



Mabwysiadu
Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru
Adoption
Mid & West Wales

Adoption Information Pack



adoptionmwwales.org.uk



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Welcome to Mid and West Wales Adoption Service which represents Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion and Powys.

We know how important the task of caring for children is and understand that making the decision to adopt can be life changing for you and your family. You may have been thinking about adoption for a while but be unsure whether becoming an adopter is right for you.

We understand that you probably have lots of questions and would encourage you to take the next step and talk to a member of the adoption team.

Within this pack you will find plenty of information about becoming an adoptive parent/s. We hope that you find it useful and informative.

You may make an enquiry to any adoption agency and are not confined to applying to the Local Authority in which you live, although you may only be registered with one adoption agency at any one time. You should declare your enquiry and/or any refusal for your enquiry to any agency to whom you make a subsequent application or enquiry.



What is the difference between fostering and adoption?

Adoption means that a child becomes legally a permanent member of your family and you will have full parental responsibility for the child. The Local Authority may provide a range of adoption support services by agreement with adoptive parents, but there is no legal obligation for the adopters to accept them if they do not wish to.

Intercountry Adoption – Mid and West Wales Adoption Service will provide a service to people who wish to adopt a child from another country. The eligibility criteria and the discretionary considerations will be determined by the particular requirements of the country from which you intend to adopt.

Fostering is providing a safe and caring environment within your own home for a child or young person when their own family is unable to do so for some reason. This could be on a long or short term basis, or even for an emergency of a couple of days. The Local Authority or child's birth parent/s have parental responsibility for the child and the parent/s may well be involved in ongoing contact and decision making for the child.

An application to foster should not be embarked upon as a means of achieving adoption. However, there are some situations, particularly when there are lengthy ongoing court proceedings, where prospective adopters for a particular child/ren, can be considered for approval as foster carers pending the satisfactory completion of the adoption process.



The Children

Why do children need adopting?

Children who need permanent families are usually already “in care” and placed with foster carers. They will be unable, for one reason or another to return to their birth parents. Some children will have been neglected, have had very unsettled lives, or have been subject to physical or sexual abuse. Emotional neglect can be as damaging as physical neglect and children have to learn to feel secure and to trust again.

Who are the children?

At any one time across the U.K. there are thousands of children available for adoption. The number of babies available nowadays is decreasing, but from time to time families for children aged between 0 and 3 years are needed.

However there are many other children needing permanent families. They are either single children aged 3 and over, or family groups who need to be placed together.

Some will be from different cultural backgrounds or be of mixed parentage and require families who can reflect their cultural and/or religious heritage.

Many of the children have emotional and behavioural needs and some may have physical and/or learning disabilities.

Children who are placed for adoption may well have spent time in several foster placements, and moving into an adoptive family may be the latest major change in their lives. They are likely to struggle to build relationships and may have emotional and behavioural difficulties and need a lot of nurturing and attention to help them recover from their earlier experiences and to help them feel secure.



What about the child's birth family?

It is natural and right for a child to want to know about his or her birth family. We believe it important that adopted children grow up knowing about their adoption, and the law allows them, once they become 18 years old to have access to their original birth records.

Increasingly children, who are placed for adoption, retain some contact with their birth families. This may be:

- direct contact, particularly with siblings, but also with grandparents and other family members, including birth parents,
-
- indirect contact through letters, photographs etc. which may be facilitated by the adoptive family or through the 'post-box' system
-
- with social services acting as an intermediary.

Your feelings and views about this, and your willingness and ability to promote contact between a child and their birth parents will be considered as part of the assessment process.



What kind of families are needed?

We need a whole range of families to meet the varying needs of the children we place for adoption. We are looking for people who can provide a child with a family for the whole of their childhood and beyond. You may be single, married, divorced, child-less or already have children. You may be working or unemployed. Whatever your situation, we need you to be able to provide affection, security and stability.

Legally, you must be over the age of 21 years to become an adoptive parent (with the exception of step-parent adoption, where different rules apply.)

There is no maximum age for adopting, but consideration will be given to each child's individual needs, and whether you can meet these needs through childhood, into early adulthood and beyond. The applicant(s) who appears to best meet those needs are most likely to be proposed as a suitable match. Wherever appropriate the Adoption Agency takes into account the views of the birth families; perhaps if birth parents wish their child to be brought up in a particular faith.

Learning to live with a new family can mean that children may test you to the limit. Children placed at any age may present families with a whole range of behaviours, so adopters need stamina, patience, and a good sense of humour!

