



Information pack for anyone interested in finding out more about adopting a child or children

Contents

- 3 Hello
- 4 What is Adopt Coast to Coast?
- 5 Why adopt with Adopt Coast to Coast?
- 5 What is adoption?
- 6 Who are the children?
- 6 Meet some of our children
- 8 What sort of people are adopters?
- 10 The steps to becoming an adoptive parent
- 12 Support for new adopters
- 12 Real life stories
- 16 Finding out more
- 16 Our privacy policy



Hello

Thank you for choosing to find out about adopting with Adopt Coast to Coast.

Reading through this pack is the first step on your journey to building a new family.

There are many good reasons for wanting to adopt :

- You may not have your own children but want to be a parent
- You may already have a family but feel you still have time and space for another child or children
- You have masses of love, security and happiness to offer to a child who has not had a great start in life.

Adoption gives children the chance to be in a permanent stable family, filled with the trust, love and care that they need.

We are looking for people who can offer a child a loving home for life and provide them with the care and support they need to grow and flourish.

Whether you are looking to adopt one child, or brothers and sisters, babies or older children, we will support you through the process to find the best match for you and the child or children you adopt.

As with raising any other child, raising an adopted child is not always plain sailing. Our children come from very different backgrounds and all have different needs. Some have faced hardship or neglect, and some may have good and bad memories of their birth family and have faced loss. They need time to gain your trust and develop an emotional bond with you, but rest assured you won't be alone in helping them with this and we'll be with you every step of the way.

If you think adopting is right for you, please fill out the enquiry form on our website at www.adoptcoasttocoast.org.uk and one of our adoption experts will contact you by the next working day to discuss your enquiry in a bit more detail.

What is Adopt Coast to Coast?

Adopt Coast to Coast is a partnership which brings together the extensive knowledge and expertise of three Local Authority Adoption Agencies across the North East and North West - Cumbria and Durham County Councils and Together for Children, which delivers services on behalf of Sunderland City Council.

The government wants all local authority adoption services across England to be managed across a wider geographical area, rather than just by one council or organisation, to give more children the opportunity to become part of a family who can meet their needs (and give prospective adopters the opportunity to find their family) – so our Regional Adoption Agency, Adopt Coast to Coast, was created in April 2021.

How will it be better?

Adopt Coast to Coast will speed up the adoption process and find the best match for the babies and children in the care of these three local authority adoption agencies.

The three local authority adoption agencies are all fully committed to the shared vision for Adopt Coast to Coast, where:

“...children will achieve their full potential within a loving and secure family, and everyone affected by adoption will receive a high quality innovative and sustainable service.”

All three local authorities already provide adoption services which are rated Good by Ofsted, creating a strong foundation for us to continue working collaboratively to find secure and loving homes for our children.



Why adopt with Adopt Coast to Coast?

We are the first step in the adoption process, helping to find people who could make good adopters. We work with the adoption agencies in three local authorities with many years' experience in placing children and approving and supporting adopters.

The three local authorities – Cumbria, Durham and Sunderland (via Together for Children) - have offices right across the North East and North West. Having a much larger area to access means you will be able to hear about a much greater number of children.

Your enquiry form will be received by the relevant local authority, which has a full range of services available to support you seamlessly throughout the entire adoption process.

- We will provide you with training and support to make sure adoption is right for you and for children waiting to be adopted
- We will support you through what we call the matching and placement process – and we're there for you right up until you get your final Adoption Order
- We will help with lots of advice and information, as well as holding workshops, and running support groups and social events where you can meet other adopters.

What is adoption?

Adoption is the legal process by which a child or a group of brothers and sisters, who cannot be brought up within their birth family, become full, permanent and legal members of their new family.

As the adopter, you become the child's legal parent(s), with the same rights and responsibilities as if the child was born to you.

Who are the children?

As we've said, the decision to place a child in care is never taken lightly, but it is done in the child's best interests. As local authorities we have children who are waiting for their forever families and they range in age from babies upwards.

