

Adopt for Coventry





Adopt for Coventry and make a difference

“ Here at Coventry City Council, we care passionately about providing a loving home for Coventry children.

We know it's a big step for people to adopt a child. We also know people will have all sorts of questions and that there are many myths around the subject.

We are here to try and offer the best possible advice and by working together, we want to give you and your family the best start. ”

Why do children need adoption?

Children of all ages, even new-born babies, sometimes need to come into the care of the local authority. There are many reasons for this. Some children and young people may need time in care while a crisis at home is sorted out and support is put in place. Parents often need extra support, and children will need to be with a foster carer while that is taking place. Sometimes parents struggle to parent their children safely due to domestic violence, drug and alcohol addiction or longstanding mental health issues.

If it is not possible for a child to return to their own family and the court agrees with this, we will need to find a new permanent home for them. For a number of children we will look for adopters to provide this. All the parental responsibilities that parents normally hold will transfer to the adopters and the child will become a full legal member of that family.

There are always children in Coventry who need new families who can love them unconditionally, who can accept that the child will come with their own personalities, skills and interests. Children need to be accepted by their new parent/s as individuals from a different birth family, with a different family history to theirs.

Whatever age they are, children will need a parent or parents who understand that parenting an adopted child is similar to parenting a birth child, but also very different.

We know that the happiest adopted children are those that can grow up in a family who accept and support the different identities of their children, where parents know that for all adopted children there will be gaps in their development and emotional security and that the love of an adoptive parent is not always enough.

Family links

All adopted children will keep some link with their birth family, this will range from keeping their first name that was given to them by their birth parent to, in some cases, staying in direct contact with members of their birth family. Most adopters help their children to keep links with their birth family by sending update letters once or twice a year through the adoption agency.

Children who need adoption

Around half of the children who need adoption have at least one brother or sister and it is very important that we place these children together. We therefore need adopters who wish to adopt groups of two and three brothers and sisters.

We encourage would-be adopters to consider a wider age range of children and be aware of the children who wait longer to find a family. These include brothers and sisters, children aged four or over and children from particular black and minority ethnic groups or who are of mixed heritage.

If you are interested in adoption please give the friendly recruitment team a call on 024 7683 2828 and we can chat through our current needs and priorities for adoption.



Who can adopt?

YOU can! If you are over 21, have life experience and can provide a safe, protective home for a child or children.

Please do not rule yourself out on grounds of age, sexuality, marital status, religion, ethnicity or health. Talk to us about your reservations. If we both agree it is the right decision for you, we will discuss how you can be assessed.

Adopted children bring their own history and life experience. They need you to give them a new beginning; unconditional love and commitment forever.

Please call the team on 024 7683 2828 to chat about our current adoption priorities.

Becoming an adopter

Adoption is one of the biggest and most important decisions of your life and we, at Coventry City Council, want you to make that decision with us. We will support you every step of the way.

We will work together to give a child or children a new beginning, and make sure that you can be that 'forever family' that they need.

When you make your first enquiry we will arrange to visit you at home and talk you through the process and our current adoption priorities. There are now two stages to this, which will take about six months.

Stage One - registration, checks, preparation

This first stage takes around two months. You are encouraged to find out as much as possible about adoption and what it will mean to you and your family. We start to get to know you, to discover your strengths and prepare you for the task ahead.

We will offer you a visit where you can talk to a social worker in the privacy of your own home. The social worker will start to gather information about you and your household.

We will start the required background checks. These include:

- DBS (Police) checks on all adults in the household
- Personal references
- Employment references
- A full medical assessment
- School references for any school age child in the household
- References from ex-partners

You will be encouraged to carry out research into adoption and will also attend adoption training which will involve three days of preparation groups where you will meet other prospective adopters. This is also an opportunity to meet experienced adopters and an adopted adult. You will learn about the children's experiences, needs and the issues they will bring with them to adoption.

For further details, visit www.first4adoption.org.uk.



Stage Two - assessment

If everyone agrees to proceed to the next stage you will be allocated a social worker who will complete your home study assessment with you. Your social worker will visit you approximately 6-8 times, getting to know you. This will provide you with the opportunity to discuss the tasks involved in adoption and gather information about you, your life experiences, skills, as well as your support needs.

You will be encouraged to continue your own research and will be invited to a further day of preparation training.

This stage should take about four months and involves lots of opportunities to discuss you, your life and your family.

