

BECOMING A

foster carer or adoptive parent

IN DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY

www.dumgal.gov.uk/fostering

tel 01387 260068

“On the day the adoption came through she went to Brownies, ran in the door and said “the best thing ever happened to me today and no one else will have any news as good as mine. I was finally adopted today and I’m so happy I could burst.””



Welcome

Dumfries and Galloway Council would like to thank you for taking the initial step to see what adoption or permanent foster care is all about?

If you would like to start a family or make your family bigger and you are considering if you wish to adopt a child or would like to care permanently for a child for the rest of their life then we hope that you will find this booklet helpful.

Reaching the decision to adopt or consider if you would like to permanently care for a child is not a decision that anyone makes easily but it can be one of the most rewarding things that you can do to make a significant difference in the life of a child. There are children in Dumfries and Galloway who will need a forever family in which they can grow up feeling loved, nurtured and have a sense of belonging which will provide security for the rest of their lives. No one is saying this will always be easy there will be times when you will be challenged, there will be good times, some not so good times and some great times.

Adopting or caring for a child on a permanent arrangement is a lifetime commitment and we hope that the information contained in this booklet will help to answer any questions you may have. This is a big step, and one which we hope you will make so please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or you would like more information.

If you would like to make a positive difference in a child's life become an adoptive or permanent carer for the children of Dumfries and Galloway.

We would love to hear from you.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to pick up the phone and call us on 01387 260068 or you can email us at Familyplacementteam@dumgal.gov.uk

Contents



Adoption and permanent fostering step-by-step guide.... 4

Your questions answered 10

We welcome your feedback 14





Adoption and fostering step-by-step guide

The following pages take you through the steps involved in the adoption and fostering process.

Steps to becoming a carer

Contact Us



The Initial Visit



Pre-approval Course



Home Study Approval



Panel Approval and Registration



Go to page 8



Adoption and fostering step-by-step guide

Step 1 Contact us

Contact us via our website, by email familyplacementteam@dumgal.gov.uk or by calling **01387 260068**

You will speak to our duty family placement worker who will pass your enquiry on to a member of the team. They will call you back to discuss your interest in much more detail and arrange an initial visit.

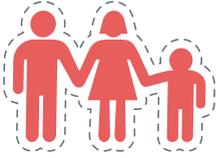
Step 2 The initial visit

A family placement worker will arrange to meet you where you will find out a lot more about what will happen if you decide to go ahead. The family placement worker will also discuss with you what you can offer a child and what you want from adoption or fostering.

The family placement worker will also discuss with you what you can offer a child and what you want from adoption or permanent fostering. The family placement worker will arrange to visit you again to ask some questions about yourself and your partner (if applicable). This is called your Initial Enquiry.

A brief report will be written and shared with you at this stage.

“ I love my job, I love the young people I look after, we have such a laugh and I still want to be doing this when I'm 80. It keeps me young! ”



Adoption and fostering step-by-step guide

Step 3 Pre-approval course

If your enquiry goes ahead, you will begin a longer period of assessment. This is a time when you can find out more detail and do some very important thinking about making a lifetime commitment to a child. Our pre-approval groups are held twice a year. The four sessions are held during the daytime or in the evenings and will cover a range of issues related to adoption and fostering in partnership with health services. The pre-approval course will have a focus on attachment-based parenting and a trauma-informed approach to caring for children.

The course will also include case studies of children requiring care and some of the processes and legal aspects relevant to fostering and adoption.

You have a crucial role to play at this point. This time is a chance for you to take a very honest look at what you want out of adoption or 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 parent or foster carer likely to be?
- Can you make the sort of commitment that will really make a difference to a child's life?

At the end of the pre-approval course you will be invited to make an application to be assessed as prospective adopters or foster carers.

Step 4 Home study assessments

The purpose of the home study report is to get to know more about you, undertake initial checks such as PVG, medicals, references and identify strengths and any vulnerabilities you may have.

A family placement worker will make a number of visits to your home and will try to get to know you by exploring with you, your own family background, your childhood experiences and your present circumstances. If you are a couple, the family placement worker will see you together and individually.

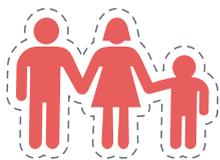
At the end of the home study, you and your family placement worker will review the report. The report includes a detailed assessment of you as a potential adoptive parent or foster carer. It will include consideration of your medical, disclosure, personal and employment references. A key part of the report is for you and your worker to decide the sort of child or children you feel you could care for. Could you, for example, look after a child with a physical or learning difficulty? What age range would you consider? And how many children could you care for?

The home study is demanding but also rewarding and can feel intrusive. It will take several months to complete. To be an adoptive or foster carer requires a significant commitment from you and your family and requires a great deal of thought.

Step 5 Panel approval and registration

The home study report is presented to a panel of four to six people, who will include social workers, other professionals and independent members including approved carers. You and your family placement worker will attend to talk about your assessment and answer any questions. Once the panel has considered the report, they will recommend whether or not you should be approved as an adoptive parent or foster carer.

The agency decision maker will then decide whether or not to accept the panel's recommendations within 14 days of the panel meeting. You will be advised of this decision in writing.



Adoption and fostering step-by-step guide

Linking You to a Child or Children



Matching You to a Child



Legal Position



Post Approval and Adoption Support

Step 6 Linking you to a child or children

Once you are approved we will begin to consider whether there are children waiting for a family who might be a suitable match for you.

