Information Guide

A guide all about adoption, the process and our agency.

www.adoptionmatters.org
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Adoption Matters is an independent children’s charity specialising in adoption and adoption support. That is all we do, and have been doing so for nearly 70 years.

We believe ALL children deserve the chance of a loving, permanent home through adoption wherever possible. Many children wait longer for a family if they are over 4 years old, from a Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) background or have complex needs. Adoption Matters has a successful track record in placing children from a range of backgrounds and the expert ongoing support and training we offer means that we have one of the lowest disruption rates in the UK.

Children are at the heart of our work and we are proud of the award winning service we offer to our adopters.

Why choose Adoption Matters?
As an independent children’s charity and approved voluntary adoption agency, we work with local authorities across the whole of the UK. For you this means a wider pool of children to consider. We have a team of experienced adoption practitioners whose sole aim and focus is you, our adopters. We ensure we find the right adopter, for the right child.

We have a very low staff turnover with many of our staff being with us for 10, 20 and over 30 years.

We are supported by a legal adviser, medical adviser, education adviser and cultural adviser (Islam). Our adoption panels are made up of a range of professionals in the field of adoption and of individuals whose lives have been personally affected by adoption.

We have a significant track record for maintaining and ensuring the success of placements.

We are the ONLY Voluntary Adoption Agency in the North West & Yorkshire area to have been rated as ‘Outstanding’ by Ofsted in 2014, 2011 & 2008 and we were named Voluntary Adoption Agency of the Year in both 2014 & 2012 by British Association of Adoption & Fostering (BAAF).

The real question is, why would you choose to adopt with anyone else?

Over 95% of our placements are successful compared with a national average of around 80%.
about adoption matters

Areas we cover

We offer our services to an area across the whole of the North West of England, North East Wales, parts of Yorkshire & Humber (Barnsley, Bradford, Calderdale, Doncaster, Kirklees, Rotherham, Sheffield, Wakefield and York) and to the South (Shropshire, Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent, Telford & Wrekin, Walsall, Wolverhampton, Dudley and Sandwell).

We have offices in Chester, Blackburn, Hale, Salford, Warrington and have staff bases in Wales, Yorkshire, Staffordshire & the Midlands.

We deal with each enquiry individually and if you live outside of any of these areas we may be able to assist you.

What we do

Our aim is to find families for children of all ages who, for a variety of reasons, are no longer able to live with their birth families. The children come from many different backgrounds, cultures and areas of the UK, just like our adopters!

We are particularly seeking families for older children (over the age of 4), sibling groups and children who have additional needs be they learning, physical or medical. Although the focus of our work began nearly 70 years ago with the placement of babies who were relinquished by their birth mothers, we very rarely place relinquished babies now unless it’s through our Concurrent Planning service (see page 7).

In common with other agencies, the very young children that we place may have identified medical, developmental and emotional/behavioural needs.

We have close links with other adoption agencies and local authorities nationwide who are looking for families for children in their care. All children in care will have experienced some level of emotional and sometimes physical trauma. They may have already been moved between a number of foster placements and therefore have difficulty understanding the concept of a permanent family. The children are all very different with individual needs, so we need adoptive parents from a wide variety of backgrounds who have a wide variety of skills and experience.

What you do need is the willingness and commitment to offer a child or children a loving, caring home in which they can thrive.

You will be prepared, assessed for your suitability to adopt and are then recommended for approval by the Adoption Panel. Great efforts are made to find the right adopters for the right child.

Our team offer an enhanced ‘family finding’ service which gains a real insight into a child’s needs. We support you and the child through introductions, placement and beyond for as long as you need it through our innovative Centre for Adoption Support.

Did you know?

To adopt with Adoption Matters you can be married, single, in a civil partnership, divorced, living together or widowed, have a full-time job or be unemployed, have your own home or live in rented accommodation, or be from any ethnic or religious background or have no religious beliefs.
By choosing to adopt through Adoption Matters you will gain the additional support, training and guidance from the Centre for Adoption Support (often known as CfAS).

