



Adopt

CREATE A CLOSE FAMILY

www.walthamforest.gov.uk/adopt



Welcome to Waltham Forest Adoption Service

We hope you will find this booklet useful and it helps you to begin your adoption journey. We have many years of adoption experience and we'll be there for you every step of the way.

There are many children who need adoptive parents. We have children of different ages and sibling groups from many different backgrounds, cultures and religions and we need families to reflect this.

CREATE A CLOSE FAMILY

Contents

	page
1. What is adoption?	3
2. Who can adopt?	4
3. Who are the children?	5
4. How to become an adopter	6
5. Flowchart of application and assessment process	9
6. Once you are approved as an adopter	10
7. Adoption Support	15
8. Recommended reading	17
9. Useful contacts	19
10. Waltham Forest's Adoption Charter	22

1. What is adoption?

Adoption is a way of providing a new family for children who cannot be brought up by their own parents or extended family members.

It is a legal procedure in which all the parental responsibility is transferred to the adopters. It ends the legal relationship between a child and their birth parents. Once an adoption order has been granted it cannot be reversed. An adopted child becomes a full member of the new family, usually taking the family's name.

An Adoption Order is made after a child has settled with their new family. The timing of this can vary depending on the needs of the child and the family. A child must have lived with their new family for at least 10 weeks before the adoption application can be lodged in court.

Although children placed for adoption no longer live with their birth families, an 'open' attitude to adoption is most helpful to the child. This can mean that some link is maintained with the birth family perhaps through the exchange of written information, via the Adoption Support Service. Such arrangements are unique to the individual circumstances of each child and in some cases the child may have more contact than this.



2. Who can adopt?

All sorts of people can make a success of adoption

- **You can be from any background.** We need and welcome enquiries from people of all backgrounds, cultures and religions – especially black families, people who are of mixed parentage or in mixed relationships. We are looking for families who match the child's racial and cultural background and share the child's religion and language. However, this is not always possible. Families, who can value and actively develop the child's sense of ethnic and cultural identity, even though they do not share it, will also be welcomed.
- **You can be single, married or an unmarried couple. You can be heterosexual, lesbian or gay.**
- **You must be over the age of 21.** This is a legal requirement and there is no upper age limit but you need to be healthy enough to take on the demands of a child. We look at what you can offer as an adopter in relation to the needs of a child waiting to be placed.
- **You can live in or out of Waltham Forest, and can own or rent your home.** Your home needs to have enough space for a child as they grow. Ideally this means that a child will have his or her own bedroom. It is important that your housing arrangements are secure. You need to be habitually residing in the UK or be domiciled here for more than one year prior to making an application to adopt.
- **You will need plenty of patience, humour and energy!** All children can be demanding and some children will need greater help managing behaviour that may be challenging. Adopters help a child learn to feel safe and promote their self-esteem.
- **Above all, you need to be determined to give a child the kind of love and support that will really make a difference to their lives.** Being an adoptive parent can be hard work but it is very rewarding for you and your child.



3. Who are the children?

The children that need adopting come from different backgrounds, cultures and religions.

Occasionally there are babies but most of the children are pre-school or school aged children. Sometimes there are brothers and sisters who need to live and grow up together. Some of the children have learning or physical disabilities and there are some whose future development is unclear.

Children need to be adopted when they are unable to grow up within their own families. There could be a variety of reasons for this. Some children may have suffered from neglect or abuse. Some parents are unable to continue caring for their children due to drug or alcohol misuse or mental health problems. Other parents simply cannot cope with raising their child.

Many of these children will have experienced trauma and disruption in their lives, which can impact on their behaviour and how they view the world. As a consequence, all of the children will have experienced loss and neglect.

Children develop ways of coping with life. Many children in care have experienced some form of abuse. They may have experienced or been subjected to, physical, emotional or sexual abuse and they may behave in ways that are not appropriate. This might be screaming, running away, hurting themselves or others.

Even when their circumstances change and they are being well cared for they will need time, care and understanding from their adopters to help them change behaviour like this.

