency, but where a relative or friend has taken over the care of a child, for example where the parents have died.

## Our involvement

Cafcass' involvement will depend on the nature of your case – for example whether the adoption order is being disputed by the birth parents, or whether the potential adopters are relatives. We can only be involved in a case when directed by the court to provide advice.

## Reporting Officer

If everyone agrees to the adoption, the Cafcass worker, called a Reporting Officer in these cases, will talk to each party and make sure that they fully understand what the adoption means for them and the child, and that they really do agree to it. They will then witness the consent forms being signed and inform the court.

The consent form will be sent to the court with a short report, as evidence of the parent's consent to the adoption.

## Child and Family Reporter

If the adoption order is not agreed, the court may ask a Child and Family Reporter (CFR) from Cafcass to report to the court about a child's welfare. The CFR's role is to provide advice to the court about what is in the best interests of the child.

They will speak to all of the adults involved in the case and, depending on their age and understanding, the child, to get their views. They will write a report to the court that will:

- \* tell the court about the child's wishes and feelings
- \* include relevant information from the meetings with the adults in the case
- \* cover other matters that the court needs to know about, such as future contact arrangements with people who are important to the child.

The court will then decide whether an adoption order should be made, based on what it believes is best for the child.

The CFR will ensure that planning has been made to inform the child of the court's decision and that the outcome of that decision is fully explained to the child.

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## Children's Guardian

In some cases, the child will be made a 'party' to a case. This happens for a number of reasons – for example if the birth parents have been given permission to oppose the adoption order, if a child or adult disagrees with the arrangements for contact after the adoption, or if the adopters are relatives of the child.

When a child is made party to the adoption proceedings, the court will appoint a Children's Guardian. Their role is very similar to the Child and Family Reporter's role, however they will also appoint a solicitor for the child to represent them in the case.

## Adoption support

There are a range of support services available for adoptive families that may be of help both in the short-term and as your child grows up. This might include financial support, support groups, therapeutic services or training programmes for adoptive parents.

More information is available at: [www.nhs.uk/Livewell/adoption-and-fostering/Pages/post-adoption-support.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/adoption-and-fostering/Pages/post-adoption-support.aspx).



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## Further help and information can be found at the following:

Gov.uk: Provides information about the adoption process.

Website: [www.gov.uk/child-adoption](http://www.gov.uk/child-adoption)

First 4 Adoption: Information and support for potential adopters.

Website: [www.first4adoption.org.uk](http://www.first4adoption.org.uk)

Phone: 0300 222 0022

Child Law Advice: Operated by Coram Children's Legal Centre, provides specialist advice and information on child, family and education law.

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

Family Lives: Provide help and support in all aspects of family life.

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

Phone: 0808 800 2222



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