

Book References for Parents and Carers

- Golding, K. (2007) Nurturing Attachments, Supporting Children Who Are Fostered or Adopted; ISBN: 978-1-84310-614-2
- Archer, C. (1999) First Steps in Parenting the Child Who Hurts, Tiddlers and Toddlers; ISBN: 1-85302-801-0
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- Archer, C. and Gordon, C. (2006) New Families, Old Scripts, A Guide to the Language of Trauma and Attachment in Adoptive Families; ISBN: 978-1-84310-258-8
- Fahlberg, V. (1994). A Child's Journey through Placement (BAAF) ISBN: 978-187-386-81-33
- Hughes, D. (2009) Principles of Attachment-Focussed Parenting: Effective Strategies to Care for Children (Norton Professional Books) ISBN: 978-039-370-55-53
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- Sunderland, M. (2007) What Every Parent Needs to Know: The Incredible Effects of Love, Nurture and Play on Your Child's Development ISBN: 978-140-532-03-68
- Eldridge, S. (1999) Twenty Things Adopted Kids Wish Their Adoptive Parents Knew ISBN: 978-0-440-50838-0

Children's Book References—Suggested reading for a child during transitions

- Nutmeg Gets Adopted (BAAF) - ISBN: 1-873868-99-5
- Tyler's/Tia's Wishes by Helen Kahn, 2003, (BAAF) - ISBN: 1-903699-22-3
- Dennis Duckling by Barbara Orritt and Paul Sandbrooks, 2003, (the children's society) - ISBN: 1-899783-28-8
- Chester and Daisy move on by Angela Lister 1995, (BAAF) - ISBN: 1-873868-19-7
- Josh and Jazz have three mums by Heidi Argent, 2007 (BAAF) ISBN-978 1 905664 12 2
- A child's Guide to Adoption-RMBC
- A Mother for Choco-ISBN, by McCann 1996 978-069811364

Films

Annie, Despicable Me, Kung Fu Panda 2, Lion King, Oliver, Tigger Movie, Hugo, Toy Story, Up!

Artwork by Thomas



A GUIDE TO TRANSITIONS



Rotherham Children & Young Peoples Services
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Adoption is for many looked after children the best plan to secure their futures and ensure that they are safe and cared for within a loving family home. Adoption is a way of providing a new family for a child who cannot be brought up within the care of their own birth family.

An adoptive child loses all legal ties with their birth family and becomes a full member of their adoptive family, usually taking on the adoptive family's surname.

Foster carers are an invaluable part of the moving on process and contribute immensely to the success of adoptive placements for the children in their care.

This booklet clarifies the expectations RMBC has for its foster carers and adoptive parents in supporting children to move onto adoption and provides top tips for making this transition successful.



By the end of the introductions everyone should feel confident enough for the child to move into their new family full-time. Introductions typically last around 10-15 days depending on the needs of the child. The plan is agreed at the life appreciation day and must be followed. How long it takes for a child to move is individual and less important than what happens along the way. It is important not use introductions as an excuse for lots of big activities or treats.

After the Move:

If everything has progressed well a final 'move in date' will be set. The new family will collect the child from the foster carers; The child's social worker or adoption social worker should be present to help facilitate this move. The adoptive parents will be asked to make contact with the foster carers that night to let them know how the child has settled.



Handling Concerns during Introductions:

- In the first instance, the foster carers should raise any issues or concerns with their fostering supervising social worker and adopters should share their concerns with their adoption social worker. It is important that concerns are not directly shared with the foster carer/ adoptive parents during the introduction visit.
- A discussion with the child's social worker or team manager may be needed in order to fully address the concerns.
- In the event that concerns remain, the foster carers could approach the child's locality manager or the Independent Reviewing Officer.
- Any concerns that foster carers or adoptive parents have must also be raised at the review of introductions meeting. Any concerns expressed should be kept confidential and should only be discussed with the social workers involved.

Prior to the child actually moving in with their adoptive family, two review of introductions meetings will be arranged. The purpose of these meetings are to discuss how the introductions are going, or have gone, and to confirm or amend the placement date.

It is important that foster carers are able to share their feelings about how the introductions have gone, both from their own view and the child's point of view. It is much better for the child that matters are raised in an open and honest way prior to a placement than if the placement occurs and later disrupts, because of issues that occurred during the introductions which were not discussed. Equally, adoptive parents are expected to be open and honest about their feelings and reservations if they have any.