The one thing all these children have in common is that neither their birth parents nor other relatives can look after them. They need a new permanent family to accept, care and support them and encourage them to reach their full potential as they grow into adulthood.



4. How to become an adopter

If you are interested in becoming an adopter please visit www.walthamforest.gov.uk/adopt and fill in an enquiry form. Email us direct at adoption@walthamforest.gov.uk

Call the council on **0208 496 3000** and ask to speak to a member of the adoption team. Our regular information events are shown online www.walthamforest.gov.uk/adopt and if your interest coincides with a date you are welcome to attend.

PRE STAGE ONE:

An adoption social worker will contact you by telephone and discuss your interest in adopting. If it is the right time to proceed further we will arrange for you to meet a social worker who will discuss your interest and what has motivated you to consider adoption.

When we accept an application we are required by law to carry out a number of statutory checks on you. We will verify any information given to us. The information is confidential and held under data protection. The checks are:

- **Local Authority Checks.** We are required to check our records (including other authorities') to see if you are known to the

social services department/s. If you are, we will require information from them.

- **References.** We will ask for at least three personal references from people who have known you at different times in your life. These can include friends and relatives. We will ask to visit these people to get their views and see what support they could offer you as a new adoptive parent. If you are in employment an employer's reference will be requested.
- **Schools.** Checks with schools will be completed for all school age children living in your household.
- **Criminal record check from the Disclosure Barring Service (DBS check).** This is an impartial confidential document detailing an individual's criminal record and where appropriate, giving information about those who are banned from working with children and/or vulnerable adults. A record of convictions will not necessarily stop you from adopting. It is the type of offence that is considered and whether it is relevant to caring for children in your home, (i.e. violent crimes, offences against children). A DBS check will be required of everyone over the age of 14 in your home.

- **Medical Checks.** To ensure that there is no medical reason that would prevent you adopting.

At this next stage you will have the right to complete a formal 'Registration of Interest'. This indicates that you wish to proceed to the next stage of the assessment process. We will acknowledge receipt and confirm acceptance of your Registration of Interest to progress to stage 2. In circumstances where the Registration of Interest is not accepted you will be informed in writing detailing the reasons.

STAGE ONE

Information gathering

Following acceptance of your Registration of Interest a social worker appointment will be made where the 'Stage 1 Contract' will be completed. During this two month period we will ask you to gather information about yourselves into 2 workbooks which we will discuss with you. This includes your family tree, chronology, your journey to adoption – all of which will be used to inform your assessment in Stage 2.

The references and checks as outlined above will be activated at this stage.

Preparation training

You will be required to attend a preparation group training course for people who wish to adopt which takes place over a 4–5 day period. The course will introduce you to people who have adopted already and people who have been adopted themselves, as well as other prospective parents like you.

The aim of the group sessions is to help prepare you to deal with issues that are common in adoption. You will look at a wide range of issues such as preparing for an adoptive child, life as an adoptive family, meeting the needs of the adoptive child, understanding the child's past and coping with any difficult behaviour. The Preparation Group is also there to help you think about and prepare for your meetings at home with an adoption social worker. At the end of stage 1 your application will be assessed which will include the work books and preparation training. You will have a chance to digest all the information and reflect on your journey.

STAGE TWO

Home study/assessment:

You will be invited to sign a stage two contact and the formal assessment process will begin. We will assess your suitability to adopt by building up a thorough profile of you and your family. This is known as a 'home study'. A dedicated social worker from the adoption service will make several visits to your home and ask you detailed questions about your own family background, your childhood and your present circumstances. If you are a couple, the social worker will want to see you together and individually.

The home study can be demanding and initially may feel intrusive as it explores your whole background/lifecycle in depth however many adopters find it a very interesting process. It takes several months to complete for adoption is a life-long commitment, and we must be sure you and your family are right for the role.

