

# Information pack

**adopt**  
EAST LOTHIAN













# Adoption changes lives!

**Our vision is for every child to be part of a family where they are safe, loved and nurtured.**

East Lothian Council is looking for people who can offer a child or brothers and sisters a loving and supportive family for life. We constantly seek to recruit more adoptive families to meet the needs of East Lothian's children... and those from further afield.

Adoption is a legal process by which children who can't grow up within their birth family become full and permanent members of a new family. Adopting a child is a life-long commitment which needs careful consideration and preparation. We are here to help you with that. Most of the children we place are early primary school age or younger but we have no upper age limit if adoption is the right plan for the child. Children come with a range of abilities and from a variety of religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds – and so do adopters.

East Lothian... a great place to live and a great place to adopt a child!

# Why adopt with us?

**At East Lothian Council we are aware that adoption is a life-changing commitment full of rewards and challenges. We value our adopters and our professional, friendly team provide comprehensive local support and guidance.**

## **We offer:**

- Counselling, advice and information about all aspects of adoption
- Access to both East Lothian and Scotland-wide registers to bring together the profiles of children in need of adoption and details of prospective adopters
- A commitment to finding adoptive parents as early as legally possible to promote early positive relationship building
- Local preparation and training for adoption
- Support from a designated adoption social worker
- Advice and buddying from experienced adopters
- A lively local adopters group offering family days with fun activities, coffee mornings and adoption workshops
- Support for children and young people affected by adoption
- Help managing contact between an adopted child and birth relatives, where contact has been agreed
- In some circumstances, finance to meet identified additional care needs
- One year's membership of independent adoption support services, either Adoption UK or New Family Social
- Leisure access cards for adopters and children to East Lothian facilities in the first year of placement



# What adoptive parents said about us...

"Our social worker has been great. She made the Homestudy an enjoyable experience; she was thoughtful, considerate, knowledgeable and professional and made us feel very relaxed throughout"

"The preparation group was very informative, really gained a lot of knowledge and the exercises were very visual which was extremely helpful"

"Talking to families at post-adoption support who have similar age kids is really useful"





# Happy, successful families

We place babies through to school-aged children for adoption from both East Lothian and other local authorities. We are committed to supporting you to become a happy, successful family. We will take time to get to know you during the homestudy process to ensure you and the child or children are right for each other.

## Who can adopt?

- You can be single, married, in a civil partnership or living together in a stable, long-term relationship
- You must be over 21 years of age
- We prefer one adopter to be available on a full time basis for the first year after the child comes to live with you. Many adopters are entitled to Adoption Leave from their employer
- You need to have patience, acceptance and empathy, along with the desire to make a life-long commitment to a child
- We are looking for adopters who can work with everyone involved with the child such as foster carers, social workers, health visitors, legal professionals, teachers and sometimes the child's birth parents
- Adopted children have usually experienced unmet emotional and physical needs and need parents who can give them lots of individual time, understanding and support
- You will need to have suitable accommodation with sufficient space for a child or children
- You need to be fit enough to meet the challenges of looking after an active child, supporting them through their teenage years and into adulthood
- We do not place children in households where anyone smokes. Nor do we assess people who have difficulties with drugs or alcohol
- We wouldn't progress an adoption application while fertility treatment or investigations are ongoing, but talk to us about your circumstances and the timing of an application

# What to expect

From the moment you first consider adoption you will be thinking about the kind of parent you hope to be. We are here to help you through the process every step of the way.

## 1. Initial enquiry

We offer everyone the opportunity to meet with an adoption experienced social worker who can help you decide if adopting through East Lothian Council is right for you.

## 2. Checks and references

If you decide to apply to adopt with us, we will complete the following checks and references. All adoption agencies carry out the same statutory checks, which are required in law. These are aimed at ensuring children are placed in families where they will be safe and well cared for.

- **Disclosure Scotland**

We will apply for an enhanced police check for each applicant and adult member of your household. This will inform us of any convictions you have had in Scotland. (We will also ask for a check to be completed in the relevant country if you have lived outwith Scotland as an adult). Having a conviction does not necessarily mean you cannot adopt but we will want to discuss the circumstances with you. It would therefore be best if you mentioned anything you are worried about when you begin the application process.

- **Health checks**

Children need adoptive parents who are physically and emotionally well. We will ask your GP to complete a health check. If you are concerned about your medical history, please discuss this with us. Our Medical Advisor is on hand to help guide us through the implications of any health issue that might impact your suitability to adopt.

- **Employment history and references**

We will ask for an employment reference and possibly references from previous employers; these are particularly relevant if you have worked with children or vulnerable adults. We will always discuss the timing of seeking an employer reference with you.

- **Local Authority check**

We will check if you have had contact with your local authority in the areas you have lived since the age of 16 years.

- **Personal references**

Your friends and family know you best so we ask for references from people who know you and your family well (including any adult children). We will visit some of these referees to ask about the qualities you would bring as an adoptive parent.

- **Previous partners**

If you have been married before or were in a long-term partnership we will usually contact your former partner to confirm there is no reason why you should not adopt. We know this may feel intrusive and if you are worried about this please speak to the social worker when he or she visits to discuss your application.

