

If you're considering adopting  
please call **0300 123 1093**  
or look at **[www.cpadoption.co.uk](http://www.cpadoption.co.uk)**



**Adopt  
With Us**

**Make a  
difference  
to a child  
today**

[www.cpadoption.co.uk](http://www.cpadoption.co.uk)  
[adoptionenquiries@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:adoptionenquiries@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)  
0300 123 1093

  @candpadoptionservice



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## Welcome to Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption

**Thank you for expressing an interest in adoption**



This brochure will give you an in depth knowledge about adopting with us. It also covers the support available to you and further information that we hope you will find really useful.



Our adoptive families provide a much needed family and home environment to some of the most vulnerable children. We hope this guide will give you a useful insight into the adoption process and help you to learn more about the challenges and rewards involved.

**Families who adopt with Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption come from a wide range of backgrounds.**

**So, if you feel you can provide a forever family for a child who needs a permanent loving home then please contact us today.**



# What is Adoption?

Most children and babies who need adopting today are in the care of local authorities. There are lots of different reasons why children come into care. In most cases it is because they have experienced a very difficult start in life and are unable to continue living safely with their birth families.

Adoption is the legal procedure in which all of the parental responsibility for a child is transferred to the adoptive parents once the Adoption Order has been granted. An adopted child loses all legal ties with their birth parents and becomes a full member of the new family, usually taking the family's name.

## Why adopt with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Adoption Service?

Giving a child a loving home, where they can feel part of a family is the most significant way to transform the child's life and can be hugely rewarding.

We are looking for adopters who can offer consistency, stability and reassurance for children who often have a very difficult start in life and usually have additional needs. We also need to find permanent homes for sibling groups to prevent brothers and sisters being separated. We want to make sure that each and every child has the best possible chance of a childhood where they feel secure and loved.

If you're considering fostering or adopting please call **0300 123 1093** or look at **[www.cpadoption.co.uk](http://www.cpadoption.co.uk)**



“

*It has been hugely rewarding. Our daughters are happy, settled and developing really well. We have been able to offer them a loving home and they have completed the large family we always wanted.*

Cambridgeshire Adopters

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Our friendly and professional team will support you during the adoption process. We aim to ensure the stability and happiness of all our adoptive families. As part of that, we will be there for you during the period where you are getting to know the child who has been identified as a possible match for your family and help you to prepare to bring him or her home. Once he or she is living with you, we will visit regularly during the process of settling in and becoming a family. Once the Adoption Order has been finalised, you are then the child's parents, and you will make the decisions for your child, but we are always interested to have news if you want to keep in touch, and we are also there to offer support at difficult times.

See page 14 for more details of the Adoption Support we offer.

**Don't let the myths put you off!**  
See page 7 for all the different types of adopters we need.



# Who can adopt?

**There is no such thing as a typical adopter. We are looking for people who have amongst other things, patience, humour, insight and the energy to be a parent.**

Every year, dozens of ordinary single people and couples become new families and adopt children who can no longer be brought up by their own birth parents. We welcome a wide range of people from different backgrounds and experiences. People who adopt include those who don't have children, as well as those who are already parents.

Whatever the reason you wish to adopt, if you believe you have the qualities to make an excellent parent, please contact us. The majority of people will make good adopters given the chance.

Over the years many people have found adoption to be an alternative way to have a family. You may think becoming an adopter is too difficult or that you will get turned down based on your age or particular circumstances. In reality, most people we assess go on to have children placed with them.



## Can I still adopt if...? Some questions answered

### Can I adopt if I am over 40?

**YES** - There are no hard and fast rules about the upper age limits. People of all ages can, and do successfully adopt depending on their health and the needs of the child. Adopters do have to be over 21 though.

### Can I adopt if I have children of my own?

**YES** - Many people successfully parent both birth and adopted children together. Usually we would only place an adopted child who is younger than your birth child by at least two years.

### Can I adopt if I do not live in Cambridgeshire or Peterborough?

**YES** - We are looking for people wanting to adopt who live in Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and the surrounding regions including Norfolk, Suffolk, West Essex, Bedfordshire and East Hertfordshire.

### Can I adopt if I am single, or living with someone but not married?

**YES** - We welcome applications from all people regardless of their relationship status, but if you are a couple, your relationship needs to be stable.

