



## Becoming an Adoptive Parent with Aberdeenshire Adoption Service in 5 easy steps!



**Step 1: Reach Out to Us** We are here to support you on your journey to becoming an adoptive parent. Contact us by phone or email to request an information pack. Once you complete and return the Registration of Interest form, a friendly Adoption Social worker will reach out to arrange an Initial Home Visit.



**Step 2: Initial Home Visit** During this visit, we'll discuss the assessment and approval process in a relaxed and informative manner. This is also a great opportunity for us to get to know each other better and answer any questions you might have.



**Step 3: Adoption Preparation Training** You may be invited to attend our Adoption Preparation Training, designed to empower you with knowledge and skills. Following this you will be in a better position to make an informed choice if growing your family through adoption is the right path for you. Topics include:

- The Role of Adoptive Parents
- Child development and attachment
- Impact of early trauma on the developing child
- Legal process of Adoption
- An introduction to Therapeutic parenting

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*"The Preparation Training was great, it was a real eye-opener to the challenges we may face in the future, as we had been a little ignorant about how helpful this would be. It was really informative." - Adoptive Parent*

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#### **Step 4: Home Study Assessment**

In Aberdeenshire this is a Two stage process. Following your preparation to Adopt course, you will be allocated an experienced Social worker from the team who will take you through the process. The first stage is focused on gathering all the statutory checks while beginning to explore your readiness to adopt. This process is all about highlighting your strengths and readiness to welcome a child into your family. Checks include:

- PVG checks
- Overseas criminal records check (if applicable)
- Medical check
- Local authority checks
- Employment history and employer's reference
- Previous partners and adult children (if applicable)
- Health, safety, and wellbeing check

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*"We enjoyed the assessment process more than we thought, we found out a lot about ourselves despite being together for 18 years. Our social worker got to know us really well, and we continue to have a great working relationship."*

*- Adoptive parent*

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If all checks have been completed and you have demonstrated your commitment to the process you will be invited to begin the more formal process of stage two. By this stage you will have started to build up a relationship with your social worker and the hope is that you feel more at ease going into more depth around your life, so the process feels less intrusive. Our families tell us that this is the part they fear the most and yet it often becomes such a valued therapeutic process for them that they really enjoy!



#### **Step 5: Presentation to the Permanence Panel**

Once complete and quality assured by the team manager and you, your home study report will be presented to our Permanence panel. It is the role of the panel to consider your home study and give a recommendation on your approval as Prospective Adoptive parents. You'll be invited to join the panel meeting with your social worker to discuss your application. The panel's recommendation will be reviewed by the Agency Decision Maker, who will inform you of their decision within 21 days. Attending panel is another big milestone for people and we support you at each step.

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*"Once our assessment had been completed we were due to go to the Permanence Panel to hopefully be approved. We were really nervous the night before and couldn't sleep, but afterwards we didn't know what we were worrying about! It was like an informal chat, and we got approved!"*

*- Adoptive Parent*

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## **What are the differences between Adoption Agencies – which once would be best for me?**

Before beginning the Adoption process, it is important that you research your adoption agency and make sure you feel confident in their ability and have trust in their capacity. It is often difficult at this stage to know what will be important for you in the future and questions to ask of your adoption agency.

Families tell us that if they knew now (post adoption) at the start of the process they would ask different questions when choosing an adoption agency.

These are some questions that are common to ask when you begin your journey.

- When is first Preparation to Adopt course?
- How soon will I be approved?
- How soon will I be matched with a child after approval?

These are all important questions and key in helping you chose an adoption agency. However, some other areas may be overlooked, simply because you don't know yet to ask them. Here is what we suggest you ensure you know:

- Will the adoption agency know the children well who have plans for adoption? (to ensure we get the linking and matching process correct)
- Will the adoption agency continue to offer support to me and my child - throughout their childhood? *\*This is really important to know as if your adoption agency is not your own local authority or if your child comes from a different local authority then adoption support can end after 3 years post adoption. The responsibility for accessing support will now be with the local authority in which you live. People tell us that forming new trusting relationships who don't know your child, their history or you – can feel difficult and be a barrier to accessing support.*
- Does every child receive quality life story books – will I have this for my child when they join our family, and will I get support to build my confidence in speaking to them about this as they grow up?
- Direct work and preparing the child for a move to adoption – are children prepared using therapeutic interventions to understand and manage their move to adoption? Will the transition process be well thought out and co-ordinated by one speciality worker.
- Are support services delivered in my local area? Or will I have to travel to access these?

If you are interested in hearing more messages for future adoptive parents you can read the following article, Smith, J. & Brown, L., 2023. Adoptive parent advice:

Challenges, strategies, and insights for future adoptive parents. *Journal of Adoption Studies*, 15(2), pp.123-145.

## Why Choose Aberdeenshire Council Adoption Service?



### Families for Children

As a local authority Adoption Agency, we know the children who need families through adoption. We begin exploring potential matches immediately after approval panel. We work closely with our colleagues to ensure that our linking and matching process is tailored to the specific child and family. We focus on

how children can grow up to meet their full potential and ensure supports are in place from day 1 to help you in your parenting journey.

### Understanding the Child Day – A new way of finding families for children.

Aberdeenshire are leading the adoption sector in how we understand the needs of children who need an adoptive family. We host an Understanding the Child Day for each child with a plan of adoption. This is a full multi-agency day where important people in the child's life come together to reflect on their lived experiences. This is very much focused on the child's voice and can truly capture how their inner world have been created and how they trust and relate to adults in their world. This means that prospective adoptive families can also walk this journey and begin to develop a strong understanding of their early life so they can prepare for the parenting role. From this day we also develop a bespoke support plan to nurture new attachment relationship helping to settle children into their new family.

