



# **BECOMING AN ADOPTIVE PARENT**

with the City of Edinburgh Council

[www.edinburgh.gov.uk/adoption](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/adoption)  
**0800 174 833**

• EDINBURGH •  
YOUR COUNCIL - YOUR SERVICES

# Welcome



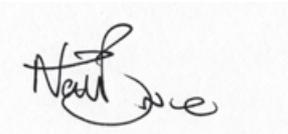
**Edinburgh's children. Can you care for them for the rest of their lives? We think you can. You just don't know it yet!**

In this pack we've included details of how you go about becoming an adoptive parent with us.

Adopting or offering permanent foster care is about making a real difference to a child's life. You provide a secure, loving home to a child – for life! Like all parenting, it means sticking with it through good times and bad. It's one of the most challenging, but also one of the most rewarding things you can do.

If you've ever thought of taking this big step, this booklet is for you. It takes you through the steps to becoming adoptive parents and answers some of the key questions you may have. Read on to find out more and if you decide to take the next step, then give us a call or email us. Our details, together with other useful contacts, are at the back of this booklet.

We're waiting to hear from you. So are the children.



**Neil Bruce**

Team manager

Looked after and accommodated children

neil.bruce@edinburgh.gov.uk

**0800 174 833**

**[www.edinburgh.gov.uk/adoption](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/adoption)  
[adoptchildren@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:adoptchildren@edinburgh.gov.uk)**

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“Adopting Emma made our family complete.”

**Alison and Chris, who adopted Emma, now aged eight**



# Adoption and permanent fostering step-by-step guide

The following pages take you through the steps involved in the adoption and permanent fostering process.

## Steps to becoming a permanent carer



# Adoption and permanent fostering step-by-step guide

## Step 1 Contact us

Contact us via our website, by email [adoptchildren@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:adoptchildren@edinburgh.gov.uk) or by calling the freephone number **0800 174 833**.

You will speak to our Recruitment Team who will pass your enquiry on to our Permanence Team. They will call you back to discuss your interest in much more detail.

We hold information meetings throughout the year where you can meet social workers, adoptive parents and permanent foster carers. They can tell you what it is really like. You can also find out about the assessment process and the children who are waiting for permanent homes.

## Step 2 The initial visit

A social worker will arrange to meet you where you will find out a lot more about what will happen if you decide to go ahead. The social worker will also discuss with you what you can offer a child and what you want from adoption or permanent fostering.

The social worker will arrange to visit you again to ask some questions about yourself and your partner (if applicable). This is called your Initial Enquiry. A brief report will be written and shared with you at this stage.

“It was great to discuss our story with the social worker and this made us realise that we really wanted to adopt.”

**Tom, who adopted  
nine year old Danny**

# Adoption and permanent fostering step-by-step guide

## Step 3 Preparation group

If your enquiry goes ahead, you will begin a longer period of preparation, assessment and training. Preparation is a time when you can find out more detail and do some very important thinking about making a lifetime commitment to a child. Our preparation groups are held regularly throughout the year. The eight sessions are held during the daytime or in the evenings and will cover a range of issues related to adoption and permanent fostering. This includes case studies of children requiring permanent care and some of the processes and legal aspects relevant to adoption.

You have a crucial role to play at this point. These weeks are a chance for you to take a very honest look at what you want out of adoption or permanent fostering and what you can offer a child. You will have time to think about all the important issues. What are the child's needs? What are your strengths and weaknesses as an adoptive parent or permanent foster carer likely to be? Can you make the sort of commitment that will really make a difference to a child's life?

At the end of the preparation group you will be invited to make an application to be assessed as prospective adopters or permanent foster carers.

## Step 4 Home study assessments

The purpose of the home study report is to identify strengths and any vulnerabilities you may have. A social worker from the Permanence Team will make a number of visits to your home and will try to get to know you by exploring with you, your own family background, your childhood experiences and your present circumstances. If you are a couple, the social worker will see you together and individually.

At the end of the home study, you and your social worker will work together to produce a home study report. The report includes a detailed assessment of you as a potential adoptive parent or permanent foster carer.

# Adoption and permanent fostering step-by-step guide

It will include consideration of your medical, disclosure, personal and employment references. A key part of the report is for you and your worker to decide the sort of child or children you feel you could care for. Could you, for example, look after a child with a physical or learning difficulty? What age range would you consider? And how many children would you take?

The home study is demanding but also rewarding and can feel intrusive. It will take several months to complete. Adoption and permanent fostering are commitments for life.

## Step 5

### Panel approval and registration

The home study report is presented to a panel of four to six people, who will include social workers, other professionals and independent members including approved adopters. You and your social worker will attend to answer any of their questions. Once the panel has considered the report, they will recommend whether or not you should be approved as an adoptive parent or permanent foster carer.

The agency decision maker will then decide whether or not to accept the panel's recommendations within 14 days of the panel meeting.

## Step 6

### Linking you to a child or children

Once you are approved we will begin to consider whether there are children waiting for a family who might be a suitable match for you.

“It's changed my life for the better.”

**Ellen who adopted three year old Tracey**

# Adoption and permanent fostering step-by-step guide

## Step 7 Matching you to a child or children

Once a child or children have been identified, you will be given full information about the child/children's background. You will then meet with their social worker, the medical advisor and the child's current foster carer. Following a professionals meeting to explore the potential strengths and vulnerabilities of the proposed match, a matching panel will be arranged within four to six weeks.