### Can I adopt if I have had fertility treatment?

**YES** - Ideally you should have finished your last cycle of treatment, and we ask that you have left a gap of at least six months before considering the adoption process- BUT if you are currently undergoing or have just very recently finished treatment and would like an informal chat at this stage, we would be happy to talk to you.

### Can I adopt if I smoke?

There are serious health risks for young children in a household where anyone smokes. We ask people wishing to adopt children under the age of five to give up smoking, including e-cigarettes for at least six months before we accept them for assessment. Non-smokers will always be prioritised because of health benefits to you and to any child.

### Can I adopt if I am gay or lesbian?

**YES** - We are interested in what you have to offer a child who needs adoption, and are happy to accept applications from gay and lesbian adopters.



### Do you have more questions?

**You can visit our website for answers or give us a call, we're here to help:**



## The Two Stage Adoption Process – Explained

There is a shorter, two-stage approval process for prospective adopters. The aim of this process is to enable prospective adopters to learn about adoption within the first stage, and then move into a more intensive assessment and preparation phase in the second stage. The expectation is that (in most cases) the application and assessment process will be completed within six months in total, with **Stage 1** taking two months and **Stage 2** taking four months. There is also a new fast-track process for second time adopters.

## The Stages of the Adoption Process

### Initial Enquiry

- Initial Contact with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Adoption
- Attend an Information Session – optional but very useful
- Initial Interview takes place
- Submission of your Registration of Interest (RoI)
- Registration of Interest accepted or declined

### Stage 1

- Statutory checks and references
- Adoption Preparation Training

### Stage 2

- Formal application accepted
- Adoption Assessment
- Adoption Panel

### After Approval

- Matching and Placement
- Introductions
- Regular visits to support you and the child
- Adoption Order granted

Full details of the **Stage 1** and **Stage 2** assessment process are available on our website [www.cpadoption.co.uk](http://www.cpadoption.co.uk)

We will explain how it works and answer your questions when we meet with you. We summarise the process opposite.

## Stage 1: Two months

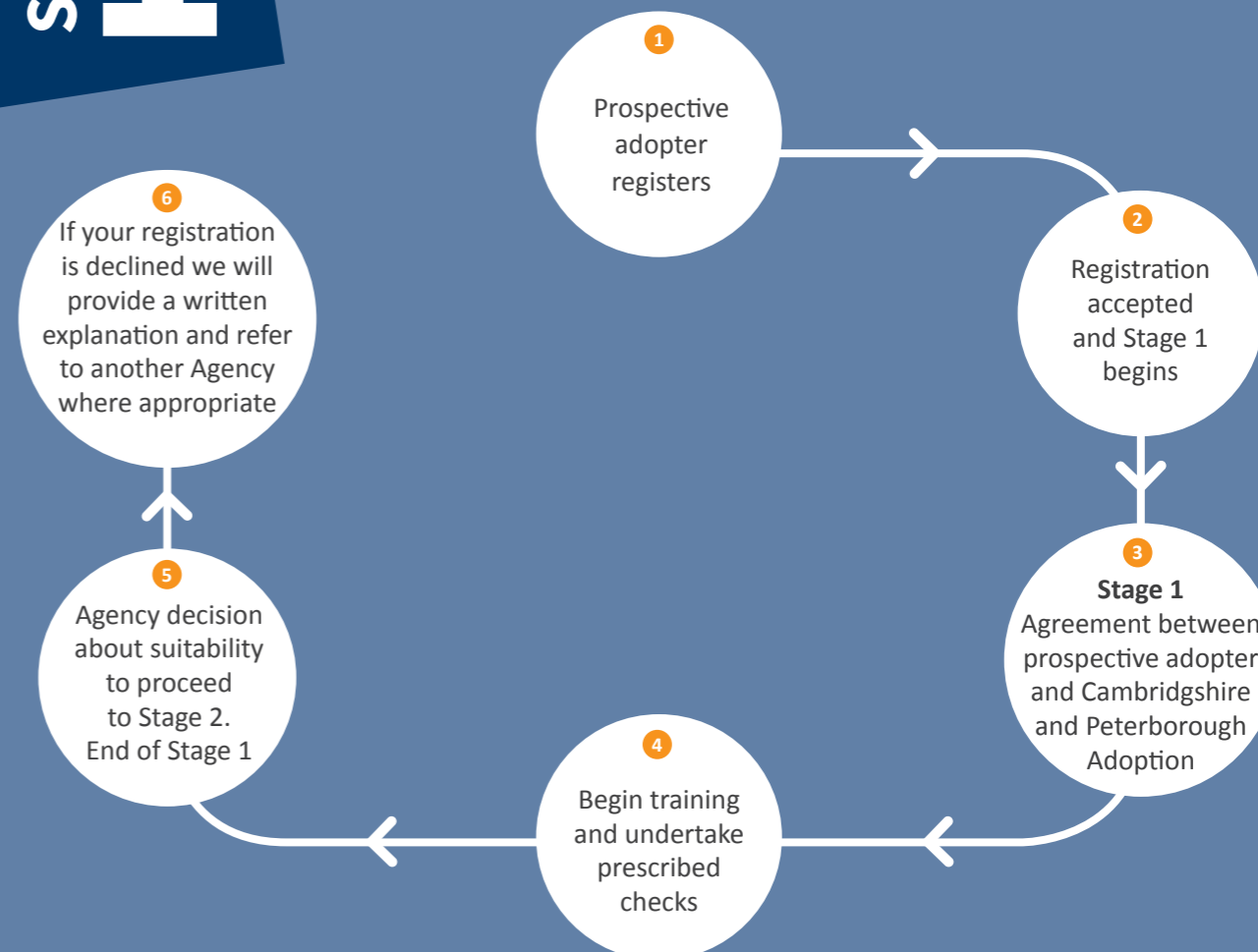
**Stage 1** begins when we accept a prospective adopter's Registration of Interest; this stage should take no longer than two months. In **Stage 1**, we will produce a written agreement with a prospective adopter which sets out the responsibilities of both of us. During **Stage 1** we will undertake police and health checks.

