

Children's Services

Adopters handbook



Together We Make A Family

Contents

1. The Adoption Team and our aims	3
2. Legal context	3
3. Assessment, preparation and approval	4
4. Now you are approved	5
5. Family finding	5
6. Pre-linking, linking and matching	7
7. What happens next?	8
8. Introductions and transition	8
9. Post placement information	9
10. Making an application to adopt your child/ren	9
11. The adoption order	9
12. Life story	9
13. Explaining adoption to children who have been adopted	10
14. Adoption support	15
15. Finances	15
16. Returning to adoption for a second time	16
17. Disruption	16
18. Case studies	17
19. Glossary	19

1. The Adoption Team and our aims

Inverclyde HSCP Adoption Team consists of the Team Lead Adoption and Permanence, two Family Placement Social Workers and part time Social Work Assistant. We aim to provide a service to all parties affected by adoption, which meets their individual needs.

Our remit involves the recruitment, preparation, assessment and support of suitable adopters and family finding for children who have been registered as requiring permanent placement out with their birth family. These children will be part of the process for Looked After and Accommodated child/ren (LAAC) and usually the Scottish Children's Reporters system and they may be subject to a Compulsory Supervision Order (CSO). They may have ongoing contact either direct or indirect with their birth families. We also offer advice, guidance and support to birth family members affected by adoption through Inverclyde HSCP Birth Ties Support Project.

2. Legal context

The local authority has an extensive legal framework which governs their roles and responsibilities in terms of duties to promote the welfare of vulnerable members of our society. The Children (Scotland) Act 1995, the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007, the Children's Hearing (Scotland) Act 2011, the Children and Young Person (Scotland) Act 2014, the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009 and the Adoption Agencies (Scotland) Regulations 2005 are the main legislative framework which underpins social work practice with children and families.

In terms of securing children's futures the main legal systems are the Children's Reporters Administration and the Sheriff Court. Many of the child/ren waiting for new families are subject to compulsory supervision orders under section 83 of the Children Hearing (Scotland) Act 2011; these will usually have measures attached to regulate the child's place of residence and contact with birth family members.

The Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 and the Adoption Agencies (Scotland) Regulations 2005 provide the broad legal framework, along with the Sheriff Court rules for Local Authority / Adoption Agency Reports regarding cases for adoption and permanence orders.

3. Assessment, preparation and approval

You will have expressed an interest in becoming an adoptive parent, and will have received an information pack which should have reached you within seven days of your initial enquiry. You will have been visited by a social worker from the adoption team within four weeks of your enquiry. An adoption initial screening report will be completed.

You will be invited to attend and participate in an adoption preparation group. These sessions focus on a range of topics to help you understand the adoption process and the needs of children who require adoptive families.

The next step would entail you formally applying in writing to be assessed as an adoptive parent. Inverclyde HSCP will allocate a social worker and we will aim to complete the home study assessment within six months. The framework for your assessment is called a Permanence and Adoption Report - Scotland (PAR-S). This is a robust method of gathering information and covers a wide range of areas including statutory checks and references.

Your completed adoption assessment is presented to Inverclyde HSCP's Adoption and Permanence Panel. This Panel is made up of a number of multi-disciplinary professionals including an independent chair, educational psychologist, adoptive parent, foster carer, residential unit manager, elected members and social work managers. The Panel sits once every month and before coming to Panel you will have the opportunity to read your assessment and make comment.

You will be encouraged to attend the Adoption and Permanence Panel this will allow you and the individual Panel members to clarify any points in your assessment and hear first-hand from you. In the case of single applicants you can invite a supportive person to attend with you. Your social worker will also be in attendance. The main focus of the Adoption and Permanence Panel is to consider all of the information before making one of three recommendations – to approve your adoption application, not approve your adoption application or defer decision for more information. There is an appeal process if you don't agree with the recommendation. The Agency Decision Maker (ADM) ratifies the recommendation from the Panel and will write to you directly outlining their decision within 3 weeks of the Panel date.