Across the U.K there are many of adopters waiting to adopt, and although there are many children waiting for permanent homes there is often a mismatch between the needs of the children and the adoptive families available. Most commonly adopters are hoping to adopt very young children up to the age of 2 years whereas the children who have the longest wait for permanent families tend to be aged over 5 or be part of a sibling (family) group who need to stay together. The situation in Mid and West Wales reflects this national picture.



Prospective adopters who are willing to consider children aged over 5 years, or be wishing to adopt sibling groups or children of any age with special needs are particularly welcomed.



Where applicants only wish to consider adopting a single baby or child under the age of 2, there may be a need to defer an application in order to give greater priority to the assessment of adopters for older children, sibling groups and children with disabilities.



Things to consider

Support network:

Because of the strains you might face, we believe that it is helpful to have the support of friends and family when the “going gets tough” and with whom you can share the good times.

Your health

You will need to be in reasonably good health as caring for children can be very demanding. If you have a pre-existing medical condition, or have had or continue to have a mental health condition that might affect your ability to cope with the stresses of caring we would recommend that you seek the advice of your GP and also discuss it with a member of the Adoption team.

Smoking

In the light of overwhelming evidence regarding the damage caused to children by passive smoking (including where the smoking is not in the presence of the child) consideration will be given to smoking issues within the assessment of your suitability. Mid & West Wales Adoption Service will not place children under the age of five with adopters who smoke and because of the additional risk, children with medical conditions such as asthma, congenital heart disease and cystic fibrosis will not be placed in a household where anyone smokes.

Your family & home

Ensuring that a child is welcomed into your family takes considerable time and energy. It is important to consider any other commitments that you might have – for example caring for other family members – your own children or elderly relatives.



Whilst there are no rules about how old any children already living in your family need to be, we would recommend that there is a minimum of a two year age gap between any children already in your family and a child who you are wishing to adopt. We also believe that it is important to take into consideration the position (e.g. youngest/oldest) of the children in your family.

Fertility

Applicants should have completed investigations and treatment before applying to adopt a child. This is because of the emotional stress involved in fertility treatment and the need for applicants to be ready to devote their energies to adoption by the time they make their application. We advise that there is a break between the ending of treatment (or making a decision not to continue) and starting the adoption process, to give people time to process this loss and come to a considered decision to build a family by adoption. Our current advice is to wait for a minimum period of 6 months but maybe longer.

Work Commitments

Any child who has been placed with a new family needs a period of time to settle down and build relationships with their new parents. We normally expect that one parent will be home for at least 6 months and longer is preferable in order to be available for and to support the child.

Home Environment

Whilst it is not essential that any child placed for adoption has their own bedroom, it is important to consider their need for space and also to consider the needs of your own children.

We have to be satisfied that your home meets our Health and Safety requirements. Many prospective adopters have pets. You will be asked about your animals during the assessment process and consideration will be given as to whether any pet poses a risk to children.



Who can adopt?

We would not accept an application from you if

- you (or both of you if applying as a couple) are under the age of 21 (the exception being a step-parent adoption where the birth parent should be at least 18 years and the step parent applicant is 21 or over).
- You (and where applicable one of a couple) is not domiciled in the British Isles (i.e The UK, Channel Isles or the Isle of Man)
- If you or anyone in your household have been convicted or cautioned for certain specified offences.
- You and your partner cannot demonstrate that you are living in a stable and enduring relationship.



The Process – Enquiry Stage

If you are interested in adopting through the Mid and West Wales Service, you can make a phone call to us, attend an Information evening (check our website) or have a face to face meeting with one of the Team. Following an initial discussion, you will be given a Registration of Interest form (ROI). This is the formal application to begin the process of adoption through our Service. We will let you know the outcome of your ROI within 5 working days of receiving it.

It may be that your enquiry needs to be put “on hold” whilst some further investigations are made or a medical is arranged if there is concern about a health situation. It may be that you have a significant event on the horizon, a wedding or house move, or perhaps you are mid-way through fertility treatment. A member of the Adoption Team will be able to offer advice regarding the timing of your enquiry.

The Process – Stage 1

This Stage will take 2 months to complete – but may take longer if checks and references take more time to be returned. You will have an allocated social worker who will visit you at home.

You will be invited to attend Adoption Preparation Training; a four day course designed to provide additional information about adopting, whilst giving you the chance to explore in more depth whether adoption is right for you. It is important to note that this course forms a part of the suitability assessment and that where you are applying as a couple, both of you are expected to attend all the sessions together.



