

ST. DAVID'S CHILDREN SOCIETY

ADOPTION INFORMATION PACK

WALES' LONGEST SERVING ADOPTION AGENCY

Cymdeithas Plant Dewi Sant



St David's Children Society

Welcome to this Agency, and thank you for your interest in adopting with us. We hope you will find the following information useful in helping you to take the first step along the road to adoption.

1. About St. David's Children Society

St. David's Children Society (formerly known as the Catholic Children & Family Care Society Wales) has been involved in the field of adoption for over 75 years.

Since 1942 we have placed over **2,000** children for adoption.

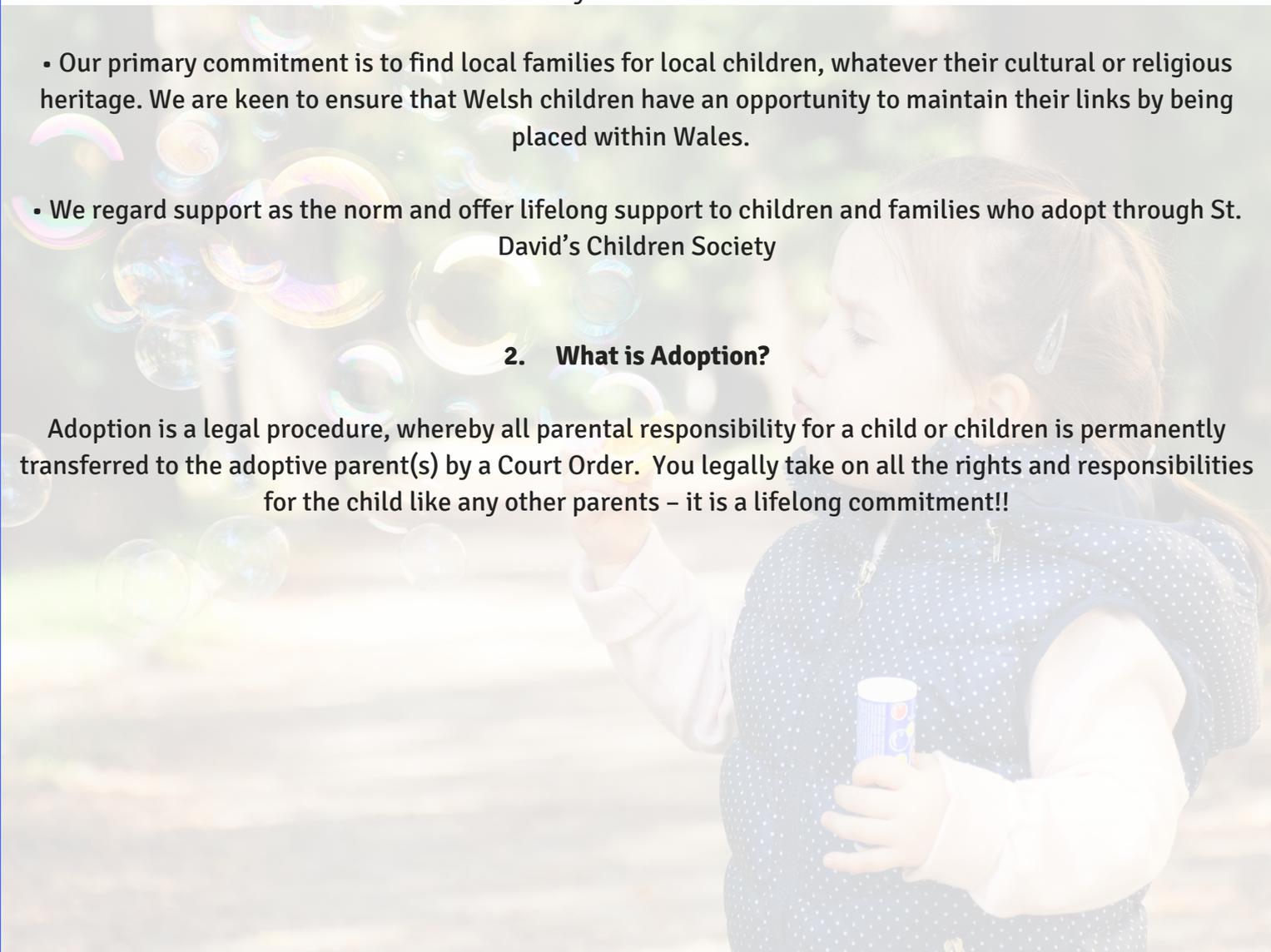
We are proud of our heritage of being the only Voluntary Adoption Agency, which is registered in Wales and has its Head Office in Wales.

Since 2015 we have also hosted AFA Cymru which provide Training, Consultancy, Advice and Information Services to professionals and adopters as well as others such as foster carers and kinship carers.

- We are a member of the National Adoption Service in Wales and work closely with our partners in the voluntary and statutory adoption agencies in Wales.
- This agency welcomes applications from all sectors of society regardless of race, disability, religion, sexuality or marital status.
- Our primary commitment is to find local families for local children, whatever their cultural or religious heritage. We are keen to ensure that Welsh children have an opportunity to maintain their links by being placed within Wales.
- We regard support as the norm and offer lifelong support to children and families who adopt through St. David's Children Society

2. What is Adoption?

Adoption is a legal procedure, whereby all parental responsibility for a child or children is permanently transferred to the adoptive parent(s) by a Court Order. You legally take on all the rights and responsibilities for the child like any other parents – it is a lifelong commitment!!



3. Children Needing Adoption

The children available for adoption come in single placements, in two's, three's and even four's. We have recently seen an increase in the numbers of all children requiring adoption and are pleased to welcome enquiries from families who are considering becoming parents through the adoption process. We are looking for families for children of all ages and we have recent experience in finding families for children over 3, children who have brothers and sisters and / or children who have more complex needs.

We recognise that becoming parents through adoption is life affirming and life changing and there will inevitably be times throughout the adoption journey that you will require support. We are able to provide this through meeting with other adoptive parents that have had similar experiences, attending support groups, training and receiving direct support from one of our social workers.



Children like Tom, Jack and Oliver, aged 2, 4 and 6 years, all needed to stay together. Tom had done his best to look after his younger brothers but he needed time to be a child and give the responsibility to grown-ups he could love and trust.