4. Now you are approved

During the assessment process you and your allocated social worker would have gathered a lot of information which formed the assessment. Your social worker would have had a thorough discussion / exploration of the specific aspects of a child's needs which is often referred to as your matching considerations and this helps inform family finding.

Following your approval as an adoptive parent the process of family finding begins. It is not unusual that after your approval you feel things have gone quiet and nothing is happening

Having gone through the lengthy assessment and preparation process, some families find the post-approval stage of 'waiting' quite difficult. Services are in place to assist with the process but in some situations families can wait for over a year before they are matched with a child or children. Your social worker will be able to support you through this process which can be one of anticipation and perhaps disappointment. The post-approval stage is an opportunity to gain further experience of working or caring for children and reading up on issues you have learned about during the preparation and assessment process.

5. Family finding

Where there are no children waiting within Inverclyde HSCP who could be considered as a potential link for you, the social worker supporting you will begin the process of looking for a child/ren outside the area from links with our neighbouring local authorities. If no potential links are identified within three months of your approval, a referral will be made to Scotland's Adoption Register.

Scotland's Adoption Register was established in 2011 with funding from the Scottish Government to link children and families across Scotland for adoption. Scotland's Adoption Register is a computer based system designed to assist in the matching of children and approved families on a national scale. Adoption agencies refer children who need adoptive families and families who are approved for adoption to this database. The social worker supporting you will complete the required documentation which outlines your approval range and the children you are interested in adopting. We encourage all our prospective adopters to be involved in creating their profile.

Adoption exchange days

Scotland's Adoption Register works in conjunction with local authorities and Voluntary Adoption Agencies to organise large national events called Adoption Exchange Days, these are closed events held across Scotland. The event is attended by social workers, foster carers, and approved adopters. All those supporting the task of family finding for children, work together to present a profile of a particular child or sibling group. This can include a written profile, photographs, moving images (video clips) and foster carers talking about what a day in the life of the child/ren in order to bring the child/ren to life. On the day prospective adopters can express an interest in finding out more about a particular children or sibling group. You will need to be invited to Exchange Days because of the sensitive nature of the information. You will be given a time slot to help manage the flow of people so that you have the best chance to review all the information about the child/ren. You should discuss the possibility of attending these days with your social worker if you think it is an option you would like to explore. Exchange Days can be exhilarating as you might find information about your future son or daughter but they can also feel a bit overwhelming.

Adoption activity days

Scotland's Adoption Register also organise events called Adoption Activity Days. These events give approved adopters, or prospective adopters at an advanced stage of the assessment process the opportunity to meet a range of children who need adoptive placements and engage with them in a fun environment. These events allow the children and prospective adopters to get involved with lots of fun activities such as face painting, climbing, crafts and soft play.

Children are carefully prepared by their social workers and foster carers for these events, the emphasis is on having fun, not finding new parents. Adopters are offered a lot of support and somewhere to have time out if the emotion of the day gets too much. The child's foster carers and social workers are also on hand for extra support.

Adoption Activity Days have proved successful in finding matches as they give prospective adopters and children a chance to make a real connection. An advantage of Activity Days is that adopters often find that their preconceptions about the kind of children they initially feel they want to adopt changes once they have had the opportunity to meet the child/ren in person.

Any one of these family finding tools may identify possible links with a child/ren. In each case the child's social worker will identify the needs of the child/ren and this will inform whether the families that enquire are likely to be a potential link.

The social worker supporting you will make contact on your behalf to the relevant child's agency regardless of which route the potential link has come through. Your social worker will speak about you in more detail to the social worker in the child's agency who has responsibility for family finding. Should the family finding social worker consider your profile a potential link for the child/ren they will request your adoption assessment and the child's Adoption and Permanence Report (CAPR) will be shared with you.

You may decide that the information you have read in the CAPR does not match the Child/ren you feel you can parent. Your social worker will advise and support you with this. Any questions either agency may have with a view to possible matching will be discussed between the relevant social workers. Following this, potential matches are selected by the child's agency social worker and they may select you to visit. Some agencies may visit one or more families but you will be made aware of this at the time of them meeting with you.