The Process – Stage 2

If you are interested in adopting through the Mid and West Wales Service, you can make a phone call to us, attend an Information evening (check our website) or have a face to face meeting with one of the Team. Following an initial discussion, you will be given a Registration of Interest form (ROI). This is the formal application to begin the process of adoption through our Service. We will let you know the outcome of your ROI within 5 working days of receiving it.

It may be that your enquiry needs to be put “on hold” whilst some further investigations are made or a medical is arranged if there is concern about a health situation. It may be that you have a significant event on the horizon, a wedding or house move, or perhaps you are mid-way through fertility treatment. A member of the Adoption Team will be able to offer advice regarding the timing of your enquiry.



Checks & References

You will be asked for your written permission for checks to be carried out with the following agencies –DBS, Health Authority, Local Authority and CSSIW (Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales).

Checks will be made with any other Local Authorities in which you have lived and if you already have children the school and or health visitor will be contacted.

You will be asked to undergo a full medical assessment with your own General Practitioner. Once this is complete it is sent to the Local Authority medical advisor, who may contact your GP or any consultant involved in your case. You will be advised of any health related issues that may affect your approval as an adoptive parent/s.

If you are working either as a paid employee or regular volunteer, a reference will be required from your current employer or agency.

If you have previously worked or volunteered in the field of childcare we will request a reference from these employers too.

You will also be asked to provide the names of three referees; two of whom must have known you for at least five years, and one who needs to be a relative. We will also need to talk to any adult children you may have. All your referees will be asked to provide a written reference about your ability to care for children and their written reference will be followed up by an interview in their home with your assessing Social Worker.



If you have been married before, or had any longstanding relationships, particularly where you have raised children together, the Agency will need to contact your previous partners to ask them about your ability to care for children. We appreciate that you may not be happy at the prospect of previous partners being contacted and we understand that there may be issues of personal safety to consider. If you are concerned please talk to a member of the team about this.

When all your references and checks have been returned, we will review them and if everything is satisfactory, we will formally agree that you can proceed to Stage 2.



The Process – Stage 2

Stage 2 which will look at your strengths and suitability and your motivation to adopt; your support needs and your experience of growing up and how you have dealt with any challenges or stressful events in your life will also be considered. If you have children already either living at home or away they will also need to be interviewed, or depending on their age, seen with you.

Stage 2 will last around 4 months and begins with an assessment agreement meeting with your social worker to plan the work needed for the assessment – usually 6 meetings at weekly intervals. You will also be expected to attend further training. Once the meetings are completed your social worker will complete your assessment report (PAR).

It will be necessary for you to provide information about any previous significant relationships and where you have lived together or cared for children together; we will need to interview previous partners. We are sensitive, however, to the difficulties that this might present, and we need you to be honest with us about the situation to help us to assess the viability of this. If you are applying as a couple we will want to understand in some detail the working of your relationship. The Social Worker will look into your lifestyle, as well as the values and attitudes which influence you and your family and the way these could affect your care of an adopted child.

We need to explore your motivation for considering adoption and why you would like to provide a home for an adopted child/ren. If this is because you are unable to have your own birth children you will need to have completed any fertility treatment you are undergoing before we can start an assessment.

We will also look at the contact that you have had with children – and your experiences as a parent, through work, volunteering or caring for other family members.



Children who need an adoptive placement will often have suffered some trauma and all will certainly have experienced separation and loss during their life. Their behaviour and future potential will be affected by this, and the Social Worker will need to explore further with you those behaviours you may or may not be able to accept and work with.

You will be asked to think about the financial implications of offering a child a permanent home. In some cases an adoption allowance can be considered and granted by the Local Authority, although there is no automatic 'entitlement' and adoption allowances are means tested and based on the needs of the child.

You will be asked to consider direct or indirect contact between the birth family and your adopted child/ren. Direct contact could involve the child/ren you have adopted having face to face contact with his/her birth parents or other family members including siblings.

Indirect contact could involve regular letters/birthday cards being sent to your adopted child/ren and for certain birth family members receiving a letter and photograph from you on a regular basis. Any arrangements will be discussed and agreed prior to adoption. You will have the opportunity to consider and discuss your feelings around these issues with the Social Worker carrying out your assessment. Should you feel that you can take on the care of a child/ren with disabilities, your assessing Social Worker will need to explore your skills and abilities to care for such a child, and offer opportunities for you to challenge your own potential to take on the care of a child with complex needs.



