



Family Adoption Links

a young person's guide to
adoption support

FAMILY
ADOPTION
LINKS

Your adoption story



If you are reading this guide, you are growing up as an adopted young person. Adoption is part of your life story, but it does not define everything about who you are.

As you get older, you may start to think differently about your adoption or become more curious about your early life, your birth family or the reasons you were adopted. You may have lots of questions, or you may not want to think about adoption at all, and all those things are okay.

There is no particular age when you are supposed to have questions, feelings or opinions about being adopted. This guide gives you some information about things you might be thinking about and where you can go for support.

Your feelings

Being adopted can bring up all sorts of feelings. You might feel happy, sad, angry, confused, curious, worried, relieved, proud or a mixture of several things at once.

Sometimes you might feel like adoption is a really big part of your life, at other times, you might hardly think about it, and you might also find that your feelings change as you get older.

There is no "right" way to feel about being adopted. If something is bothering you, talking to someone can help. You could talk to your family, a trusted adult, a teacher, a social worker or someone at Family Adoption Links.

Questions you might have

Why was I adopted?

There are different reasons why children are adopted. When you were adopted, the adults involved in your care and the court decided that adoption was the best way to provide you with a safe and permanent family.



You may already have information about what happened before you were adopted. This might be in your Life Story Book, a letter, photographs, documents or other information kept about your early life.

As you get older, you may want to understand more about what happened and why. You have the right to ask questions about your own story. If you want to know more, start by talking to your family, one of your trusted adults or us here at Family Adoption Links. We can help you understand what information is available and who can help you access it.



What about my birth family?

Your birth family is an important part of your history. You may currently have contact with members of your birth family which could include letters, cards, photographs, online communication or visits.

At Family Adoption Links, we call these arrangements Staying in Touch and contact arrangements were decided based on what was considered best for you. As you grow older, you may have different thoughts or feelings about them. You might want more contact, less contact, or to keep things exactly as they are. Whatever you are feeling, it is worth talking about.

If you are unhappy or unsure about your arrangements, talk to your family and Family Adoption Links. We can help you understand your options and make sure your views and feelings are heard.



Questions you might have

Who should I tell I'm adopted?

You get to decide.

Being adopted is personal information about your life which means you don't have to tell everyone, and you don't have to answer questions that make you uncomfortable.



You might be happy to tell your friends or people at school, or you might only want a few people to know. You may also want to tell someone but not know how to explain it. If you want help deciding what to share, or how to respond when people ask questions, talk to someone you trust.



Can I meet other adopted young people?

Definitely, sometimes it can make a real difference to meet other people who have grown up with adoption as part of their story.

Family Adoption Links provides opportunities for adopted young people to meet, connect and take part in activities together.

This could be through events, groups or youth opportunities across the region. You don't have to talk about adoption if you don't want to. Sometimes it's just useful to meet people who understand that adoption is part of your life.

Collabor8 is an online space run by FAL where adopted young people can connect with others who have experience of adoption, share experiences and take part in activities. To find out more or join, get in touch with your local adoption team.



Social media

Social media can be a great way to connect with friends, find communities, share interests and learn new things. But when you're adopted, the online world can sometimes raise some extra questions.

You might come across information about adoption that makes you curious. You might search for information about your birth family. You might find people who share your experiences.

You might also come across information, photographs or people that you weren't expecting.

Think before you search or share



Before posting or sharing anything about your adoption, think about:

- Who could see this?
- Would I be comfortable with this being online in a year or five years?
- Could this information identify me, my family or my birth family?
- Could sharing this affect someone else?
- Do I know who I'm talking to?
- Am I sharing something because I genuinely want to, or because someone is asking me to?

Remember that even if an account is private, information can still be copied, screenshotted or shared.

Be careful with personal information



Try not to share information online that could help someone identify or find you, such as:

- your home address
- your school
- your phone number
- your location
- information about your family
- details from your adoption records
- photographs or documents containing personal information.

This doesn't mean you can't talk about being adopted online. It means you should be in control of what you share and who you share it with.

What if I find my birth family online?

It is understandable to be curious about your birth family. You might find information about them online or even come across their social media accounts. If this happens, take a moment before contacting them or sharing anything.

Finding someone online can bring up lots of emotions, and online information may not give you the full picture. Talk to your family or someone at Family Adoption Links first and we can help you think through what you have found and what you might want to do next.

You should never feel pressured to contact anyone simply because you have found them online. Equally, if something has already happened online and you are worried about it, you can still ask for help.

Useful online safety websites



Information and advice about staying safe online.

<https://www.childnet.com/>

Advice and resources to help young people stay safe and confident online.

<https://saferinternet.org.uk/>

CEOP provides support and advice where a child or young person is being sexually abused or exploited online or is worried about something of this nature.

<https://www.ceopeducation.co.uk/>

If something goes wrong online



Sometimes people online aren't who they say they are. You may also come across bullying, unwanted messages, fake accounts, upsetting content or someone asking you to share information or photographs.

If something online makes you feel worried, scared, uncomfortable, pressured or confused tell someone.

Who can I talk to?

Your parents, family and friends can help you with lots of questions about adoption. They might know the answer, or they can help you find out more.

If you have feelings, thoughts or worries that you would like to talk about with someone else, you can talk to Family Adoption Links. Our team knows lots about adoption and is here to listen, answer your questions and help you and your family. You can talk to us about things like:

- your adoption story
- your feelings
- Staying in Touch
- something that is worrying you
- questions you have as you get older.



You can also take part in fun activities and events where you can meet other adopted children and families. You don't have to have a big problem to talk to us.

If you live in...

Contact...

North Lincolnshire

01724 297024

adoption@northlincs.gov.uk

Lincolnshire

01522 782111

adoptionssupporthelpline@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Leicester

0116 454 6540

Post-Adoption-CFST-Duty@leicester.gov.uk

Leicestershire

0116 305 1126

adoptionssupport@leics.gov.uk

Northamptonshire

01724 297024

adoption@northlincs.gov.uk

Other useful contacts

If you have a question, worry or something you would like to talk about, there are other people you can contact too.

Childline is a place where you can talk about anything that is worrying you.

You can call them for free

on:

0800 1111

You can also visit

www.childline.org.uk

Kooth is a website where you can talk to someone about your feelings or worries and find things that might help you feel better.

www.kooth.com

Sometimes you might want someone to help you tell adults what you think and how you feel. An advocate can listen to you and help make sure that your voice is heard.

National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) can help children who would like an advocate.

Call 0800 616 101

The Children's Commissioner helps make sure that children's voices are listened to and that children know about their rights.

0800 528 0731 or help.team@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

Ofsted checks adoption services to make sure they are doing a good job. If you are unhappy about something to do with an adoption service, you can tell Ofsted.

0300 123 1231 or enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk