

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

The Adoption process and timescales:

Initial Enquiry – contact us

If you are interested in adoption, even if you are still wondering if it is right for you, please contact us by phone on **01738 472260**, or by email adoptionenquiries@pkc.gov.uk or by completing the **initial enquiry form**.

Initial home visit

We will then arrange for someone to visit you at home to discuss adoption in more detail and to answer any questions you might have. This will help you understand more about the adoption process and to find out more about the children who need adoptive families.

Some people find it helpful to have this discussion even if they are not yet sure whether adoption is the right step to take or if they are not yet sure it's the right time for them.

Application Form

Once the initial home visit has taken place, you will be in a better position to decide if you wish to proceed and we will have considered if your circumstances suggest you are able to meet the needs of an adopted child. We will then ask you to complete an application form which gives us information about you along with your permission to undertake the necessary checks.

Whilst we endeavour to work in partnership with you at all times, there may be information which is given to us in confidence - for example from a referee or your GP - which we are not able to share with you. Checks and references required for an adoption assessment include:

- **Local Authorities** – We contact Local Authorities where you have lived since the age of 16.
- **Medical information** – 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.
- **References** – We ask for three referees who know you well. In addition, as the assessment progresses, we find it helpful to talk to extended family members who will be a support to you and involved in an adopted child's life. We also contact your employers for a reference.
- **Previous partners** – Will often be contacted for a reference depending on the significance and length of the relationship; if you have parented children with them they will always be contacted.
- **Disclosure Scotland** – Some serious offences, especially offences relating to children, may result in an application not proceeding.

- **Employment and finance** – You don't need to be financially well off to adopt a child but we will need to have information about your employment history and current financial situation to ensure appropriate security for any child placed with you.
- **Health and safety check** – Health and safety check of your home will be undertaken.
- **Pets** – Some pets are considered a risk to children and will be considered in your assessment. We are not able to accept applications from owners of dogs noted in the Dangerous Dogs Act.

Preparation to Adopt Group

You will be invited to attend a Preparation Group which comprises of six sessions, usually held over three days. The aims of the Preparation Group are:

- To raise awareness of the key issues in adoption that needs to be considered by all prospective adopters
- To help you understand more about how children's early experiences impacts on their development, behaviour and relationships
- To help you think about whether adoption is right for you
- To help you think about what you can offer a child who needs an adoptive family

The Preparation Group offers the chance to hear from social workers, foster carers and adopters who will share their experience of adoption with you.

We run Preparation Groups about twice a year and will book you a place on the next available group. Although most people attend a group at the beginning of their assessment, you can attend a Preparation Group at any stage as we work hard to avoid any delay in progressing assessments.

Assessment / Home Study

You will be allocated a social worker, who will meet you regularly, usually in your own home, to gather the information required for the assessment report (Form F). This part of the process is a chance for us to get to know you really well, to explore what you can offer a child waiting for adoption and to make sure you have a realistic view of what is involved as an adoptive parent. We are looking for people who are flexible and able to meet the challenges and demands of caring for an adopted child. The areas we need to talk to you about include:

- Individual profiles of all members of your family
- Your reasons and motivation for wanting to adopt
- Your own experience of being parented and experience with children
- Details of past and present relationships
- Information about your home and community
- Details of your education and employment
- Your support network
- Backgrounds and experiences of children and how this might affect them in their adoptive families
- The meaning of adoption for children and their families, including discussions about different forms of contact with birth families

The home study can be demanding but we aim to work with you in an open way to make it a positive experience for you and relevant to the adoption task. We want to make sure you are fully informed and prepared for both the rewards and the challenges that adoption may bring.

Fostering and Permanence Panel

Once your social worker has completed your assessment, the report will be presented to the Fostering and Permanence Panel for consideration. The Adoption Care Standards guidance is that your application should be presented at Panel no later than six months from the date of your first meeting with your social worker.

You will be invited to attend Panel along with your social worker. The Panel comprises of an independent chair and representatives from health, education and social work. Some Panel members work for Perth and Kinross Council and some are independent. There is an adoptive parent on the Panel.