The agency decision maker will then decide whether or not to accept the panel's recommendations within 14 days of the panel meeting.

## Step 8 Legal position

When adopting, you will be able to petition the court any time 13 weeks after a child or children have been placed with you, provided the permanence order with authority to adopt has been granted. Social workers will complete the necessary paperwork. If you are permanently fostering, the legal position will vary and your social worker will be able to advise you.

## Step 9 Post approval and adoption support

Once you are an approved adopter or permanent carer your social worker will remain involved to support you. You will also be offered group support and training to help you with any issues which may arise. Your social worker will organise this according to your needs or those of your child.

“The support doesn't end with the training, it's great to know there's someone there whenever we need it.”

**Alison, who adopted four year old Lachlan**

“ We’re just an ordinary family,  
that’s what makes it work so  
well for Ben and Susan.”

Ian and Kim, who adopted six year  
old Jamie and four year old Susan

*Remember us...*



# Your questions answered

## What is adoption?

Adoption is a lifelong commitment. It's about providing a permanent family for a child or children in care, who cannot, for whatever reason, return home. When you adopt a child, you take on all the rights and responsibilities for the child that the birth parent had.

## What is permanent foster care?

Permanent foster care is a lifelong commitment. It's about providing a permanent family for a child or children in care who cannot for whatever reason, return home. When you permanently care for a child, you share legal rights and responsibilities for the child with the City of Edinburgh Council.

## Which children need adoption or permanent care?

There are all sorts of children who need adoptive or permanent foster parents, from babies and toddlers to children of upper primary school age. Sometimes there are two, three or more brothers and sisters who need to live and grow up together.

Some children may have been abused or neglected in their past. Other children may have physical or learning disabilities. Some children may have developmental or genetic uncertainties around their future development.

The one thing all these children have in common is that their parents are unable to care for them and they need a new, permanent family to care for them as they grow up.

## How long does it all take?

New standards for adoption and permanent foster care say the entire process, from your initial phone call to being approved as a prospective parent, should take no more than about eight months. All adoption agencies are working towards this goal.

# Your questions answered

## What rights do birth parents have afterwards?

Once an adoption order has been made, birth parents have no legal rights to the child and cannot claim him or her back. With permanent fostering the position will vary according to the child's specific circumstances.

## Will the child still see their birth parents or other relatives?

The child may well benefit from continuing to see (or to have 'letter box' contact with) other important people in their lives. For a small number of children it will be important for them to see periodically a birth parent, brothers or sisters, grandparents or previous foster carers.

This is something we will discuss fully with you before a child or children are placed with you. A number of other children will have indirect contact with birth family members by letter box contact.

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

It is very important that you know as much as possible about the child's past. By law we must give you 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 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 I be paid?

You are expected to meet the general living costs of a child you adopt, just like any parent. However, you may be eligible for an adoption allowance, which depends on the identified needs of the child. With permanent fostering, you will receive an allowance for the child and a fee as a departmental foster carer.

# Your questions answered

## 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.

## How do I take the next step?

You need to contact the Permanence Team in the City of Edinburgh Council. by calling **0800 174 833** or emailing **[adoptchildren@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:adoptchildren@edinburgh.gov.uk)** Staff in the Permanence Team will be pleased to answer your questions and provide support and advice about taking the next step. If you want more information about adoption or permanent fostering before getting in touch with us, you could contact the following organisations:

Adoption UK offers support and information before, during and after adoption. A parent-to-parent network of more than 3,500 existing and potential adoptive parents.

**Adoption UK**  
**Scotland Office**  
**172 Leith Walk**  
**Edinburgh EH6 5EA**  
**Telephone: 0131 5555 111**  
**Fax: 0131 555 5351**  
**Email: [scotland@adoptionuk.org.uk](mailto:scotland@adoptionuk.org.uk)**  
**Website: [www.adoptionuk.org](http://www.adoptionuk.org)**

British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) offers information and support on all aspects of adoption.

**BAAF Scottish Centre**  
**113 Rose Street**  
**Edinburgh**  
**EH2 3DT**  
**Telephone: 0131 226 9270**  
**Fax: 0131 226 2503**  
**Email: [scotland@baaf.org.uk](mailto:scotland@baaf.org.uk)**  
**Website: [www.baaf.org.uk/scotland](http://www.baaf.org.uk/scotland)**

# We welcome your feedback

**If you decide to apply to become a carer or adopter, you will be starting an important and hopefully long-lasting relationship with the City of Edinburgh Council.**

We will ask for your feedback at the time when the decision is made about your approval as a carer or adopter and then at annual reviews. You can, of course, let us know your views at other times of the year. Approved carers and adopters are all members of the national organisation, Fostering Network. This organisation is also interested in your views.

## **The complaints procedure**

The Council has a complaints procedure that approved carers and adopters can use if they are unhappy about some aspect of the service they have received or on behalf of a child or children for whom they are caring. Further details of the complaints procedure can be supplied on request.

“Our preparation group was brilliant. We met other families who wanted to adopt and we’ve stayed in touch.”

**Jenny and Paul**

“ We’ve never been so proud as when we took Marty to his first day at school.”

**Mike and Claire, who adopted five year old Marty**





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