6. Pre-linking, linking and matching

Before any representatives usually the child's social worker and senior social worker from the child's agency visits, your social worker will assist in preparing you for the visit they will also be present during this visit. They may bring a photograph of the child/ren. As part of the preparation for the visit, you may wish to make enquiries at your local pre –school group, nursery or school, depending on the child's age, about availability and process for applications in the event of the agencies asking about local resources.

At the visit the child's social worker will talk about the child/ren and ask a range of questions to promote discussion about the child/ren and yourselves. This is an opportunity to ask questions about the child/ren and your social worker may also ask questions or offer information. For example, you may want more clarity on a child's long term contact arrangements. The visiting social workers will inform you of their time scale for making a decision. After the child's agency visits you and if everyone agrees the link should progress it is likely that you will meet the medical adviser to learn about the child's current and potential future health needs. Following this it is likely you will meet the child's current foster carer to learn about the child's day to day routines and likes and dislikes. You will have the opportunity to meet with any other significant figures in the child's life to ensure you have a full picture of the child's needs before making a final decision about whether you wish to pursue the link.

A linking meeting will then be arranged. This meeting will consider the potential link between the child/ren and you as the prospective adopters. This meeting will provide the matching panel with up to date information about the children's needs and your capacity to meet those needs. Your social worker will attend this meeting to represent you and will advise you of the recommendations made.

The Matching Panel will consider the child's needs, views of the birth family, the linking process, the strengths and vulnerabilities of your family, preparation of the impact of the placement, contact, support needs and legal route. The Matching Panel will make a recommendation regarding the match, legal route and any financial arrangements to the Agency Decision Maker. You will be made aware of the recommendation on the day of the Panel and will receive written notification of the decision within three weeks. Being selected for a child/ren from a different local authority from Inverclyde will involve attending the Matching panel in the child's agency.

At any point in the process you, your social worker or the child's agency may decide not to proceed with a possible link. If it is the agency or your social worker who makes this decision you will be given feedback on why this decision has been made. In the early stages, where there may have been a lot of interest in a child/ren who you have identified, the feedback may be limited. If it is following a visit, there is likely to be more information about why you were not selected.

If you are not matched within two years of approval you will be asked to attend a review panel to explore how you have experienced your adoption journey so far and to look at whether adoption is still the right choice for you.

7. What happens next?

This section is about what happens next: the supports available during the introduction and transition process, post placement and following an adoption order being granted. This is in line with the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 and the procedures of the Adoption Service in Inverclyde.

8. Introductions and transition

Following the decision being made for you to be formally matched with the child/ren you will need to consider preparing for the child/ren moving to live in your home. At this stage it may be helpful to mention the possibility of going on adoption leave to your employer, looking at equipment you will need and preparing existing child/ren in your family and your relatives. Your supporting social worker can help you. If you have been selected for a child/ren living a longer distance away, you will need to prepare for travelling and possibly staying overnight.

The child's agency will arrange a transition planning meeting. This meeting will take place prior to the child/ren being placed with your family. In Inverclyde this meeting is chaired by the Team Lead - Adoption and Permanence. At this meeting the plan for introducing the child/ren to you and preparing the child/ren to move to your home will be drawn up. Introductions are drawn up based on the needs of the child/ren, their age and understanding. It's a good idea to clear your diary, as you will need to be as flexible as possible.

We will ask you to prepare an introductions book which is a child friendly book introducing yourself to your future son or daughter. Your supporting social worker will assist you with ideas on how to prepare this book and ensure it is appropriate to the child's age, needs and comprehension.

It is likely the child/ren will be subject to a compulsory supervision order through the Children's Hearing System and they must agree for the child/ren to move. The Children's Hearing must at the request of the local authority convene a Children's Hearing to review / vary the child's order. This process can create delays and any decision made at a Children's Hearing can be appealed by their birth parents.

Following the child/ren moving to live with you, the child's social worker will set a date with you to visit within seven days and a post placement meeting will be organised within 4 weeks of the moving date. There will also be an agreed visit made by the child's foster carer to the child/ren within your home.