The prospective adopter will need to provide the names of four referees, two family members and two not related to them (for single applicants we need three referrals, one from a family member and two not related). We will interview each referee and make a written report of the interviews with them.

At the end of **Stage 1** we will inform the prospective adopter of our decision as to whether they can proceed to **Stage 2**. Prospective adopters must make an application within six months if they wish to proceed to **Stage 2**.

## Stage 1

### Prospective adopter-led (2 months) Initial preparation/training





## Stage 2: Four months

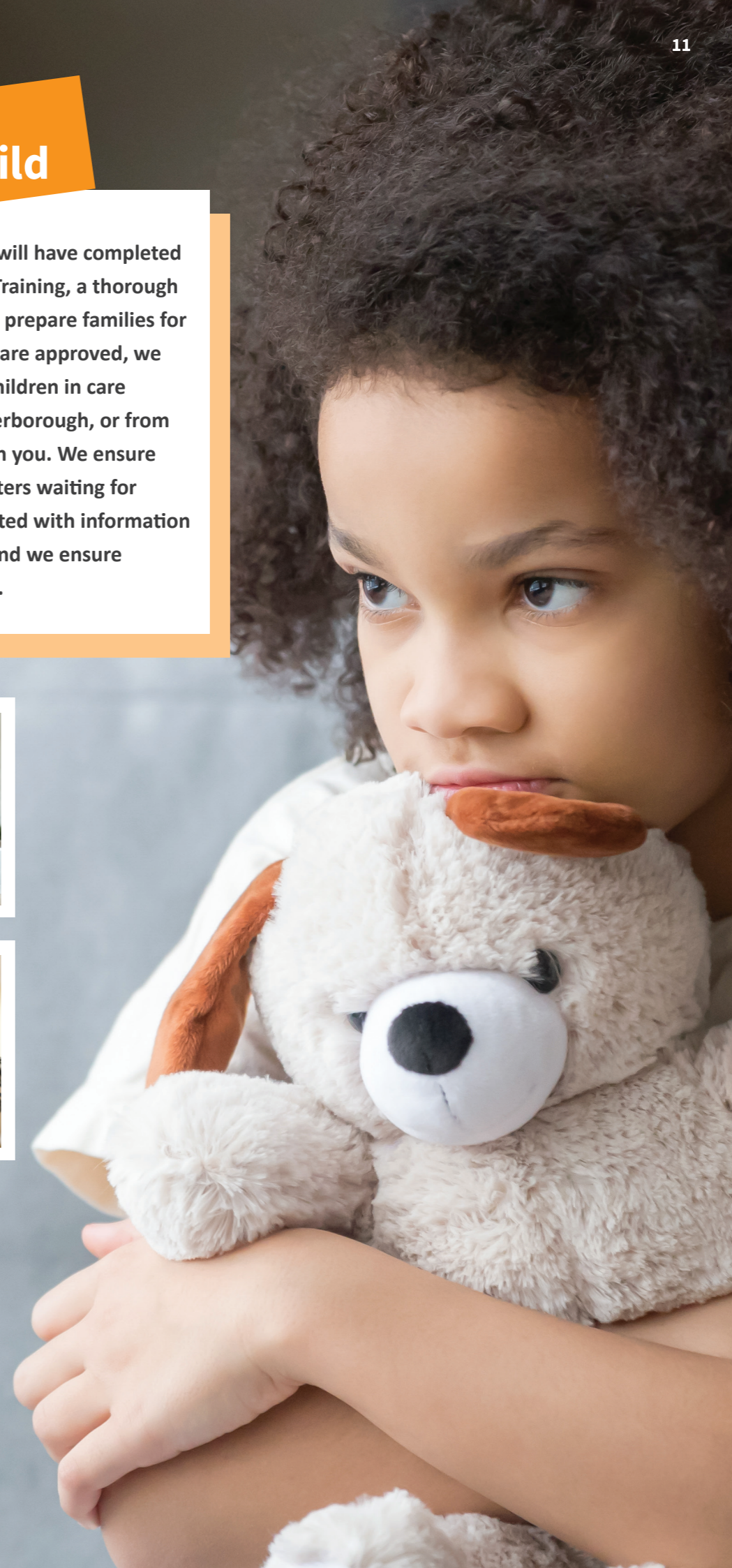
**Stage 2** of the adoption process will only begin once the prospective adopters have completed Stage 1, and have notified us that they want to proceed to Stage 2.