Some children need to be placed alone, and some with their brothers and/or sisters. Some will have health or medical issues, and may have development delay, or physical, emotional and/or learning disabilities. This might be because of their poor start in life or be something they were born with.

Most children will have complex family backgrounds. They may have been living at home with family for some time before there were sufficient grounds or concerns to remove them.

Examples of what the children could have experienced are:

- Misuse of drugs and/or alcohol
- Mental ill health difficulties
- Domestic violence

Any of these issues may have impacted on the child's emotional and behavioural development.

Meet some of our children

Let us introduce you to just a few of the children we are currently caring for

Liam and Noah

Brothers Liam and Noah are lovely boys but have had a turbulent start in life. Liam is six, with short curly blond hair, blue eyes and fair skin. He is an active little boy who loves to run around outside, but also loves to sit and relax and watch a film or play Roblox on his iPad. He is a well-mannered and thoughtful little boy who will always make sure that when he gets a treat or toy, that he can get an extra one for his little brother.

Five-year-old Noah has blue eyes, blond hair and fair skin which tans easily in summer. He wears a big smile from morning until night, and is a loving, affectionate, laid back and light-hearted little boy. He has the funniest sense of humour, a great imagination, and a cheeky personality. He rarely gets upset and always finds a reason to smile in any situation.

The two brothers are very close and love to play together – but they have really felt the loss of their Aunty Nic, who they were close to but who has become ill and can't help to care for them any longer. They have occasional behavioural issues when they feel insecure or worried about the future, and they need to feel really safe and secure by a family that will cherish, love and support them. They are both thriving on the stability and predictability of a firm household routine, and they need this continued, with a parent or parents who will ensure that they are at the centre of everything they do and will always put the boys first.

Both boys are physically healthy and have gorgeous personalities, which are growing as their confidence grows. They just need a loving and caring environment to help them reach their potential.

Jamie

Jamie is an eight-month-old baby with big blue eyes and blond hair, a happy little boy who is very engaging and attracts people to him with his smile and cheeky face. He loves the attention but is not over familiar with people and likes the security of his foster carers being with him. He enjoys his bottle as he still has a high calorie formula.

Jamie loves musical toys, singing and dancing, especially to The Wiggles and the Twirly Woos. He doesn't like loud noises and can be very jumpy and is easily frightened, for example, if a toy does something unexpected.

Jamie experienced significant neglect in the first six months of his life, and his carers say that at first he was withdrawn and didn't cry to be picked up. However, they have gained his confidence and now he recognises everyone and laughs and smiles to gain their attention.

Jamie does have some health issues, all of which are under the supervision of specialists and can be discussed further with your social worker.

Lizzie

Lizzie is a sweet three-year-old who loves new experiences, a social little girl who is eager to interact. She loves to play with the foster carer's nine-year-old son but can be demanding if he doesn't want to play. Lizzie attends nursery three mornings a week and loves it, chatting happily about it.

Lizzie likes to draw and paint and to ride her bike. She loves teddy bears and playing with her doll in the pram, and she loves to wear pink and sparkly clothes. She also loves watching Peppa Pig on TV.

Lizzie is usually a very happy little girl, but she has experienced significant neglect and as a result wasn't used to boundaries and routines. She can become upset and demanding if told "No". She would also eat very fast and cram food into her mouth, but this behaviour has improved significantly while being cared for. Her speech and language were also delayed but have also improved greatly since being looked after by the foster carer.

Janie and Allie

Janie and Allie are lovely sisters, who would need to be adopted together by the same adoptive family.

Janie is six, with brown eyes and dark blonde hair. She is very polite, is a popular girl in class and a real people pleaser. She likes to make sure that everyone around her is happy.

Janie likes to dress up and do role playing games. She also likes to be out and about, going to the park and beach, and likes family activities or playing in the garden.

Janie can be bossy with her younger sister, and there is a lot of competition between the two, but once she is reminded not to be bossy, this settles down.

Allie is four, with brown eyes and straight brown hair. She is a happy, easy going little girl, with a good sense of humour, but she can be moody at times when she can't get her own way. She is a chatty little girl but can sometimes be hard to understand because of her delayed speech.