The Centre for Adoption Support was established in 2013 as a partnership between ourselves and Caritas Care with support from the Department for Education’s National Prospectus Grants Programme. We have developed the Centre and its services in conjunction with four partner Local Authorities: Cheshire West and Chester and WWiSH (Warrington, Wigan and St Helens). In the first 2 years, the centre has worked with over 500 parents, 113 children and delivered support to around 700 social work, health and education professionals.

The centre offers additional bespoke backing, training and guidance to adopters, their families and their schools based on adopter’s individual needs. Training and support ranges from therapeutic support to activity days for children to adopter led support groups and social events.

The Centre has received support and endorsement from Children and Families Minister Edward Timpson MP as an exemplar of adoption support.

We welcome applicants from all backgrounds, ages, sexuality, faiths and people who have no religious beliefs.

We know that there is no ‘perfect’ adopter, we need adopters from a range of backgrounds and cultures.
the difference between adoption & fostering

People are often confused about the difference between adoption and fostering, so it might be helpful to describe the differences:

**Adoption**
Adoption is a way of giving children who cannot be brought up by their own parents or wider family, a secure permanent family. Adoption is a legal procedure, granted by the court, which gives the adopters the same parental rights, duties and responsibilities as any birth parent. Adoption is forever. The child usually takes the surname of the adoptive parents, inherits from them, and loses all legal ties with the birth family. Although quite often adopted children may have some contact with members of their birth family, as experience has shown that this benefits adopted children.

**Fostering**
Fostering offers children a safe, caring family home while they are unable to live with their birth family. This is while social work teams work with families to try and make home safe again for a child to return. This is always what social workers strive for if suitable. Over 70% of children in care are in foster care and over one third return to live with family. Foster care can range from an overnight stay, to a few weeks/months or on a longer term basis. If the problems cannot be resolved with birth family and a suitable extended family member or friend cannot be found, the child/ren may be placed for adoption or long term fostering.
concurrent planning – a different route to adoption

By choosing Adoption Matters we can offer a Concurrent Planning service working in partnership with Caritas Care and on behalf of a number of local authorities in the area.

So what is concurrent care?

In 2014, a new legislation was introduced that asked local authorities to consider placing children, in certain circumstances, with adopters who have also been approved as foster carers. This was to help improve outcomes for children in care by reducing the number of moves they have to make in their very early lives. The circumstances in which a child would be considered for Concurrent Planning would usually be:

- Backgrounds of severe parental difficulty
- (often involving drugs and alcohol)
- Parent’s history is known
- Low likelihood that the child will be able to return home – but this is not a certainty

Applicants are jointly approved to both foster and adopt for babies and young children, mostly under the age of 2 years but up to the age of 4. They can be single children or brothers and sisters.

When a child is first looked after by the local authority, they are placed with the ‘concurrent carers’ who look after the child as their foster carers and take the child for frequent contact with their birth parents or relatives at an agreed neutral venue (often at the office base in Salford).

The local authority works with the birth parents whilst the case is being considered by the court (usually within 6 months) and the court then decides whether the child should return to their birth family or be adopted by the existing carers.

This reduces the number of moves for the child and allows them to build healthy relationships.

However, this type of care does have uncertainties for carers / adopters as it is the adults who bear the risk and uncertainty rather than the child. Concurrent Planning isn’t the right pathway for everyone but if this is something you feel you can consider, then a social worker will be able to give you more information at your informal meeting.

Did you know?

This Concurrent Planning service is the only one of its kind in the North West and is an exciting, creative and challenging opportunity to offer a service which minimises disruption and unnecessary moves for very young children.
the children waiting for adoption

Children in care are from a variety of backgrounds and cultures. They have different needs and experiences like all children.

One thing we know about children who enter care is that they will be feeling a whole range of emotions and will often be frightened. Some children may have suffered abuse and some will have been neglected, unfortunately, two thirds of children in care entered due to abuse and neglect. Almost all children will have experienced separation, loss and uncertainty.