At the end of the home study, you and the social worker will work together to produce a Prospective Adopters Report (PAR). The report includes a detailed assessment of you as a potential Adoptive Parent, plus the results of the medical, police and local authority checks and your personal referees. A key part of the report is for you to consider the profile of a child or children you feel you could adopt and integrate into your family unit. Could you, for example, look after a child with a physical or learning difficulty? What age-range would you consider? Would you be able to take siblings?

Adoption and fostering panel

Your adoption social worker will present your Prospective Adopters Report (PAR) to the adoption and fostering panel – a group of independent people including social workers and other professionals – who will make their recommendation. You will be able to attend the Panel when your report is being presented and you will be advised of the Panel's recommendation at the end of the presentation. Based on their recommendation, the Divisional Director of Children and Families Service the Agency Decision Maker will make the final decision on whether or not to approve your application. This decision is made within 7 working days and you will be notified in writing.

5. Flowchart of application and assessment process

1. Complete a reply form or online enquiry.

2. You will be invited to an information session and/or given an appointment to meet an assessment social worker to talk to you about the adoption process.

3. A decision about your application will be made and if accepted you will be asked to complete a Registration of Interest Form. Once accepted you will progress to Stage 1.

4. At the Stage 1 contract meeting you will be given two work books to begin your adoption learning journey. You will be required to provide proof of ID and give consent to statutory checks – i.e. police checks and medicals. References will also be taken up.

5. During Stage 1 you will be asked to join a preparation group for people who wish to adopt.

6. Stage 2: You will have a number of meetings at home with an adoption social worker as part of a home study assessment. Your adoption social worker will write up the assessment in a Prospective Adopters Report (PAR) which you will be able to see and comment on.

7. This report will be sent to Waltham Forest's Combined Approvals and Matching Panel, which makes a recommendation to the Divisional Director of Children and Families Services who makes a final decision about whether to approve your application to adopt a child.

Once you are approved, your adoption social worker will help to match you to a suitable child. This 'match' will be taken to the Matching Panel of the Local Authority responsible for the child. The social worker will offer you any support you may need as you become parents and will support your adoption application with the court.

You can come back to the adoption service at any time in the future for advice or assistance. This is available to anyone who lives in Waltham Forest with experience of adoption. If you live outside Waltham Forest, your needs for this type of support will transfer to the local authority where you live three years post adoption order.



6. Once you are approved as an adopter

Matching you to a child

Once you are approved, we will consider whether there are Waltham Forest children waiting for adoption who might be a suitable match for you. In some cases we may already have a child or children in mind for you and this process would start more quickly once you have been approved. We will begin the matching process by looking at profiles of children who could potentially be suitable for your family. Once a possible match has been identified, this will be considered by the adoption panel.

If we are unable to match you to a Waltham Forest child, we will consider children from other local authorities and your name will be put on the Adoption Register, a national database for approved adopters and children waiting to be adopted.

Placement

Once a child or children have been identified as a possible match for you, you will be given full information about their background. After the matching panel has approved the match, you will meet the child or children.

Following a gradual period of introductions, your adoptive child or children will come to live with you and become part of your new family.

Remember, you are not on your own, we will offer you support and advice after placement, and will be responsible for keeping in touch with you until the adoption is finalised. We will discuss what adoption support services are available in your area.

Your child may need to keep links with their birth family, and we will have fully discussed this with you before you decide to go ahead. Once a child is placed with you, you will share parental responsibility with the Local Authority and the birth parent(s).

The Adoption Order

When your adoptive child has successfully settled down in your family, you will be able to apply to the court for an Adoption Order to be made. Your child has to live with you for 10 weeks before you can formally apply to adopt them. Once the Adoption Order is made, all rights and responsibilities originally shared between the birth parents, local authority and yourselves will transfer to you solely. Any contact arrangements with birth relatives will be agreed at this stage.

Adoption Support Services

During the pre-placement introductions and the settling in of your child some financial support may be available to assist you during this time. On-going adoption financial support may be available. These payments are means tested and eligibility is determined by the needs of the child and family.

Your social worker will discuss all of this with you at the time a match is being considered.