Millie aged 3 years whose Mum had an alcohol dependency and moved around the country a lot. Millie had a lot of uncertainty about her development, because alcohol can affect the growth and development of babies in the womb. Her adopters had to be prepared to accept that Millie might have additional needs which were not known about. Millie found it hard to settle in her foster home and had a poor sleeping pattern. She had suffered neglect and had dental decay. After the stability of being in a foster family and settling into routines, Millie was ready for a family for life. Millie was placed with adopters who had previously adopted and 2 years later she is doing really well.

Millie's adopters update her birth mother on Millie's progress in an Annual report sent via Children's services.



Terry and Leona were 4 and 5 years of age when they were removed from their birth family. They had spent some time living with their grandparents and had also been in foster care for short periods of time. Terry had some specific needs in his speech and language and got easily frustrated taking out his anger on his big sister. With help and support in 18 months Terry made a lot of progress, and he and Leona built a better sibling relationship. Terry and Leona were placed with a childless couple and are lively and happy.

Jennie 18 months old, has an African-Caribbean dad and a white mother. Jennie's mum had learning difficulties which meant she did not always know how best to look after Jennie. Jennie's dad had left when she was few weeks old and there was little support for Jennie's mum as she had spent her own childhood in care. Jennie's development was delayed and there was some uncertainty about whether she had had any learning difficulties herself. Adopters needed to know that Jennie's future was uncertain and Jennie was placed with adopters when she was under 2 years old. Jennie still has delays in some areas, but she has settled well and is proving to be a real character!!

Many of our adopters have commented on the fact that although their children may have experienced trauma and loss, they often surprise them with their resilience and capacity to overcome adversity. The majority form strong, healthy attachments with their adoptive families and adopters report that the investment of their time, energy, love and commitment to such a child is hard work, but worth it!

Some adopters even come back for more!!!

Many of the children who have additional needs are described as having **“global developmental delay”** or may have a learning difficulty or a learning disability.

Sometimes, we can be overwhelmed by these terms and forget that behind the words is a child who like any other child needs a loving and supportive family!!

When we ask families to consider children with these needs we do our best to

- ensure that families know as much as possible about the child,
- help you understand what it might be like to care for them on a daily basis
 - that they have access to good support/ advice and
- that this support and advice is there for as long as they and the child need it.

Global developmental delay: This term is used to describe a child who is not meeting or has not met their developmental milestones, e.g. they may have been later than the average child in crawling, sitting up, walking, talking in sentences, potty training. As the child becomes older they may catch up in some or all of these areas or equally the delays can become more obvious especially when they reach school age.

Often, children placed for adoption will have had their basic needs neglected and will not have been given the opportunity to have a good diet, be encouraged to play with toys, have stories read to them/ songs sung to them. Some may have been confined to a pushchair and never potty trained.

Sometimes they can be affected by their family background especially when there may have been drug/alcohol abuse which can affect the child's growth and development as well as their ability to deal with their own emotions and those around them.

Children will, with consistent loving care reach their potential and this will be different for each child. E.g. Becoming toilet trained at a later age is a massive achievement and one which child and parent can be rightly proud of.

There are a range of services to help families, including support in school, speech and language therapy and physiotherapy. Agencies such as ourselves, Adoption UK and those run by the local authority all offer support, to help ensure the best outcomes possible for your child.

Learning Difficulty: This is a term used to describe children who may struggle with certain aspects of their lives, but who are not intellectually impaired. This could mean children who struggle with the way that information is learned and processed. Sometimes this can affect how they manage in a social or classroom setting and can include dyslexia or ADHD. There are many famous people, often creative who could be described as having a learning difficulty, including many actors!

Learning disability: This term is used to refer to children who may struggle to achieve everyday tasks, without some additional support. There is a degree of intellectual impairment.

Often, but not always, there may be a specific medical or genetic condition which is neither fully understood nor diagnosed, this could include a child who has Down's syndrome or Fragile X or a child whose birth parent has similar needs. The level of support a child will need will vary and some children with support may achieve a level of independence as they reach adulthood whereas other may always need input from services. Occasionally, there may also be a physical disability.

It is important to remember that children and adults alike who are described as having a learning difficulty, have different levels of ability and many will be able to live in the community either independently, or with varying levels of support. Children can have a positive future and committed adoptive parents can help them to reach their potential and lead happy and fulfilling lives.

Adopters with children in placement indicate a varying picture of experiences.

Some find the initial days after placement hard going:

“If I’d known what the first couple of days were going to be like I’d have thought again”.

but the same applicant says that five weeks into the placement of a young child with developmental delay:

“things have really settled down, our 2 ½ year old is settling, we are becoming attached to her”.

Other applicants say:

“since the court day he has been incredibly settled and we’ve noted a difference in him...he just seems so relaxed and calm. He’s doing really well in school and his teacher is full of praise saying that he is improving every day....he’s just making fantastic progress and we’re so proud of everything he is achieving!”

Adoptive children like 8 year old Kate have said:

“new mums and dads are good, they love them and they like the fact they are dressed well and have good food”.