Allie likes messy play, especially play dough and arts and crafts, and her favourite TV programme is Paw Patrol. Allie enjoys nursery very much and loves dressing up in her princess dress.

When Allie first came into foster care, she was very much the baby of the family, but has been encouraged to play at a level of her age and has made great progress with her development. She needs to be encouraged to share and take turns and is starting to do this now. She has just started school and is keen and excited to go every day.

These wonderful children are just the tip of the iceberg. Once you start on the adoption process, you will hear about other children, and be ready to adopt them all! Your social worker will guide you through the matching process, and you will be matched with the right child or children for you.

What sort of people are adopters?

People from all walks of life can adopt. The main driver is wanting to provide a safe, stable and loving home to a child.

We need adopters with a wide range of knowledge, experience, skills and lifestyles. We also need flexible, open, honest people who are able to consider a range of children and who can understand the difficult start these children will have had. You need to be able to adjust your life and expectations to the needs of the child or children.

Adoptive parents need to be able to work alongside a range of other professionals especially in the early stages so it is important that you can get along with people and listen to, and take advice from, people who know the child/children or have professional knowledge which can help you in advising the best ways to meet the child's needs.

Key things that people ask us

People who adopt need to be 21 and over, and can be

- single, married or cohabitating
- from any ethnic or religious background
- heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender
- a homeowner or living in rented accommodation
- employed or on benefits

Home space

You can own your home or rent it – the key is having space for children to live and play.

Employment

You can be working or be unemployed and receiving benefits. What's important is that you can show us that you can afford to support a child.



Smoking

Smoking for us means cigarettes, e-cigarettes or vaping.

We want our children to be brought up in a family that enjoys health and wellbeing, so we don't place children aged under 5 in a household with someone who smokes or vapes. You would also be unable to adopt an older child who has a medical condition which could be affected by smoking, such as chest problems, asthma or any disability.

An adopter who has given up smoking needs to have stopped for at least 12 months before we will consider placing a child under five with you. If you've been a non-smoker for six months (well done!), why not talk to us now and if it's right for you we can get the ball rolling.

Criminal history

It's not an automatic no to adopting if you have a criminal conviction or caution – it just depends what the offence was. Be completely honest with us, and we of course will keep your information confidential.

We can't consider an application from anyone who has been convicted or charged with offences against children, sexual offences against adults or significant offences of violence.

Fertility treatment

Many people consider adoption after ending fertility treatment, and we completely welcome hearing from you. However, it's important to let yourself adjust emotionally from treatment, and to think deeply about how adoption is a very different way of becoming a parent.

If you are considering adoption, we would love to talk to you, understand your circumstances and help you work out the best approach and timing for you.