The Adoption Process

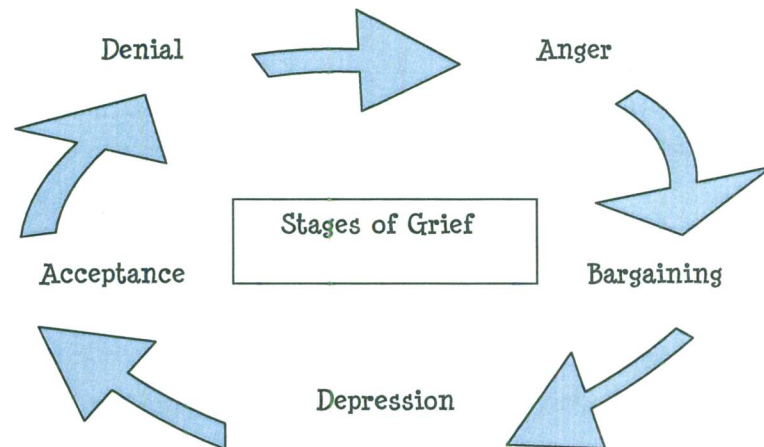
Preparing the Child

Foster carers can begin to generally talk about adoption and moving by talking about going on trips, packing for a journey, moving house, etc - what happens and the feelings those experiences evoke.

- It is important to communicate to children that families are diverse and come in all different shapes and sizes - as some children are adopted by same sex couples or single parents...so it is important that they remain open to different experiences of parenting and family.
- Films can be helpful to help children to understand what is happening to them. Read or watch something together and then chat afterwards.
- Stories about moving to adoption or moving house are helpful. RMBC's 'A Child's guide for Adoption'.
- Once a possible link to adopters has been agreed the final birth family contact should be planned 2 months before matching panel in order to allow the child to grieve.
- The final contact with birth parents should be completed at least one month before the life appreciation day. Photos should be taken on this contact.
- Foster carers can review the Life Story Albums with the child. They can tell them a made up story of 'a child they once knew'.
- Calendars provide a visual way for children to count down how many sleeps until they move.
- Foster carers should gather keepsakes, mementos, photos, favourite toys, etc together to move with the child. Don't forget to ask school for any cards or keepsakes they may have.
- School friends should also be able to say good luck to the child shortly after matching panel. This is usually 7-10 days before the life appreciation day. Ask school to prepare cards and photos for the child (with labelled names)
- Arrange a 'Good-Luck' Party for the foster family to enjoy a private time with the child before the move to adoption. Prepare the child's favourite meal, play games, etc. Be mindful of the size of these gatherings so that children are not overwhelmed.

Grief And Loss Signs To Look Out For

- Irritability
- Insomnia
- Chatter-box behaviour
- Spacey, pre-occupied
- Defiant
- Regressive
- Careless about hygiene/clothing
- Withdrawal
- Refusal to eat or talk
- Weight loss or gain
- Nightmares
- Poor school performance
- Anxious or hyper-vigilant
- Clingy, whiny
- Soiling or bedwetting



Babies feel change but cannot understand or verbalise it. They may experience loss of familiar carers as total abandonment and be extremely distressed. It is important that familiar sensory experiences and routines are maintained (i.e. how things feel and smell). Adopters should use familiar nicknames or phrases and use the same wash powder, perfume as the foster carer if possible. Where possible, foster carers should give the child's bedding to the new adoptive parents, this will help the child to settle more easily.

Foster Carers can help by:

- Talking about moving to a new family in a child-friendly manner
- Providing a consistent, predictable routine
- Being nurturing, comforting and affectionate
- Maintaining a calm atmosphere and soothing activities
- Giving simple names to big feelings
- Offering choices and some sense of control (i.e. what activities they do when they meet their new parents)

The child's social worker, fostering supervising social worker and adoption social worker should be on hand for the initial introductions on the first day and throughout the introduction process. Photos taken of the first time the child meets their adopters are needed.

During this process, the child's behaviour may change; you should be mindful of this and consider the following areas during the introductions:

- Is the child settled in the care of new parents?
- Is the child looking to their new parents for their needs to be met?
- Are there any changes or disturbances to the child's behaviour? (sleep patterns, bedwetting, soiling, regressive behaviours, confusion).

Preparing your family/friends:

Following the first week of introductions, the foster carers take the child to the adopters for a home visit. This allows the carers to give the child permission to stay. The adopters provide tea and then the child and carers return back to the carers' address (or hotel if applicable) and then return the following day.