Under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 the local authority has to provide an assessment of your needs, if you request this. This includes adoptive families, children and adults who are adopted, birth family members, stepparents and inter-country adopters. We have links with health, education and other adoption services that may be able to assist.

During your home study and during the matching process, your social worker will provide information about adoption support and will clarify what support may be available to you and your family. This could include, for example, financial assistance, therapeutic support and supporting contact arrangements.

An adoption support assessment can be requested post-placement and post-adoption by any adoptive family who either live in the borough or have had a child placed by the London Borough of Waltham Forest in the last three years.

Frequently asked questions about adoption support

What is adoption support and who is it for?

The London borough of Waltham Forest is an adoption agency. Under the Adoption and Children Act 2002, we must provide a range of services for anyone involved in adoption. This includes children and adults who are adopted, birth relatives and adoptive families.

Which organisations provide adoption support services?

If you have adopted through or live in Waltham Forest we can provide you with support.

We work with other agencies, such as voluntary organisations, health and education services to give you a co-ordinated, multiagency package of support.

How can I access adoption support services?

You can write, telephone or email us. We will arrange for you to come to the office or we may visit you at home. We will talk with you about the support you need and agree a plan. The plan will outline objectives, timescales and details of other agencies that may become involved and a period of review to take your changing needs into account. An assessment for adoption support services explores your family's circumstances. It identifies your needs and we can tell you what resources are available.

Following the assessment, the local authority must act reasonably in deciding whether to provide adoption support services.

If you are undergoing a stage 2 home study, you can ask your assessing social worker for information about adoption support.

When can I ask for an assessment to be made?

If your child was placed through Waltham Forest council and you live here, we can offer you a service. If your child was placed by Waltham Forest council and you live in another borough, we can give you support for three years after the adoption order was granted. After that we will negotiate the transfer of support to your local council.

The exceptions to this are the agreement for the provision of financial support, which we will continue to review annually as well as the contact agreement. These two aspects of adoption support remain our responsibility throughout your child's minority years.

Although all new adopters are encouraged to identify their adoption support needs with their social worker, you can ask for support at any point.

I adopted years ago, am I still eligible for adoption support?

Yes, if your child is under eighteen and you are living in the borough. If you move away from Waltham Forest, your new council may become responsible for providing you with support services. You can contact us to discuss the possibilities.

I adopted my child through Waltham Forest council but live in/have moved to another borough. Who is responsible for adoption support for my family?

Waltham Forest council is responsible for the assessment of adoption services for the first three years from the date the adoption order was granted, wherever you live. We will include your adopted child and other children in the family affected by adoption in the assessment. If it is more than three years since the adoption order was granted, the adoption support becomes the responsibility of the local authority in which you live, with the exception of the agreed financial support and contact arrangement.

I have recently moved to Waltham Forest. Where do I go for support?

If the adoption order was granted less than three years ago, the placing authority remains responsible for the adoption support services. If the adoption order was granted more than three years ago, you can ask us for help.

Is any help available for me to manage my child's contact arrangements?

Waltham Forest council has a duty to promote contact between children and their birth family. All contact arrangements are agreed in advance, with a signed agreement outlining the frequency, type of contact and everyone involved in the arrangements.

There are different types of contact, they include:

- **Letterbox contact** – With letterbox contact, you share information by post about your adopted child with the birth family. This can include photographs, school reports, birthday cards and letters.
- **Direct contact** – With direct contact, you and your adopted child have face-to-face meetings with the child's birth family. We can help by providing places to meet, supervisors to assist with the process and sometimes help with travelling expenses.

- We offer a **mediation** service if there are disputes or changes in contact need to be agreed.
- **Telephone contact** – Telephone contact can be part of the arrangement if, for example, a child is adopted within the extended family. This form of contact may also be suitable for siblings who are placed in different adoptive families.
- **Contact by email** – Older adopted children may prefer to have contact by email. This may be agreed for contact between siblings who are placed in different adoptive families.
- **Skype contact** is another way to keep in touch and may be suitable for children placed or who have moved overseas and for siblings who live with different adoptive families.

