

ADOPTION INFORMATION

WELCOME

Thank you for your interest in Adopting with West Dunbartonshire HSCP who is committed to finding adoptive families for children who, for whatever reason, cannot live with their own birth families. This pack will provide you with some of the information on what is involved in caring for a baby/child who has been removed from or relinquished by their birth parent(s).

West Dunbartonshire HSCP needs families for children of all ages, sometimes children on their own or with their brothers and sisters, with a wide range of needs but with a great deal to offer their new family.

Adopters don't need qualifications — they need to be genuinely committed to offering a permanent stable, loving and nurturing home to children who have experienced loss in their lives.

I hope this pack will help you decide if you want to take the next step in the adoption process. Your interest in Adoption is appreciated and the Adoption and Permanence Team looks forward to hearing from you.

ADOPTION INFORMATION

There are many children in foster care, between the ages of birth and ten years (and sometimes older) who need a “forever” family.

Adopting children is rewarding but hard work. Families need a range of resources and supports to assist them through the years ahead.

All children who are placed for adoption have to come to terms with the fact that for one reason or another they could not be brought up by their own parents. In general, the younger the child, the more likely they are to be able to form new healthy attachments within their new family, which in later years will help them to cope with feelings of loss or rejection in relation to their birth family.

However, for most children, the route to adoption is neither short nor simple. They will have had difficult experiences such as periods of abuse and neglect and they may also have had a variety of carers. The children are likely to feel insecure and mistrustful of adults and may feel threatened by change.

Learning to live with children who have suffered emotional damage can be very demanding. It is important that prospective adopters think carefully about their work and family commitments and plan ahead to ensure that they have additional time and space to devote to a child or children.

DECLARATION

Applicants will be asked if a child has ever been removed from their care or if they have ever been refused registration as a childminder.

OUR CORE VALUES

Our core values are protection; improvement; efficiency; transparency; fairness; collaboration; respect; and compassion.

CRITERIA FOR ADOPTING

AGE: All applicants must be over 21 years old

- Applicants should be able to parent a child until they reach the age of independence

STATUS: Applications will be accepted from

- Single applicants
- Married couples/Civil Partnerships
- Non married couples/same sex couples/L.B.G.T who have been living together for a minimum of 2 years

INFERTILITY:

- Applications will be accepted from enquirers both with or without children.
- Applications will not be accepted from enquirers currently undergoing any form of infertility treatment or who are on a waiting list for treatment

RESIDENCE:

Enquiries will be considered from residents within West Dunbartonshire and surrounding areas, providing that applicants are willing to travel to West Dumbarton for preparation groups and other meetings.

PREPARATORY GROUPS:

Enquirers must attend preparatory groups prior to making a formal application (accept in some exceptional circumstances). Information will be provided at that stage about the current legal framework with respect to adoption.

RESOURCE

Applications will only be accepted from enquirers who are willing to consider children from a range of backgrounds. The majority of children placed for adoption have suffered emotional damage through neglect or abuse.

ETHNIC ORIGIN, CULTURAL BACKGROUND, LANGUAGE AND RELIGION

Applications are welcome from all sections of the community.

BIRTH FAMILY CONTACT

- Applicants must demonstrate their commitment to sharing appropriate information about the child's birth family and the circumstances of the adoption with the child throughout his/her childhood and thereafter.
- Applicants should be prepared to meet with birth family members if requested to do so.

LOCAL AUTHORITY, HEALTH AND EMPLOYMENT AND POLICE CHECKS

- All applicants and other members of their household over the age of 18 will be subject to local authority, health and Disclosure Scotland checks.
- All Applicants may be required to give their written permission, to the Agency Medical Adviser, seeking information and reports from any health professional, which has had contact with the applicants.
- All applicants will require to be medically examined by their GP and a confidential report will be submitted to the Medical Advisor to the Adoption Panel.

REFERENCES

- Applicants will require to provide names and addresses of three referees who are known to the applicants. These should be people who have known both applicants and who can testify to their relationship, character and behaviour one should be a family member. Referees will be interviewed as part of the assessment process.

