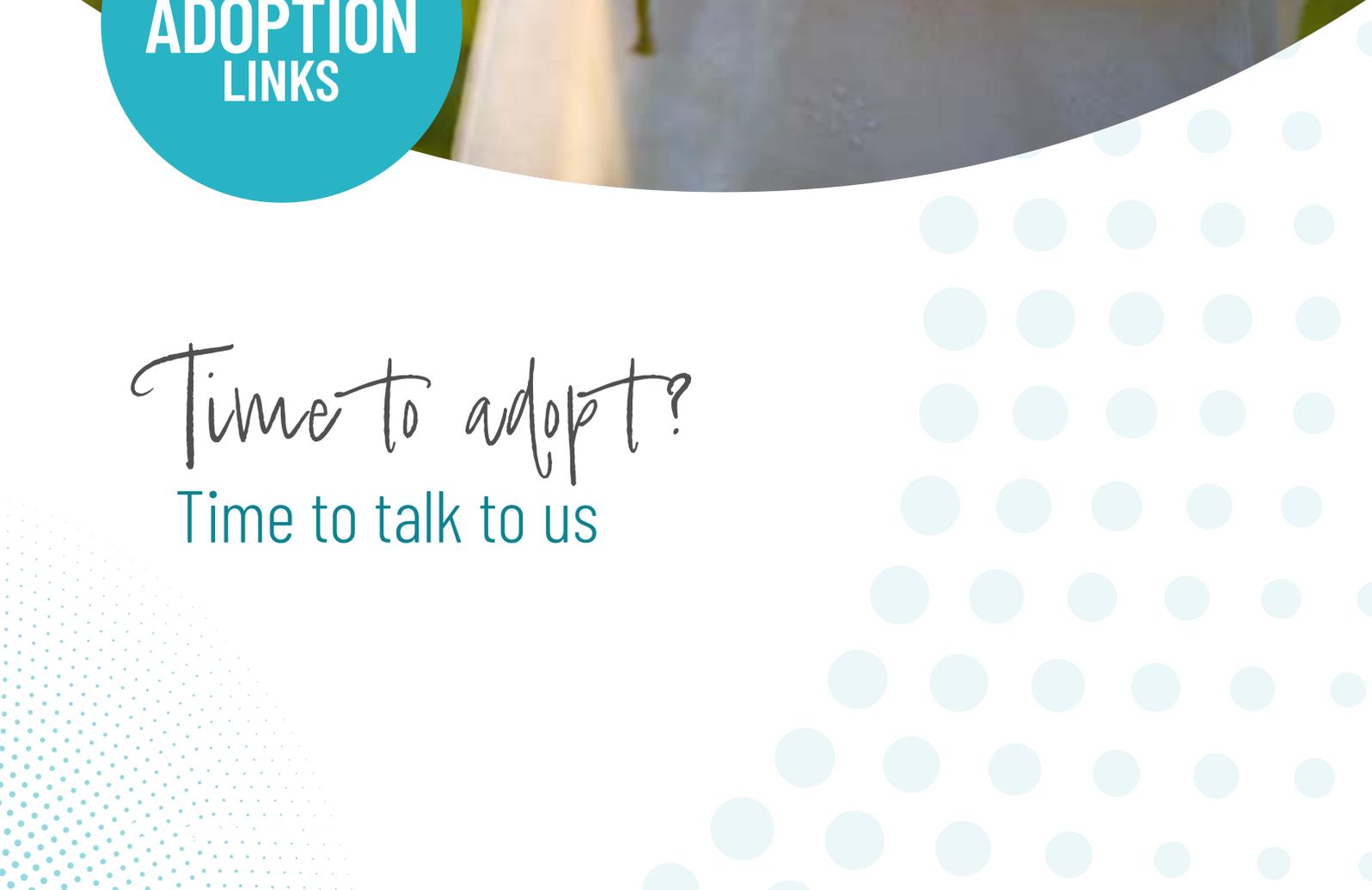




**FAMILY  
ADOPTION  
LINKS**

*Time to adopt?*  
Time to talk to us





## WHAT WE DO...

Quite simply, we strive to find the right family for children who can no longer live with their birth or extended family.

Our Social Workers will gently guide you through every stage of the adoption process to ensure you are thoroughly checked, prepared and trained to become parents to our precious children. Following your approval, we are committed to searching within our partnership and beyond to match you with your new son/daughter/children, a match that we are confident is the best for both of you.