I already receive adoption support from you but my circumstances have changed, what happens now?

Your assessment will have set a time to review the service and discuss any changes in your circumstances. If there are significant changes before then, tell the social worker as soon as possible so we can arrange to hold the review earlier. You may instigate a review at any point yourself.

I have adopted a child from abroad, am I still eligible for adoption support?

Yes. We offer you the same service as if you had adopted in this country and you can ask for an assessment to be carried out. If you have any questions you can contact the team.

I am a step-parent, can I be assessed for support?

Yes. You can ask for an assessment. We will take your family's circumstances into account when we draw up your support plan.

What happens if I disagree with my assessment plan?

You can talk to the social worker. If you still feel that the issues have not been resolved satisfactorily, you can contact the adoption support services team manager.

To discuss the above with us, please contact us:

**Adoption support services
London borough of Waltham Forest
221 Hoe Street
London E17 9PH
020 8496 1594
adoptionssupport@walthamforest.gov.uk**

If you are still not happy with the service you have received you can write to the council complaints manager whose details are at the end of the booklet.



7. Your adoption passport – adoption support

For your child

Schools are asked to give all children adopted from care priority access to schools, which means that your child should be able to attend whichever school you think best meets their needs. Guidance to school admission authorities can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admission-of-children-adopted-from-local-authority-care

- Your child will also attract the Pupil Premium – state-funded schools are given additional funds to help meet their needs. You will need to let the school know that your child is adopted so that the school can claim the pupil premium.
- If your child is 2 years old you can take up the offer of a free early education place. For more information about provision in your area you can contact your Waltham Forest's Family Information Service. You can find out more at www.walthamforest.gov.uk/fis
- If your child needs extra support, you can ask your local authority to assess their needs for adoption support services. If you think your child may have special educational needs you can ask your local authority to assess these needs too.

For you as an adopter

- Many adopters are entitled to adoption leave and pay when their child is placed with them (www.gov.uk/adoption-pay-leave). The law is changing to make this entitlement more similar to maternity and paternity leave pay, and it will include the right to take time off when you are meeting your child, before they move in with you.

- If you are living in council housing and claiming Housing Benefit or Universal Credit while waiting for a child to move in you can also apply for funding (Discretionary Housing Payments) so that you are not penalised financially while you have an empty spare room.
- You are entitled to a summary of your child's health from his or her local authority's medical adviser before he or she is placed with you, and to a "life-story book" and a "later-life letter" to help your child understand their early life.

Adoption Support Services

Waltham Forest provides and may fund a range of support services for children adopted from care. These support services can include:

- **counselling**, information and advice, help with behavioural, attachment and other problems, money e.g. to help with special care needs, or for former foster parents
- **help with contact** between an adopted child and his or her birth family
- **meetings and events** to enable groups of adopters and adoptive children to get together
- **training** to help adopters to meet the needs of their adoptive child
- **help** where an adoption is at risk of break-down.

Access to these services depends on your circumstances but you can ask for an assessment at any time.

Adoption Support Services Advice

- Waltham Forest has an Adoption Support Services Adviser to help you access adoption support and other specialist services, such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. (www.walthamforest.gov.uk/adoptionsupport)
- The NHS commissions health services to meet the needs of adopted children, and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence will produce new guidance so that your GP will understand the problems you may face.
- Every adopter is entitled to an assessment of their adoption support needs, but local authorities do not have to provide support in response to an assessment. Which services you are able to access will depend on your circumstances.