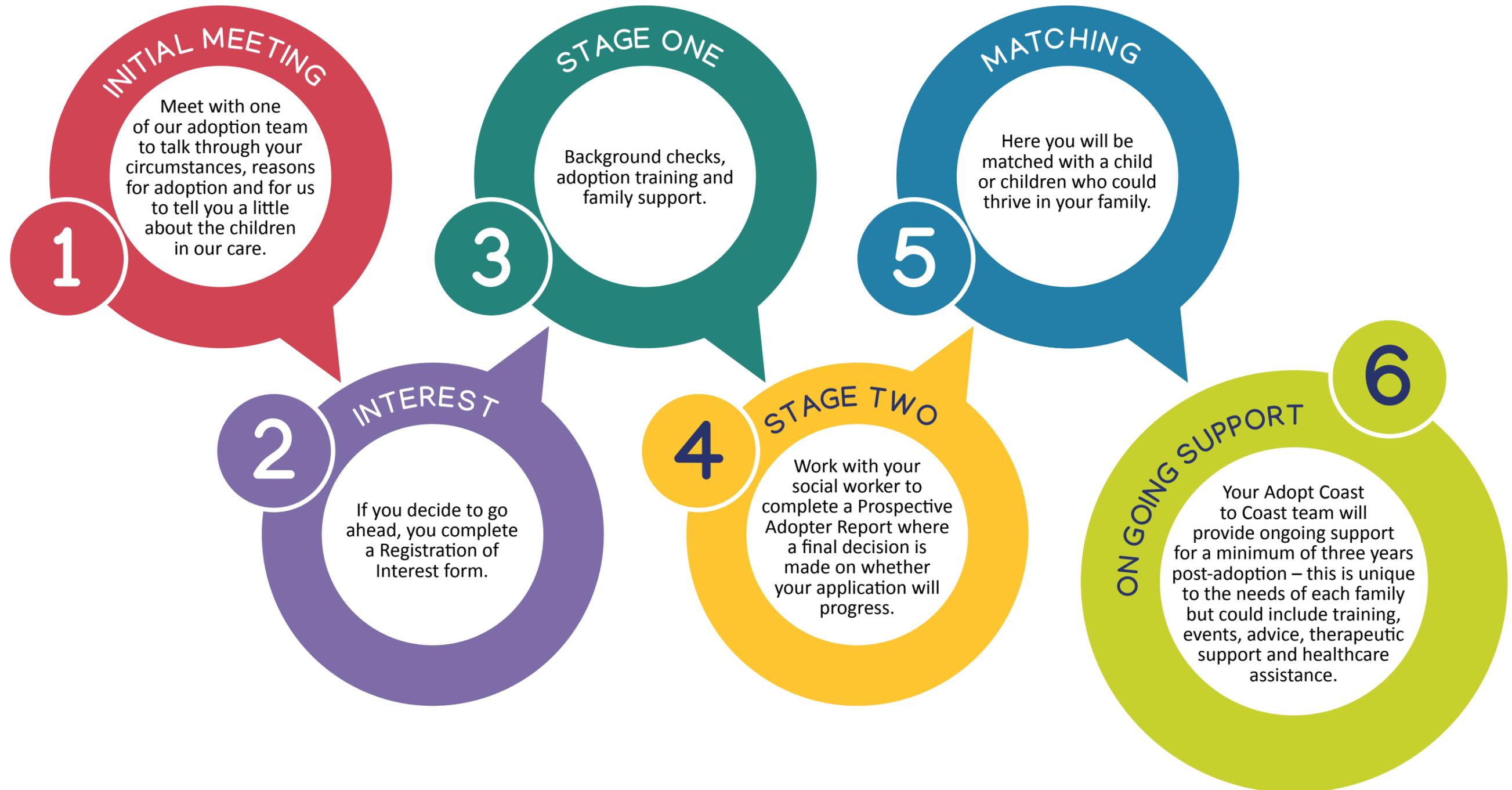
Pets

We're a nation of pet lovers and pets can play a very important part in a household. However, we also have to think of the child, so we assess all pets. Usually there's no problem, unless the pet is known to be dangerous.

If you own a lot of pets, we will also need to be sure that there are no health risks, and that you have enough time to care for and prioritise a child.

The steps to becoming an adoptive parent.

Being approved as a prospective adopter can take as little as six months and although it can be daunting rest assured, we'll be right there every step of the way to make sure that you're fully prepared, supported, and completely understand the process.



Support for new adopters

We offer tailored packages of support which can vary and may include:

- counselling, advice and information
- a dedicated duty line where you can get advice from a social worker
- training events and workshops on topics such as managing post adoption contact and therapeutic parenting
- evening support groups to meet and chat with other adoptive parents
- stay and play sessions for new families
- an annual fun day and Christmas parties
- regular e-news
- buddying up with other adoptive parents
- advice, support and mediation with post adoption contact arrangements
- helping you find other relevant support services
- access to family therapy and psychology services
- direct work with children including life story work
- help and advice on what to do if relationships in your adoptive family are breaking down advocacy and liaison with education and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

Real life stories

We know hearing stories from people who've been through the adoption process can really help with understanding how it all works, so here's the experience of just a few real-life adopters.