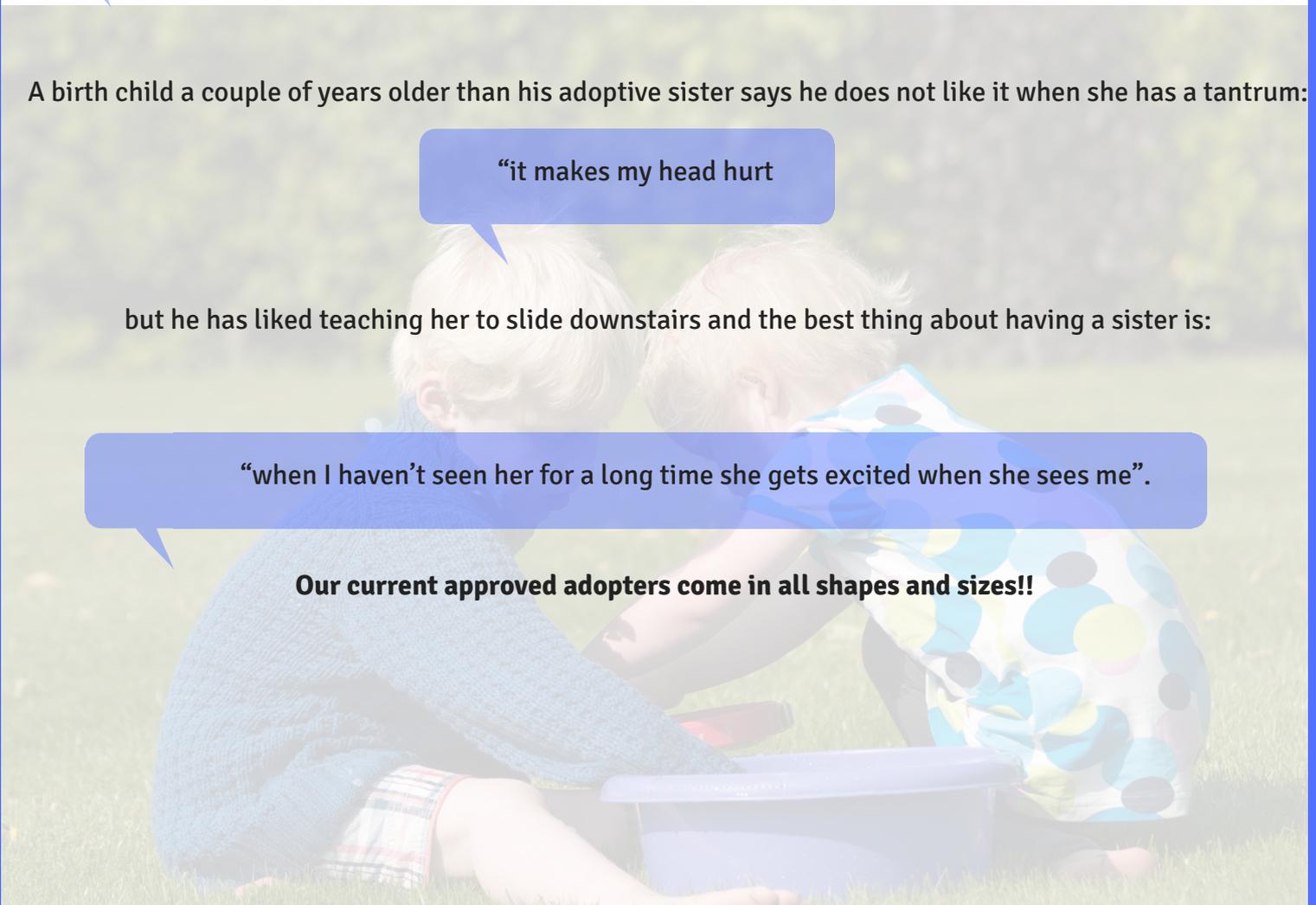
A birth child a couple of years older than his adoptive sister says he does not like it when she has a tantrum:

“it makes my head hurt

but he has liked teaching her to slide downstairs and the best thing about having a sister is:

“when I haven’t seen her for a long time she gets excited when she sees me”.

Our current approved adopters come in all shapes and sizes!!



4. Who can Adopt?

- people of all ethnicities
- people of any or no religious faith
- people with or without children
- heterosexual couples (married or living together)
- couples who are in a same sex relationship
- single people
- people who have birth children under 18
- people whose children are grown up
- people of all ages, over the legal minimum age to adopt of 21 years

There is not a fixed upper age limit. However, we need to be sure that you will be fit and well to care for an adoptive child, not only now, but as they grow older.

Our adopters reflect each and every one of the above criteria, in various combinations, just as each child's needs are different.

Sometimes infertility issues/treatments may need some time and further discussion to ensure the time is absolutely right for moving forward with adoption.

Health problems do not necessarily prevent approval to adopt, but all applicants are subject to a medical report and the agency works in line with government advice regarding a healthy diet, lifestyle and exercise.

In line with this advice, this Agency cannot accept an application from those who wish to adopt if either applicant smokes cigarettes or e-cigarettes

Where applicants have recently ceased smoking including smoking e-cigarettes, they will have to evidence, via their GP that a period of at least six months has elapsed before an application can be taken up.

We will also consider alcohol consumption and offer guidance on what is deemed acceptable in respect of parenting children who are adopted.

Income levels do not affect your ability to adopt, or whether you are in receipt of benefits. The important thing is that you can afford to care for a child until they reach adulthood.

Likewise, it is not relevant whether you own your own home, or whether you live in rented accommodation. What is important is that you are settled, that you will not need to leave at short notice and that there is sufficient space and the accommodation is suitable for a child.

We cannot accept applications from people who have a recent criminal conviction or pending criminal charges, or a previous conviction for a violent offence or an offence against children. However, if you have an isolated conviction for a minor crime, we may be able to accept your application.

Please note: We are committed to working in partnership with applicants and endeavour at all times to openly share and discuss any issues/concerns, which emerge in the course of the assessment process.

On occasions however, there may be situations/information, which develops or emerges in the course of an application, which means the Agency, in its professional judgement, formally ceases the application.

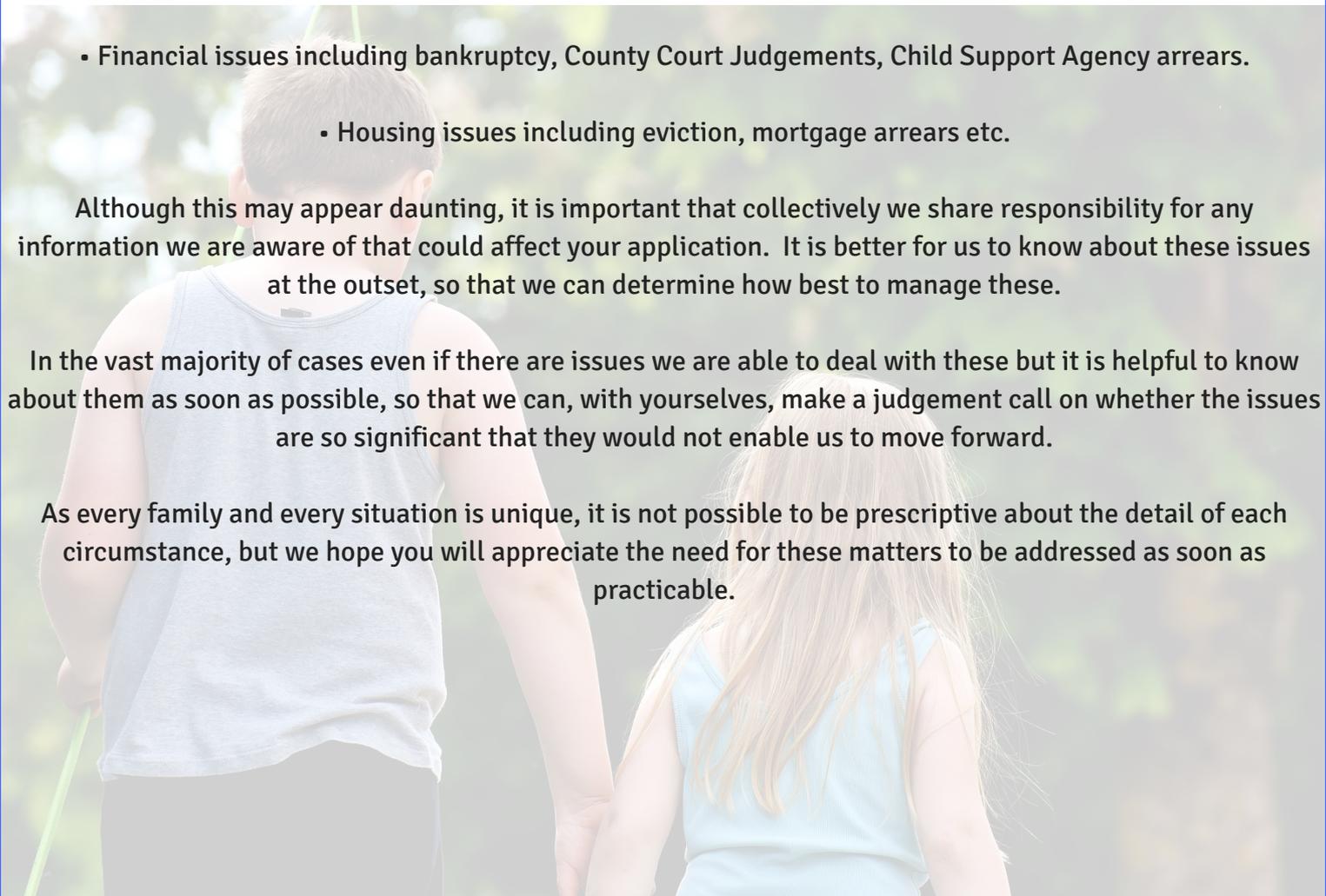
We would for example want you to inform us of any of the following and perhaps a good opportunity for doing so would be when an Initial visit takes place in your home.

- Any convictions which have related to serious driving offences including driving whilst under the influence of alcohol, those relating to fraud, dishonesty and/or assaults against a child/adult. These may also be relevant in the context of the extended family.
 - Incidents of Domestic violence within a relationship.
- Medical conditions of a nature or degree which would suggest a health check would need to be undertaken at an early stage in the process.
- Any family disputes which are likely to impact on a child, e.g. loss of contact with family members including adult children, ex partners etc.
 - Financial issues including bankruptcy, County Court Judgements, Child Support Agency arrears.
 - Housing issues including eviction, mortgage arrears etc.

Although this may appear daunting, it is important that collectively we share responsibility for any information we are aware of that could affect your application. It is better for us to know about these issues at the outset, so that we can determine how best to manage these.

In the vast majority of cases even if there are issues we are able to deal with these but it is helpful to know about them as soon as possible, so that we can, with yourselves, make a judgement call on whether the issues are so significant that they would not enable us to move forward.

As every family and every situation is unique, it is not possible to be prescriptive about the detail of each circumstance, but we hope you will appreciate the need for these matters to be addressed as soon as practicable.



5. Steps in the Adoption Process with this St. David's

- After initially contacting St. David's Children Society a discussion takes place between yourself and an Adoption Social Worker.
- The Society responds with an Adoption Information Pack.
- On reading the Adoption Information Pack, if you wish to know more please complete and return the request for an Initial visit form.
- A Social Worker will arrange an informal visit to your home usually within two working weeks. This is to share with you more information about the adoption process and to enable us to find out about you and discuss relevant information. Please note there is no obligation on either party at this stage to move beyond the initial visit.
- After this initial visit subject to further discussion, you will be invited to attend a 3-day pre-adoption preparation/training course.
- Once the 3-day course is completed you will be asked whether you wish to pursue your interest in adopting and you will be given a Declaration of Issues form to complete, so that we are clear about whether there are any particular issues which may affect your application. (see above) If you are anxious about completing this, please don't hesitate to contact a member of the team. Once we are in receipt of the Declaration of Issues form, pending no serious concerns, we will send you a formal application form and consent forms. The completed application form will enable this agency to begin the process of undertaking checks in relation to your suitability.
- If there is agreement to move forward, you will need to be aware that from the point of accepting your application a number of statutory checks will be undertaken so it is important that you are serious about your commitment to adoption at this stage as this will alert other people in your family circle to their interest in adoption.
- The Formal Application Pack includes a number of consent forms for you to sign your agreement to the necessary checks being made. E.g. permission for:
 - A full medical (for which your GP will charge a nationally agreed fee)
 - Disclosure and Barring Service Checks (DBS)
 - Overseas Checks including SAFFA if you have lived aboard or served in the armed forces
 - Local Authority checks.
 - CIW (Care Inspectorate Wales)

Please refer to checks and references summary sheet for detailed information.

If you already have children in your household we would also seek a reference from their school, or if you have younger children we would seek a reference from the health visitor.

If you are in work we would seek a reference from your employer. This normally takes place at an agreed point mid-way through the assessment.

If you are self-employed we would seek a reference from your accountant.

General Data Protection Regulations

Information is provided in the St David's Children Society Privacy Notice explaining what information we collect, how it is used, shared and stored. A copy of this is available on our website or can be sent to you on request.

Adopting Together is an exciting child-focused adoption service, supported by the National Adoption Service, which brings together the Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) in Wales to find families for children who may be waiting for a long time for their forever family.

Children who wait the longest are mostly aged over 4 years, brother and sisters who need to stay together, children with additional needs, children with some uncertainty regarding their development, and children from a BAME background. These children have had a tough start to their young lives and waiting for a family for a significant length of time can create additional problems.

Through this service we will provide specialist recruitment, including child-specific recruitment and adopter-led events, and a programme of therapeutic customised support to find the right families for these children and we will walk alongside them in their adoption journey.

Creating Families for Children Who Wait

You will need to be understanding, loving, playful and kind. You will need to have space in your lives, as well as people around you to share the joys and the challenges. We will walk alongside you and help you understand what these children need and will make sure you have the right support at the right time.