The next day the adopters collect the child from the carers for the child to spend a full day with adopters. The day could end with bath time, where appropriate, before the child is returned back to carers.

It is important to remember that children do not really understand the concept of foster care or temporary parent until much older, approximately 5 or 6 years old.

Sometimes the child or siblings appear to be confused or distressed with the introduction process and the instinct of carers and adoptive parents is to ask at the review for the move to be brought forward. However, it is normal for children to be distressed and they need time with the foster carers to grieve before feeling able to move to new parents. The introduction process offers time for this to happen and it is important that the children have time to explore these feelings before the move. Therefore it is important that the plan of introductions is followed as much as possible!



- Inform your family of the plan of Adoption for the child as soon as it is agreed.
- Help your family members, especially young children or grandchildren, to say good-bye and offer good luck wishes for the future through letters, audio CDs or video footage that can go with the child.
- Capture special moments of your family with the child. Help your family to create a special book of memories for their time together with the child. Give a copy to the child.
- Teenagers, partners/spouses or older children may become moody, angry or withdrawn. This is OK and a part of the grieving process. Provide them with space to talk or share, if needed.
- It may be helpful and therapeutic for you and your family to write a 'What I Wish For You' letter to help to process all your wishes for their future without you.
- It is important to prepare your children and grandchildren in case post adoption contact is not honoured or maintained in the way it was promised.
- You may wish to provide a letter for when the child is older, which explains your involvement, experiences and your feelings and wishes for the child.
- Siblings and other children in placement may become anxious about a child going to live with their 'forever family'. It may be nice to share the child's adopters family book and photographs with them to ease their anxieties.

It is important that the child, their siblings and any other child in placement are NOT told about their new family until 'matched' at panel. It should then be the child's social worker and foster carers that tell the child together. If a child asks in the meantime use phrases, like 'we are looking very hard for a forever family for you'

Managing Introductions:

Following the matching panel, A 'Life Appreciation' day is organised in order to share information with the adopters about the child and their history.

The main objective in introductions is to gradually withdraw the current carers from the child's life in exchange for the gradual introduction and acceptance of the new adoptive parents. Introductions provide an opportunity for the adopters and the child to practice becoming a family. Introductions help adopters gather valuable information about the child from the foster carers in regards to their routines, interests, preferences and behaviour management strategies.

We recognise that facilitating introductions can feel intrusive to the life of the foster family. Adoptive parents are welcomed into your home, your family life, and routines even in the early hours and evening times. please speak with your fostering supervising social worker if you require reimbursements travel, food expenses during the introduction period. This can put foster carers in a challenging position of helping adoptive parents to build a relationship with a child that they have formed an attachment with. Foster carers must also contain the grief and loss within themselves and their own family whilst supporting the child in managing their own grief and loss. This is a difficult balance to strike and takes considerable skill, empathy and time to manage. Foster carers can seek support from their fostering supervising social worker and adopters from their adoption social workers. The Fostering Team also hold a sibling group for foster carers' birth children to access support services.



The length of introductions depend upon the needs of the child. Generally, introductions last between 10 to 15 days, including weekends.

The following schedule may not be exactly what is planned but introductions should follow this type of pattern. If the child is nursery/school age they should not attend school for the duration of introductions.

- The first visit to the child should ideally take place at the foster carers' home. It should last around 1.5 hours with adopters, carers and social worker; there should be no other children or adults present. The carers and adopters should interact together with the child to enable the child to feel comfortable. This visit is a good opportunity for the adopters to see the child's bedroom and to ask about their favourite toys and games.
- The second visit often lasts for half a day and should involve lunch. This gives the adopters an opportunity to see what the child is like during mealtimes and allows the adopters to share a meal with the child.
- The third day maybe the first full day, with the adopters arriving in the morning and then leaving around tea time. Foster carers and adoptive parents may all take the child out to visit a local park or other local attraction.
- On days 4 and 5 adopters will spend a full day at the carers' home and this will usually involve going for a walk, or going somewhere for lunch with the child. Adopters should remain afterwards to help with bath time and bedtime routines. The 5th day may also involve the adopters taking the child out on their own. It is advised that the adopters take the child to the same attraction as on day 3 as this will allow the child and adoptive parent to feel as confident as possible
- After approximately 5 days there is a 'Review of Introductions' meeting to look at what progress has been made and for any issues to be raised.