

You CAN do it...

adopt a child

What is adoption?

North Somerset Council is committed to permanent family care for all children, as far as possible.

For some children, whose own families are unable to bring them up, the best plan is for them to be adopted. Adoption means that children gain a new parent or parents who will make a permanent commitment to them to bring them up as part of their family.

The courts, when granting an adoption order, transfer the parental responsibility of the original parent(s) permanently to the adoptive parent(s). Legally, it is as if the

adopted child had been born to the adoptive family. There are other ways of caring for other people's children, but only adoption permanently transfers the responsibility for such children from the parents to whom they were born, to new parents.

Adopting a child can bring enormous rewards to both the adopter(s) and the child. It brings about a new relationship which can provide long term security and love, and help children overcome much of the sadness which has led to their needing a new parent or parents.

Tel: 01275 888 236

email: adoption@n-somerset.gov.uk

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What sort of adopters do we need?

The range of needs presented by children is enormous, and we are looking for a wide variety of adopters to provide families for children who need them.

Whilst applicants must be over the age of 21 years there are no other strict criteria relating to age or lifestyle.

Applicants may be:

- married, living with a partner or single
- employed or unemployed
- living inside or outside of North Somerset

Above all, adoptive parents need to have an understanding of children's needs, time, energy and commitment to helping a child throughout their life.

Although adoptive homes are needed for children of all ages, there are very few babies needing to be adopted. Adoptive homes are especially needed for children over the age of two years, for sibling groups who need to be placed together, children from minority ethnic groups and for children with disabilities.

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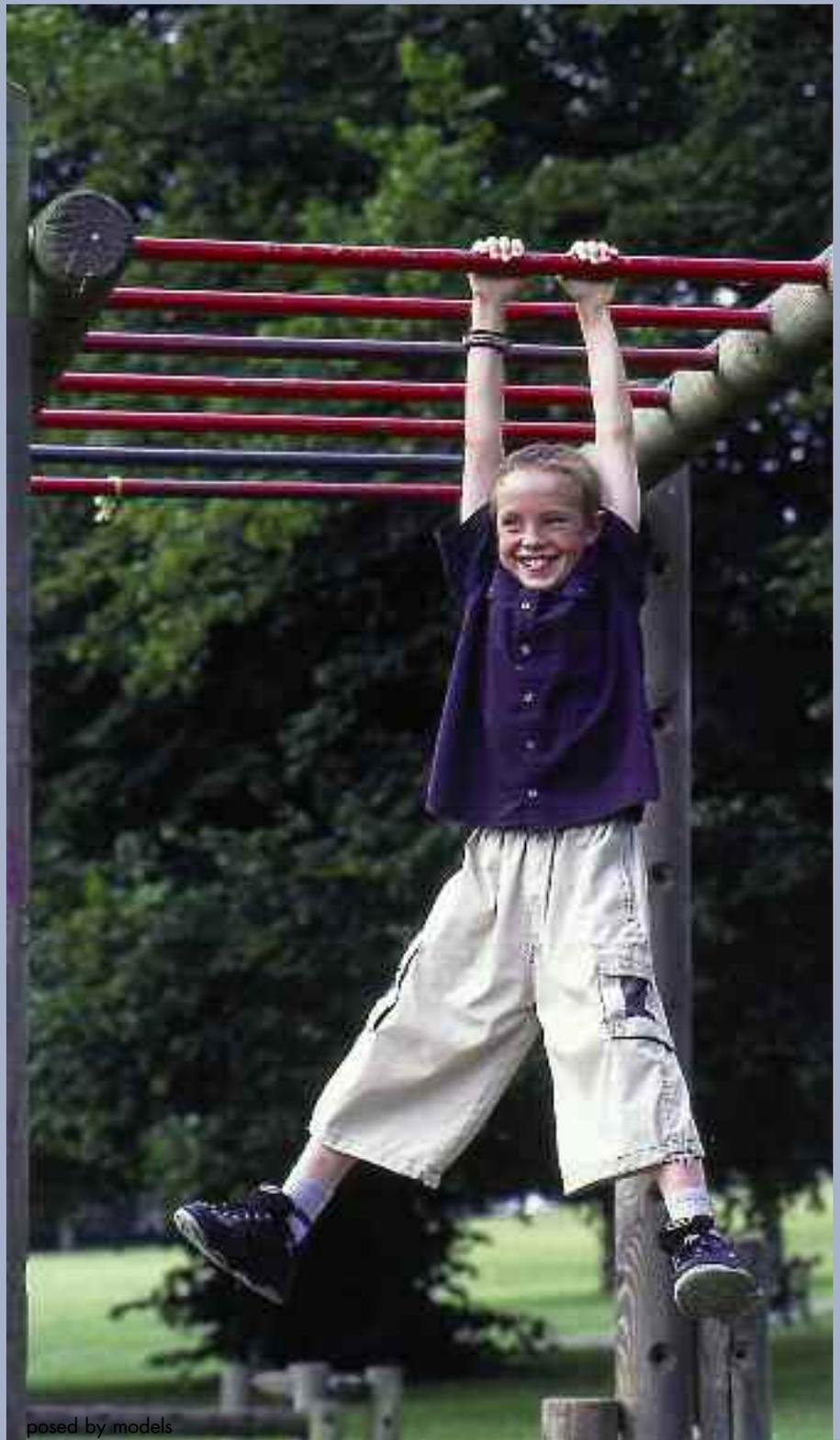
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Quotes from adoptive parents:

"It's been hard work, but fun. I highly recommend adoption – it's a life changing experience."