Adopting through Adopting Together will offer you a customised therapeutic model of assessment, training, therapeutic transitions and ongoing psychological support which enables and empowers you to meet the needs of children while creating your family.

Adopting Together Support

From the day you make contact, to the day you become a family and for as long as you need it, we will provide you with specialist support. Adoptive parenting is a rewarding choice but can sometimes be as hard as it is wonderful. Needing help is absolutely normal as you navigate your way through the stages of your child's life and we are here to support you.

All adopting families are offered on-going support; however through Adopting Together you are offered a specific package of therapeutic support that acknowledges the impact of the child's journey and is tailored to yours and the child's needs. Our model focuses on strengthening your relationship with your child as they move in to your family and is offered as early as possible as your relationship grows and develops. We know that this early work will really help to set the foundation for positive life-long relationships. Support is centred around a therapeutic framework which seeks to understand the needs of your child, the strengths you bring to parenting, strategies to enable you to best parent your child and the ways in which this can be fully supported.

Package of support

- An initial meeting led by a clinical psychologist to identify and consider the needs of your child and how we will best support you in parenting them.
- A series of ongoing therapeutic sessions to identify and discuss any concerns you may have and develop continued strategies for support.
- Tailored package of support for your child to help them move from their foster family into your family to set the foundation for your life-long relationships.
 - Professional support from a named social worker for as long as you need it.
- Access to a variety of specialist training programmes – including additional training pre-placement.
- Peer support from experienced adopters who will walk alongside you offering support and guidance.

Enquiries from Second time Adopters

Enquiries from second time adopters may be received by letter, telephone call or email. Any communication should be passed to the adoption Services Manager who will ensure that enquiries receive a written response within three working days. An initial visit would then be initiated by the Agency within 10 working days.

The Agency will prioritise applications most likely to meet the needs of children waiting for adoption. Once a family formally respond to the Agency following the initial visit, the Agency will aim to allocate to a social worker within two weeks of the family's formal application. The Agency will aim to complete a second time adoption application within 4-6 months.

If a child was adopted into a family, we generally recommend a period of 2 years before a family apply again. However, each case will be considered on an individual basis and exceptions may occur where a family are approached by the Local Authority about a sibling to the child in placement.

Much of the second assessment will focus on the adopter's direct experience of parenting, how they parent, the process of attachment, how their relationships and supports systems have evolved, the impact of any new child entering the home and how they are going to prepare their child.

Second time adopters receive a tailored assessment which takes account of their previous experience of adopting and the needs of the child they have previously adopted. They will be offered training specific to second time adopters which lasts for one day.

For all second time adopters checks and references will be gathered afresh and a new file will be set up if the case was previously closed to the Agency.

If the adopters are seeking approval for the brother or sister of a child not yet adopted the Agency will seek new checks from CCSIW and DBS so we are confident all checks remain clear. Where a previous medical is within 2 years an update medical will be requested unless there are significant issues in which case a full medical may be more appropriate. The medical must be within 6 months of the Adoption Panel.

A written reference will also be obtained from each applicant's last/current employer.

Updated personal references will be required for all second time adopters, these may be by telephone for very recent applicants but will be both written and in person for second time adopters where 2 years has elapsed. Each interview focus on how the family have adapted to parenting and parenthood.

Where the applicants have school age children, the relevant school(s) will be contacted, with the permission of the applicant, for information regarding the applicant's ability to promote the child's education.

The safety of a child is paramount and the social worker and Agency will need to be satisfied that a family are able to meet the additional demands of parenting another child.

The allocated adoption social worker will arrange for requests for written references to be sent on behalf of the Agency.

What is the Preparation training?

Preparation Training takes place over 3 days and each applicant is expected to attend:

The preparation training aims:

- To help inform you about important issues in adoption, and
- To help families to decide whether adoption is right for them.

Not all families decide to move forward with adoption even when they have completed the training and made a formal application to the Agency.

Some decide to take time out and then come back at a later point; others may decide it is not for them.

Topics covered in the training include:

What does parenting involve?

How do we support a child in learning about their origins and in their contact with the child's family of birth?

What are the extras needed to parent an adopted child?

The impact on children of difficult and painful experiences, including emotional, physical or sexual abuse

What is the legal process of adopting?

Parenting in multi-racial and cultural society

The groups also give an opportunity to meet with adoptive parents and others involved in the adoption process. **For example you will meet all the members of the social work team.**

Post Preparation training course:

The agency will in discussion with the applicants and in receipt of the Disclosure of Issues form make a decision about whether the application can progress. It would be after this stage that a social worker is allocated to the assessment.

If the agency decides that it cannot recommend moving forward, the applicants will be advised in writing of the reasons for this and can at this stage, access the Agency's complaint process if they are dissatisfied with the decision.

Once the preparation training has ended and a positive decision has been made by the agency to move forward, applicants are invited to attend a PAR workshop which will be one of 5 workshops that form part of the agency's assessment and preparation of adopters.

The PAR workshop is another opportunity to meet with social workers from the Agency and is when the format for the Prospective Adopters' Report is shared. There is further discussion/exploration about the assessment process itself and applicants are able to start completing some aspects of the report themselves. This is the first stage of completing the report which is presented to the adoption panel charged with recommending whether applicants are suitable to adopt.

More details about the assessment process is set out below: Please note other than the medical check there are no costs to applicants.

- The Assessment itself consists of at least 8 visits, sometimes more of approximately 1½ to 2 hours duration. Basically, it is a preparation/assessment procedure, which will require your active participation by:
 - producing a profile about yourselves: this would include your own personal family history, details of any brothers/sisters, your education/employment history, your interest/hobbies, places you have lived in etc. All of these help us to better understand the person you have become.
 - providing information that tells us about your potential capacity as an adoptive parent(s). This will take the form, for example, of supporting statements/observations and tasks, which may include your own reflections about relevant life experiences you may have had. Your assessing Social Worker will support and assist you in this process.
 - Midway through the Assessment we undertake a review as to how the adoption process is proceeding. It is a three way meeting between yourselves, your Social Worker and a senior member of St. David's staff. A summary of this review meeting will be included in the report that is presented into the adoption panel. This review is important in helping us to look together at the progress of the assessment, whether there are any significant issues that need to be discussed, and your views on the process to date.
 - When the Assessment is completed your Social Worker will write up the assessment report, in a nationally agreed format, called the Prospective Adopters Report, which will be presented to St. Davids Adoption Panel. You will be given a copy of your Assessment (minus the referee interviews and other third party information given in confidence) in advance of the Panel meeting, and will have a timescale of up to 10 working days in which to reply with any written observations. Following on from this, the report, along with any written observations from the applicants, will be submitted to the Adoption Panel.
- You will be invited to attend the Panel meeting. This maybe a bit daunting but your social worker will be there with you and you have sight of any questions the Panel may wish to ask you before you meet them. (Generally timescale from Application to presentation to panel is 6 months).
- The Adoption Panel makes a recommendation about whether applicant/s can be approved as suitable to adopt.