Julie and Peter

I always knew that Peter and I would not have a biological child as Peter shared early into our relationship that he was unable to father a child. In my 20's having children wasn't at the forefront of my mind and we enjoyed a great life – highlights being getting married, renovating our home, travelling to foreign countries and building our careers. But by my mid 30's I started to feel that something was missing from our lives, and we began to think about the options available to us to become parents.

We went to an adoption information event, and the myths of adoption were dispelled. We talked about it with each other, and with our families, as we realised that adoption definitely was something that was bigger than just us and having the support of our family was invaluable.

Six months later, we decided that Fostering for Adoption was an option we wanted to consider, and we took the plunge and made a formal enquiry.

Our social worker guided us through the assessment process, so we always knew what to expect, what was coming next and how long everything was likely to take. It was much more enjoyable than I had anticipated, and the day of the panel when we were unanimously approved will always be a treasured memory for me.

Now we are parents to our delightful two year old daughter. She came to us as a Fostering for Adoption placement and we have been a family for 14 months now.

Life just gets better all the time – we can't imagine what things were like before she arrived. We are sure that we will face issues and challenges as she grows - but what parent doesn't?

We have already made links with the Adoption Support Team and attended some of the workshops and events they run. It is reassuring to know that this support is there for us when and as we need it – because Peter is already asking when we are going to adopt again!

Steven and Robbie

"We'd do it again in a heartbeat!" That's the verdict from Steven and Robbie, who are in a fostering for adoption process with their lovely baby boy, Josh*.

When Steven and Robbie first met, they both knew straight away that the relationship was right – and they also knew they wanted a family of their own. Robbie said: "We talked about children at our first date! So our relationship had the same goals, but to be honest at the beginning we just Googled a bit."

In 2019 they decided the time was right for them, even relocating so they'd be closer to their supportive family network if they were approved. They attended an information event run by the local authority, and then had a visit by a social worker.

Robbie said: "We didn't hear anything for a while after the training. We were assigned our fabulous social worker – but then along came lockdown! However, Covid didn't stop us building a really good relationship with her, and in some ways it worked better, because we could just jump on Teams and didn't have to book well in advance to speak."

Steven highlighted the need for lots of patience and understanding: "You need to get used to saying your story over and over – so don't get worked up about it, it's just part of the process. So too is the realisation that you will need to do lots of soul searching, which can be pretty confronting when you come to examine your own childhood up close."

The couple agreed that the crucial thing was to be honest, with themselves and with their social worker: "You might be scared to rock the boat and want to present the best version of yourself. That's only natural, this is something you really want to make happen – but there's no way round the fact that you've got to be honest and open from the very beginning, and be prepared to explore everything about yourself, or this just won't work for you or your new family. And don't be afraid to ask about financial help like fostering fees and allowances."

The couple had been warned that they would be unlikely to get a baby – but their matching process didn't quite run to plan: "In our minds we had become fully prepared to welcome a slightly older child, maybe 18 months old, into our family," Robbie said. "We went in front of the panel – the longest 16 minutes of our lives – and were approved,

which was such a huge relief for us. And then just one day later, we got a call to say, 'Come and meet a little baby'. It took a rapid and massive shift in our thinking!"

Robbie and Steven met Josh when he was just two weeks old and fell in love with this beautiful little boy. All of their energy then went on equipping their home with everything you need for a newborn, as well as learning how to deal with bathing, bottling and nappy changes.

"That was a mad time, but the hospital staff were amazing and we also had our families on hand, so we felt a lot more confident about caring for him properly."

The journey has been even more emotional for the couple because they chose to go the fostering for adoption route, and the next big step is waiting for the court decision that adoption is the right thing for Josh.

Robbie said: "We're pretty confident that he will be staying with us and we can formally adopt him – but we'll all feel a lot better once that decision has been made. Whatever happens, we know we've given him the best possible start in life. He's a beautiful, normal, healthy baby, who brings us joy each and every day."

Steven added: "The adoption journey might seem completely overwhelming for some people, especially if you've been thinking about it for a long time – but it's all totally worth it."