We work with local authority adoption services across the whole of the UK and every week, we receive information on children needing a family.

Our aim is to find families to care for these children on a permanent basis and provide secure and stable family lives. Our biggest need is to find adoptive families for:

- Older children – aged 4 and above
- Children with additional needs – learning, physical, behavioural, emotional
- Children in sibling groups – we always aim to keep brothers and sisters together
- Children from Black & Minority Ethnic backgrounds

Most of the children placed for adoption are cared for by their local authority in foster homes prior to placement for adoption. The trauma and upheaval they have known in their early lives is likely to have impacted on their general development and also have an influence on their behaviour.

Every year there are many vulnerable children in the UK who are waiting to find a new adoptive family.
children we have placed for adoption

Children placed by Adoption Matters

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age at time of placement</th>
<th>Number of children placed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 1 year</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 years</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>71</strong></td>
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<table>
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<th>Age at time of placement</th>
<th>Number of children placed</th>
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<tr>
<td>Under 1 year</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
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<td>9 years</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>64</strong></td>
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What do the children need?

The same as all children – love, security and stability: for adopted children this is particularly important as they may not have previously experienced this.

The children need flexible, positive and resilient parents who will encourage them and will delight in their achievements.

For most adopted children, it is important and appropriate to keep contact with people from their past, including members of their birth family together with brothers and sisters, previous carers and other people who may have been important to them.

Experience has shown that having a strong sense of their history and family roots is very beneficial to a child’s well being.

Contact arrangements vary considerably - sometimes it’s regular face-to-face contact and sometimes it is by letter, maybe once or twice a year.
i’m interested - what happens next?

Step 1
General Enquiry Form / Information Discussion

If you are interested in proceeding, please complete the General Enquiry Form included in this information pack either by email or post. On receipt, we will contact you to arrange a pre-planned telephone call for an informal discussion about your interest in adoption. We aim to do this within 10 working days.

Step 2
Home informal visit

An experienced social worker will then arrange to visit you at your home. If you are interested in applying as a couple, they will need to see both of you. This is an opportunity for us to go through your queries together and to look at your individual circumstances.

We understand that you may be anxious about this visit, please don’t be, it’s called an ‘informal visit’ for a reason!

Step 3
Registration of Interest - (Stage 1)

Following the visit if you, and we agree, we will then ask you to complete a more detailed form called a ‘Registration of Interest’. This provides the information we need to begin to take up the checks, medicals and references, which are a legal requirement. We will allocate you a social worker who will guide you every step of the way from then on.

Step 4
Adoption Preparation Training Groups

You will be invited to attend our Adoption Preparation Training Groups. These are training courses held frequently across the regions we cover and will give you an overview about the adoption process.

Step 5
Formal Application and start of Assessment Process (Stage 2)

After successful completion of the preparation groups and once all the checks and references are satisfactorily completed, a shared decision is made between you and the agency to make your formal application and to begin the adoption assessment.

If we have particular issues to raise before this second stage, we will arrange to discuss these with you at a home visit.

The Stage 2 assessment involves regular meetings with the social worker so that they can complete the Prospective Adopters Report often called a PAR, which is in due course presented to the adoption panel.

Step 6
Panel

All reports are submitted to an independent adoption panel who will consider all the information provided and make a recommendation about whether you are suitable to adopt.
At any time during the assessment you, or we, may decide that adoption is not right for you. This could be due to something that arises during the assessment process, for example changing life circumstances or other concerns that lead you to decide that it isn’t the right time. In such circumstances we are able to put the process ‘on hold’ to give you time to reconsider and/or address any personal issues.

**Step 7**
Approval

The panel will make a recommendation to the agency based on the social worker’s assessment (PAR) to approve you or not. This completes Stage 2. In the event you do not agree with the Agency Decision, you have the right to appeal to the agency or alternatively, the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). You will receive details of the appeals procedure before panel.