Adoption Panel and approval

When both stages are complete, your references have been checked and all the required checks are in, you and your social worker will present your Prospective Adopter Report to the Adoption Panel. Their job is to make sure that all applicants, at this stage, have had the information and preparation they need and have the skills needed to adopt.

You will be invited to attend the Adoption Panel. The Panel has an independent chair and is made up of a wide range of people with experience of adoption. It's their job to make a recommendation about your suitability for adoption.

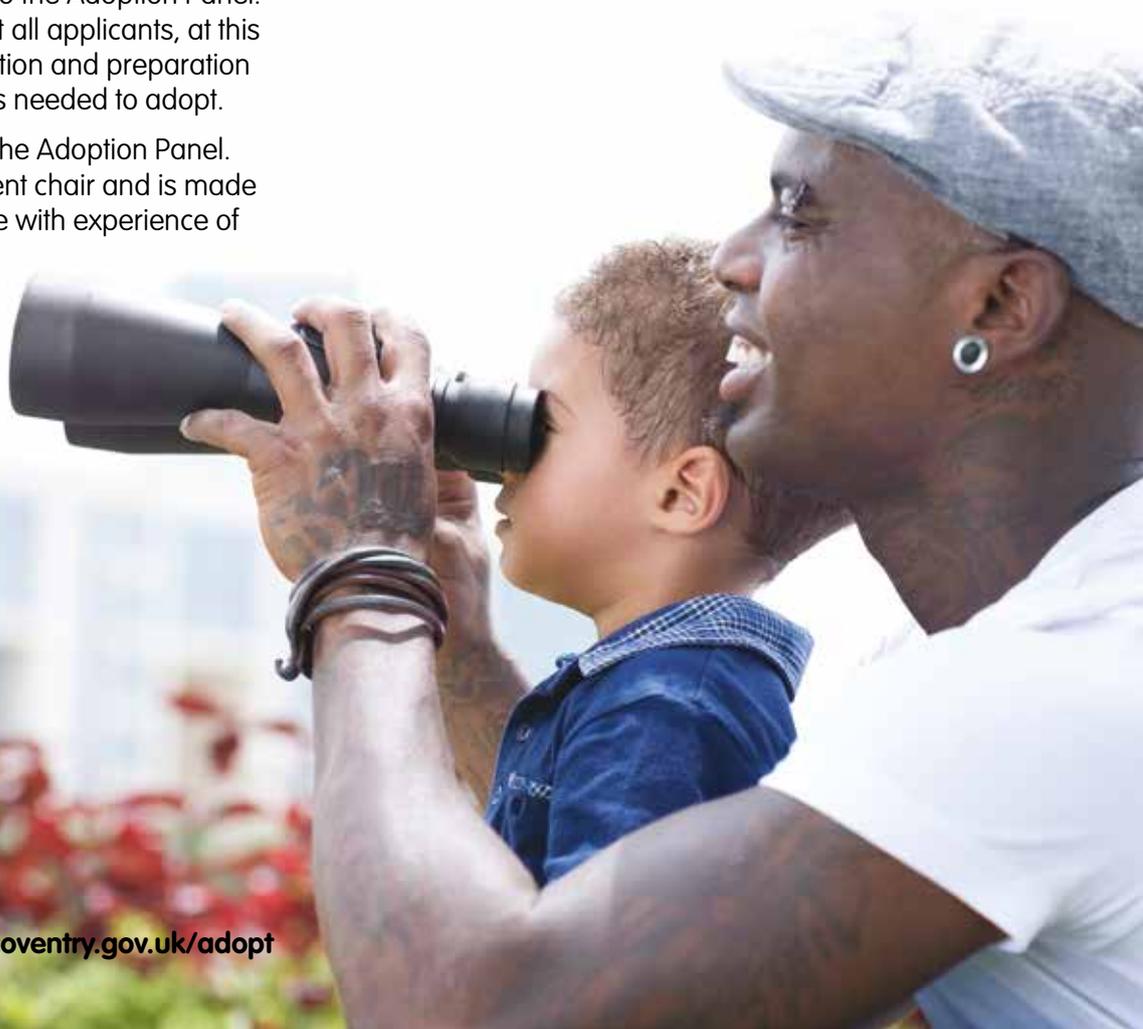
Following this, the recommendation goes to the Agency Decision Maker. The Agency Decision Maker is a senior manager at the Council, who has the legal responsibility to make and approve a decision.