The Panel will make a recommendation about your approval as an adoptive parent and you will receive a decision in writing from the Agency Decision Maker within 21 days.

Post-approval

After you have been approved as an adoptive parent, your social worker will keep in touch with you and work with you during the 'linking and matching stage' that aims to identify children searching for families who may be a good match for you and your family. This can be a challenging and emotionally tiring time for adopters and there can be a great deal of uncertainty and a rollercoaster of emotions. Adopters have reported that they have found this stage the most demanding. It is very hard to put a timescale on this stage as it may take a few months to find the right match or it can take over a year to ensure we have the right match. This stage includes:

Linking you to a child

Initially we will consider children within Perth and Kinross Council who are searching for families and endeavor to find a link for you. There are advantages to being matched to child within Perth and Kinross Council as you will then only need to work with one agency.

If we are unable to identify a suitable link within 13 weeks we will place your profile on Linkmaker, a national secure database that links profiles of children with profiles of approved adopters. When appropriate we will also attend Adoption Exchange Days and Adoption Activity Days arranged through Scotland's Adoption Register to identify possible links for you.

Once a potential link is identified your Form F assessment report is shared with the child's social worker and the child's background reports shared with you and your social worker. If all parties agree this is still a potential link then the child's social worker would arrange to meet with you and discuss further the needs of the child and consider if you are able to meet these needs. If everyone still wishes to proceed following this meeting then a meeting or series of meetings are arranged with people who know the child well such as foster carers, nursery staff and medical advisors. These meetings should provide as much information as possible about the child and allow everyone to

make a fully informed decision about whether this is a potential match. If all parties agree then a formal linking meeting is held and the Local Authority where the child resides decides whether to formalise the link between the child and you.

Matching you to a child

Once you have been formally linked with a child a Fostering and Permanence Panel must then be held that will consider the appropriateness of the match; exploring the potential strengths and vulnerabilities of the proposed match. The Panel will make a recommendation and the agency decision maker will then decide whether or not to accept the panel's recommendations within 14 days of the Panel meeting.

Legal Position

The legal position in terms of who holds a child's parental rights and responsibilities can vary at this stage of the adoption process. The parental rights may still be held by the birth parents or by the Local Authority depending on the legal route being pursued. This can impact significantly on timescales for when a child will be in a position to move and would be fully discussed with you throughout the linking process.

Introductions and Transitions

Following the match being formalised and dependent on the legal position the next stage will be arranged as soon as is possible. This stage involves the adopter meeting the child and gradually building up the time they spend with a child over approximately a 2 week period at the end of which the child will move in with their new forever family.

There are a series of coordination meetings to organise this process and ensure everyone is clear about the process and the importance of many elements, such as; preparation work being done with the child in advance with talking books being used to introduce the adopters to the child; the adopter getting to observe the child's routines in the foster home; arrangements for the child to see the foster carer at set stages following the move.

Ongoing Adoption Support

Once a child has moved in with you an adoption order that grants you full parental rights and responsibilities cannot be applied for until 13 weeks has passed. The timescales for an adoption order being granted can vary significantly. Until an adoption order is granted you will be visited and offered support, advice and guidance by your social worker and the child's social worker. You may be required to attend meetings such as LAC Reviews and you will need to check permission with the Local Authority around areas such as authorising medical treatment, going on holidays, using babysitters or taking part in adventure activities.

Following an adoption order being granted by the courts then the support you receive will be dependent on the level of need, we are aware that this can vary over time and there may be times you do not wish to access any supports and other times you feel the need to contact us and request specialist supports.

You will be able to contact with a member of the Adoption Team at any stage and discuss your concerns and talk about the support you feel will be most helpful. This may be workers offering short terms pieces of support work or longer term work such as life story work or making a referral to a specialist service, for example for therapeutic work or educational support. You can also access our Adoption Support Group which meets about four times a year and is a good opportunity to meet other adopters and develop your support network, discuss the common issues facing adoptive parents and to speak to workers from the team about your particular circumstances.