The child's agency will notify your local authority and the health services that the child/ren have moved to live with you. In cases where the child/ren is over three, there will have been some discussion between the child's local authority, you and the identified nursery or school to explore a placement request for them. The school start date will also be discussed. Any expenses incurred, such as travel, will need to be supported by receipts and travel tickets. Payment of these will be the responsibility of the child's agency.

In rare situations, families or agencies may decide during the pre-linking, linking, matching or introduction period that the match is not suitable. This can be a sad and difficult experience. Your social worker will offer you advice, guidance and support. You will need time to recover from such a disappointing experience before you consider any future family finding

Meeting with birth parents

This is a meeting both birth parents and the adoptive parents. It is designed to be a therapeutic process to enable both parties to meet each other and help give some reassurance to the birth family that their birth child will be looked after and well cared for in their new family.

It is also an opportunity for the birth family to share any relevant information that they have about the child whilst they were in their care; information which may not be included in social services or Court reports and information which may be personal to the family which they may not have felt able to share with social workers during the process.

The meetings are often emotional and it can be difficult for both parties; however it is important to remember that emotions do need to be contained as much as possible and that any unwanted behaviour by either party may lead to the meeting being terminated. A social worker will be present throughout the meeting to facilitate it and also tackle any difficult issues that may arise.

In cases where interpreters are required, the interpreter will not always have to translate everything that is said word for word but the adopters may give cues to the interpreter to ask or clarify something with the social worker. Similarly, the social worker may do the same. The social worker will ask the interpreter to relay anything which is not appropriate to the social worker straight away. If the interpreter feels unsure as to whether they should relay the information or not, they should ask the parties to stop talking for a moment whilst they check with the social worker as to whether it is appropriate or not.

The meeting is not, however, a forum for birth parents to air their grievances against the local authority or the Court and this sort of information should not be discussed. It is also about the perceived rights or wrongs of the birth parents or what they believe may or may not have happened which led to their birth child going into care. Such discussions should not take place and, if they start and persist, the meeting will be terminated.

Similarly, as the contact arrangements between birth family and adoptive family will already be in place and will have been agreed, it is not a forum for these arrangements to be questioned. Contact usually takes the form of an exchange of letters and photographs, once per year, but this is not always the case. The birth parents and adopters will have been spoken to about the contact arrangements and this is not something which should be discussed at this meeting.

Sometimes, the families may be asked to have a photograph taken together to include in the life story book. This is something which is a personal choice but is very useful for the child to have in their life story book and it is encouraged.

As a guide, here are some of the things that birth parents may ask:

- How will you make sure that my child will be well cared for?
- Will they practice the same religion?
- What sort of education are they likely to have?
- What interests do the adopters have?
- Can the adopters describe the sort of area they live in and what sort of things there are for children to do in the area?
- What sort of activities will the child do with the adopters?
- What sort of lifestyle do they have, are they active / relaxed?
- How would the adopters describe their personalities to the birth family?
- What is their family like (generally, no specifics about names or location)?
- Will you keep the child's first name?

Questions birth parents may not ask:

- The adoptive parents full names, dates of birth and personal identifying information
- Exactly where the adopters live or the geographical location
- Why the adopters are choosing to adopt.
- What the adopters' financial situation is

The adoptive parents' social worker will have discussed the questions that they are going to ask with them to make sure that they are appropriate but as a guide, here are some of the questions that adopters may choose to ask birth parent:

- Why did you choose his/ her name?
- Do you have any special dreams for he/ she or things you really hope he /she can do / achieve.
- What were he/ she like as baby?
- Is there anything particular/ important you want the child to know about you / his /her past when they are older (avoid questions about why they came into care)
- What hobbies etc did you enjoy as a child?
- Do you think the child looks like/ takes after any particular family member?
- Any health conditions in the family that might be passed on?
- What would you most like to read about/ hear about the child in the letterbox letter?
- What was the birth like?

None of these examples are exhaustive but a social worker will always intervene if necessary.