But your journey with us doesn't stop there. Our post adoption support services are excellent and varied. Quarterly newsletters, regular online and in-person training plus specialist support and assistance with Adoption Support Fund applications mean that our adopters can approach the experience with confidence.



## YOU CAN ENJOY...

- ✓ A larger pool of children to ensure the best possible match
- ✓ A comprehensive range of support services to ensure a positive adoption journey
- ✓ The widest pool of professionals who engage in innovative and ground-breaking new adoption practices



WE'RE A DYNAMIC  
REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP  
AIMED AT DELIVERING  
EXCELLENCE IN EVERY  
ASPECT OF ADOPTION.



*"The love and happiness our children have brought us has been the best thing we have experienced.*

*Adoption changes both your life and a child's life for the better."*



## Are you READY TO ADOPT?

Adoption is the legal process by which children, who cannot be brought up by their birth parents, or other significant, connected people, become a full, permanent member of a new family. When you adopt a child you become their legal parent(s) with the same rights and responsibilities as if they were born to you.

Adoption is a lifelong commitment which should not be undertaken without very careful thought and preparation. Like all parenting it presents challenges and difficulties, some of which require perseverance to work through but it can also be intensely rewarding as you see your child develop and grow.

## Adoption CHECKLIST

We welcome applications from people who...

- Are married, single or divorced
- Are straight or from the LGBTQ+ community
- Come from all walks of life
- Are over 21 (there's no upper age limit as long as you are healthy enough to parent a child into adulthood)
- Already have children (whether still living at home or grown-up)
- Are a homeowner or living in rented accommodation
- Are employed or unemployed
- Have a healthy lifestyle
- If applying as a couple, have lived together for 2 years
- Have a local support network in place
- Have allowed a 6 month gap after completing fertility treatment
- Are able to demonstrate a good knowledge of child development
- May have experience in caring for children in the age group they would like to adopt
- Are free from any criminal cautions or convictions for offences against children or sexual offences against adults



*"I thought we'd be considered too old in our forties but we were quickly made to feel that we might have a lot to offer a child."*



# Children WHO NEED ADOPTING

As some of the most vulnerable children in society, we are committed to finding the right families for our children to ensure they receive a happy, loving and supported childhood.

In the past, adoption consisted almost exclusively of the placing of babies 'given up' by their birth mothers. This has now changed, as has the nature of adoption and children who are available for adoption today are more likely to have been removed from their birth families due to neglect or abuse.

Because of this, adoptive children may...

- Require continuing support as they grow due to their early life experiences
- Have experienced inconsistency of care of a main caregiver and may have had numerous carers
- Present some behavioural challenges as a result of their experiences
- Have brothers and sisters who all need to be placed together
- Have some positive memories of their birth family
- Have medical problems or delayed development arising from birth parents misuse of alcohol and/or drugs during pregnancy



Arthur & Henry

Sweet, brown haired siblings who love to be outdoors and shower their foster carers with cuddles. After a neglected and hectic start in life, these little balls of energy are thriving under the support and love of their foster family. Could you help them realise their potential?



Ruby

With huge brown eyes and an infectious giggle, little Ruby loves making things with Play-Doh, swimming and animals. Although she only has a little hearing in one ear (the other ear is fine), she is making great progress and will continue to thrive with the right adoptive parents.



Luca

Luca is a quiet and gentle little boy who is really starting to come out of his shell thanks to the love of his current foster family. With slight development needs due to a neglected start in life, Luca would thrive under the care of patient and supportive adoptive parents.

These are representative examples of children we are family finding for.



## We are always looking for ADOPTERS FOR

### Children aged 3 +

When we asked our adopters about the advantages of adopting this age group, they couldn't have been more enthusiastic.

These are the benefits they listed...

- Ease of communication – the child can tell you what they want/how they are feeling
- Bonding can be easier
- More children to match with
- Fewer unknowns with health issues
- No sleepless nights/nappies
- Easier to return to work

### Sibling groups

Siblings have a lifelong bond and when it is in their best interests, we do everything we can to keep these children together.

