

**Challenging, Rewarding, Inspiring**  
Change a child's world  
*Adopt with Perth and Kinross Council*

**Adoption: Frequently Asked Questions**

**What is Adoption?**

Adoption is a way to provide a loving home for children who cannot grow up and be looked after by their birth families. When you adopt, you take on all the legal responsibilities and rights for the child. Most children who are adopted are placed with adoptive families without the agreement of their birth families and this means that a court will decide if their parental rights and responsibilities should be removed.

In Perth and Kinross, the children who need adoptive families vary in age from birth up to the age of about seven. It is more difficult to find adopters for children with disabilities, older children and siblings.

Adoption is not always easy but it can be very rewarding. Children who need adoptive families will have additional needs which may affect their health and development. In recent years, we have seen an increase in children who have experienced neglect and whose birth parents misuse drugs and alcohol. This can mean that their future development is uncertain and the impact of their early experiences has a **lifelong** effect on their behaviour and emotional development.

**Who can adopt?**

Applicants are welcomed regardless of their relationship status, sexuality, beliefs or ethnicity. We welcome applications from married couples, couples who have entered into a Civil Partnership, single people and from unmarried couples who are in a stable, long-term and enduring family relationship, whether applicants have children or not.

If you are single, we believe that you will need to have a strong support network to manage the demands of adopting a child. Couples will need to have been together for at least two years and be married, in a civil partnership or be living together in an enduring family relationship. If you already have children, there will need to be a gap of about two years between the age of your child and an adopted child.

Applicants need to be over the age of 21. We do not have an upper age limit, but age will be one of a number of considerations which will be addressed in your adoption assessment in order to ensure you are able to meet an adopted child's needs throughout their childhood.

Adopters need to be in good physical and emotional health. Adopting a child is a lifelong commitment which requires energy, stamina and physical fitness. The Agency Medical Adviser will consider issues in your current and previous medical history which might impact on your ability to care for a child throughout their childhood and beyond. This may include some medical issues such as mental health and weight.

### **What if I smoke?**

The risks associated with passive smoking mean that we are not able to accept applications from people who smoke to care for children under 12 years old. If you have recently given up smoking, we need you to have been a non-smoker for at least a year before making an application to adopt.

### **Can I adopt if I am unable to have birth children?**

Yes. However, if you have chosen to have infertility treatment, we expect this to have been concluded for at least six months before you make an enquiry about adoption. Both avenues to parenthood are emotionally demanding and our experience has shown that it is unwise to follow both options simultaneously.

### **Do I need a spare room if I want to adopt?**

Yes. A spare bedroom will be required for a single adopted child. Adopted siblings of the same gender can share a room but there will need to be space in your home for children to have their own room by early primary school age.

### **If I have a criminal record will I be able to adopt a child?**

All prospective adopters are required to complete a Disclosure Scotland check. Some serious offences, especially offences relating to children, may result in an application not proceeding.

A criminal record would not automatically prevent you from becoming a prospective adoptive parent; however, this would be dependent on the charge/conviction. You would have to be prepared to discuss the details of the charge/conviction and be prepared to declare any relevant information at the point of the enquiry.

### **What about employment and income?**

Prospective adopters do not have to be employed, but you do need to demonstrate that you are financially secure and this is assessed as part of the application process.

If you are employed you should discuss adoption/parental leave at an early stage with your employers. Taking an extended period of leave of work to spend time building trust, create a sense of safety and start to build a positive attachment relationship with a child will be essential in the initial stages of an adoption.

There may be a need for a parent to stay at home full time with an adopted child and how long will depend largely on the age and individual needs of the child. Pre-school children may need a parent to be available to care for them, help them settle and feel secure in their new family for an extended period, rather than going to nursery or a child minder.

### **Will I be told about the child's background?**

It is very important that you know as much as possible about the child's background and some of their family history. We will ensure that you have access to all the information we hold about a child at the relevant point of the matching process. This will include information about the child, which includes details about his or her background, time in care, school history and any medical needs.

This knowledge will help us ensure that this child is a positive match for you. It will also help you understand the child when they come to live with you, help the child understand the circumstances of their adoption or fostering and help you find the best way of supporting them in the future.

### **Will a child continue to see their birth parents or other relatives?**

It may be beneficial for a child to have on-going contact with people who have been important in their lives such as a brother, sister, parent or grandparent. Contact arrangements can be formalised within the legal process and may include direct contact, face to face contact, or indirect contact such as an exchange of written information, at an interval seen to be in the child's best interests, usually annually or biannually. Direct contact is not usually stipulated, whereas, indirect contact arrangements are fairly common.

Within Perth and Kinross we feel that it is very important to also acknowledge the importance of Foster Carers to lives of children who are adopted and we believe that post placement contact with a child when placed with adopters is important. We aim to ensure that contact with Foster Carers is built into the transition planning.

### **What rights do birth parents have after an Adoption Order has been granted?**

When an Adoption Order has been granted a birth parent's legal rights for the child are removed and these are transferred to the child's adoptive parent(s). In some cases a birth parents rights may have already been removed and transferred to the Local Authority. An Adoption Order to transfer parental rights cannot be applied for by an adoptive parent until a child has been living with them for 13 weeks.

### **Will I be paid?**

You are expected to meet the general living costs of a child you adopt, just like any parent. In some cases a child may be eligible for an adoption allowance which is then means tested; this depends on the identified needs of the child.

### **What support will I get afterwards?**

A child you adopt is entitled to the same range of social services and other support, based on their need, as any child. This could be, for example, special educational and medical services, as well as advice or counselling. We have a committed staff group who are here to support you and we offer adopter support groups, annual family days as well as individual support and/or family work from social workers.

### **How long will the assessment take?**

We aim to complete your assessment within 6 months of you submitting your formal application. This would, however, be dependent on a number of factors, such as how quickly checks can be completed and availability to participate in the assessment.

The whole process can be fairly lengthy and it may take over a year to get from your initial enquiry to the point where you are registered as a prospective adoptive parent.

**If I am approved as an adopter how long will it be before I am matched with a child?**

There are no set time limits in relation to how long it can take for you to be matched with a child. Above all else successful adoptions require careful matching of the needs of children to the capacity of their adoptive parents to meet those needs, a process that requires and deserves careful consideration.