**Stage 2** will involve intensive training and assessment. We will create an assessment plan with the prospective adopter. This would detail, for example, the dates of meetings/visits and agreed training. The timing of meetings should be arranged to suit the applicant and the process can be extended.

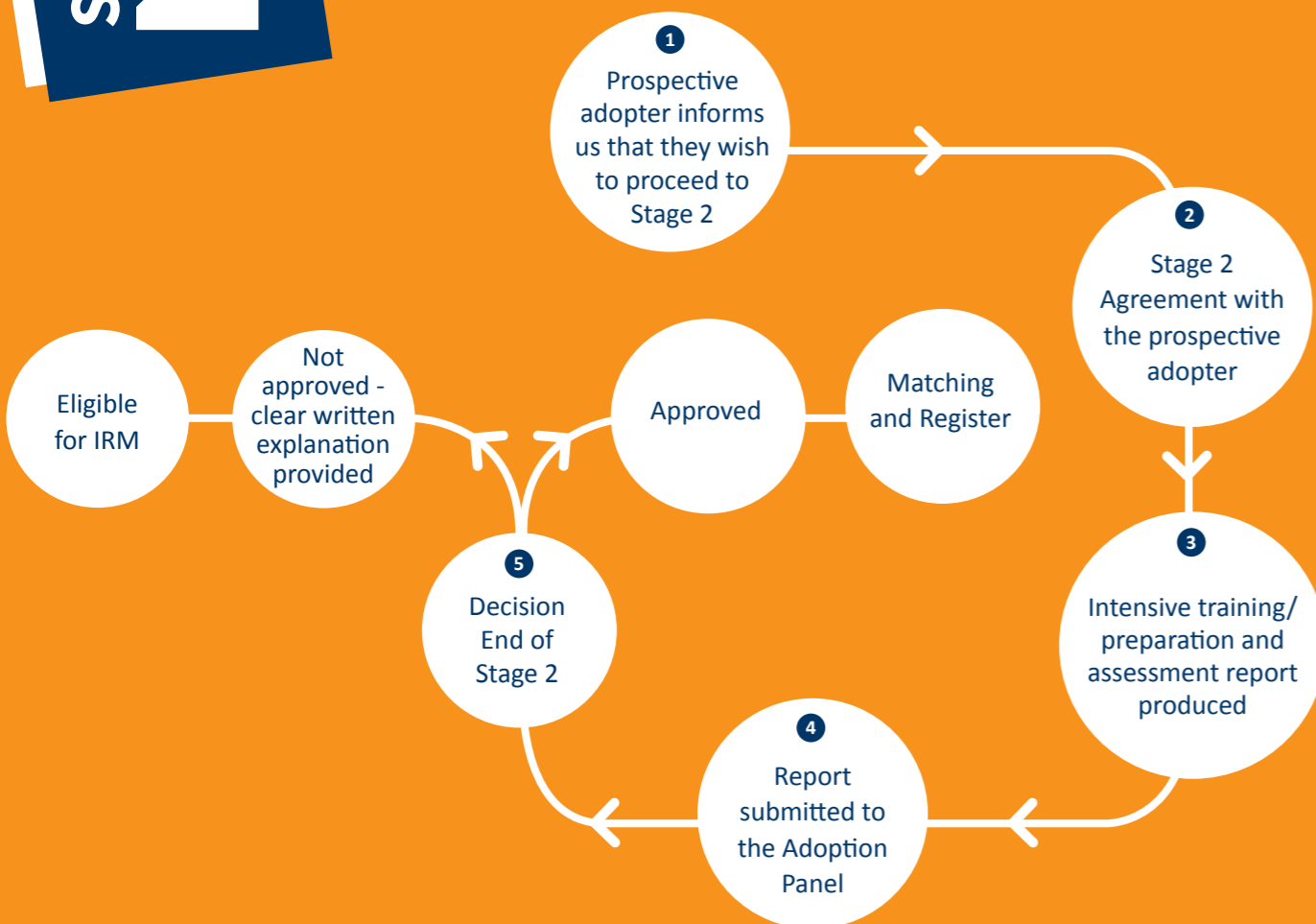
**Stage 2** ends when we decide whether the prospective adopter is suitable to adopt a looked after child.