- Very occasionally the Panel may defer making a recommendation. This may arise in situations when the Panel feels that more information is required in order for it to make a recommendation.

Applicants are informed of the outcome as soon as possible after a recommendation has been made, usually within 24 hours of the Panel sitting.

The Panel recommendation is considered by the Agency Decision Maker, who is the Chief Executive of the Society. It is the Agency Decision Maker who makes the decision about whether a particular applicant/s is/are approved as an adoptive parent/s, having considered all the information available to her. This decision is made within 7 working days of the Panel meeting, unless affected by sickness or leave.

- If your application is approved, you will then be in a position to be considered for the children who are available. You will be supported in this by your Social Worker.

- At this point the time-scale since your first contact with the Society is likely to be 6-8 months.

Please note: All Adoption Agencies broadly follow the above process. We will support and encourage you throughout what can appear to be a daunting process and work alongside you to ensure that you are fully informed and involved in every step of the way.

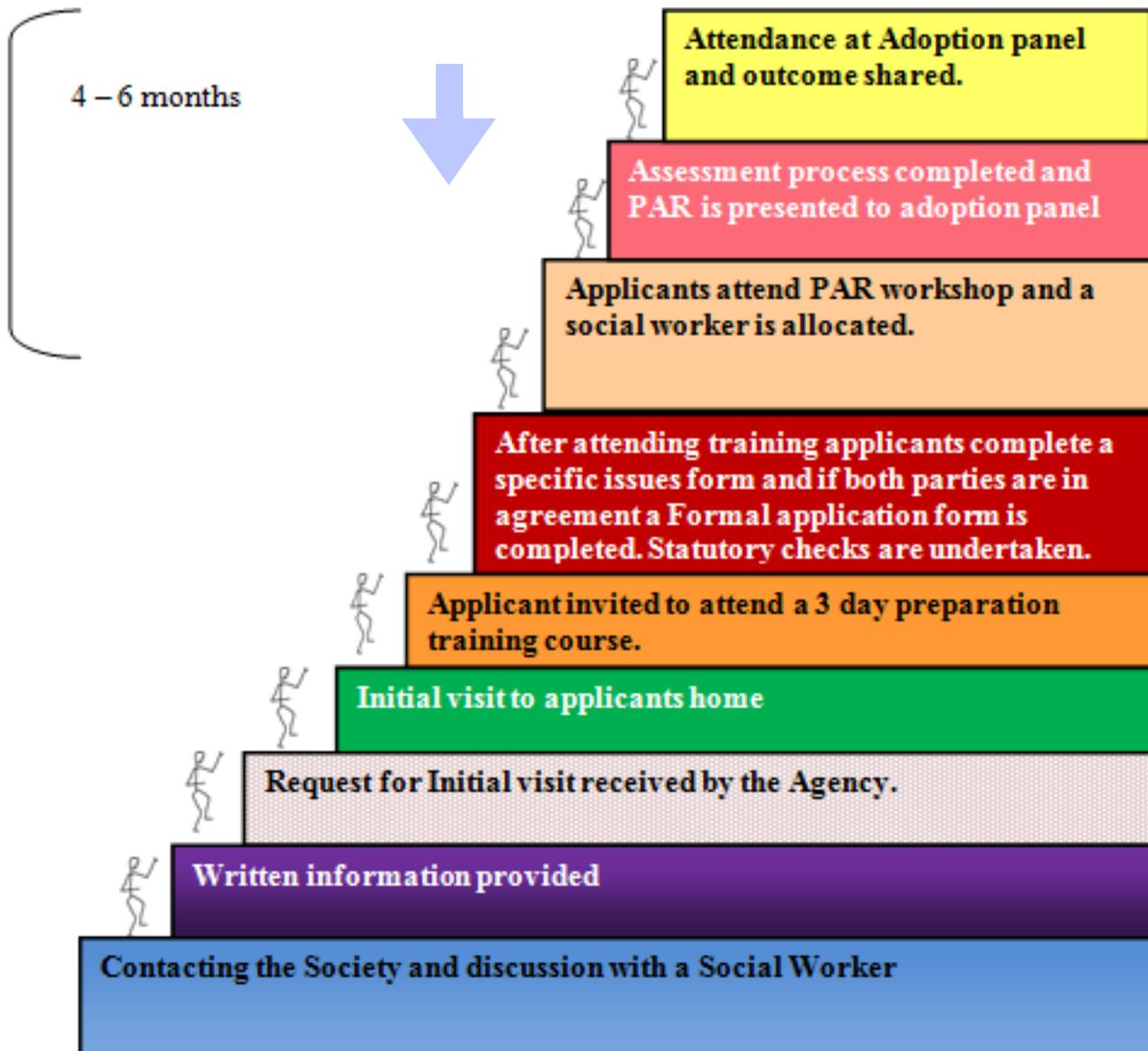
Remember that we are not looking for perfect parents-they don't exist! We are also not interested in setting you up to fail. The assessment process is there for you to reflect on your own life experiences, consider how these experiences have shaped the person you are today and the sort of parent you may become to meet the needs of children waiting for a new family

It is a rigorous process but it needs to be as we need to get it right for the children.

WE KNOW ADOPTION CAN WORK!



STEPS IN THE ADOPTION APPLICATION



Checks and References carried out by St. David's Children Society in respect of Adoption Applicant/s

St. David's Children Society aims above all else to achieve safe adoptive placements for children. Our work is governed by legislation that all Agencies have to adhere to. We try to undertake these checks in as sensitive and timely a manner as possible. This information is normally subject to Data Protection requirements. The majority of these checks will be undertaken once we receive a completed formal application form.