A new beginning for you and your child or children

Once you have been approved we will start to search for the right child or children to be placed with you.

In some cases, we will have talked to you about the children waiting for a family and you will have an idea of whether there is a specific child or children for you.

If this is not the case then we will share with you profiles of children waiting for an adoptive family and talk to you about the children who are going through the court process, where decisions are being made about whether adoption is right for them. We will also forward your details to the National Adoption Register and other services and help you to search wider for the right child or children for you.





Support for adopters

After you are approved as an adopter for Coventry City Council you will be introduced to the social worker who will support you through matching with a child until your child has been adopted and has settled with you.

This social worker will spend time getting to know you, will have read your report and will talk to you and the social worker who undertook the assessment.

We will ensure that:

- we visit you every four weeks until you are linked to a child or children
- you will continue to have access to advice, support and any additional training
- we provide social events, adopter support groups and coffee mornings as well as an adoption newsletter and a mentoring scheme
- we regularly update you about Coventry children
- we keep you as involved as possible

Once your child has been identified we will ensure that:

- you receive information about your child or children
- we plan what support you, and they, will need
- we fast-track therapeutic or parenting support
- extra help is available at nursery/school if it is needed.

Frequently asked Questions

We live outside the city. Can we still adopt a child from Coventry?

For many of the children waiting to be adopted, we need to find a family who live outside the city boundaries. Roughly speaking, we welcome enquiries from people living within an hour's drive of Coventry. Adopters who live in the city itself tend to wait longer for a match.

We're not married. Can we still adopt?

Yes. Two people who are living as partners in an "enduring family relationship" are welcome to adopt.

Can I adopt if I am single?

There is no bar to single people applying to adopt. In fact for some children it may be better for them to be placed with a single adopter. However, as many of the children available for adoption need two parents to manage their particular needs, single adopters may wait longer. If you are single you will need to have a robust support network.

We are living on income support so we can't afford to adopt a child. Can you help?

Financial support may occasionally be available where adopters are able to meet our current adoption priorities but adoption would cause financial hardship to a family. This is especially true for those thinking of adopting a group of brothers or sisters, or a child or children with additional needs.

We already have birth children. Could we adopt too?

Yes. We welcome people who have raised their own children. This experience can often make you ideal adopters for older children or those with special needs. However, we do recommend a 2-3 year age gap between your youngest birth child and an adopted child and we will consider very carefully with you what the impact on your existing child or children will be.

I don't own my house and have heard that I can't adopt.

That's a myth. Prospective adopters should have secure accommodation i.e. a house or flat, which can be rented or mortgaged. There must be sufficient room for a child to sleep and play and older children of different genders will need a separate bedroom.

I want to adopt, but I work full-time and do not want to give up work permanently. Can I still adopt?

Yes, you can. Adopters are expected to take roughly a year's adoption leave in order to settle a child in to their family and home. This may need to be longer for pre-school children and some children will need full time care for longer. In 2003, Statutory Adoption Pay and leave (roughly equivalent to Statutory Maternity Pay and leave) were introduced. Adopters are entitled to this and to paternity leave for a partner. Two partners can also share Adoption leave nowadays. The main carer will then usually go back to work part-time in order to be available for the children before and after school and in holidays or times of sickness.

We want to adopt a very young child but have heard there aren't any babies placed for adoption?

There are now fewer babies available for adoption due to a change in society's attitudes and better contraception. However, there are still pre-school children needing adoption. We also need adopters for older children, as well as brothers and sisters (of various ages) who need to stay together. Children aged over four and children from particular black and minority ethnic groups wait the longest for adoption alongside children with additional needs.

Please see our website for more information.



You may have other questions. If you would like a discussion with one of our knowledgeable staff in Coventry please call the Adoption team on 024 7683 2828. We look forward to talking to you.



Could you foster a baby or child with the possibility of adoption?

What is Fostering for Adoption?

Fostering for adoption is used for babies and children where the Local Authority plan is adoption and where there is only a slim chance that they will be able to live with parents or a member of their extended family.

In these circumstances the child may be placed with approved adopters, who are also temporarily approved as foster carers for that particular child, whilst assessments are carried out with the birth parents and the court decides whether the child should be placed for adoption.