## Finding a child

All our approved adopters will have completed our Adoption Preparation Training, a thorough training course designed to prepare families for adopting a child. Once you are approved, we then work hard to match children in care in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, or from other local authorities, with you. We ensure that all our approved adopters waiting for children are regularly updated with information about potential matches, and we ensure that you are kept informed.



### Agency-led (4 months) Intensive training/preparation & assessment



## Early Permanence - what is Early Permanence?

**This is an innovative way to find families for babies and very young children to prevent delay. Some babies will return to their families, most will be adopted.**

We place babies and children under two years old for Early Permanence with Early Permanence carers while plans for their future are being decided by the Family Court. During this time the children are fostered by their Early Permanence carers. Most of the babies placed will need to be adopted, but where it is possible, they may be returned to the care of their parents or relatives. If the Court decides that the baby cannot go home they will be adopted by the carers. This prevents babies from having delays and moves in care, and allows adopters to build attachments from an early stage of the babies' lives. This is a win/win scenario for the babies to have security from the earliest months.

### Who can be an Early Permanence carer?

We are looking for families who are resourceful and emotionally mature, able to put the needs of babies and young children first, and who can respect and work with children's families in the early months.

Early Permanence carers will be approved as both adopters and foster carers.



### What does the role entail?

While caring for the child placed with them, the Early Permanence carers will take the baby for regular supervised contact with his or her parents several times a week. If the Courts decide that the birth parents have shown they can be reliable, able and loving parents, the babies will be returned to their care. The Early Permanence carers will have the satisfaction of knowing that they have given these children the best possible start in life by providing care and security from an early stage, and will help them settle back into their family. Most of the babies placed are likely to need adopting and will remain with their Early Permanence carer – adopter.



## Find out more about Early Permanence

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*Aaron has changed our lives and we feel really blessed to have adopted him through Early Permanence. It has been a tough experience but magical at the same time. We can say most definitely that he has enhanced our world hundred fold. He has also brought the whole family closer together. We couldn't imagine life without him now.*

*A maternal sibling was born and we were approached to care for her too, but Aaron was only one at the time and it just wasn't the right time for him or us. However, we are in contact with little Ava and we meet up on a regular basis. Ava has also been adopted via Early Permanence. For a while we felt totally contented with the three of us but as he got older we started to consider a sibling for Aaron.*

*When Aaron was four-years old a paternal sibling was born with little change with the birth parents circumstances we were approached to care for him via Early Permanence and the time was right for Aaron and us so his brother Ronnie was placed at eight-days-old.*

*Aaron absolutely adores his brother Ronnie and is not jealous at all but he can be overly helpful and he is very protective of him.*