8. Recommended reading

A Child's Journey through Placement

Vera Fahlberg (2008)
ISBN 9781873868133

Coming Home to Self

Nancy Verrier (2006)
USA-ISBN 0-9636480-1-2

Attachment, Trauma and Healing

Healing Parents – helping wounded children learn to trust and to love
Terry Levy
www.attachmentexperts.com

Parenting the Adopted Child

Holly van Gulden
www.hollyvangulden.com

Preparing for Reunion

Julia Feast, Elizabeth Webb, Sue Seabrook and Michael Harwood
ISBN 1899783091

Adoption, Search and Reunion

Julia Feast, David Howe and Denise Coster (2000)
ISBN 189978330

The Adoption Reunion Handbook

Liz Trinder, David Howe and Julia Feast (2004) ISBN 0470094222

Half a Million Women – Birth mothers

David Howe (1992)
ISBN 0140154159

Adoption is for Always

Linda Walvoord Girard
ISBN 1573927651

Amazing Grace

Mary Hoffman and Caroline Binch
ISBN 0803710402

Bruce's Story

Maureen Thom and Celia Maclive (1993)
ISBN 0907324274

Heather Has Two Mommies

Leslea Newman (2000)
ISBN 1555835430

How I Was Adopted

Joanna Cole and Maxie Chambliss (1995)
ISBN 0688119298

Helping Children Cope with Separation and Loss

Claudia Jewett (1994)
ISBN 155830512

It's a Family Affair (complete Gay and Lesbian Parenting Book)

Lisa Saffron (2001)
ISBN 1873741626

I'm Here Waiting

Audrey Mullender and Sarah Kearn
(BAAF 1997)
ISBN 1873868413

The Child Within

Catherine Munroe (1993) –
ISBN 0907324738

Life Story Work

Tony Ryan and Roger Walker
ISBN 1873868103

Models of Adoption Support

Heidi Argent (2003) –
ISBN 1903699258

Safe Contact

Catherine Macaskill (2002) –
ISBN 1903855098

Transracial Adoption and Foster Care

Joseph Crumbley –
ISBN 0878687173

Related by Adoption

Heidi Argent (2004)
ISBN 1903699398

Love is Not Enough

Experiences in Transracial Adoption
Infactuation Productions
BBC video

Adoption Law for Adopters

Mary Lane (2006)
ISBN 9780951595022

The Child's Own Story

Richard Rose (2004)
ISBN 1843102870

Nurturing Natures

Graham Music (2011)
ISBN 978-1-84872-057-2

Building the Bonds of Attachment

Dan Hughes (2006)
ISBN 978-0765704047

What every parent Needs to Know

Margot Sunderland (2007)
ISBN 978-1405320368

9. Useful organisations

Adoption UK

Linden House
55 The Green
South Bar Street
Banbury
Oxfordshire OX16 9AB
Tel: 0844 848 7900
www.adoptionuk.org.uk
Provides support for adoptive families.

After Adoption

Unit 5 Citygate
5 Blantyre Street
Manchester
M15 4JJ
Tel: 0800 056 8578 Free family talk action line
www.afteradoption.org.uk
Provides independent support to birth parents
and birth relatives.

BAAF

Safron House
6–10 Kirby Street
London EC1N 8TS
Tel: 020 7421 2600
www.baaf.org.uk
Provides general information on adoption

Care Leaver's Association

Clarendon House 5th Floor
81 Mosley Street
Manchester M2 3LQ
Tel: 0161 236 1980
www.careleavers.com
Gives advice and support to people who were
in care as children.

Family Lives

Head Office
CAN Mezzanine
49 – 51 East Road
London N1 6AH
Tel: 0808 800 2222
www.familylives.org.uk
Offers telephone helpline and provides
parenting advice, guidance and tips.

First 4 Adoption

49 Mecklenburgh Square, London WC1N 2QA
Tel: 0300 222 0022
www.first4adoption.org.uk
helpdesk@first4adoption.org.uk

General Register Office

Adoption Section
Room C202
Trafalgar Road
Southport
PR8 2HH

www.gov.uk/adoption-records

To access adoption records (pre 1975) and for the adoption register.

Intercountry Adoption Centre

22 Union Street
Barnet
Hertfordshire
EN5 4HZ

Tel: 020 8447 4753

www.icacentre.org.uk

Provides information for families who have adopted from overseas.

London Metropolitan Archive (LMA)

40 Northampton Road
London EC1R 0HB

Tel: 020 7332 3820

www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/lma

For adoption and in-care records.