- **Other checks**

If you have children already we will ask the health visitor or school/nursery for a reference. We will also complete a Home Health and Safety Check and where appropriate a Pet Risk Assessment.

### 3. Preparation and training

Each prospective adopter attends a series of preparation groups designed to help you think about what you will bring to adoption, what adopted children need from their new parents and how parenting by adoption differs from parenting a child born to you (we call it Parenting Plus). We also look at the legal and financial aspects of adoption and some of the processes involved. Experienced adopters take part in the groups to share their advice and offer encouragement. The groups are led by social workers experienced in adoption. The group preparation programme is usually run over four days including weekends, or in the evening as best fits with the group. The group programme is aimed at helping you make an informed decision about adoption. After completing the groups you'll be asked if you want to continue and make a formal application to adopt.

### 4. Homestudy

Every applicant participates in an assessment known as a *Homestudy*. This involves regular meetings with your social worker over a four to six-month period (or longer if necessary). This helps us to agree whether adoption is right for you and your family and if so, the range of children for whom you are best suited. During the assessment you and your social worker will look at the relevant skills, knowledge and experience you bring as prospective adopters. The assessment considers a range of factors such as:

- **Your life experience and motivation to adopt**
- **The strengths you bring to adoption, individually and as a couple (if relevant)**
- **Your family's views about adopting**
- **Your childcare experience or potential**
- **Your wider support network – it's difficult to go it alone**
- **Your understanding of the needs of adopted children**
- **Your financial readiness to adopt**

At the end of the assessment period we will draw all the evidence presented into a report which is then presented to the Adoption Approval Panel. You will be invited to attend the panel along with your social worker. The panel will recommend whether your application to adopt is accepted. If not you can request a review of the decision. Once approved, we can consider you for children who are waiting.

## 5. Matching

Before being formally matched with a child you will be given full information about the child and his or her background. You will have the opportunity to meet with the child's social worker, current foster carer, the medical advisor if relevant and anyone else who holds significant information about the child or the circumstances. Once you are certain you want to proceed we will arrange a formal matching panel.

## 6. Legal position

East Lothian Council is committed to placing children with their adoptive family as soon as is possible. Depending on the child's circumstances, you may be asked to foster the child for a period before adopting. All this will be discussed with you in advance of the matching panel, so there should be no surprises.

The court cannot grant an adoption until the child has been living with you for at least 13 weeks. In most cases, however, the child will have been living with you longer than that. The social workers involved will prepare reports for the court, which are submitted along with your adoption petition. You will probably need a lawyer to do some of the necessary paperwork but your social worker will be able to advise you.

## 7. Finance

As an adopter you will be financially responsible for your child, however some legal, start-up and travel costs may be met by the local authority placing the child.

In certain circumstances additional financial payments and allowances apply. Further information about this is available via your social worker and will be discussed with you at every stage in the process.

## 8. After adoption

We will agree in advance the type of support you and your child are likely to need in the days following adoption and in the longer term and remain in touch for as long as needed.

We hope for adoption to be as smooth a process as possible for all our families but we know there can sometimes be hurdles along the way. Our experienced team are here to provide guidance with all adoption-related issues or concerns at any time.

**We'd love to hear from you!**

To find out more about adoption and fostering, please contact East Lothian Council's Community Resources Team. T: 01620 827643 E: [adoption@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:adoption@eastlothian.gov.uk)





## Inter-country adoption

Inter-country adoption is the adoption of a child who is habitually resident in one country, by an individual or couple habitually resident in another country, in this case Scotland. Inter-country adoptions are only permitted through registered adoption agencies, such as that managed by East Lothian Council. Many Scots successfully adopt from abroad, but it is important to be aware that this is a complex, lengthy and potentially costly process.

All prospective adopters must be assessed as suitable to adopt by their local adoption agency. This assessment involves a discussion of your lifestyle, what you could offer a child from abroad, as well as standard checks including medical, financial, police and local authority, also interviews with referees who know you well. As well as meeting Scottish standards, prospective intercountry adopters must also satisfy the eligibility criteria of the country from which they wish to adopt. These can include restrictions on the age, sexuality or marital status of potential adopters.

Each of the agencies involved in the inter-country adoption process – the local authority, Scottish Government, legal advisors, the government in the child's home country and the UK Border Agency – require a fee for their services.

If you would like to discuss this further, please call the duty social worker in the Community Resources Team on 01620 827643 or alternatively email the team on **[adoption@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:adoption@eastlothian.gov.uk)**



Interested in fostering?  
Call: 01620 827643  
or visit [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/fostering)

[www.eastlothian.gov.uk/adoption](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/adoption)

[adoption@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:adoption@eastlothian.gov.uk)

01620 827643

**Fostering and Adoption Services**

Community Resources

Randall House, Macmerry Business Park

Macmerry EH33 1RW

East Lothian

**Health & Social Care Partnership**



Versions of this leaflet can be supplied in Braille, large print, audiotape or in your own language. Please phone Customer Services if you require assistance on 01620 827199