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*"The session provided an opportunity to really consider carefully what the child will need from any care giver in the future and gave the team space to understand the child's journey to date. Previous meetings have considered a lot about the parents needs which of course is important but the space to focus on the child was welcome and very helpful."*

*-Child's Social Worker*

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*"These are extremely profitable days, to allow sharing of information between professionals, in order to try and achieve the best outcomes for the children involved."*

*- Health visitor*

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## Therapeutic Transition Social worker (TTW)

In our Adoption service we have a unique worker with a specific role in supporting children who are moving to adoption. She works directly with the child and prepares them to understand their story in an age-appropriate way, through play and social stories while they are living with their foster family. Using Thera play based play she connects with the child and their foster carer (their secure base) through a carefully planned move to your home, the TTW begins to include the Prospective adopters into the play and build up the trust within this safe space. Once the child moves our TTW continues to visit the child, offering support to new adoptive families and ensuring the early days of forming attachment relationship are supported and strengthened.



In partnership with the Child's social worker, the TTW will also ensure the Adoptive family have a life story book for the child and support them to build up confidence in continuing the conversations about their story. We know that if children are helped to understand their story and feel accepted by their adoptive parents, that they are then more able to feel worthy of love and belonging and develop a healthy sense of their self and own identity.

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*The support of this role has been invaluable and almost immeasurable in the benefit she has provided us and our girls. We feel hugely grateful that this role exists as it has given us so much additional insight to our girls that we feel has dramatically accelerated our relationship with them through greater understanding of their lives to date. For the girls in the moment, they have enjoyed the time with TTW describing it as "fun" and "lovely" however I feel that the foundation of understanding their lives she has helped them to develop will be something they will mature into appreciating more with every year that passes. I would advocate for all children on the pathway to adoption or significant time in care to be supported by a Transitions Support Worker as an invaluable stakeholder in the whole process, and one we count our blessings on an almost daily basis to have been such a vital part of our adoption journey.*

*-Adoptive Parent*

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## Enduring support

We are focused on building strong relationships and a community around our families, should they need this. Support from our service is life long and we offer various levels of support to meet the changing and growing needs of your family.

If you are approved by Aberdeenshire Adoption agency you will have our commitment to enduring support.

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*“My Social worker is and will always be my fairy god mother. She has been a godsend helping me every step of the way. I don't think I could have got through the whole process without her at my side, she helped me with my struggles and emotions and guided me with the tough questions that would arise with \*child\*. I always knew that if I needed help, she would be there for me and she was. I am eternally grateful for everything you have all done.”*

*-Adoptive Parent*

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## Preparation to Adopt and home study

We map out our Preparation to Adopt dates yearly and generally offer 2 courses a year. After Preparation to Adoption training, you will move straight into stage 1, meeting your allocated worker who will take you on your complete adoption journey, allowing you to build up a trusting safe relationship. After stage 1, we move into the more formal stage of the homestudy once we have established your readiness and confirming that all the statutory checks are back and clear. Having a clear process with timescales helps people manage some of the other aspects in Adoption that are more uncertain. You will receive an open and transparent service from us and we work in strong partnership with you to prepare you for parenting and growing your family through adoption.

## Care Inspection

All Adoption agencies are Inspected by the Care Inspectorate to ensure we are upholding our duties and maintain good practice and outcomes for children and families. Aberdeenshire Adoption service was Inspected in February 2025. We achieved grades of ‘excellent’ and ‘very good’ (see below) with feedback describing our practice as ‘sector leading’ demonstrating ‘outstandingly high outcomes for children and young people”

This is a sample from our report with the full report available here [Find care](#)  
Aberdeenshire Inspection reports

*“The unique voices and experiences of children and young people were listened to at every stage of their involvement with the service. This was supported by a detailed, child centred referral form and a multiagency 'understanding the child day' which was held before family finding began to ensure that children were truly known and heard before any decisions about their future was made. Even very young children were exceptionally well supported to make sense of their plans and to be active participants in their transition planning. Children were supported to use a variety of therapeutic communication tools to express their thoughts and feelings before and after moving to live with their adoptive families and continued to use these tools in the months that followed. Transitions happened at a pace that was right for each child, skilfully supported by the therapeutic transitions worker.”*

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>How well do we support people's wellbeing?</b>                                                              | <b>6- Excellent</b> |
| 1.1 Children, young people, adults and their caregiver families experience compassion, dignity and respect.    | <b>6- Excellent</b> |
| 1.2 Children, young people and adults get the most out of life                                                 | <b>6- Excellent</b> |
| 1.3 Children, young people and adults' health and wellbeing benefits from the care and support they experience | <b>6- Excellent</b> |
| 1.4 Children, young people, adults and their caregiver families get the service that is right for them         | <b>6- Excellent</b> |
| <b>How well is our care and support Planned?</b>                                                               | <b>5- Very Good</b> |
| 5.1 Assessment and care planning reflects the outcomes and wishes of children, young people and adults.        | <b>5-Very Good</b>  |

The Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection (CELCIS) highlighted our good practice in Aberdeenshire, including the TTW role. You can read more about our excellent work and our child-centred, relational approach to adoption in their article. [Developing a child-centred, relational approach to adoption](#)

We hope this information leaflet has been helpful, an experienced member of the team is waiting to hear for you to answer any questions you may have and support you in your journey.

## **Contact Us**

“Are you ready to start your adoption journey?”

Contact us on –

Phone: 01467 532800 or

Email [adoption@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:adoption@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)