Natural Parent Network

NPN Registered Charity Address
41 The Lindens

Friern Park
North Finchley

London N12 9DL

Tel: 0845 4565031

www.n-p-n.co.uk

A self-help organisation to support birth families that have had a child adopted.

New Family Social

PO Box 66244

London E9 9BD

Tel: 0843 2899457

www.newfamilysocial.co.uk

Provides support and information for prospective and existing LGBT adopters and foster carers.

**OPAC-UK (Pre-adoption, Post adoption,
Permanency: Advice and Counselling)**

(previously known at the post adoption centre)

5 Torriano Mews

London NW5 2RZ

Advice line: 020 7284 5879

www.pac-uk.org

Offers a confidential specialist advice service and free counselling sessions for anyone who has been involved in adoption, special guardianship, long term fostering, or permanency.

**Transnational and Transracial
Adoption Group**

www.ttag.org.uk

Provides opportunities for adopted and long term fostered people, placed into families whose racial and cultural heritage is different from theirs, to meet each other.

TALKadoption

Tel: 0808 808 1234

Email: action@afteradoption.org.uk

A free national helpline for young people who want to talk about adoption.

Compliments, comments and complaints

We always try to provide good quality services but we know that sometimes we get things wrong. Comments and complaints can help us to get things right. We try to resolve differences as soon as they arise between people.

Complaints Manager
Social Care Complaints Team

Residents First

Waltham Forest Town Hall

Forest Road

Walthamstow

London

E17 4JF

020 8496 3247

www.walthamforest.gov.uk

Thereafter if you are not satisfied you may be able to refer your complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman (www.lgo.org.uk).

10. London Borough of Waltham Forest Adopters' Charter

Children come first

- Adoption is first and foremost a service for children who cannot live with their birth family. Children should be helped to understand what adoption means and supported throughout the adoption journey and beyond.
- Adoption is a life-changing decision that affects the child, and his or her birth and adoptive families. It must be made with the child's best interests, wishes, feelings and needs at its heart and on the basis of sound evidence and high quality assessments.

Waltham Forest will:

- Ensure that children are placed, with siblings wherever possible, within a timescale that is best for them and without unnecessary delay.
- Treat prospective adopters and adopters with openness, fairness and respect.

- Make prospective adopters' first points of contact informative and welcoming.
- Approach adopter recruitment in the spirit of inclusiveness with a view to identifying potential and opportunity – no-one should be automatically excluded.
- Recruit prospective adopters who can meet all or most of the needs of children waiting for, or likely to need, adoption and signpost prospective adopters to other agencies if there is insufficient local demand.
- Explain to prospective adopters the needs and profiles of the children waiting to be adopted.
- Ensure preparation and training, the home study assessment, and approval process are explained and proceed efficiently.
- Regularly review progress on matching with prospective adopters, and inform them about the Adoption Register and refer them to this within required timescales.

- Provide adopters and prospective adopters with information, counselling and support, as and when needed, throughout the adoption journey and beyond.
- Provide prospective adopters with information about the Independent Review Mechanism.
- Work in partnership, and with other agencies and the Courts, to ensure that all decisions are timely and joined-up.
- Do all they can to enable their adopted child to feel loved and secure, and to reach their potential.

Heather Flinders

Heather Flinders
Divisional Director, Children & Families

Adoptive parents will:

- Be aware that adoption often brings challenges as well as joy, be realistic about the needs of children awaiting adoption, and accept that with support they may be able to consider adopting a child with a different profile to the child they originally envisaged adopting.
- Make the most of opportunities to develop their parenting skills, and seek support when needed at the earliest stage.



Adopt

CREATE A CLOSE FAMILY

London Borough of Waltham Forest

Adoption Services

221 Hoe Street Walthamstow London E17 9PH

Switchboard: 0208 496 3000

Adoption Service Direct line: 0208 496 2470

www.walthamforest.gov.uk/adopt

adoption@walthamforest.gov.uk

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