"The adoption process was, at times, stressful, but the love, joy and happiness our son brings, makes it all worthwhile."

"Adoption is a real roller coaster of emotions. Up one minute and down the next. But the first time your child smiles at you makes it all worthwhile."



posed by models

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Who are the children needing adoptive families?

Many children who need an adoptive home are currently in foster care, having experienced some kind of trauma in their early lives. They may have emotional, behavioural or developmental problems as a result of their early experience. They may have suffered physical and/or sexual abuse, neglect or other forms of ill treatment. Some may have medical problems, physical or learning disabilities.

Some children are placed for adoption with the consent and co-operation of their parents, who may be very actively involved in planning the adoption and may wish to continue to remain in contact with the child and his or her adopters.

Other children are placed for adoption as a result of a court's decision, possibly against their parents' wishes.

Children needing adoptive families come from a wide range of social backgrounds, races, cultures, and religions.

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Steps to becoming an adoptive parent

Information and preparation

Following your initial enquiry, you will be offered an interview with a social worker and invited to attend an information evening.

If you wish to take things further you will be required to attend an adoption preparation course run by Social Services.

Assessment and Checks

If you still wish to pursue your enquiry, and when a decision has been made to take up your application, a social worker will contact you to arrange a series of visits to your home.

The purpose of these visits is to give you more information about adoption and to discuss the issues with you in detail so that you can be sure that adoption is right for you as a family. In addition, we need to know you well enough to be sure that you can meet the needs of any child we place with you for adoption.

As well as the visits, we are required by law to take up various references, including police, health and personal references. The process is confidential and you should not be deterred if you have had difficulties in the past. We are interested in learning of people's strengths and whether they could make good parents.

You also have to have a medical examination, for which you pay the fee. We are looking for families with good general health, but it may be that you have some health problems which would not necessarily prevent us from accepting your application.

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Approval and matching with a child

Following the visits of the social worker, a full report is prepared and presented to the North Somerset Adoption Panel, which is responsible for making recommendations concerning the suitability of applicants as prospective adopters.

When you have been accepted as prospective adopters, your social worker will keep in touch with you until the right child has been identified. This may involve a wait of only a few months, or may extend into a wait of one, two or more years. You will be given full

information about the child for you to consider before the first meeting is arranged. If at any stage you feel the child is not right for you, you should tell your social worker so that the matter can be discussed. You will need to feel sure about any child suggested, as you are entering into a life-long commitment.

Meeting the child

Once you have met the child and decide you wish to proceed, a series of introductions will be planned, and when everyone involved agrees the time is right, the child will join your family.

Obtaining the adoption order

You can apply to the court for an adoption order as soon as the child comes to live with you.

However, it is likely that both you and the child will need more time to settle down together before thinking about applying to the court. Legal complexities may also influence the timing of your application to the court.

The child's social worker will be visiting you regularly during this period, and advising you about when and how to apply to the court.

Once the adoption order is made, you will be issued with an adoption certificate in your child's new name, which replaces their original birth certificate.

Support after the adoption

Ongoing support is available to adoptive parents throughout the process and after adoption. This can take the form of opportunities to attend support groups, training and individual visits from social workers.

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Inter-country (overseas) adoption



posed by model

What is inter-country adoption?

Inter-country adoption is an alternative means of providing a family for a child whose country of origin considers the child to be in need of an adoptive home.

Adoption transfers the legal responsibility of the original parent(s) permanently to the adoptive parent(s) and provides the child with a new, secure and permanent family to grow up in.

Who are the children needing an adoptive home?

Inter-country adoption applies to a child adopted from outside of the United Kingdom.

Children will be living in a variety of circumstances prior to placement, for instance, a children's home, orphanage or foster care, and there may be little information known about their early life or upbringing.

The children may have emotional, behavioural or developmental problems. Some may have medical problems, physical or learning disabilities.

Who can adopt?

Adopters who wish to adopt from overseas come from a range of family circumstances.

Inter-country adopters have to fulfil the same criteria as domestic adopters, and each country has their own requirements, for example, to be of a certain age. Advice will be given to you regarding each country's criteria.

Who undertakes the assessment?

An independent assessor experienced in inter-country adoption will visit you initially

to discuss your enquiry. This is an opportunity for you to discuss your application as well as hearing more about the country from which you wish to adopt.

The independent assessor will then write a report which will be presented to the North Somerset Adoption Panel, who consider applications from prospective adopters who wish to adopt from overseas. The same standards will be applied as in the case for domestic adoptive applicants.

A preparation course will be offered to adoptive applicants, which you would be expected to attend.

Will there be a charge?

A fee is charged for the initial visit and subsequent assessment report. This fee will apply to all applicants unless they are in receipt of social security benefits.

A breakdown of the fee structure can be obtained from the adoption team.

Further advice

As well as our advice you can contact

Overseas Adoption Helpline

Tel: 0208 447 4753

www.oah.org.uk

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I/we have read the information pack on adoption and would like a social worker to contact me/us to discuss adoption.

Signed

Name/s

Date of birth

Address

Postcode

Telephone

I/we are interested in: Adoption from within UK
(please tick box)

Adoption from overseas

Please indicate the best times to contact you and give a work or mobile number if necessary



Return to:
Adoption,
Town Hall, Weston-super-Mare,
Somerset BS23 1UF
Tel: 01275 888 236
email:
adoption@n-somerset.gov.uk