The Adoption Information Exchange System

The Information Exchange System enables birth family members and adoptive parents to stay in touch by exchanging written information. Information is sent between parties and supported by the adoption team, who will record what has been received, and pass the original card and / or letter to the birth family member or adoptive parents. The team preserves the confidentiality of the birth family member and adoptive families. All information is screened by the team to ensure it does not breach confidentiality or contain anything inappropriate or distressing to either family.

Who can the Information Exchange Help?

Children: it can be usual for children to be curious about their birth family as they grow up. An information exchange can support children to understand their history and develop a secure sense of identity. It can also reduce the trauma of loss and fantasy about their birth family should they decide in later life to trace their birth family. It can also help the child/ren feel accepted for who they are, in the knowledge their adoptive family know of their past and love them.

Adoptive parents: Information Exchange helps the adoptive parents with the ongoing life story of the child/ren throughout their life. It can help answer questions. Prospective adopters sometimes worry that continuing this communication will hinder the child's attachment to their new family; studies have shown it strengthens relationships bringing them closer together.

Birth Families: Often the birth family members can think of the child/ren at the age they were removed. Information exchange helps reassure them that the child/ren is safe and well and that they are not forgotten and remain part of the child's life story.

Who can use the Information Exchange?

The information exchange system can be used by anyone who has been of special importance in the life of an adopted child/ren, so long as it will be helpful to continue with this form of contact. This can be any birth family member including birth parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents, aunts and uncles.

What is the process?

The frequency with which information can be exchanged will be considered throughout the child's permanence journey and can be a voluntary arrangement or may be stipulated by the Court. Once the frequency of contact has been agreed, both parties will be asked to sign a voluntary information exchange agreement. This will detail what happens and when, together with what is acceptable and what is not. These details are recorded on the Inverclyde Information Exchange Register. You will receive a copy of the agreement. The adoptive family would usually be asked to write first to the birth family member as having specific news about the child/ren can make it easier for the birth relative to reply. The adoption team will send a reminder that the information exchange is due approximately a month before the agreed date each year.

Both parties are asked to send their information in unsealed envelopes with the child's name on it. As mentioned earlier all written information is screened. In the event the information is deemed inappropriate or breaches confidentiality a member of the adoption team will contact you and offer support to amend and resend information.

The use of social networking sites in adoption have become an issue for some families. We can provide support, advice and information to families where this is a concern.

9. Post placement information

The child/ren joining your family will generally continue to be subject to a compulsory supervision order until the adoption order is granted. This will mean that they are regularly reviewed under the Looked After and Accommodated procedures. You will be asked to attend and or contribute in writing to the child's plan. Your social worker will support you at these meetings.

10. Making an application to adopt your child/ren

You will be required to appoint a solicitor who specialises in childcare and adoption law. The child's local authority may have made a decision from the Matching Panel that they will pay reasonable legal costs for the adoption petition.

There are birth families that will contest the adoption plans for their child/ren which can lead to a lengthy legal process as the Court will want to ensure the birth parents' rights and views are fully considered.

Both your social worker and the child's social worker will be requested by the Court to write a joint report, called a section 17 report. This information is about the child/ren, the children's birth family and you. This report will set out why the child/ren have been placed for adoption and any future planned contact arrangements. The information within the report is used by the Sheriff to inform their decision about granting an Adoption Order.

11. The adoption order

Within the Adoption Petition you will be asked to give details of the child's new name: this refers to your surname and any middle name you have chosen with or for the child/ren. We encourage families in the majority of cases to retain the child's first name as recognition of the identity given to the child/ren at birth and this is the name they will know themselves by.

On the day of the Adoption Order being granted you may attend Court with the child/ren. When the adoption order is granted you will hold full parental rights and responsibilities for your child/ren.

12. Life story

We all have a life story, for adoptive child/ren this is especially important as it supports their identity and is the link between two families. All Inverclyde children will be given a life story book, a memory box and a later life letter. The book and letter are prepared by the child's social worker with support from the child's foster carer, and where appropriate their birth family. The book is just the beginning of the child's journey and may contain photographs, mementoes, drawings or simple narrative. Inverclyde HSCP promotes a life story model which starts in the present, then incorporates the past, returns to the present and leads to the future. Children are unique as are their stories, so no two books will be the same. The Adoption Team offers spot light sessions, which will provide an opportunity to talk about and build on your understanding of life story work together.