**Step 8**
Family Finding

Now you are an approved adopter we will work to start looking for a child or children whose needs we believe you can best meet. This is where our expertise really shines. We have extensive experience of family finding and ensuring we find the right child for the right adopters and as we work with local authorities across the whole of the UK - we have a very extensive ‘pool’ of children to look at. You will receive regular communication from your social worker throughout this process.

**Step 9**
The perfect match

When a ‘match’ to a child is found, we will work closely with you and the child’s local authority adoption team in putting together introductions and support plans. Once a child moves into your home you will apply for an adoption order from court and once granted, you will become their legal parent/s.

**Step 10**
Ongoing support

As part of the matching process, ongoing support will be discussed and agreed. Prospective adopters tell us they have chosen Adoption Matters because of our clear commitment to the support of our adopters and our strong reputation for this service. People value our independence from the Local Authority who are seeking to place the children.

**Ongoing support**

We will do our utmost to obtain full and accurate information about the children you are considering. We will guide you through discussions regarding the child/ren who eventually join your family and support you through introductions to them. We will then remain in close contact to help you with advice and guidance regarding any particular issues that you encounter in caring for the child.

Support is offered through all stages of your enquiry; from your registration as adopters, through placement and, should you wish, even in the years ahead after an Adoption Order has been made.

We have adopters’ support groups which meet regularly and we can link you into Adoption UK which is a national adoption support network. We offer additional training geared to therapeutic parenting which provides strategies for managing children’s behaviours.

Again, through our Centre for Adoption support you have the comfort in knowing that you will receive ongoing support for as long as you need it.
frequently asked questions

These are just some of the questions we are most frequently asked:

**Do you have to be married to adopt?**
No. We welcome applications from people who are single, living together, divorced, widowed or in a same sex relationship. What does matter is if you are a couple is that you are in a stable, loving relationship.

**Can you adopt if you have your own children?**
Yes of course, we welcome and encourage enquiries from people who have their own children. You can adopt if you have children still living at home or if they have grown up and live elsewhere.

**Am I too old to adopt?**
We are all living longer these days and life expectancy has risen so much in the last two decades that we now actively encourage adopters in their fifties and above to think about adoption. Legally, adopters need to be over 21 but there is no upper age limit. We will expect you to have the health and vitality to see your children through to an age of independence. So consideration will be given to your age comparative to the age of the child you want to adopt; younger children are more likely to be placed with younger parents.

**Can I adopt if I am gay?**
Whether you are heterosexual, lesbian or gay does not prevent you from adopting. When looking at what makes a good adopter, sexuality is not on the ‘list’. We are proud members of New Family Social (www.newfamilysocial.org.uk) the UK network for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) adoptive and foster families which allows all our approved adopters free membership.

**What about income & employment?**
You do not have to live in a big house or be well off to adopt. You can adopt whilst renting, working, retired or if you are unemployed. What you do need is the willingness and commitment to offer a child or children a loving, stable and caring home in which they can thrive.

**What if I have been divorced?**
Many of our adopters are divorced and may have re-married or remained single. We would talk with you about your personal circumstances and learn about your personal history. We would need to get in touch with any previous partners for references - this is a legal requirement.

**What about general health?**
All enquiries are given careful consideration and adoption agencies are advised by the Department for Education that prospective adopters should have “the health and vigour to meet the child’s varied demands in their growing years and to be there for them into adulthood”. You will need to consider your age/s in relation to the age/s of the child/ren you wish to adopt.

**I have children of my own, what age gap should I consider?**
Generally, we recommend that the child to be adopted is placed as the youngest family member and usually an age gap of a couple of years is preferred; after all that’s how families usually grow. Therefore, we would suggest you wait until your youngest child is aged 4 before applying, however, we look at all enquiries on an individual basis and we are happy to discuss your particular circumstances with you.

**How long does adoption take?**
Around 6 months. In general, 2 months from Registration of Interest to formal application and 4 months from formal application to your approval at panel is our aim. However, we are led by you and you can slow this process down at any stage if you wish.
Experience has taught us that children placed for adoption are emotionally vulnerable and very demanding of attention and that it will take time for them to begin to settle in your family. You will have to consider how this may affect the children living in the family. It will be important for your social worker to meet your children and to consider their views and understanding of adoption.

