

# Young person's guide to adoption



# Adoption Team

You can find more information about adoption at **[devonadoption.org.uk](http://devonadoption.org.uk)**

You can ring us on **0345 155 1076**

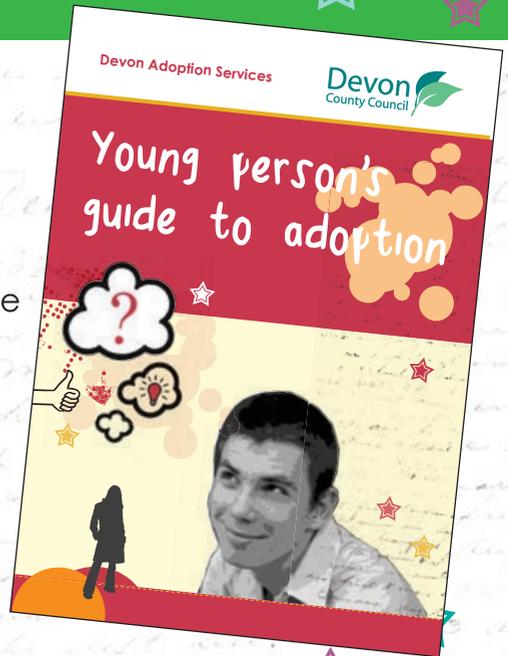
You can email us at **[adoption@devon.gov.uk](mailto:adoption@devon.gov.uk)**



# Young Person's guide to adoption

This booklet has been written to answer some of your questions about adoption, but it can't answer every question about your specific situation. If you have more questions you can:

- check your Life Story Book
- read your Later Life Letter
- talk to your parents
- talk to someone from the adoption team.



Remember, it was not your fault that you were adopted. People working with you and your birth parents decided that adoption was the best way to keep you safe and give you a good start in life.



# Why was I adopted?



There are lots of reasons why a child is adopted, but it is usually because things have been difficult for you in your birth family. For example, your birth parents may have been unable to look after you properly due to learning difficulties, mental health problems, or drug or alcohol use. Children are usually only adopted when everyone agrees that they are not being looked after properly, or are not safe living with their birth family.

## Who decided that I would be adopted?

People such as social workers, family support workers, teachers, nursery workers, health visitors and drug and alcohol workers will have worked with your birth family to try and make things work, so that you could grow up there.

**When things didn't get better your social worker arranged a Placement Planning Meeting, where everyone involved in helping you and your birth family talked things over and decided that it would be best for you to be adopted.**

**Your social worker then went to court so a judge could look at all of the information and listen to everyone involved, including your birth family. The judge made the decision that you would be happiest and safest with a new, adoptive family. This is called making a Placement Order.**



# How were my adopters chosen? ☆

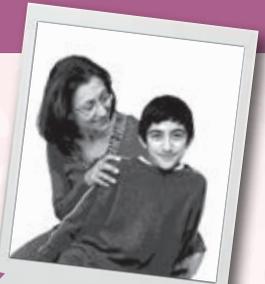
Your social worker talked to the adoption team and asked them to find a good family who could understand the difficult time you had been through.

Your family had strict assessments and training, where we asked them lots of questions about their lives. We also asked their family and friends what they thought about them becoming adopters.

Your social worker and adoption social worker met with your adoptive family to talk about you, your personality, your birth family and what had happened to you.

**Your adoptive family then met with a group of people who have an understanding of adoption issues. This is called a Panel Meeting. The panel asked your adoptive family more questions to make sure that they could love you and care for you and make sure you were safe and happy.**

During this time you were looked after by your foster family.



# Was it my fault?

**No.** When you moved in with your adoptive family it may have been hard for you to understand why you were leaving your foster carers, and why you had to say goodbye to your birth family, and you may still feel upset about this.

But it is important to remember that none of this was your fault.