"All the waiting and worrying, all the concerns about whether you've said the right thing or the wrong thing – just relax, be truthful and open with your social worker, and you could have your own forever family too."

* Name changed.

Sally

I always knew that I wanted to be a mum. I had a couple of serious relationships in my thirties where I'd hope to conceive but sadly this didn't happen. As I hit forty, I found myself single but still wanting to be a mum. I funded some private infertility treatment, but this wasn't successful. At the age of 43 I started to think about adoption. That first call to the agency was nerve wracking however I was immediately put at ease. I felt that my enquiry was valued, and this lessened my concerns about being able to adopt as a single woman who worked full time.

A social worker on the team contacted me within a few days of my initial enquiry and arranged a home visit. The visit was definitely a two way process; whilst, as I expected, I was asked lots of questions I also had the opportunity to raise questions and was encouraged to do so. I was left feeling positive, informed and excited about the next step. I was also given the details of another single adopter for me to contact to gain some more information.

The training course was one of the hardest parts of the process for me as it brought to life the experiences of children who need adoptive families and the reality of being an adoptive parent. I particularly enjoyed listening to the adopters and foster carers who spoke on the course as they provided a real insight from first-hand experience. Being able to ask them questions was really helpful. The course was the first opportunity I had to meet other people who, like me, wanted to become adopters. The agency welcomed my request for my mum to attend the course with me which was important to me as she would be a significant part of my child's life and support to me as a parent.

After training the assessment sessions started which consisted of weekly visits. My assessing social worker was really knowledgeable. She guided me through the process setting work for me to complete between sessions and suggested appropriate reading material to develop my understanding and to prepare me for becoming an adoptive parent. Overall I wasn't fazed by the assessment process and actually found it quite enjoyable – who else gets a dedicated two hours a week to talk about their life and experiences!

The assessment ends with going to panel. I knew what to expect but I was still nervous as being able to become a mum was so important to me. I was present when the panel considered my report and became emotional when I was told the panel supported my approval. I was so glad my mum was there with me to celebrate this.



David and Daniel

It only took three months after approval when we got the call telling us we had been selected for a two-year-old little boy. I remember feeling numb when I phoned my partner at work to share the news.

The following day our social worker came to visit us and gave us information about our son. Whilst we had been told that we would get a lot of information, we were impressed with the amount of detail shared with us at this stage. This helped us make the decision that we felt able to be his parents.

From this first visit the process moved quickly – we met our son's social worker, his foster carer and were able to have a meeting with his health visitor too. Our social worker supported us throughout all these meetings and encouraged us to ask any questions we needed to.

Introductions were shattering. I remember feeling like I was on an emotional roller coaster – did he like us? Did the social workers feel we could do this? Was the foster carer confident that we knew how to look after him? But I didn't need to worry because we were well supported by our social worker who was in daily contact with us, offering reassurance and guidance through this. The process is well managed with a detailed plan to ensure that both we and our son had time to get to know each other. Our son has now been with us for eight months now and we now can't imagine how life was before he arrived.

Adoption is a journey and we still feel that we are on this journey. We are still learning and grateful for the ongoing support that is available to us, despite the adoption order being now granted.

Finding out more

Thank you for taking the time to find out more about adoption through Adopt Coast to Coast.

We know choosing to adopt is a big decision and you're bound to have a lot of questions and things to consider before deciding if it's right for you, so why not attend one of our online events to find out more?

We offer small group information events or one-to-one appointments, so you can feel comfortable discussing your situation with one of our friendly adoption experts from your own home and at a time that suits you. There's no pressure from our team and we are happy to answer any questions you may have or talk you through the process.

Visit: www.adoptcoasttocoast.org.uk to book an information event or call us on **03000 268 268** if you have any questions.

Keep up to date through our social media  

Our privacy policy

Adopt Coast to Coast has a privacy policy for adoption which outlines:

- what kind of personal information is collected from you
- why and how it is used
- the conditions under which it is kept
- how long we keep it for
- when we may share it with others
- your rights in relation to your information.