

Adoption Services in Middlesbrough Children's guide



Statement of Purpose

- The safety, welfare and needs of children come first.
- The adoption service works in partnership with young people, their birth parents, adoptive parents and their families. They also work with people from other adoption services that find people who want to adopt a child like you.
- The adoption service aims to treat everyone fairly.
- The adoption service aims to help children who need parents by finding people who want to adopt a child and matching them up.
- They also help people who ask for their child to be adopted; people who have been adopted; and other people in their families.
- Staff in the adoption service are all properly trained and experienced.
- The adoption service is very careful about making sure that those people who want to adopt a child are the right kind of people. This includes checking into their background, finding out what kind of a parent they would be and helping them to understand what is needed.
- The adoption service provides information and support for people who want to adopt a child. This includes having their own social worker to help them through the long process.
- The adoption service makes sure that people who adopt a child know where to get help and support after they have adopted someone.
- The Adoption Service has a complaints procedure if things go wrong.

Who's who in the adoption service?

These are the people who work for the Adoption Service.

Name	Job title
Lynn Woodhouse	Adoption/Fostering Team Manager
Tony Kerr	Assistant Team Manager, Adoption
Debbie Harrison	Social Worker, Adoption Team
Amy Tregidga	Social Worker, Adoption Team
Joyce Virth	Social Worker, Adoption Team
Claire Gibbon	Social Worker, Adoption/Fostering Team
Carole Tonner	Recruitment Training & Development Officer
Sue Atkinson	Team Clerk (shared with Fostering)
Gill Bisp	Team Clerk (shared with Fostering)

Who are adoptive parents?

Adoptive parents come from all sorts of backgrounds and have all sorts of families.

People who want to adopt a child might be:-

- People who are not married and live by themselves.
- People who are not married, and live as partners.
- People who are married but don't have any children of their own.
- People who are married and have children of their own.
- People who already look after children as foster carers.

- People who would like to adopt children with disabilities, babies or groups of brothers and sisters.

In our **Pledge** to you, we promise that:

“We will try very hard to make sure that you live with people who care about you and care for you.”

Being adopted

- When a plan is made that you need to be adopted into a new family, a Judge in a Court of Law makes this decision. From this point, it is usually about 8 months until we find a new family for you.
- Your social worker will talk to you about what it means to be adopted and the kind of family you would like to have.
- We try to match you and your new parents very carefully so that you will all be happy to become part of the same family forever. Your new family may live nearby or could live in another part of the country.
- Before you meet your new family, your social worker will visit to discuss your situation with them. Together, they may decide to meet your foster carer to get more information about what you are like to live with.
- When they meet, they will talk about your needs and what kind of things you like to do and also the things you don't! They will talk about how you are doing at school and what your hobbies are.
- The new family can tell your carers and social worker where the local parks are, where the school is and what sort of things they do on a weekend. They might have a pet dog or cat.
- When you have lived with your new family for a few months your new parents make a decision to apply to the court to adopt you. The court makes this decision. Once you are legally adopted, it means that you are no longer part of your birth family - you belong to your new adoptive parents.

Contact between Adoptive Families and Birth Families

- Before you are legally adopted, a plan is made about contact between your birth family and your new adoptive family. This includes contact with parents, grandparents and brothers and sisters.
- Contact will be encouraged so links can be kept up between your birth family and your new family. Contact can be face to face - so you meet back up with your birth family - or through the "post box" system.
- Face to face contact will only happen if your new family and your social worker feel that it would be right for you. The adoption service can help this to happen. This only happens if it has been agreed before you go to live with your new family.
- You and your adoptive parents can send cards, letters, drawings or photographs to the post box. The adoption service will keep a copy, in case they get lost.
- The adoption service will send things on to your birth family and they can write back to you, using the post box. Your adoptive parents decide whether it is ok to pass on to you the things that are sent by your birth family.
- The adoption service always check to make sure people haven't moved before they send things on. This means that important information doesn't get lost and isn't delivered to someone else by mistake.
- If contact wasn't agreed at the time of adoption, the service can ask if people are willing to have contact. The adoption service **cannot** make people accept contact.
- The priority is for you to have a permanent family.