13. Explaining adoption to children who have been adopted

One of the concerns of adoptive parents is when and how to explain to your child/ren that he or she is adopted.

In the late 1980's, an American psychologist called David Brodzinsky researched children's understanding of adoption and he came up with a helpful approach. Before Brodzinsky, most of the research on "telling" had focused on the impact that learning about the adoption made on the child's emotional adjustment.

Brodzinsky found that children go through distinctive separate stages in their understanding of adoption. This means that, at different ages, a child/ren will need different kinds of information about adoption.

A summary of Brodzinsky "level of understanding"

Stage:1 0-4 years

Children have no intellectual understanding of adoption. They notice differences, eg black/white skin, curly or straight hair, boy/ girl. They can notice and comment on physical differences between themselves and others. They learn to imitate the likes/dislikes of people around them. These likes/ dislikes do not have to be expressed verbally - children imitate attitudes. They can learn terms such as "adopted" and by association, will learn to attach positive or negative connotations to them.

Stage:2 4-6 years

Children cannot really understand the difference between being adopted and being born into a family. They can repeat words but, if questioned, become confused. They ask spontaneous questions about where they came from. As they start nursery or school, they are exposed to different attitudes to adoption, which can affect the value they perceive to be associated with adoption.

Stage:3 6-8 years

Children begin to understand clearly that adoption and birth are two different ways of entering a family. They accept the family relationship as permanent, but they do not understand why.

They need information about:

- Adoptive family relationships
- Permanence of those relationships
- Motives for adoption
- Motives for relinquishment

Information given must be simple and factual. Again, attitudes are important - the context and the way you give the information, the values attached and the emotional overtones are crucial.

Stage:4 8-10 years

Children understand clearly the difference between birth and adoption they wonder: “Can my birth parent reclaim me?” What if my adopters die / divorce / give me up” They have some understanding of the emotions that go with the facts e.g the sadness of infertility. At this stage children can become confused, sad and angry. This is called “adaptive grieving” It is a normal process which takes place as the child/ren acknowledges the loss of his or her birth parent, siblings the other life that he or she would have had. The child/ren may show either an obsessive interest or a total lack of interest in his or her birth parents.

As an adoptive parent you need to acknowledge the real cause of the change in the child’s behaviour and not allow children to get “stuck” at an early stage of the grieving process. Think about the stages of grief (shock, denial, anger, guilt, sadness, depression, acceptance, reconciliation, and re-attachment)

Stage:5 10- 13 years

Children begin to understand the legal basis of adoption and also develop a more sophisticated view about the complicated reasons for adoption. They develop a more secure sense of permanence.

Remember there are no absolutely “right time” and no “right way” to talk about being adopted. There are simply opportunities to share some facts at different stages of understanding throughout Childhood. When adoption is spoken about openly, your child/ren will be better able to understand what it means about his / her identity and their relationship with your family. Remember telling is different from understanding even a young child/ren is capable of learning the word “adoption” and a pre- schooler may use the vocabulary appropriately without any true understanding of the meaning. This is not because parents have not explained well, but because children do not yet have the necessary cognitive understanding.

14. Adoption support

Adoption support is life long and available if needed. The child's local authority is responsible for providing adoption support for three years following the granting of an Adoption Order after this it becomes the responsibility of your home local authority. The exception to this is adoption allowance which remains the responsibility of the child's local authority.

Inverclyde HSCP Adoption Service recognises that having good adoption support in place can make a difference to adoptive families. Inverclyde Council has a dedicated team of social workers providing adoption support.

You can ask for an assessment of your adoption support needs at any time. Support can take many forms; it can be the provision of counselling or advice, help with educational matters, managing difficult behaviours or financial and therapeutic support. If required an adoption support plan can be implemented and reviewed.

There are a range of ongoing spot light sessions to promote shared learning provided for adopters. These sessions are made available to adopters each year as are a number of training events. Social events for adoptive families are held twice a year and this enables parents and children to meet each other in a relaxed and fun setting. You will also receive an adoption newsletter annually.