Occasionally a family with young children are interested in adopting either a much older school-aged child or a teenager or an older child with a severe disability. The circumstances of their application would be given careful individual consideration.

**Can you adopt if you are unable to have your own children?**

Yes. However, we will always encourage you to discuss matters relating to childlessness with your GP and to pursue medical investigations before considering adoption. We always ask you to have completed any investigations or treatment before actively pursuing an adoption application. Both avenues to parenthood are emotionally arduous and our experience has shown that it is unwise to follow both options simultaneously. You will not be prevented from adopting if there is no clear explanation for your infertility. Some people positively choose adoption over having birth children.

**Are there any residence restrictions?**

It is essential that all prospective adopters are clear about their domicile and habitual residence as early as possible in the adoption process. For single applicants, the law states that they must either be domiciled in the UK, or habitually resident for at least a year before making an application. For couples, one of the applicants must be domiciled in the UK or both must be habitually resident in the UK for at least a year before making the application. If in doubt about this, talk to us and we may recommend that you seek independent legal advice.

**How important is support and how much might I need?**

Support from family and friends is very important. Adoption is not something you should do in isolation as you will need to draw on practical and emotional support in planned and in emergency situations. Your social worker will look carefully with you at your existing support network and that which you may develop in the future.

**Can you be approved by more than one adoption agency?**

No, you can only be registered to adopt with one agency. So if, as adopters approved by another agency, you are living in our area and now wish to work with us, we will discuss your individual circumstances with you and with the agency that approved you.

**If you are considering applying to adopt, do any checks have to be made?**

Yes. There are lots of checks that we have to make and this is guided by law and governed by the Government body Ofsted. They include, police checks known as DBS, education, probation, social services, we will also ask you for several personal references and will need to speak to previous partners.

There are certain criminal convictions that are considered a bar to adoption but we will look into all criminal convictions on an individual basis and take into consideration the circumstances and time of any offences. We would ask you to advise any convictions as early as possible so we can discuss this with you.
your skills and experience

You may be worried that you do not have the right skills and experience to adopt, well don’t!

We will explore with you how your life experience, present knowledge and skills will help you be a successful adopter. You may not have lots of experience of bringing up or looking after children, but other experiences in your life may have given you understanding which will be useful as an adopter.

**For example:**

- You may have cared for the children of relatives or friends;
- You may have experienced separation from people important to you or even bereavement and successfully managed these emotionally times. This could help you to understand how a child coming into foster or adoptive care may feel;
- You may have been bullied at school or work and so be able to stand up for a child who also feels different.

At this initial stage it would be helpful if you could begin to think about your life experience and the relevant skills and knowledge it has given to you. You need to think not only about the employment you have had and any qualifications you have gained, but also about experiences acquired through your own family life, voluntary work, hobbies and interests.

Why not use the following headlines as a guide to the sort of areas we will be discussing with you further?

- Child care experience
  - What did you learn from the way you were brought up?
  - What experience have you had in caring for children?
  - Should you extend your experience by looking after friends’ or families’ children or by getting involved with local children’s groups or schools?
- Working with others as part of a team
- Links with individuals/groups in your community
- Relevant training/achievements
- Which of your family and friends could offer practical and emotional support?
**Medical charges**
You may have to pay for your adoption medical. This is conducted and charged for by your GP and payment is at their discretion, but the recommended fee is around £74.00.

**International checks**
If you have lived or worked abroad you are required to have police checks in the relevant country. This sometimes involves the payment of a fee. In some situations the check will need to be translated, and this may also involve a payment to the translator.

**Legal Expenses**
There is a standard national fee of £170 to lodge an Adoption Application in the Court. The child’s local authority usually agrees to pay this fee. They will usually pay legal costs involved in a complex adoption application if you are not eligible for Community Legal Advice (formerly Legal Aid).