- **Health checks**, including a medical undertaken by the applicants' G.P.
- **Disclosure and Barring Service Checks** (formerly Criminal Record Bureau checks), are currently undertaken on all those in the household who are over the age of 16 years.
 - **Local Authority checks** for the previous 10 years.
 - **CSSIW or OFSTED checks** in respect of the applicants themselves.
- **Personal references** from two non-relatives who know the applicants well and can comment on their lifestyle, experience with children etc.,
 - A reference from a **family member**.
- A reference is usually sought from **ex-partners** when they have jointly parented, but the Agency may also wish to obtain a reference from an ex-partner when, in the Agency's view, this would be helpful to the assessment process and the relationship has been longstanding and significant.

At a later point in the process these referees will be interviewed by the assessing social worker:

- If applicable, a written reference from the **school** that the applicants' child attends.
- If applicable written confirmation of **employment** from an employer, or from an accountant if self-employed.
- Any additional references/enquiries that the agency considers would be helpful e.g. **SSAFA** when applicants have served in the Armed forces, or a Local Authority, when applicants have previously applied to foster or adopt. (Please note the applicant/s written consent would be sought)
 - **Child Support agency.**

For some of the checks it will be necessary to have sight of highly personal information in order to verify the identity of the applicant e.g. bank account, pay slip etc.,

At all points in the assessment process, the assessing Social Worker will aim to be as supportive as possible.

What happens next is usually referred to as:

6. The Matching Process

Once you are approved as an adoptive parent your Social Worker will work with you and support you in the process of being matched with a child/children.

Several things will happen:

- Your details will be sent for registration, with the Adoption Register Wales which operates throughout Wales. You will be asked to sign your agreement to this before the information is sent. Your Social Worker will provide you with an additional information sheet about this process.
- You can also place your own profile on Link Maker and search for children who are waiting for a family through this website. Your social worker will talk to you about how this works in practice as this as it may not be an option that is right for everyone.
- If you are selected as a potential match for a child/children there will be a series of discussions and meetings with the relevant social workers and information relating to the child/children will be shared with you, and an assessment of any Adoption Support needs will be made. The proposed match will then be presented to the adoption panel of the Local Authority that has responsibility for the child/children. You will be invited to attend the adoption panel together with your Social Worker and the Social Worker for the child.
 - If the panel approves the match, then there will be a planning meeting which will agree the process of introducing the child to your family.
- The timescale from first hearing about a child to meeting them can often take 3-4 months as it is important that you learn as much as possible about the child and have the opportunity to meet with medical advisers, schools foster carers etc.
- The process for children referred to the 'Adopting Together' project will differ slightly. Your social worker will talk to you about this in more detail.

WHAT CAN IMPACT ON THIS PROCESS?

The vast majority of children who are placed for adoption have been through the process of care proceedings, at the end of which, if the court accepts the care plan for adoption, it will grant the local authority a placement order. The placement order gives the local authority permission to place the child with prospective adoptive parents.

When a local authority makes the decision to place a child/children with prospective adoptive families and before the introductions start, the birth parent is given written notification by the Local Authority of their decision making and that the child will be placed with a prospective adoptive family.

Please note that neither the identity nor the location of the prospective adopters is disclosed to the birth parents/family.

Things to remember:

- Different Authorities operate different styles of introductions
- You may or may not have met the child prior to the linking matching panel
- You may or may not have the opportunity to meet the birth family. This will depend on the needs of the child, your wishes and feelings and those of the birth family
- If you are not adopting from your local area, you may need to travel for a short period of intense introductions, requiring a period away from home. In some situations, financial assistance may be offered by the Local Authority.
- During the period of introductions you will be involved in a progress review, which will look at how the introductions are progressing. The review may make decisions about:
 - The pace of the introductions
 - A possible date of placement
 - Whether the proposed link is viable



THE MATCHING PROCESS

Registration with the Welsh Adoption Register



Specific child identified as a link



Basic information scrutinised by the Agency and discussion with the child's Agency



If the link is a positive one the information is shared by Agency Social Worker with the proposed adopters



If adopters interested in child – the child's Social Worker and Agency Social Worker visit to share more information



If both parties wish to proceed – Agencies hold a Matching Meeting



Any additional information shared with adopters and a Placement Plan and Adoption Support Plan are drawn up. Adopters may meet with medical adviser, foster carers, etc.,



The match between child and adopters is presented to the child's Adoption Panel and recommendation made



Child's Agency Decision Maker makes decision and all parties meet to plan introductions



Introductions are reviewed regularly – usually last two weeks and provided all parties are happy, the child/children will be placed!!

7. Post Placement

The time between a child/children being placed and an Adoption Order being granted can vary from several weeks to several months.

During this time, the child/children and yourselves will be visited and supported by the Social Worker from St. David's and the Social Worker for the child/children placed.

There will be regular visits to your home and the placement will be reviewed in accordance with the Adoption regulations, to make sure that all is well and that the child's needs and those of the family are being met.

The Courts will not consider an Adoption application until the child/children has lived with an adoptive family for 10 weeks before making the application. Often it is considerably longer as everyone needs to feel that they are ready, that the child has settled and that everyone has made the transition to becoming a family.