15. Finances

The financial implications of adopting a child/ren are explored during the assessment process. The local authority can after assessment provide financial support where necessary, and recognises finances are an important part of family life. An assessment will be undertaken prior to any adoption allowances being paid and will be dependent on the child's needs and the adopters' financial circumstances. Allowances will also be considered for sibling groups and children with special needs in recognition of the additional commitments of parenting these children. Adoptive parents have the same benefit entitlement available to all families with children through the Department of Works and Pension (DWP) this includes child benefit.

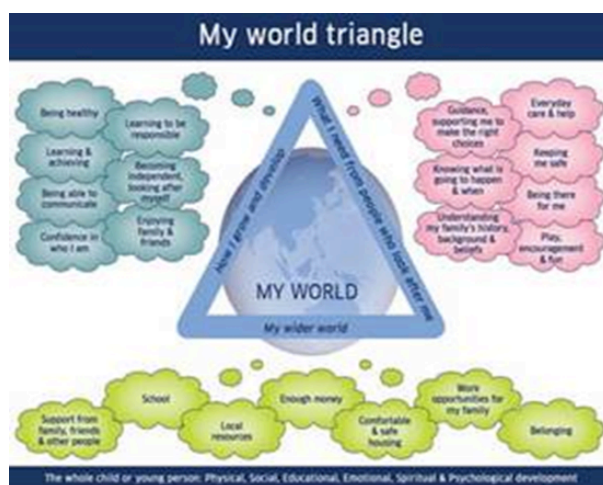
16. Returning to adoption for a second time

As adoptive parents choosing to return to Inverclyde HSCP for a second time, you will be familiar with the assessment process. However it is worth noting that this will potentially involve a different worker building a relationship with you and your family.

The standard procedural checks such as enhanced disclosures, medicals, support and social networks, together with a review of your financial situation will be considered. The assessment process will then concentrate on your family background since you were initially approved as adopters. We will revisit your motivation to adopt and your experience of parenting, and crucially we will focus on the needs of your child/ren. Both now and in the future and how you can balance these with another child joining your family including how you will manage to hold two separate birth family histories and support contact arrangements. Having completed all of the above this should assist you in considering your matching criteria. The assessment process will be interactive with an expectation that you will be flexible in making yourself available and are able to complete homework tasks.

The information gathered during your assessment will sit alongside your original adoption assessment and will be presented at the Adoption and Permanence Panel

The My World Triangle is used as a baseline for discussions looking at the right hand side what a Child/ren needs from a parent, to reach their potential. The left hand side looks at what the Child/ren needs to grow and develop. The bottom section looks at the wider world of the Child/ren. Your assessment will consider your capacity to meet a child's needs both now and in the future.



17. Disruption

Across the UK, there is a small percentage of placements that have difficulties either post-placement or after the Adoption Order is granted. Therefore it is important that families recognise signs of stress or when children are struggling with their past difficulties which may manifest themselves in challenging behaviour. During the post placement period, talking this over with the child's agency and your supporting social worker will help you manage the situation, and alert them to any therapeutic support that may be needed. When situations get difficult following an Adoption Order being granted, you can request an Adoption Support Assessment from the adoption service.

18. Case studies

Case study 1: Sara and Katie

Sara 20 months old and Katie 5 months old are registered as children requiring a permanent placement out with their birth family. The girls are half siblings who share the same foster placement. Sara and Katie have two older half siblings who were adopted together. Sara and Katie's birth mother had a very unsettled childhood, and has had problems with drugs and alcohol misuse from a young age. The girls' birth mother has also had several periods of depressions and has Hepatitis C.

It is suspected Sara was exposed to alcohol and occasional heroin use in utero. Sara was born full term and currently has no health issues other than having a squint. All that is known about Sara's birth father is that he is thought to be violent. Sara lived with her birth mother and maternal grandparents for the first 8 months of her life, but was looked after and accommodated due to increased risks of neglect impacting on Sara's wellbeing. Sara's birth mother could at times be very good with Sara, but she was unable to prioritise Sara's needs when she was under the influence of drugs and alcohol. There was a plan to rehabilitate Sara to her birth mother, and she briefly returned to her mother's care before being accommodated with her current foster carers at 1 year old.

