



Information for Foster carers About Adoption

Suffolk Adoption Agency

Information and guidance based on current information available at the
time of writing: June 2024
To be reviewed: November 2025

This guidance is designed for foster carers who have expressed an interest in adopting a child in their care who has a plan for adoption, or the Local Authority are working towards a plan for adoption*. The process of adopting will be explained throughout this document. If you have further questions, please liaise with the child's Social Worker and the Adoption Social worker.

*If you are a foster carer who is interested in becoming an approved adopter and have **not** expressed an interest in a child already in your care the following information does not apply, but you may still be eligible for a 'fast-track' assessment and this will be discussed with you when you make your enquiry.

What happens first?

After expressing an interest in adopting the child in your care (by e-mailing the adoption practice manager) an initial visit will be undertaken by an Adoption Social Worker from Suffolk Adoption Team. This is an opportunity to ask any questions you have about adoption. Within this visit the Social Worker will gather information from you, some of which includes:

- Household composition, age, and any pets
- Location and Accommodation
- Health or safety issues
- Motivation to adopt
- Lifestyle
- Employment/ finances/ adoption leave
- Family background and existing children in your home
- Consideration will also be given by all involved parties (including you as the child's primary care giver) as to how (and when) the child's views on the potential plan will be sought.

As part of progressing your enquiry the Adoption Social Worker would seek the views of the Childcare Social Worker, and your Supervising Social worker.

Once the Adoption Social Worker has visited, a report will be completed within five working days. This will be sent to you and includes a summary of whether the Local Authority recommends a progression to a full adoption assessment and the reasons for this. In most cases, you will receive this report alongside a blank 'Registration of Interest form', although there are exceptions to this such as if a legal strategy meeting is needed to clarify the legal status of the child before the registration of interest form is given.

In making your decision about proceeding to be assessed to adopt a child in your care, the following points must be given your consideration:

- **Suffolk carers** – would continue to receive their current fostering allowance rate as transitional payments for two years.
- **Agency carers** – would continue to receive their current rate of pay for two years as transitional payments. Evidence of your remittance is required (either paper/electronic version).

- Adopters would continue to be paid their fostering allowance/fee for two years minus child benefit (which is around £21.85 per week). This is because once the placement becomes an adoptive one, adopters can apply for child benefit for the child.
- Once the two year mark (post Adoption Order being granted) has been reached, transitional payments would cease. If there is reason to consider you may require ongoing payments, a financial assessment of your circumstances would be undertaken before any further payments are agreed.
- Foster carers will be responsible for paying the £201 for the Adoption Order application fee (fee correct as of June 2024).
- Transitional payments are paid once the match has been agreed by the Agency Decision Maker and the placement becomes an 'adoptive' one. Payments are made monthly, not weekly.

What happens next?

It is important that you make an informed decision about whether you wish to be assessed as prospective adopters for the child/ren in your care following the initial visit.

Following a positive recommendation from an initial visit and your decision to proceed has been confirmed via submission of the Registration of Interest Form, foster carers are 'fast tracked' to Stage 2 of the adoption assessment. This is a four-month assessment period to undertake a Prospective Adopter's Report. You will then proceed to Suffolk Adoption Agency's Approval panel to consider a recommendation as prospective adopters, if the child you would like to adopt has a Placement Order, it is likely that your adoption approval and the adoption match would be presented to Suffolk's Permanence Panel on the same day.

What does the 'fast track' assessment entail?

Your checks and references will be applied for, with a specific regard to adoption. You may be required to undertake an adoption medical, the cost of which is payable by you. You will be booked onto an adoption preparation course, which typically takes place across four days. In addition to this, you may also be offered specific courses to support your application. Your friends and family may be invited to attend adoption specific 'friends and family training'. The assessment period takes place over 4 months and will require you to be available for approximately 6-10 'assessment sessions' with your allocated social worker. A detailed assessment plan will be given to you at the start which outlines the topics which will be covered in each session.

Can we continue to foster?

It is expected that at the point an adoption assessment begins (following submission of the Registration of Interest form), there would be no **new** foster placements within

your household for the duration of the assessment period until the existing placement becomes an adoptive one (*this expectation may be reviewed if you are placed 'on hold' during the assessment period*).

If a positive recommendation for you to adopt the child in your care is made by the Agency Decision Maker, your fostering placement then becomes an adoptive placement. This represents a significant 'change in circumstances' and thus requires a fostering review to be heard by the fostering panel. Your Supervising Social Worker will liaise with you about when you feel ready to re-commence fostering and should request a panel booking for the fostering review. This review will consider your change of circumstances, the views of all those in your household, including yourself and the adopted child, will be gathered, as well as those of the Independent Reviewing Officer and child in care social worker.

The fostering panel will make a fresh recommendation about your continued suitability to foster.