- This could be where parents have previously had one or more children removed and adopted and they have made little or no improvement in their circumstances to indicate they can safely care for this child.
- It could be where the parents' circumstances and the risks to the child are such that there is no active plan to return the child to live with the parents or extended family.
- It could, very occasionally, be where parents indicate that they want their child adopted but they have not yet formally consented to this.



Why Fostering for Adoption?

Usually children who are adopted are first placed with foster carers and then moved on to their adopters once the court grants a Placement Order. This is a huge disruption for a child at a vulnerable age. Fostering for Adoption protects children from experiencing moves within the care system. It provides children with good quality, uninterrupted and consistent care whilst the plan is being decided. If the court decides adoption is right for the child the Foster for Adoption carers will be considered as permanent adoptive parents for the child. Consistent care from an early age with the same carers reduces possible harm and it supports the child in developing healthy attachments. Fostering for Adoption enables the child to live with potential adopters at the earliest opportunity so they can form an attachment to the new family sooner.

What does it involve?

Babies and children are placed with approved adopters who have been assessed and approved as temporary foster carers for that child. The Fostering for Adoption carers will provide the day to day care for the child and will continue to work with the child's social worker to ensure that the child has all of their needs met. At the same time, the child's social worker will continue working with and assessing the child's birth parents to see if they have made the changes needed to have the child returned to their care. The Court will make the final decision on the plan for the child but this can take 6 months or longer. If the decision is that the child should be adopted then fostering for adoption carers can attend the Adoption Matching Panel and if panel and the Adoption Agency agree, they will become the prospective adopters for the child. After this they can apply to the Court for a final Adoption Order. Alternatively, if the court decides that the child should be returned to their birth family then the child will go back home.

Will the child still have contact with their birth family whilst this is going on?

Yes, until the court makes a decision that the child should be adopted, most children will have regular supervised contact with their birth family. This could be several times a week.

As Fostering for Adoption carers your confidentiality is protected as much as possible so the birth family will not know your private details. You will only be expected to take the child to contact with their birth parents if it is safe to do so.

What are the benefits for the carers?

Fostering for Adoption carers have the immense satisfaction of providing stability and security for a child or children at an early stage in their development, with the possibility that they may become their legally adopted child/ ren, if the court agrees.

Do Fostering for Adoption carers get paid?

Yes, Fostering for Adoption carers receive a fostering allowance for the child during the "fostering phase" and are also entitled to claim the normal amount of adoption leave and pay either when the child is first placed or when the court gives the Placement Order and the placement changes to a "placement for adoption."

What support is available for Fostering for Adoption?

When a child is placed with the Fostering for Adoption carers, support is given by an Adoption social worker who will be able to provide advice and support. This social worker will help the carers understand the fostering requirements and support them through any of the particular challenges and uncertainties which may be involved in this type of placement. The child or children also have an allocated social worker who

will continue to visit them at the carers' home and also keeps the carers updated regarding the plan for the child and the court process. If the placement becomes a "placement for adoption" the Adoption social worker will support the carers through to the Adoption Order and beyond.



Do Fostering for Adoption carers have a different type of adoption assessment?

Fostering for Adoption carers are approved adopters who have the skills, emotional resilience and willingness to be able to offer a child a loving and nurturing home whilst living with the possibility that the child may be returned to their birth family.

Foster for Adoption carers go through the normal prospective adopter's assessment but during this, a social worker will provide further information and training on Fostering for Adoption if there is an interest in this idea. In particular potential Foster for Adoption carers need to be clear about the fostering role and the expectations to work with the agency and other professionals. There is the chance to talk with other people who have done Fostering for Adoption during this process.

Potential carers and their social worker will discuss whether they have the special qualities needed to offer a Fostering for Adoption placement. Foster for Adoption carers will need to be able to deal with uncertainty and be robust enough to manage the potential loss of the child/ren if they are eventually returned to the birth family. Foster for adoption carers also need to be able to work with birth parents in a positive way and in some circumstances facilitate contact until such time as the decision about the children's future is made. Fostering for Adoption is not suitable for everybody.