Recruiting and Supporting Adoptive Parents

- The adoption service advertises for adoptive parents by placing adverts in Newspapers, Magazines, on the internet (www.middlesbrough.gov.uk), (www.mgrid.org.uk), bus shelters, yellow pages, Slideshows placed on Electronic Display boards and by using posters. We also set up and man information stands in public areas. In 2011 we have also featured on TV and Radio
- An Information Pack is sent out to people who are interested.
- 2 Social Workers visit and talk about the application process, the needs of children like you who need a new family and the role of an adoptive parent. They also find out about their situation and the reasons why they want to adopt a child.
- The Social Workers visit again to make sure that they have met everyone in the household and to make sure the family has thought about adoption seriously.
- A check is made with the Criminal Records Bureau to see if they have been in any trouble with the police.
- The person has a medical check to make sure they are fit.
- Then they take part in an adoptive parent preparation group that lasts for 4 whole days. This gives them lots of information.
- Adoptive parents then do at least 6 sessions with 2 social workers to find out about their personal background, history, experience, their home and their thoughts about what type of a parent they will become.
- Each person in the household is talked to separately.

- 2 people who know them well are interviewed. Also 1 other family member, who could be your new grandma, uncle etc.
- The Family Placement Panel looks at all the information. The panel then makes a recommendation about whether they think the person should be approved as an adoptive parent.
- The Deputy Director of Children, Families and Learning gives the final approval for the person to become an adoptive parent.
- Once adoptive parents have been approved they are given information about how a match is made between them and a child.
- Adoptive parents are given support by a social worker from the adoption team who visits them regularly. The social worker looks for a possible child and discusses the child's situation with them.
- The adoption team social worker works closely with the child's social worker to make sure that the adoption will work for everyone. This includes providing support when people are introduced to each other.
- Adoptive parents, approved by the adoption service, are regularly sent a newsletter about the service.
- Adoptive parents are given information about places to get help and support after they have adopted someone. This includes Adoption UK and After Adoption.
- They are also offered a chance to do further training as looking after a child can be a difficult but rewarding job.

What to do if you are unhappy about anything to do with the adoption service.

➤ **Talk to someone**

Many problems can be sorted out quite easily if you tell someone about them. *All our staff have a responsibility to help you to sort things out, if you ask them to.* Talk to your social worker (or any other member of staff), a relative, your teacher, your independent visitor (if you have one) or anyone else that you trust.

➤ **Contact After Adoption**

After Adoption provides information, support and advice to anyone affected by adoption. You can call (free) on TALKadoption: **0808 808 1234**, text on: **07818594201** or e-mail: **actionline@afteradoption.org.uk**

➤ **Contact an Independent Advocate**

You can also get help from an independent advocate who can speak up on your behalf. *The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) will provide you with an adult (who does not work for the Council) to help you.* You can contact NYAS on their freephone number: **0800 616101**, send a text to **0777 333 4555** or e-mail to: **help@nyas.net**

➤ **Contact the Children's Rights Director for England**

The Children's Rights Director is responsible for listening to the views of children who live away from home. The Children's Rights Director for England is Roger Morgan. His address is Office of the Children's Rights Director, Ofsted, Aviation House, 125 Kingsway, London WC2B 6SE.

There are lots of ways to have your say about living away from home so call (free) on: **0800 528 0731** or visit the web site: **www.rights4me.org.uk** to find out what other young people have said.

➤ **Make a complaint**

The law says that if you are unhappy about anything that we do or do not do, you have the right to complain about it. The Children's Complaints Officer is there to make sure that your complaint is dealt with properly.

The Children's Complaints Officer is based in Vancouver House:

01642 728416 Mon to Thurs 8.30 - 5.00pm, Fri 8.30 - 4.30pm

Email - voicemyourviews@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Text - **07624 802273**

This is what happens when you make a complaint.....

You will get a letter saying who will look into your complaint. You should get this letter within 3 working days of us hearing from you.

Stage 1 - Local Problem-solving

A manager who is responsible for the service will talk to you about your complaint. They will try to sort it out as quickly as possible. We will try to resolve your complaint within 10 working days if we can. If your complaint has not been resolved or you have not received a response within 20 working days, you can move to.....

Stage 2 - Investigation

A different manager will look into what has happened. An Independent Person - someone who does not work for the council - will be involved too. They will make sure your complaint is dealt with fairly. We will try to complete this stage in 25 working days. If you are not happy with how your complaint has been dealt with, you can move to.....

Stage 3 - Review Panel

Your complaint will be looked at by a 'Review Panel'. The panel is made up of three independent people, who do not work for the Council. You will be asked if you would like to go and talk to the panel. This panel will decide if your complaint has been dealt with properly and fairly. The panel will say what they think should happen. We will tell you what we are going to do.

If you are still not happy, you can talk to the Local Government Ombudsman. Contact their Adviceline: **0300 061 0614** or **0845 602 1983**, text 'call back' to **0762 480 4299** or e-mail: advice@lgo.org.uk