*We think Early Permanence provides stability and prevents foster moves for young children. We feel we are able to separate fostering from adoption, which is the mind-set that is required. We were also very keen to form a positive relationship with the birth parents and were pleased to have been able to meet with both of Ronnie's birth parents as part of the process second time round. If they are able to turn their life around then we will be proud to have given Ronnie the best start in life. However hard that might be for us, we will always know that we did something amazing. If we do go on to adopt Ronnie then we will have detailed information about his birth parents, which would otherwise not be possible. Early Permanence is a 'win win' situation for the child.*

**Clare and Richard**

*We knew the baby might be returned to their birth family and we knew we would be sad if this happened. But right from the start we felt really positive about Early Permanence because we feel it is the right thing for the babies and children involved.*

*Ben was 36 hours old when we collected him from hospital. At this stage, we were his foster carers and attended regular contact visits with his birth parents. I would think to myself, 'They're his parents. I'm helping with the baby while they're sorting themselves out'.*

*We are pleased that we had the chance to meet his birth parents and see how much they loved him. As he grows up we can give him a much clearer picture of them because we met them ourselves. Ben is now six months old and we couldn't be happier that he is a permanent member of our family.*

*There was one moment, when Ben wasn't sleeping and we were lying on the bed and I was pretending to sleep to try and get him off. He reached out and touched my face. And I thought, 'Who are you kidding, you love this baby so much'. I think it is an amazing process, it's not easy, but you can do it. I have absolutely no regrets what so ever. The outcome and the benefits are massive and those are the benefits you can't get from anything else.*

**Julie and Paul**

\* Names changed to protect identities



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# Adoption Support

**Our team of dedicated social workers work closely with potential adopters, supporting them throughout the process.**

Once an adoption order has been granted, our Adoption Support Team is available to support the child and their adoptive parents. The team can help with the adjustment to becoming a family and offers ongoing support as the child grows up. This support may include parenting training to meet the special needs of the child, helping parents answer a child's questions about their past, or counselling.

We have access to clinical support who can provide specialist support, guidance and recommend the most appropriate intervention to meet the child's needs.

As adopted children grow up they need help to understand their background. We will help adopters to share information in a child friendly way.

Becoming a family takes a lot of work and patience, but we are always here to help achieve the best possible outcomes for adopted children and their parents. The role of a Social Worker is to support children and adoptive parents through the process of becoming a family and to help them deal with the challenges that adoption can bring as a child grows up.

# Adopting Siblings

**“ We adopted a sibling group because we wanted to start a family. It wasn't working for us the natural way so we talked about it and chose to look into adoption. It took a year from the start of the process to the children moving in.**

**The children have a strong bond with each other, they have a close relationship and the fact that they've got each other and always will have that connection to their birth family through each other is a real positive, a real strength.**

**It's been really lovely to be with the children, to see them develop and grow and change and keep that close bond. I think that's been a real positive. Each of them are their own little characters. And it is so nice to bounce off one and do something with somebody else as they've got slightly different interests.**

**There's going to be challenges, like there is with any parents. We have been able to access the Post Adoption Support and we know that always there's going to be professionals there that are able to offer us advice and guidance. We've accessed training through them, and that has been really invaluable for us.**

**We've never looked back, we absolutely adore our children and have a very fulfilling life - we'd recommend it.**

**The whole point of starting this process was to have a family and we've got that and more. It makes our house a home. It's all about them coming in excitedly with a snail in their hand and not knowing what it is or finding a bug, or being able to show them a dragon fly hovering in the garden. Those kind of magical moments make it all worthwhile.**

Emma and Nathan

\* Names changed to protect identities

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## Next steps Making it happen...

Lots of people think about adopting but never take the next step. Whether you need further information and advice, or are ready to make your application to adopt, we are here to help you.

## Contact details

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Adoption Service,  
Scott House, 5 George Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3AD  
**0300 123 1093**

## Useful websites

### First4Adoption

This is a national helpline and website offering a first port of call for people considering adoption. They are able to help you locate adoption agencies in your area. You will find helpful information on the adoption process and what it is like to be an adoptive parent.

Tel: **0300 222 0022** Website: **[www.first4adoption.org.uk](http://www.first4adoption.org.uk)**

### Adoption UK

Adoption UK is a national charity run by and for adopters, providing self-help information, advice, support and training on all aspects of adoption and adoptive parenting. They also provide a library of books and DVDs. You can download a membership form from their website, or call them.

Tel: **0844 848 7900** Website: **[www.adoptionuk.org](http://www.adoptionuk.org)**