On first reflection, many adopters think it may be too challenging but there are so many advantages to adopting a sibling group, including:

- The children stay together
- You have a ready-made family
- Telling their life story is easier
- Your family is more emotionally secure
- You may be eligible for financial support

## Children with additional needs

The love, support, empathy and kindness that all children require is no different for children with additional needs. It is a common misconception that these children are challenging when actually they just need you in a different way and the potential for rewards are huge. Our adopters speak candidly about how with the right love and support, the achievements that these children can realise is incredible and unbelievably rewarding.

We are currently family finding for children with a range of additional needs which can include things like a slight hearing loss, heart problems, physical disabilities and Down's Syndrome. You will be supported with a range of post adoption training and services to ensure that you are well-equipped to meet the additional needs of these children as they progress through their life.

## BAME/Mixed heritage children

Although ethnicity is a factor we consider when matching our children and families, it is no more important than any other element of a successful match. Adopters who are able to support their child's identity and embrace racial and cultural differences as their child grows can provide brilliantly loving homes for our children.

Things to consider include...

- Do you live in an area where there is a diverse population?
- Would there be other children in the nursery or school that reflect a range of ethnicities?
- How would you support a child to be confident about feeling different from other family members because of their ethnic and cultural background?
- How would you help a child to understand and connect to their ethnic heritage?



*"Having adopted two beautiful girls we were then contacted about adopting their baby sister.*

*It was a massive decision to make our family bigger but looking back it was the best thing ever as they have each other to share their past with and have been kept together."*



# The ADOPTION PROCESS

Everybody who wants to adopt goes through a comprehensive assessment to ensure they have the capacity to meet the needs of any child placed with them. These assessments also help to ensure those who wish to adopt are able to respond to any issues associated with adoption.

You will be reassured to know that our Adoption Team supports potential adopters throughout the whole process.

We will talk to you about the different skills you have to offer and why you feel adoption is the right path for you and your family. It is a very interactive process and at all times you will be fully involved. We will discuss all of the necessary checks that we plan to undertake and are always on hand to discuss any questions you may have.

## 1 Initial enquiry and informal questions

Interested in proceeding? Please contact your chosen adoption service (addresses on page 17). One of our friendly team will then get in touch for a preliminary chat.

## 2 Informal home visit

Next, we'll come to your house to give you the opportunity to talk about adoption in greater detail. We'll discuss the children we are family finding for and your own wishes and expectations. We'll also identify whether there is anything that could prevent you proceeding at this stage.

## 3 Registration of Interest

If you decide that you would like to adopt and we agree, we'll send you a Registration of Interest form. This provides us with all of the information we need to take up the checks, references (3) and medicals required. To assist with this stage, you will be allocated your own Social Worker.

## 4 Adoption Preparation Training

This three day interactive training course gives you an opportunity to learn from experienced adopters, hear about the children you may be matched with, learn adoptive parenting skills and meet other prospective adopters.

In the majority of cases this training takes place in Stage 1. Remember the purpose of the workshops and homework is to assist you in making an informed decision about adoption, so ask as many questions as you want. You are free to withdraw at this or any other stage of the process.

At the end of Stage One, a shared decision is made over whether to progress to Stage 2.

Stage 1 - Two months

## 5 In-depth Assessment

This assessment builds on Stage 1 and involves regular meetings with your Social Worker to compile the Prospective Adopter's Report. More information will be given in the workshops about the information that is gathered and what you need to do at this stage.

## 6 Panel

All of the reports we have worked together on will now be submitted to an independent Adoption Panel who will discuss and make a recommendation on whether you are suitable to adopt. When the Panel makes their recommendation on your suitability to adopt you will be informed straight away.

## 7 Approval

Once the Panel have made their recommendation to us, the Agency Decision Maker (normally the Assistant Director of Children's Services or the named Principal Social Worker) will make the final decision as to whether you are suitable to adopt.

## 8 Family Finding

Working with you, your Adoption Social Worker will now be busy finding a potential match. You will also be subscribed to our Linkmaker online matching service which allows approved adopters to be proactive in finding a match in the UK.

You will be given a lot of written information about the child and a chance to meet with their social worker to help decide if this match is the right one. If everyone agrees to proceed, the application will go to Panel and the Decision Maker once again.

After the match between you and the child has been approved there follows a carefully planned programme of introductions. During this process, you and the child will be given time to think whether or not this link feels right. Your Social Worker will support you throughout.

## 9 Moving in

If introductions progress successfully and all parties wish to go ahead, the day you have been waiting for can go ahead and your child/children can move in to your home. Your Social Workers will continue to visit and contact you regularly during this exciting but sometimes exhausting time.

