

Adoption and Permanent Fostering

Step-by-step Guide

Step 1 – express an interest Contact or be referred to us to make an initial enquiry. You can do this by calling 0131 556 6787 or e-mailing: familybasedcare.east@edinburgh.gov.uk

Step 2 – the information meeting After your initial enquiry, we may ask you to an information meeting where you can meet and chat with social workers and adoptive or permanent foster parents. The parents can tell you first-hand about adopting a child – the challenges and the rewards. And the social workers will be happy to answer any questions you have about what happens or about the children who need permanent new homes.

Step 3 – the initial visit A social worker will arrange to meet with you. This meeting gives you an opportunity to 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 want out of adoption or permanent fostering and what you feel you can offer a child.

Step 4 – making an application If you decide to go ahead you will need to fill in an application form. You will also be asked to give permission for checks to be made by ourselves and Disclosure Scotland. Having checks carried out on you may sound daunting. But it's worth remembering that these checks have to be carried out to rule out anyone who has committed a serious crime, such as violence or offences against children.

Step 5 – preparation, assessment and training If your application is accepted, you will begin a longer period of preparation, assessment and training, working in partnership with your social worker. Preparation is a time when you can find out more details and do some very important thinking about making a lifetime commitment to a child. Part of our job is to give you a lot of information about adoption and permanent fostering, including the children requiring permanent care in your area.

You have a crucial role to play at this time. 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 or permanent foster parent likely to be? Can you make the sort of commitment that will really make a difference to a child's life?

While you are learning about adoption and permanent fostering, we will begin to assess your suitability by building up a thorough profile of you. This is known as the home study. A social worker from the Council will make several visits to your home and ask you detailed questions about your own family background, your childhood and your present circumstances. If you're in a couple, the social worker will want to see you together and individually. You'll also have to have a full medical examination with your own GP, and you will be asked to provide two personal referees and an employment reference if applicable.

The home study is demanding, it can feel intrusive and it will take several months to complete. But there are good reasons why everything is explored in depth with you. Adoption and permanent fostering are commitments for life, and we must ensure you are right for the role. Just as importantly, you must be certain you can make a success of it.

This guide gives you an outline of the different steps involved in the adoption and permanent fostering process.

The 'step-by-step' chart shows the typical sequence you will follow with the City of Edinburgh Council.



Step 6 – the home study report At the end of the home study, you and the social worker will work together to produce a home study report. The report includes a detailed assessment of you as a potential adoptive or permanent foster parent, along with the results of the medical, disclosure and local authority checks and your personal and employment references. A key part of the report is for you to decide the sort of child or children you feel you could take on. 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?

Step 7 – the adoption and permanent care panel The home study report goes forward to a panel – a group of social workers, other professionals and independent members. Your social worker will attend to answer any questions from panel members. You will also be asked to attend. Once the panel have considered the report, they will recommend whether or not you should be approved as an adoptive or permanent foster parent.

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 – linking you to a child/children Once you are approved we will begin to consider whether there are children waiting for placement who might be a suitable match for you. In some cases we may already have a child/children in mind and this process could start more quickly.

Step 9 – matching you to a child/children Once a child or children have been identified as possibly suitable for you, you will be given full information about their background and meet with their social worker and other significant people. Following a linking meeting to explore the viability of the match, a Matching Panel will be set up within four to six weeks to make recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker.

Step 10 – legal position When adopting, you will be able to apply to the court for an Adoption Order to be granted any time 13 weeks after a child or children have been placed with you. If you are permanently fostering, the legal position will vary and your social worker will be able to advise you.

Step-by-step Chart

This guide should be read along with the Adoption and Permanent Fostering Questions and Answers booklet.

1 express an interest

2 the information meeting

3 the initial visit

4 making an application

5 preparation, assessment and training

6 the home study report

7 the adoption and permanent care panel

8 linking you to a child/children

9 matching you to a child/children

10 legal position