**Financial Support**
Local Authorities will consider the possibility of offering financial support to families for children who have a range of additional needs that require extra funding. Families may be required to make an income declaration and, generally, allowances are taxable. Once agreed, allowances may continue to be paid long-term (post Adoption Order) or may be a one-off lump sum. The allowances do not undermine the legality of the Adoption Order. The Adoption Support Fund released in May 2015, may also assist with future support needs.

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**Child Benefit**
Details can be obtained from www.gov.uk/child-benefit

**Child Tax Credits/Working Tax credit**
Details can be obtained www.gov.uk/child-tax-credit/overview

**Statutory Adoption Pay**
Details can be found on www.gov.uk/adoption-pay-leave about payments for adoption leave. We or the Local Authority will provide you with a matching certificate to pass to your employer to claim any necessary entitlements.

**Council Housing/Housing Benefit/Universal Credit**
Adopters may have priority for council housing and if claiming the above benefits can apply for discretionary housing payments whilst awaiting the placement of a child, so that they are not penalised because they have a spare bedroom.

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**The Adoption Support Fund (ASF) was introduced in May 2015 and allows adopters to access support services more easily in future.**

More information ASF is available at: www.first4adoption.org.uk/adoption-support/adoption-support-fund
**sarah’s story**

**My name is Sarah Savage, born and brought up in Middlesex, but I moved to Wilmslow with my husband 11 years ago.**

Due to our journey I am now studying to be a counsellor, with the wish to help and support others that are going through what we have experienced.

Although we were desperate to have children and a family of our own following infertility and several attempts of IVF, I am not sure we would have endured the adoption process if we did not enter into this new journey with the support, knowledge and care from Adoption Matters’ social workers.

After our initial meeting discussing why we wanted to adopt, how many children would we be thinking of at the moment, getting the tick of yes we can continue to the next stage brought us a step closer. From there we started our preparation groups, meeting others that all had the same desire as us and meeting some friends that we are now very close with. The four days were emotionally exhausting but great fun was had, a lot of information was given to us to help us decide if adoption really was for us, with all the highlights and low times explained to us in detail. Meeting adopters (a couple and a single man), hearing from them and the ‘real’ stories was just a deal fixer for us.

Once we had finished the prep groups we posted our intent to adopt and we were soon appointed our social worker, who was to investigate ‘every’ part of our lives. It was hard going, but our worker was with us all the way, holding our hands through the process starting to feel like part of the family. Once all the administration and forms were complete we were handed to a social worker who was to see us through Adoption Panel (gulp) and should that be successful, family finding through to the final Adoption Order.

As with our first worker the relationship with our new worker became very strong. Taken into the adoption panel, sat with approx. 13 people in the room, a few questions asked but friendly and professional. I can remember the nerves – our next step forward was with the decision of these faces all focused on us. We were lucky enough that the Panel Chairman was in with us that day and we had the phone call within 24 hrs, we were accepted.

We were going to be a Mummy and Daddy to our choice of 2 children that were out there somewhere.

It wasn't long until our worker turned up with a mountain of profiles, because we had chosen to adopt siblings the choice was endless and overwhelming, how do you not fall in love with everyone and their story? We chose to minimise our requirements – as harsh as that may seem, who would fit within our lives and be less disturbed by the move to their forever home.

After a couple of heart wrenching knockbacks beaten to the post by another lucky family, we were approached via Adoption Matters from a local authority. Our worker called us giddy with excitement, they had two girls, sisters! that they thought would be perfect for us. Looking at our profiles on the database, we were their first choice.

Our worker brought their profiles round to us and over a coffee and a piece of paper with two little faces looking at us, we knew these were going to be ‘our girls’. I can’t explain the feeling, we just knew in our hearts.