# Early PERMANENCE

This is the term that covers two different ways of adopting babies and very young children called 'Foster to Adopt' and 'Concurrent Planning'.

## What is Foster to Adopt?

This is where the child is placed with approved adopters who are also approved foster carers. In Foster to Adopt, the local council has decided that the best route for the child will be adoption but the courts are still deciding whether this is the case.

## What is Concurrent Planning?

Concurrent Planning is for babies and children under two in care who are likely to need adoption but who still have the chance of being reunited with their birth family.



## The advantages to Early Permanence

- It allows the early months and years of the child's life to be what most children need and expect
- It enables the child to be with people who may become their permanent parents at a much earlier stage
- They are placed with carers who may become their adopters depending on the decision that the court makes. It must be remembered that until the court decides that adoption is right for the child, the parent's case remains to be decided

## Why consider Early Permanence?

Most children that are placed through these methods are very young and some are even straight out of hospital. Carers who take these children are able to ensure that their needs are met from a very early age and help them through the most vulnerable stage of their life. People who choose Foster to Adopt and Concurrent Planning need to work with the uncertainty however that the child may return to their birth parents. During the placement they may also need to have contact with the birth parents.

In the rare cases that this does happen, our carers have taken comfort in the fact that they have done all they can to provide love and security at a crucial time and are supported by their Social Worker.

# Adoption SUPPORT

As a partnership we're working collaboratively to offer a comprehensive range of training, therapy and support to help our adopters and children at every stage of their journey.

This support starts from the moment we receive your Registration of Interest right through to post adoption and includes:

- Online and in-person training courses covering a variety of subjects
- A Life Story book to help your child understand their early life
- Telephone advice line
- Quarterly newsletter
- Assistance with Letterbox contact
- Support with education and the Virtual School
- Peer groups
- Social events for both you and your child

We find that our adopters like the flexible approach we offer and are able to access courses and support as and when they need it (for example when their children go to school or when they need further assistance explaining their child's life story).



*"The service has provided guidance, signposting and referrals to people who 'get' where we are."*



## Bespoke Support

If you require additional support, you can request an assessment of needs for support services. These services may then be provided through the

- Social Work team
- Adoption Service
- Health or Education Directorate
- Or a combination of these and other agencies

## Adoption Support Fund

The Adoption Support Fund was created by the government to enable adoptive families to access and pay for therapeutic support.

To access the fund, we will assess what level of support you need and make an application on your behalf.

Your Social Worker can talk to you about this in more detail.



# Financial CONSIDERATIONS

## Preparing to adopt

The only cost of adopting a child through Family Adoption Links is the cost of your medical checks which can range from £80-£120 depending on your GP. However, there are other costs that you may need to consider such as taking time off work or travelling to training courses.

## Once you have adopted

Parenting any child is costly and financial considerations are something you need to take into account when deciding whether you would like to adopt particularly as you are expected to meet the general living costs of the child. Some things to bear in mind...

- Budgeting for the additional costs of having a child
- Adoption Leave and statutory adoption pay
- Going part-time, reducing your hours and the financial implications
- Child Benefit
- Child Tax credit/Working Tax credit
- Council Housing/Housing Benefit/Universal Credit

## Financial support for children with additional needs/sibling groups

If you are considering adopting a child with additional needs or larger sibling groups, there may be support available to you (means tested) to help you manage these needs. These may be paid regularly on a long term basis or as a one-off sum.

You may also get help with the initial "setting up" costs arising from the need for certain items and equipment. In addition you may receive help with the legal costs of adoption.

## Education Funding

All adoptive children are entitled to

- Early Years Pupil Premium – £300 of extra funding for every adopted 3 and 4 year old.
- Pupil Premium Plus – £2,345 of extra funding for state-funded schools to help meet each adopted child's educational needs.



*"Adoption was one of the best decisions we have ever made. Our little boy is doing amazing and we can't imagine family life without him."*



# Adoption STORIES

We're not looking for the perfect adopter or family for our children, what we are looking for is kind, loving, patient, supportive and flexible parents who can cherish, support and care for a child.

All adopted children have lost something that is important to them and may need help to work through their feelings of sadness and loss. They may have experienced harm and find it hard to believe that their adopted parents love them, or that there is such a thing as that 'one safe place' to grow up in. Through training and with help from your Social Worker, we will equip you with the skills to help them understand and process their experiences.