## You may sometimes:

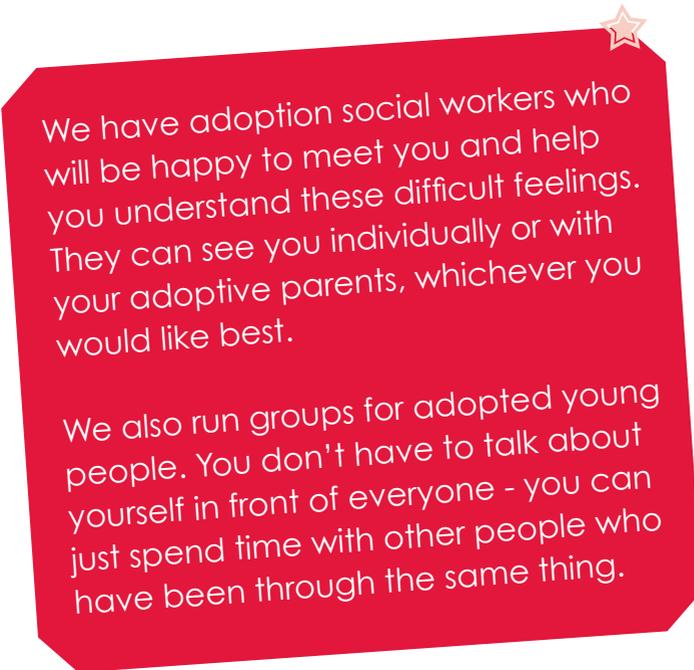
- think that if you had been nicer or hadn't been naughty your birth parents would have been able look after you
- feel that you should have done more to keep your birth family together
- remember feeling stupid and ashamed because you couldn't do something or didn't understand what you were being told
- think that if you had been loveable enough, your birth parents would have been able to change and stop doing things like taking drugs or being violent.

These thoughts and feelings are natural and many adopted people have them.



Every child deserves to be loved, safe and happy, however naughty they are, or how much they may struggle to understand things. It is not a child's responsibility to stop adults having arguments or to solve problems in their family.

It's easy to say, but it's hard to understand this if it has happened to you. You may be angry with your birth parents for letting you down and not putting you first. These feelings can be hard to cope with and it is important to talk them through with someone.



We have adoption social workers who will be happy to meet you and help you understand these difficult feelings. They can see you individually or with your adoptive parents, whichever you would like best.

We also run groups for adopted young people. You don't have to talk about yourself in front of everyone - you can just spend time with other people who have been through the same thing.



# How do I find out more about my birth family?

## You can:

- check your **Life Story Book** from when you were younger, which will give you basic information about your birth family and how you were adopted.
- ask if you have a **Later Life Letter** written by your social worker when you were adopted. The letter helps to explain why you needed a new family and couldn't stay with your birth family
- speak to your **parents** – they may have more information to discuss with you when you feel ready.



However, not everyone has a Later Life Letter, and your adoptive parents may find it hard to explain why you were adopted.

If you want to know more, we can check your **adoption files** for more details. We keep these records for 100 years, so there is no rush to see them! You should only do it when you feel ready. If you are under 18 we will need your parents' permission. You may know most of the information, but some things can be very moving or upsetting, so it's important you have support around you.

You may also have a **Letterbox file**. This is where your parents write every year or so to your birth family to let them know how you are getting on, and the birth family can write back. However not everyone has Letterbox contact, so ask your adoption social worker if you have one.

Letterbox is confidential; you send your letter to us and we forward it to your birth family without any of your contact details. They can post a reply to us and we will forward it to you, your parents or your social worker, whichever is best for you.

If we think it will be good for you, we can help you to write a letter to your birth family, and, if we are still in touch with them, we can help them to reply. Read our factsheet about the Letterbox service at

**[devonadoption.org.uk/resources/further-reading](http://devonadoption.org.uk/resources/further-reading)**



# How do I meet my birth family?



A lot of young people say that they want to trace their birth family and meet them again. This may be possible, but it is much better if you are able to understand the reasons you were adopted before you try and do this.

It may be that you're not getting on with your adoptive family any more, or that you feel that they've never really understood you. You may remember your birth family and miss them, or be wondering what happened to your birth parents and brothers and sisters and want to know if they're ok.



Some young people say they 'just want to be in the same room as them'. You might want to know what your birth parents look like, see their gestures and mannerisms, or hear their voice. A lot of these things are genetic, and some people want to see what they've inherited.



Of course not everyone wants to do this. You might just want to find out the reasons you were adopted, and why you couldn't live with your birth family.

**If you want to know more contact us and we will talk to you about the different options. Remember, whatever you're feeling we can help you.**

## Adoption Team

- Phone us on **0345 155 1076**
- Email us at **adoption@devon.gov.uk**
- Visit our website for young people in care **standupspeakup.org.uk**
- and our adoption website **devonadoption.org.uk**

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Find out about your rights and a way for you to be heard: Children's Rights Director for England **www.rights4me.org**

If you need more information or in a different format phone **0345 155 1015**, email **customer@devon.gov.uk** text **80011** (start your message with the word **Devon**), textphone **0345 155 1020** or write to Devon County Council, County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter EX2 4QD