The ball started rolling, with the support of our worker we had a meeting at our home with the girls social worker and family finder from the local authority, all went well, abundance of cakes and biscuits must have helped! Next steps we were to meet the girls foster carers, this was great because we got to learn about them as little people and not just on paper, all started to become very real. From this date we confirmed a date for matching panel, this would be the seal for us that these two little girls were in reaching distance.
The day of matching panel, we all congregated at the local authority offices. Lots of confirming from us all that we were happy to continue, a plan was written up on when we would start introductions, how they would proceed. The sooner the better was agreed for the girls as they had been in care too long. Two weeks after matching panel we were to meet our girls in the flesh for the first time. Over elation was, panic we need to get their rooms ready. Wonderful friends and family lending us cots and a cot bed, several trips to IKEA, Mothercare, Costco etc we needed car seats, a buggy for the youngest, nappies... how our lives soon got turned upside down.

I will never forget the first day we went to the Foster Carers house to meet the girls, a little face of an inquisitive two and a half year old at the window, a just walking 18 month old waddling up the drive to meet us, then taking my hand to walk back into the house. Amazing! Once in the house the little face at the window saying hello mummy. It was love at first sight. The next two weeks we met with the girls at the Foster Carers home, going to the park, just playing and gaining their trust. They were slowly introduced to their new home and bedrooms, which they loved immediately and climbed into their beds for an afternoon nap, before going back to their Foster home. In 2011, after what had felt a very long two weeks the day had come we were to bring them home a week before my 40th birthday, what a present!!

The following days, weeks and months we all learnt how to adapt to each other, with lots of nurturing, the most amazing hugs, not many tears but they were ickle girls that had adapted to being compliant all their short lives. Our worker from Adoption Matters was always on hand to help with worries or concerns and a frequent visitor supporting us all the way.

I have got quite emotional telling this story, it has been a journey of trials and tribulations, but I wouldn’t change it for the world. We have ‘our girls’ who are so close and an absolute blessing to us.

Our worker brought their profiles round to us and over a coffee and a piece of paper with two little faces looking at us, we knew these were going to be ‘our girls’. I can’t explain the feeling, we just knew in our hearts.
other organisations that may be useful

**First4adoption**
First4Adoption is an independent organisation set up to provide information about the process of applying to adopt and about the applicant/s' local adoption agencies. They provide a helpline and a useful website, also information about the adoption passport.

Tel: **0300 222 0022**
[www.first4adoption.org.uk](http://www.first4adoption.org.uk)

**Department for Education (DfE)**
The website contains details of the adoption passport which explains about entitlements as a prospective adopter and what support you can request from the local authority who have placed a child with you via the agency and from the local authority in the area where you are living.

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education)

**BAAF (British Association for Adoption & Fostering)**
BAAF is an independent organisation that provides information and advice about adoption and fostering, strives to improve practice and to influence policy, runs courses and conferences and publishes a wealth of informative literature.

BAAF also offer Be My Parent, which is a monthly colour newspaper, produced by BAAF, which features children who need new, permanent families.

Tel: **0207 421 2600**
[www.baaf.org.uk](http://www.baaf.org.uk)

**New Family Social**
New Family Social is the UK network for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) adoptive and foster families. We are proud members of New Family Social allowing all our approved adopters free membership.

Tel: **0843 2899457**
[www.newfamilysocial.co.uk](http://www.newfamilysocial.co.uk)

**Adoption UK**
Adoption UK is a national self-help group run by, and for, adoptive parents, offering support before, during and after adoption. We offer prospective adopters one year’s free membership to Adoption UK.

Tel: **01295 752240**
[www.adoptionuk.org](http://www.adoptionuk.org)

**Ofsted**
Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills. They inspect and regulate our services.

Tel: **03001 231 231**
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)
Thank YOU for your enquiry.

We hope our information guide was of interest. The next step would be to fill in our general enquiry form and return it to us so we can proceed with your enquiry.

However, if you have some queries you would like answering first, you can contact our confidential advice line at any time for a quick chat with our experienced adoption practitioners. Just call 0300 123 1066 Monday to Friday between 10-4pm.

There is no such thing as a silly question and we will be happy to answer any queries you may have.

We look forward to hearing from you again soon and thank you again for your interest.

The Adoption Matters Recruitment Team.

www.adoptionmatters.org
or call us on 0300 123 1066