ADOPTION AND FINANCE

- It is usual for adopters to assume full financial responsibility for their adopted child. It is helpful therefore for prospective adopters to consider what arrangements they will make, once a child or children are placed, to take

account need from the new family. Adoptive families are eligible for Child Benefit.

- In certain circumstances Adoption Allowances may be available when particular criteria are met. Information will be provided by a Social Worker from the Adoption and Permanence Team.

CHANGES IN CIRCUMSTANCES

- If an applicant's circumstances change significantly during the course of the assessment process, advice may be sought at an early stage from the Adoption Panel.
- If the applicant has been accepted but has given false information or knowingly withheld information then this will also be presented to the Adoption Panel.

HEALTH VISITOR

An applicant's local health visitor is contacted to see if s/he has any opinion on the applicant's ability to care for a child.

SMOKING

The risks to young children of living in a smoking environment are well documented. Normally, we would not place children under the age of five years where a member of the family smokes. Similarly, if a child had identified risks of heart or lung disease we would not place them in a smoking household.

HEALTH

West Dunbartonshire HSCP does not operate a policy which would automatically debar an applicant from being approved because of their weight, but prospective applicants should be aware that a BMI in the morbid obesity range (BMI in excess of 40) may preclude adoption.

We recommend that anyone who wishes to adopt a child, and who is aware that they are in the obesity range, should make it their priority to seek advice about reducing weight. They should contact their GP practice with a view to getting an assessment of their weight problem and help with planning a reduction programme.

Applicants will be asked to undergo a full medical assessment conducted by their own GP. It is recognised that adoption can be strenuous activity and serious health problems or disability may affect a person's ability to care. Any health problems or disability will be considered sympathetically by the agency's Medical Adviser along

with the assessing social worker. There may be restrictions on the registration because of health concerns.

DEPRESSION/MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

It is an inevitable part of life that at some point there will be an event, which is experienced as stressful and may lead to the person becoming temporarily depressed. Bereavements, illness and relationship problems are probably the most common reason.

The experience of infertility can also be extremely stressful and is akin to bereavement in the sense of grief and loss which may result. For some people medical intervention may be necessary, and their GP may have prescribed medication for them.

Prospective applicants who are receiving medication, for example anti-depressants, should discuss making any changes with their GP first to avoid any side effects or withdrawal symptoms. If depression has been severe or there have been repeated episodes, then applicants must consider how the stress of adoption or dealing with the emotional/behavioural difficulties that many children have, may aggravate any health problems.

THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The assessment process is a two-way process in which we aim to give you information to prepare you for the complex role as an adopter, and to help you decide if adopting is for you.

Within the assessment process, the Adoption and Permanence Team will look for you to have the potential to develop the following skills:-

Knowing the difference between adoption and natural parenthood.

Understanding the backgrounds of some children awaiting adoption.

Understanding the behavioural difficulties that a child can display.

Deciding how they would cope with the child sharing information from their birth parent/family.

Deciding what kind of child would fit into your family.

In order to achieve this, a qualified social worker will be identified to carry out an assessment and provide a comprehensive report to be presented to West Dunbartonshire Adoption and Permanence Panel. You will be fully involved by being able to contribute to the report and the content of the report will be fully shared with you apart from third party information.

You will be invited to the Adoption and Permanence Panel along with your social worker, where your application will be considered. The Adoption and Permanence Panel will make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker. The agency Decision Maker has to reach a decision within 14 days and advise you of this decision, in writing 7 days thereafter. The Agency Decision Maker will also state the terms of your approval as an adopter.

If it is decided that your application should be refused, the reasons for refusal will be explained to you. WDHSCP have a reconsideration process if an applicant wishes to see a review of the decision.

How to Complain

Complaints should be brought to the attention of staff directly involved, or their manager, to be dealt with as they arise (this is stage 1 of the complaints process).

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of this resolution, or if you do not wish to pursue this option, please contact us to submit a stage 2 complaint at:

West Dunbartonshire Health & Social Care Partnership
Hartfield Clinic, Latta Street, Dumbarton, G82 2DS

Telephone: 01389 776833

E-Mail: wdhscp@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Our **Complaints Leaflet** provides our service users with details of how to make a complaint and our complaints procedures.