

## **INFORMATION FOR PARENTS OF A CHILD OR CHILDREN WHO ARE TO BE PLACED FOR ADOPTION**

It is likely that you will have been given this information by your child's social worker possible as part of the [Care Proceedings](#). We know that this is a difficult time and many parents may not agree with this plan for their child. However, this leaflet aims to give information so that you will be better informed about adoption.

### **Who can I talk to about adoption?**

Clearly you can talk to your child's social worker, but you are also entitled to your own social worker either from the adoption support team or, if you would prefer, we also have arrangements with a voluntary agency. Both workers can meet with you on a number of occasions to support you through the process. You can access these services either through your child's social worker or contact the adoption support team directly on 01707 897654. There is a leaflet on the independent service.

It is important that you tell your social worker if you have any specific requests regarding your child's upbringing. For example, you may wish your child or children to be brought up in a specific religion or culture, or you may feel that your child or children have special interests and you may wish for these to be developed, for example, dancing or sport. We cannot promise to fulfil every requirement but you can be assured that the needs of your child or children will always be put first.

We are able to give you general information about the families who are available to adopt and your views will be taken into account when a family is chosen.

There is a leaflet for you to make your views known to the adoption panel which you can fill in and is returned directly to the chair of the adoption panel. The chair of the adoption panel will then inform the adoption panel of what you wish to say. There is a leaflet in the birth relative's pack or you can get one direct from the panel administrator on 01992 556913.

### **What is Adoption?**

An [Adoption Order](#) is an order giving [Parental Responsibility](#) for your child to the adopters. At the same time, the parental responsibility that you had as the mother of your child, or may have had as the father, is removed. After an adoption order has been made the law treats the child as the child of the adopters, as if he or she has been born to the adopters.

### **What is the adoption process?**

In order for adoption to be the plan for the child who is being [Looked After](#), this must be agreed at the statutory review to which you will be invited. If this decision is taken then the next part of the process is that a report on your child, called a Child's Permanence

Report, will be written and presented to the Adoption Panel. An adoption medical will also need to take place and you will be asked to fill in a medical form on yourself in order to help us plan for your child's long term needs. The Child's Permanence Report contains all the information on your child and their birth family and the circumstances which led to the proposed plan for adoption. The report will be made available to your child once they are 18 years of age should they request to see it. It is important that you read this report and you will be asked to either sign it or to confirm that you have seen it. You may also make any comments you have on the content of the plan for adoption and these will be given to the Adoption panel for them to consider along with the Child's Permanence Report.

The Adoption Panel will consider carefully all the information and decide whether they wish to make their recommendation that adoption is the best plan for your child or children. You will be informed on this recommendation within 24 hours of the panel. Following the recommendation by the Adoption panel, the adoption agency decision-maker will have to formally decide within 7 days whether they agree with recommendation of the panel. You will be sent a letter telling you the decision within 5 working days and verbally within 48 hours. If there is still outstanding court proceedings this will be subject to the court agreeing with the plan for adoption.

If the court confirms the decision, then a letter will be sent to you from the decision-maker confirming the original recommendation. In order to find an appropriate family a meeting will be held to look at all the needs of your child including any special requests you have made regarding a future adoptive family.

The needs of your child are then matched with prospective adopters who best meet those needs. Normally there is more than one potential family and these will each be looked at in detail in order to decide which one can best meet the needs of your child. The families can be visited by the social workers ahead of the selection meeting if there are specific issues to discuss. Having made a selection, the family is then visited by the social worker for your child and shown an 'anonymised' copy of your child or children's placement report and any other relevant paperwork. This process normally takes a few weeks.

Once a family has been identified, and they wish to be considered for the match, your child or children's papers come back to the Adoption Panel along with those of the potential adopters. The panel will make a recommendation as to whether it agreed for the proposed 'match' to go ahead. Once again, this recommendation is forwarded to the adoption agency decision-maker for a final decision. You will be informed within the timescales already outlined above.

### **What about contact arrangements?**

Any contact arrangements will generally have been agreed as part of the [Care Plan](#) presented to the court. It may be possible, if appropriate and in the best interest of your child or children, for you to maintain a link with your child. This may take the form of a

letter once or twice a year; we call this 'letterbox contact' or 'indirect contact'. You write a letter to your child, which is then sent to the adoption agency, in this case Hertfordshire County Council. You will be helped with what things to write and out will receive a letter in return from the adoptive parents. In some instances, if it is appropriate, you can have face to face contact with your child or children, how often this would happen would depend on individual circumstances.

There is detailed information on contact in adoption available for you on request. If you are currently having direct contact as part of the court proceedings and there is no plan for continuing contact this will be reduced until there is a final 'wishing you well' visit. Once your child has been placed and before the final adoption hearing you will be contacted to finalise and sign the contact agreement. You may also want to meet the adopters. This can be done during the introductions or following placement. We would offer you support in this, as experience shows that generally appropriate timing for this. You may also want to place your name on the contact register for when your child is 18; again further details on this are available on request.

### **Will my child remember me?**

Before your child moves into their new home a 'life story book' will be made for them which will explain what has happened to them so far. It is important that children have photographs and memories from their past. Some parents feel able to help with making the book, or have photographs, letters or special gifts they want to pass on. This has proved to be really important to them as they grow up. Your social worker can help you with preparing a 'memory box' and with writing letters for the post box.

### **What happens at the adoption Hearing?**

Once the child is settled and the adopters are ready, they will make an application to the court to adopt. As part of this process the court will ask a social worker from the court, independent of this agency, to visit you. If you are consenting to the adoption then a reporting officer who is a social worker appointed by the court will see you to confirm your agreement. If you are opposing the plan then a children's guardian will come and see you. Their job is to consider what is in the best interest of your child and report accordingly to the court. He/ she will want you to tell them why you do not want your child adopted and they will then report your views to the court. The court does have the power to dispense with birth parents consent if it feels it is in the best interest of your child to be adopted before they made an adoption order.

### **What happens if an adoption order is made?**

When your child or children are officially adopted they get an Adoption Certificate from the Registrar General which shows their new name only and shows the adopters as his/her parents. This certificate takes the place of a birth certificate for all legal purposes. When your child or children reach 18 they will be entitled to get a copy of

their own original birth certificate. This will show their original name and will also tell them your name and the address you were living at when their birth was registered.

### **Can I still have support after an adoption order is made?**

It is important to us that you feel able to contact us with any queries or issues you may have and the adoption support is there to offer you support at any point through the years. We will send a letter to you as a way of reminding you about your letterbox contact and you can use this to ask for services or to update us on your current situation. We also have access to an independent counselling service run through Barnardos that you might find helpful. There are also support groups for birth families in a similar position and we can put you in touch with these.