



Leicestershire

# **Criteria for the Recruitment and Assessment of Adoption applicants.**

**December 2022**

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## **Criteria and Considerations: Adopter Applicants**

The Leicestershire County Council Criteria and Considerations in respect of Adopter Applicants have been written in reference to the Family Adoption Links (FAL) Information Guide as Leicestershire County Council is part of the FAL regional partnership.

Leicestershire County Council Adoption Service have a responsibility to recruit and assess adopters for children who cannot live within their birth families. The needs of the children who require adoption are the first priority and key consideration in accepting any application.

Leicestershire County Council are committed to the recruitment of a diverse range of families who can meet the needs of our children.

We welcome applications from people who

- Are married, single or divorced
- Are straight or from the LGBTQ+ community
  - Come from all walks of life
  - Are over 21
- Already have children or who are considering parenting for the first time
  - Are a homeowner or living in rented accommodation
  - Are employed or unemployed
    - Have a healthy lifestyle
- If applying as a couple, have lived together for 2 years
  - Have a local support network in place
- Have allowed a 6 month gap after completing fertility treatment
- Are able to demonstrate a good knowledge of child development
- May have experience in caring for children in the age group they would like to adopt

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- Are free from any criminal cautions or convictions for offences against children or sexual offences against adults

### **Applicant eligibility:**

In all cases the deciding factors in accepting an application will be: -

- The qualities and skills which people bring to the task of adopting a child and meeting their continuing needs into adulthood.
- That their circumstances at the time of applying to Leicestershire County Council in respect of adoption are conducive to the task of adoptive parenting.

### ***UK residency status***

Applicants do not have to be a British citizen to adopt a child, but:

- must have a fixed and permanent home in the UK, Channel Islands or the Isle of Man
- must have lived in the UK for at least 1 year before beginning the application process

Source: [www.gov.uk/child-adoption](https://www.gov.uk/child-adoption)

### ***Criminal Offences***

If an applicant or household members has a criminal conviction or caution for offences against children or for serious sexual offences they will not be able to adopt. Other criminal offences will not automatically exclude applicants but will be taken into consideration during the assessment process.

\* See also Checks and References section of this policy.

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### **Age**

Applicants must be over the age of 21.

### **Further considerations:**

#### ***Diversity***

Applications are welcomed from a wide cross-section of society. People with disabilities will receive the same consideration as other applicants in terms of their capacity to parent an Adopted Child. Applicants from black, Asian and inter-racial families are actively encouraged. Leicestershire County Council will consider applications from people of all religious faiths, and from those applicants who have none.

#### ***Applicants with Children***

Applicants who have their own birth children are welcome to applying to adopt with Leicestershire County Council. The youngest child in the family should be at least two years old before entering the assessment process. There should be a minimum two-year age difference between the age of the youngest child in the existing family and the age of the child to be placed.

#### ***Second or Subsequent Applications***

Where applicants have previously adopted, Leicestershire County Council recommends that applicants do not seek to apply to adopt again within a year of the making of an Adoption Order. Such timescales ensure that the previously adopted child has been given time to settle into their new family.

Where applicants have previously adopted, careful consideration should be given to the presenting needs of the adopted child/ren already in placement before accepting the applicants into the adoption process.

An exception to this rule may present if a subsequent child is born after the placement of an older sibling.

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### ***Bedroom Space***

Prospective adopters should have one spare bedroom per child for the number of children they hope to adopt.

The exception to this rule is for applicants who have one spare bedroom but who express an interest in adopting a sibling group of two, with the understanding that this would need careful matching.

### ***Fertility Treatment***

Applicants must have completed any ongoing investigations, treatment or counselling for infertility before proceeding with the adoption application. Applicants should allow a minimum six-month gap between the conclusion of treatment and counselling before their application can be accepted.

The adoption assessment should also consider the applicant's future plans for birth children and how this may impact upon their terms of approval.

## **Checks and references**

All applications will be subject to checks and references as follows:

### ***DBS checks***

Applicants will be required to have an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check.

They should be encouraged to work openly and honestly with the Service in respect of their criminal history and advised that any attempts to conceal previous criminal history, or aspects of this, or to be dishonest about it, will be assessed in depth and likely be seen in a negative light.