Step 7 Matching you to a child or children

Once a child or children have been identified, you will be given full information about the child/children's background. You will then meet with their social worker, the medical advisor and the child's current foster carer. Following this a meeting will be held to explore the potential strengths and vulnerabilities of the proposed match, a matching panel will be arranged within four to six weeks.

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 Legal position

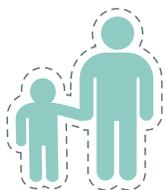
When adopting, you will be required to approach a solicitor to act on your behalf. You will be able to petition the court any time 13 weeks after a child or children have been placed with you. The child's social workers will complete the necessary paperwork. If you are permanently fostering, the legal position will vary and your family placement worker will be able to advise you.

Step 9 Post approval and adoption support

Once you are an approved adopter or permanent carer your family placement worker will remain involved to support you. You will also be offered group support and training to help you with any issues which may arise. Your family placement worker will organise this according to your needs or those of your child.



“It's changed my life for the better.”



Frequently asked questions

What is adoption?

Adoption is a lifelong commitment. It's about providing a permanent family for a child or children in care, who cannot, for whatever reason, return home. When you adopt a child, you take on all the rights and responsibilities for the child that the birth parent had.

What is permanent foster care?

Permanent foster care is a lifelong commitment. It's about providing a permanent family for a child or children in care who cannot for whatever reason, return home. When you permanently care for a child, you may share legal rights and responsibilities for the child with Dumfries and Galloway Council

Which children need adoption or permanent care?

There are all sorts of children who need adoptive or permanent foster parents, from babies and toddlers to children of upper primary school age. Sometimes there are two, three or more brothers and sisters who need to live and grow up together.

Some children may have been abused or neglected in their past. Other children may have physical or learning disabilities. Some children may have developmental or genetic uncertainties around their future development.

The one thing all these children have in common is that their parents are unable to care for them and they need a new, permanent family to care for them as they grow up.

Children over the age of 12 will be required to give consent to an application to adopt or for a permanence order.

How long does it all take?

New standards for adoption and permanent foster care say the entire process, from your initial phone call to being approved as a prospective parent, should take no more than about eight months. All adoption agencies are working towards this goal. What rights do birth parents have afterwards?

Once an adoption order has been made, birth parents have no legal rights to the child and cannot claim him or her back. With permanent fostering the position will vary according to the child's specific circumstances.

Will the child still see their birth parents or other relatives?

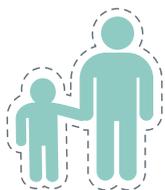
The child may well benefit from continuing to see (or to have letterbox contact with) other important people in their lives. For a small number of children it will be important for them to see periodically a birth parent, brothers or sisters, grandparents or previous foster carers.

This is something we will discuss fully with you before a child or children are placed with you. There are a number of children who will have contact with birth family members by letterbox only.

Will I be told about the child's background?

It is very important that you know as much as possible about the child's past. By law we must give you information about the child, which includes details about his or her background, time in care, school history and any medical needs.

This knowledge will help you understand the child when they come to live with you, help the child understand the circumstances of their adoption or fostering and help you find the best way of supporting them in the future.



Frequently asked questions

Will I be paid?

You are expected to meet the general living costs of a child you adopt, just like any parent. However, you may be eligible for an adoption allowance, which depends on the identified needs of the child. With permanent fostering, you will receive an allowance for the child and be a self employed foster carer for Dumfries and Galloway Council.

What support will I get afterwards?

A child you adopt is entitled to the same range of social services and other support, based on their need, as any child. This could be, for example, special educational and medical services, as well as advice or counselling. As an adoptive carer Dumfries and Galloway Council will offer the following services:

- completion of a post adoption support agreement
- ongoing training opportunities
- attendance at an adoptive carers support group
- direct support from a family placement worker
- information and advice via Dumfries and Galloway Council website
- signposting to other services as necessary

“What better job could there be than giving babies a great start in life, giving them love and care and time to recover and grow into successful little people.”

How do I take the next step?

You need to contact the family placement Team in Dumfries and Galloway Council by calling 01387 260068 or emailing familyplacementteam@dumgal.gov.uk

Staff in the Family Placement Team will be pleased to answer your questions and provide support and advice about taking the next step. If you want more information about adoption or permanent fostering before getting in touch with us, you could contact the following organisations:

Adoption UK offers support and information before, during and after adoption. A parent-to-parent network of more than 3,500 existing and potential adoptive parents.

Adoption UK Scotland Office

172 Leith Walk, Edinburgh EH6 5EA

Telephone: 0131 5555 111

Fax: 0131 555 5351

Email: scotland@adoptionuk.org.uk

Website: www.adoptionuk.org





We welcome your feedback

We will ask for your feedback at the time when the decision is made about your approval as a carer or adopter and then at annual reviews. You can, of course, let us know your views at other times of the year.

Approved carers and adopters are all members of the national organisation, Fostering Network or Adoption UK. These organisations are also interested in your views.

If you decide to apply to become a carer or adopter, you will be starting an important and hopefully long-lasting relationship with Dumfries and Galloway Council.

The complaints procedure

The Council has a complaints procedure that approved carers and adopters can use if they are unhappy about some aspect of the service they have received or on behalf of a child or children for whom they are caring. Further details of the complaints procedure can be supplied on request.

“Every child who we have looked after has been a joy to care for and whatever the difficulties, none if it is their fault.”

“ One of our young people has been awarded Apprentice of the year at college! ”



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