Here are some examples of adoptive parents who have worked hard to develop trusting and secure relationships and by doing so they have really made a difference to their child.



## Oliver

Oliver was 3 when he was adopted. He had spent the first two years of his life with his birth parents where life was chaotic and where he spent a lot of time in a room where he could not move around. The home environment was unsuitable and not safe, his meals were irregular and there was a general lack of care ie dirty clothing.

Over time Oliver built a loving relationship with his adopters. He was an active little boy and really enjoyed playing football with his adoptive Daddy. His weight was what it should have been and his speech had improved with the help of a speech therapist. He had regular meals and everyone who met Oliver said what a confident and happy little boy he appeared to be.

When Oliver was 5, food started to go missing from the fridge and after a few weeks his bedroom started to smell. When they explored, they found a pile of food that Oliver had taken from the fridge. He had not tried to eat it but had shoved it under a pile of toys under his bed. His Mum found this really hard to understand and worried that people would think that she was not feeding him.

Following advice, they went shopping with Oliver and bought him a lunch box of his choice. With Oliver, they put some acceptable snack food in the box, eg breakfast bars and raisin boxes. They then put the pack up box under Oliver's bed. They told Oliver that they would check the box every week and replace what had been eaten. It was enough to reassure Oliver that there was always food there if he needed it and he stopped taking food from the fridge. His parents believe this was when he finally started to trust them to look after him and to make sure that he had what he needed. He no longer felt that he had to look after himself.

## Lottie & Noah

Lottie was 8 months old when she was placed for adoption with her brother Noah aged 2.

Lottie was a placid baby and a joy to care for. Her adopters could not believe how easy she made the transition to their care. Noah was a lively toddler who liked to have things his own way. It was very tiring for their adopters who were learning about being parents to two very young children and making the adjustments that this required.

After three months they acknowledged that it was not how they thought it was going to be and that they were struggling to make a connection with Noah. They were worried because they had felt their connection to Lottie was instantaneous. However, with support,

reassurance and time they slowly began to feel they were making a connection with Noah. They describe their relationship with Noah as something very gradual that developed over time.

His Mummy remembers his first day at nursery and him walking off with his book bag. Just before he got to the door he turned around with a worried look and she waved and smiled and shouted out to him that she would be back at 3pm. She was stood outside nursery waiting to collect Noah at 2.30pm. She had not been able to stop thinking about how he was getting on all day. They both shared the biggest cuddle when Noah met his Mummy waiting for him at the school gate.



# FAQs

## Do you ask for any other references?

Yes, we will ask you to provide us with the names of people who we can contact and visit. They will be asked to provide an opinion on your ability to care for children and suitability to adopt. At least two of the references you need to provide must be from people who are not related to you. We may also wish to contact previous employers particularly if you have worked with children. If you have had significant previous relationships we will ask to contact former partners. Here the purpose will be to establish if there are any concerns relating to violence or potential risks to children. Where you have children of your own, including those who have grown up, we will also want to speak with them and involve them in the adoption process.

## Might I be turned down on the grounds of being overweight?

Not in itself. You will be assessed in relation to your capacity to provide for the developmental needs of a child through to adulthood. Your weight therefore will be considered within the context of your overall state of health and fitness, both now and into the future.

## What about serious illness?

If you have had treatment for a serious illness, the agency will seek full information from your GP and will want to establish the impact of the illness and future prognosis. If there is a significant risk that you may not be able to care for a child throughout their dependent years, our Medical Adviser will seek further information and advise us accordingly.

## What about my health more generally?

All applicants must undergo a medical examination within Stage One to assess their physical and mental health. This is important to ensure that people are likely to stay fit and well enough for some time to come. Many of the children placed for adoption have experienced significant losses in their lives so we must avoid compounding these losses by placing children with people who are likely to suffer from serious health problems. This does not mean that a previous illness or condition will act as an automatic bar.

## Can I adopt if I've suffered from mental health issues?

If you have experienced or are currently experiencing a mental health problem you would not automatically be ruled out as an adopter. An agency would need to carefully consider all the factors around the condition before making a decision.

## Will I be able to adopt if I own pets?

We need to be sure that any pets that you own do not pose a threat to children's health or safety. Also, some children may suffer from allergies which would prevent placement with some pets. A report from a vet may be requested.