Katie was thought to be exposed to alcohol, heroin, valium and antidepressants before birth. Her birth mother was also known to have been highly stressed for much of the pregnancy. Katie was born 4 weeks prematurely, and displayed signs of neo-natal abstinence syndrome (NAS). Katie was a very jittery baby initially, and for the first few weeks of her life she was reluctant to be held. Kate was Looked After and Accommodated with Sara's foster carer as soon as she was discharged from the hospital. Katie's birth father is of White German ethnicity, and has a history of alcohol misuse and offending. Katie's birth father has been cooperative with her social worker, and provided information about himself and his family history.

Sara was initially jealous when Katie was placed with her and would often "poke" Katie, but this has reduced and the girls now appear to know and recognise each other. Both girls are currently meeting their developmental milestones, and have demonstrated they have a good attachment with their current carers. At the adoption and permanence panel it is decided that Sara and Katie should be adopted together.

Case study 2: Anna

Anna was born with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) which lasted a period of one month. Anna's birth mother is thought to have used heroin and valium whilst pregnant with Anna. For the first five months of her life, Anna lived with her birth mother and two half siblings. During this time it is likely that Anna was exposed to a very chaotic living environment, and her birth mother also started a new relationship which was extremely volatile. When Anna was Looked After and Accommodated her mother was heavily under the influence of alcohol and this was a traumatic experience for the children. There was a history of depression, bi polar disorder and diabetes within Anna's maternal family. Little is known about her birth father or his own family history.

Anna was made subject to a Compulsory Supervision Order under section 83 of The Children (Scotland) Act 2011, with measures attached supporting her place of residence and contact with her birth mother and siblings.

Anna and her two older half siblings were placed separately; they were placed in permanent foster placement with contact maintained between all three children. Anna was registered for adoption at the age of 23 months. Anna was meeting her milestones at this point, and was described as sociable little girl who enjoyed going to playgroup. She was still having fortnightly contact with her birth mother, but it was hoped this could be reduced before the adoption application was lodged at court. The plan was for Anna to have ongoing direct contact with her half siblings.

Case study 3: Megan

Megan is an 18 month old girl. Her parents both have learning difficulties which impacted significantly on their ability to parent her. Megan lived at home with her parents for the first year of her life with a high package of support in place from Social Work and Learning Disability Services however this package had little impact on her care. Megan was developmentally delayed when she was accommodated and there were issues about her attachments.

There was no rehabilitation plan put in place when Megan was accommodated as it was felt that all supports had been put in place previously. Megan currently sees her parents once a fortnight. Megan's Social Worker has tried to reduce this contact however the Children's Hearing have been reluctant to do so as they do not want to pre-empt a Sheriff's decision. Megan's parents also plan to contest the Adoption Order which may cause legal delay.

Megan is currently doing well in her foster placement and no longer presents with any developmental delay, she is walking and starting to talk. Megan is also making good attachments to her carers.

19. Glossary

1. CSO - Compulsory Measures of Supervision is a legal order implemented through the Children Hearing system which is reviewed annually.
2. LAAC - refers to the Child/ren being Looked After and Accommodated by the Local Authority
3. PAR - S is the report used to collate information about adoptive parent
4. Form E is the report used to collate information about the Child/ren.
5. ADM refers to the Local Authority Agency Decision Maker
6. Life story - refers to the Child's life.
7. Preparation Group

Other useful resources

AFA Scotland, Coram BAAF and Adoption UK; are the main national agencies involved in policy making, training, research and family finding. Adoption UK is an independent organisation and has a large network of support groups for adoptive parents. Adoption UK also publishes two papers monthly.

Helpful links

- Adoption UK
- www.birthlink.org.uk
- AFA Scotland
- www.scotlandsadoptionregister.org.uk
- Coram BAAF
- adoptions@nrsscotland.gov.uk