During your assessment you will be asked to evidence your potential as a parent in the following areas:

- Caring for children
- Providing and safe and caring environment
- Working as part of a team

Your own development

Mid and West Wales Adoption Service will work in partnership with you regarding your suitability assessment. We agree to work in an open and honest way, maintaining the confidentiality of the information you share and dealing with you in a respectful and sensitive manner.

The welfare and happiness of the children with whom we work is paramount and although we will work with you to assess your suitability your subsequent approval as an Adopter is not guaranteed.

Why do we need to know all this information?

Adopting a child is so much more than having your own children.

There is an additional “healing” component involved in becoming an adoptive parent as you will have a major role to play in helping the child to come to terms with their experiences and losses.

Even a baby who has never spent time with his or her birth parent needs to deal with the knowledge and hurt that comes from knowing their birth parent chose to give them away or was adjudged not able to be a parent. The impact that this can have upon a child’s self-esteem – often into adulthood- should never be underestimated. Adopted adults who have sought counselling to find out more about their birth families have commonly stated such views as “it’s not that I don’t love my adopted family to bits, it’s just that I need to know why I was adopted”. Others commonly express concerns that the fact they were not cared for by their birth parents is somehow their fault. They often have anxieties about how their birth families have coped with their adoption.



Adoptive parents need to explore these feelings for themselves and to understand the normality of such views in order to best help their child to grow up knowing who they are. If the adoptive parent “hopes” that their child will not have such feelings, but does not discuss these issues, the chances are that the child will grow up with such feelings, and may express their anger outwardly at a world that does not acknowledge their confusion.

The Adoption Panel

Following the gathering of all the assessment information and evidence, the Adoption Social Worker will provide a written report on which you will be asked to comment and to sign. The report will then be presented to our Adoption panel for consideration for approval of your suitability to adopt.

The Panel meets once or twice a month, and members include social workers, a medical advisor, an adopted person, an adoptive parent, and other representatives. You will be notified of the date and will be invited to attend with your Social Worker. Once Panel have read the reports and had an opportunity to meet you, as well as ask any questions, they will make a recommendation as to whether you are ‘Suitable to Adopt.’ The Agency Decision Maker receives the reports and the Minutes of the Panel Meeting and has 7 days in which to make a decision about the Panel’s recommendation. You will be notified of the Panel’s recommendation within 24 hours and notified in writing within 14 days of the Agency’s decision.

What happens if you are not approved?

In the event of your assessment not being agreed by the Agency Decision Maker you will receive a copy of the reasons and any recommendations of the Adoption Panel. Should you wish to make a representation against the decision, you can either make representation to the Adoption Panel or request that the Independent Review Panel consider your assessment. More information about this is available upon request.



Following Approval

If you are approved as prospective adopters, the Mid and West Wales Adoption Service will seek to find a suitable match for you. If no suitable match is identified for you in Mid and West Wales you will be referred to the Wales Adoption Register, which may result in you being considered as a possible match for a child/ren from other areas of Wales.





Support for adoptive parents and adopted children.

Adoption Support Services are available for adopters and children living within an adoptive family. As an Adoption team we are committed to supporting you through your adoption journey and can provide help in a number of ways.

- Information and advice for anyone in an adoptive family
- Support groups for adopters
- Services for children who may have emotional, behavioural or psychological needs
- On-going life story work and assistance in helping a child to understand their past.

Contact the Adoption Team to find out more. A member of the team will visit to assess your current situation to ascertain where we can best help, or to point you in the right direction.

Financial support

Financial support may be available depending on the needs of your adopted child. Your financial situation will be means tested and is reviewed annually. If your circumstances change it could mean that any financial support may be altered upwards or downwards, but continued payment of allowances depends on the continuing needs of your adopted child.



All adoptive parents of an adopted children aged under18 and all prospective adopters being matched with a child can request an assessment for adoption support.

The following are some of the situations that could qualify you for financial support:

- Your adopted child's needs are extra to those of other children in the community
- To enable siblings to continue to live together
- To ensure contact to continue with birth family members
- To enable your child to continue to live with you

If you think that your child may be eligible for financial support you can contact the Adoption Team who will advise you of the full "adoption allowance" policy and can arrange for an assessment of your financial circumstances if appropriate.

Ready to take the next step?


We'd like to hear from you! If you are interested in adoption or would like to explore what it could mean for you, please contact us today. Our friendly team is here to answer your questions, provide guidance and support you on your journey.

If you are ready to start the process, contact us at:
Mid and West Wales adoption.

Your journey towards adoption starts here – let's chat!


 Visit our website: adoptionmwwales.org.uk

Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire & Ceredigion

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