Adoption Process

Just like everyone else

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Initial Enquiry about Adoption
The adoption process can vary but generally it begins when you make the initial contact to find out more about it. After an initial telephone interview you will have received this information pack with a tear-off slip which you can return to us if you wish to proceed.

Initial Home Visit
Once the tear-off slip is returned, we will make contact with you to organise a home visit to explore your enquiry further. The home visit is an opportunity for you to have a discussion with an experienced adoption worker about adoption, the children who need adopting and why you would like to adopt a child. It is an opportunity for us to make an initial assessment about what you are able to offer a child and make sure you are able to offer a stable, secure environment to them. After this visit, an Adoption Manager will make a decision about whether to progress your enquiry further. However, it could be that as a result of the information you provide and the discussion you have with the worker, you may not wish to proceed at this time. It could be that this assessment indicates you are not ready to take the next steps towards adoption.

Our goal is to be open and honest with you and we want to help you have realistic expectations about adoption. If the decision is made not to progress your enquiry at any stage, this will always be discussed with you. Should you disagree with our decision you are entitled to make a complaint.

Adoption Preparation Groups
If you do progress further, the next stage in the process is the Adoption Preparation Groups, which are held locally over several weeks. You and other interested people will be asked to attend a series of preparation groups to find out more about why children are looked after and accommodated by the local authority. You will explore and discuss some difficulties children have and how to deal with them. Details of the legislation and internal procedures supporting the work we do is also explored at the groups.

Formal Assessment
Following this a worker will be allocated to you and the formal assessment will begin.

The assessment or “home study” as it is sometimes called, includes Disclosure Scotland checks, Health Board checks and Local Authority checks. We will also arrange for you to have a full health assessment.

We ask for written references from people who know you well, including family members and friends and will visit some of these people. If you have had significant relationships in the past, we will ask you about these and discuss getting in touch with your ex-partner. This would particularly be the case if you had children with your ex-partner.

This assessment is detailed and looks in depth at your life experiences, attitudes, your approach to parenting and experience of children. The assessment will also look at the age, number and gender of children you could adopt.

This formal assessment is carried out in your own home and normally takes a minimum of 6 months to complete, unless there are circumstances that require further explanation. This assessment report incurs no cost to the applicant’s.

Approval to Adopt
A report is prepared by your allocated social worker based on the assessment. Then a manager will visit you and complete a Second Opinion Report also. This is generally a one off visit by the manager in the adoption team. These Reports are then reviewed by an independent Adoption Panel who meet you and your social worker and make a recommendation about whether you should be approved to adopt. The final decision is made by the Agency Decision Maker.

If you are not considered suitable to adopt, you will be advised of your rights and potential next steps. This will be sent to you in a formal letter. It includes the right to make representation to the adoption agency with regard to that decision and request a review.
Linking and Matching

Once you are approved to adopt, your social worker will discuss with you children who are currently waiting for adoptive families, with a view to matching you. The most important consideration in matching is ensuring that the match is right for both the adopter and the child. This can mean that there is often a wait between being approved and being matched.

Once you are identified as having the potential to meet the needs of a particular child, your social worker will discuss with you the details. If you would like to find out more, you will be given written information, including medical and health information about the child. You will also meet with the child's social worker. You have the opportunity to meet with an adoption medical adviser to discuss any health issues the child may have and to meet with other professionals involved with the child, including the child's foster carer. There will be discussions around the support, including financial support that you may require to meet the needs of the child and your needs as an adoptive family.

If everyone wishes to proceed with this proposed match, then a meeting is held between all those involved before the match is presented to the Adoption Panel.

If the match is recommended by the Panel and the Agency Decision Maker approves the match, your social worker will start the process of introducing you to the child. This process will depend on the child/ren you are matched with and their needs. If your child is subject to a Children’s Hearing Order, they will be placed with you by the Children's Hearing. You will be given more information in relation to this at the time.

Ongoing Support

The support, help and advice you have received throughout the process of adopting does not stop when a child is placed. You will continue to receive visits from your social worker and the child's social worker for a while once a child is placed with you to ensure you are receiving the help and support you need. You will require to petition the Court in relation to adopting your child.

A post adoption meeting is held in your home to ensure all supports that you require are in place. Should your needs, or those of your child change, you are entitled to an assessment of these needs at any time. Adoption support is lifelong for those involved in the process.

You will also be invited to a Post Adoption Support Group that includes prospective adopters and existing adopters. These groups are generally held two or three times a year and in conjunction with South and East Ayrshire.

See the following flowchart for a visual order of the process.

**The Adoption Process**

- **Phone/e-mail/telephone Interview**
  - (Information pack sent out)
- **Tear-off slip returned to Family Placement Team**
  - followed by Initial interview at your home
- **Attend Adoption Preparation Groups**
- **Assessment Process Begins**
  - (Includes Disclosure, health and other checks)
- **Prospective Adopter’s Report is written & also Second Opinion Report**
- **Adoption Reports are taken to Adoption Panel for a recommendation**
  - (Our Agency decision maker decides whether to approve (or not) applicants as adopters)
- **The right to ask for a review if you are unhappy with decision**
- **POST-APPROVAL**
- **Linking with a child or children**
  - (Approved at Adoption Panel)
- **Adoption Panel Planning Meeting**
  - Child/ren are placed following a Planning Meeting
- **Adoption Order application is made to Court**
- **Post Adoption Support Meeting**