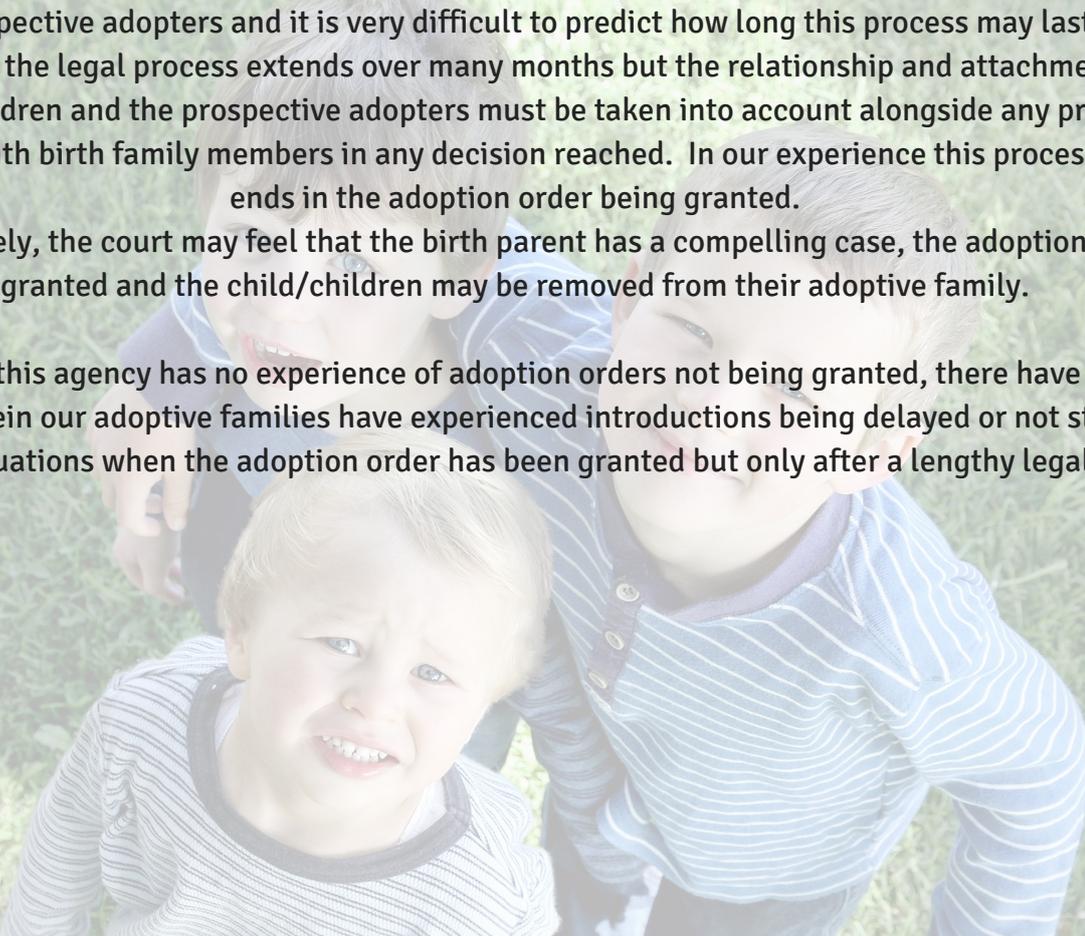
Once an application to adopt has been lodged in the court, then the court process begins of timetabling the case, ensuring that all the legal documents are in place and that the necessary reports have been written.

You will be kept informed of the progress each step of the way and will, along with your child/children, attend the court for either the final hearing or a subsequent celebration hearing!!

WHAT CAN IMPACT ON THIS PROCESS?

- When a birth parent is notified that an adoption application has been lodged with the court, they may seek to oppose the granting of an adoption order. There is a strict protocol, which the Judge will have to follow in order to fully consider whether to agree to the birth parent's request. This process will be very stressful for the prospective adopters and it is very difficult to predict how long this process may last for.
- In some cases the legal process extends over many months but the relationship and attachment between the child/ children and the prospective adopters must be taken into account alongside any pre-existing relationships with birth family members in any decision reached. In our experience this process ultimately ends in the adoption order being granted.
- **Extremely** rarely, the court may feel that the birth parent has a compelling case, the adoption order is not granted and the child/children may be removed from their adoptive family.

Whilst to date this agency has no experience of adoption orders not being granted, there have been some situations wherein our adoptive families have experienced introductions being delayed or not starting at all and other situations when the adoption order has been granted but only after a lengthy legal process.



Child and adopters visited on a weekly basis by child's Social Worker and adopters' worker



Placement reviewed within 4 weeks by an Independent Reviewing Officer



Placement reviewed within another 3 months and consideration given to lodging an adoption application at the Court



If all parties agree adopters will be assisted in lodging application and supported through the Court process



The Court timescale can vary from 6-12 weeks to several months depending on the complexity of the situation.



Adoption Reviews will occur every 6 months until the Adoption Order is granted.



Adoption Order granted. Adoption support needs reviewed.

8. Post Adoption Support Support

Once you have legally adopted your child/children all parental rights and responsibilities transfer to the adoptive parent/parents.

Many families feel at this stage that they want to get on with their lives and may not need support from the Society again, but adoption support may be required in line with the Adoption Support regulations. St. David's will also offer ongoing support if the family wish for the Society to remain involved.

All families presented to Adoption Panel will have had their adoption support needs assessed at the time of approval and also prior to the placement of a specific child/children. This will form the basis of any post placement support and would be reviewed in line with the Regulations, in recognition that over time these needs may well change.

The Local Authority that placed the child/children has a responsibility to support the placement for 3 years after the placement begins in line with the Adoption Support Regulations. After the three-year period has elapsed, then at any point in the future, adoptive families can approach the Local Authority in which they live and request an assessment of their Adoption Support Needs. This does not necessarily mean that Social Workers will still be visiting your home, but it does mean that families are entitled to have their support needs assessed. Sometimes the support may mean for example a referral for play therapy, or support in dealing with contact arrangements.

This society also has responsibilities in supporting adoptive families and we will always respond to requests for support in recognition that adoption is a lifetime commitment. The exact nature of this support will vary according to the needs of each child and family. However, families may want to keep in touch with the Society and other families who have adopted through the support groups we hold for families three times a year plus our very popular Christmas and Summer celebration events.

The Agency also hosts a 'Stay and Play Group' once a month for families to attend which is run by staff members for children 4 and under.

We also offer ongoing training to families to assist them in their ongoing learning and development about the needs of children who have been adopted. These training events can be extremely helpful once you are living with your child as your learning can directly correlate to your actual experiences of parenting.

For some children and families, the supports already available to all families within their own communities, may be all that is required.

Adoption UK also offers support, advice and training to families and you are entitled to one year's free membership of Adoption UK once you have been matched with your child.

9. And finally

Good luck and remember you are not alone. Adoption is a lifetime commitment, which we all share responsibility for in trying to get right, especially for the children.

If having read this information,

- You are interested in hearing more, please complete our Initial Visit request form and we will undertake to visit you, usually within two working weeks
- You are still uncertain, contact us and we can discuss things further.

You may also wish to access some advice/support from the following before proceeding further with your interest:

- Ourselves – St. David's Children Society 029 2066 7007
- Adoption and Fostering Cymru (AFA) 029 2076 1155
- Adoption UK 02920 230319
- To find out where your nearest Regional collaborative is (5 local authorities working together) go to the National Adoption Service Website www.adoptcymru.com
- Additional Information you may wish to read such as the Legal Guide to Adoption is available on our website.



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