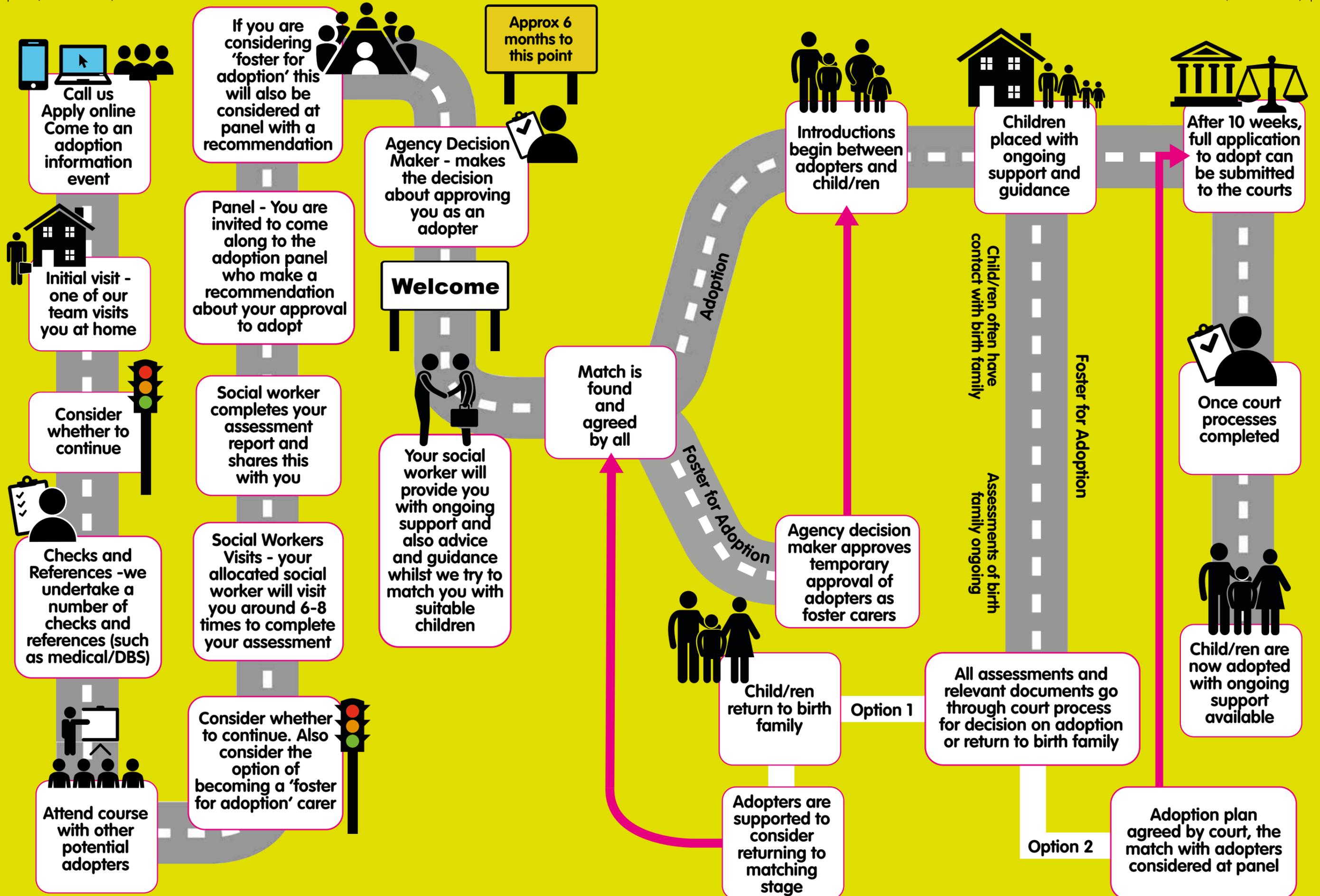
Foster for Adoption carers can be considered for any child needing a Fostering for Adoption placement (although you may also wish to be considered for adoption placements made in the usual way).

If a Fostering for Adoption placement is needed information will be shared with the carer about the particular child. This will include as much information as we have about their health, development, birth

family history and the reasons why they are unable to live with their birth family. Because children placed through Fostering for Adoption may be very young and placements may need to be made very quickly there may be less information available in these circumstances. If the child's social worker feels that the carer and child/ren are a good match and that the carers are able to meet all of the child/ren's needs they will visit the carers at home to discuss the child/ren further. If the Fostering for Adoption placement is to go ahead the social worker will recommend that the carer should become a temporary foster carer for the child and a report will be submitted to the Agency Decision Maker for his/her approval. The social workers will then arrange for the child to be carefully introduced to you and placed.

Please see our assessment map overleaf for further details of the steps to becoming a Foster for Adoption carer





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 **024 7683 2828**

 **www.coventry.gov.uk/adopt**