## Am I too poor to adopt?

Having a child can be a costly business and your financial circumstances and employment status will always be considered as part of our assessment. Having a low income or being unemployed does not automatically rule you out and you can be an adoptive parent while on benefits.

### How much space do I need?

We normally prefer that prospective adopters have a spare bedroom for a child placed for adoption. There may be some flexibility, depending on the age of the child and the possibility of converting existing accommodation to create an extra bedroom.

### Can I adopt if I smoke?

Although you may not be automatically excluded from adopting, most agencies will strongly encourage you to give up because of the known medical risks of passive smoking for young children. If you hope to adopt a child aged 0-5 years, you will be asked to give up smoking at least six months before Stage 2.

### What about fertility treatment?

We understand that for many people they will wish to explore as fully as possible having a birth child before considering adoption. Where fertility treatment is ongoing we do not accept applications to adopt. Where it has proved unsuccessful we believe that it is important for applicants to have time to adjust to the prospect of not having a birth child before progressing with an application. Your readiness to move forward is something that you will think about together with an Adoption Social Worker.

### What if I've been convicted of a criminal offence?

This really depends on the nature of the offence. Not all criminal offences are an automatic bar to adoption. You must declare any cautions or convictions and agree to checks being carried out on you. Such checks are undertaken through the Disclosure and Barring Service, the NSPCC and the local authority and will need to be done on all members of the household aged 16 years and over.



*"We have found the adoption team amazing, right from the beginning of the initial phone call to having our little one placed with us. The support has been incredible. We couldn't have asked for a better social worker and team around us. The adoption training provided was so insightful and really helped prepare and equip us for the journey."*



## Don't FORGET...

When you are thinking of adopting a child, it is important to remember that you are adopting a person who is a child now, but who you will have to help through all their stages of development. Some children may need to regress to developmental stages that they have missed in order to be able to move forward.

As they grow, you will need to help them with the mixed feelings they have towards their birth family. No matter what has happened to a child, he or she is still biologically part of their birth parents. To feel good about themselves, she or he will need help in understanding and accepting what has happened.

The children who are placed for adoption have wonderful courage and resilience. We see the difference that patient, loving and committed parenting can make to a child. This makes all the difference in helping them to flourish and recover the positive healthy growth towards being happy adults.

## What TO DO NEXT...

We hope that this guide has given you a comprehensive insight into our adoption services. If you would like to go ahead here are your possible steps...

- Attend an Information Event (dates on our website)
- Watch our You Can Adopt video (available on our website)
- Get in touch with any further questions or to take your enquiry further (details on page 17)



*"Keep up the amazing work you do, and please pass on to the managers that the experience of placing our son with us was smooth and well delivered."*



# Get IN TOUCH...

We are a Regional Adoption Agency and these are our local authority partners. If you would like to take the next step on your adoption journey, please get in touch with your chosen adoption team using the details below...

## Northamptonshire

☎ 0300 1261008  
✉ [adoption@nctrust.co.uk](mailto:adoption@nctrust.co.uk)

📍 Northamptonshire Children's Trust  
Voluntary Adoption Agency  
Northamptonshire Children's Trust  
1 Angel Square  
Angel Street  
Northampton  
NN1 1ED



## North Lincolnshire

☎ 01724 297024  
✉ [adoption@northlincs.gov.uk](mailto:adoption@northlincs.gov.uk)

📍 Adoption Team  
North Lincolnshire County Council  
Church Square House  
30-40 High Street  
Scunthorpe  
DN15 6NL



## Leicester

☎ 0116 4544540  
✉ [adoption@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:adoption@leicester.gov.uk)

📍 Adoption Team  
Leicester City Council  
Princess Rd W  
Leicester  
LE1 6TR



## Leicestershire

☎ 0116 3050505  
✉ [adoption@leics.gov.uk](mailto:adoption@leics.gov.uk)

📍 Adoption Team  
Leicestershire County Council  
County Hall  
Leicester Rd  
Leicester  
LE3 8TD



## Lincolnshire & Rutland

☎ 01522 554114  
✉ [adoption@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:adoption@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

📍 Adoption Team  
Lincolnshire County Council  
County Offices  
Newland  
Lincoln  
LN1 1YL





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[familyadoptionlinks.org.uk](http://familyadoptionlinks.org.uk)

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