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Enquirers should be advised that if their DBS check reports any previous convictions, a risk assessment will be completed and reviewed by a Service Manager within the Family Placement Service.

### ***Local Authority checks***

Checks will be completed with all Local Authorities where the applicant has previously lived.

If any applicant is currently known to the Local Authority in relation to any current child or adult safeguarding concerns, then it is likely that their enquiry will not be progressed.

If the enquirer has been known to social care previously in respect of any Child and / or adult safeguarding issues, and / or if they have received support previously in respect of their care of their own children, then close consideration should be given to whether their enquiry is progressed.

### ***Health checks***

All applicants should be informed that a health assessment with their GP will form part of the Adoption Assessment Process. Adopter applicants will be asked to pay for their health assessments, at the point where this is provided by their surgery. Applicants will also be required to give consent to the Adoption Medical Adviser to seek further information from a consultant if they are receiving ongoing medical treatment or support

Not all health conditions will be of concern and that a determination about the impact of an individual's own health conditions will be provided by a health professional within the assessment period. The Local Authority will consider the nature, seriousness and length of the condition and its impact on the day-to-day life of the carer; and how this may affect the life of a child or young person placed with them.

All health assessments will include consideration of applicants' weight and BMI. Applicants with a BMI reading of 40 or over will be asked to lose weight by implementing lifestyle changes before entering the adoption assessment process.

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### *Pregnancy*

If applicants become pregnant during the assessment process it is likely that the adoption service advise them to withdraw their application at that stage.

It is important that applicants are not trying to conceive naturally, through IVF or any other intervention and that they understand the importance of the potential use of contraception during assessment.

### *Smoking*

Applicants who smoke should be advised that this will restrict the age and type of child who may be placed with them. It is unlikely that households where one or both applicants smoke would be considered for applications for children under 5 years old.

Applicants would need to provide evidence that they have stopped smoking for a minimum of six months in order to be considered as carers for babies and infants.

All children and young people with a disability [which means they are often dependent on and in close proximity to their carer] and all children with respiratory problems such as asthma or heart disease will not be placed with smoking families.

This criterion is supported by Coram BAAF research.

### *Vaping*

Prospective adopters who vape but do not smoke can be considered for adopting younger children.

We ask adopters to be positive role models to children in their care and that we will, therefore, request that they do not vape in their presence. If a prospective adopter vapes, they must keep the liquid/electronic cigarettes locked away and out of the reach of children and will need to evidence this within their assessment.

This criterion is supported by Coram BAAF research.

### ***Working Arrangements***

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It is a basic requirement, that the adoptive parent or one of the adopters (if a couple) would be expected to take a minimum period of time off from work (equivalent to the nine months paid Statutory Adoption Leave) immediately after the placement of a child, to allow relationships within the home to develop. However, our preference is that they take a full twelve months off work.

Each case will be different, particularly as people's working patterns can be so variable, and the needs of Adopted children waiting to be matched can also be different.

Within Assessment, the Applicant[s] must also be able to evidence that after the first year of placement, if they return to work, that they will not over-rely upon childcare provision. Applicants will be asked to consider their plans for child-care should they return to work after Adoption leave.

### ***Moving House***

If the applicant is moving home at the time of their Enquiry or their house move is imminent [i.e. within the next 6 – 8 months], consideration should be given as to whether / when the assessment commences.

### ***Duration of Relationship***

In order to apply to become Adopters for Leicestershire County Council, couples need to have been living together for a minimum of two years. If the couple has been living together for eighteen months, an enquiry could still be taken, and the couple invited to attend the Find out About Adoption Open Evening.

In respect of an Applicant's marital status, Applicants may be single, divorced, married or in civil partnership, or living together.

### ***Ex-Partners check***

Applicants need to be made aware that Leicestershire County Council may need to interview previous partners with whom they shared a significant relationship. This will include partners with whom they have had birth / adopted children and / or those with whom they shared a parenting role for an unrelated child, for example, the applicant





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provided care to an ex-partners Child/ren. A significant relationship will also be considered as one which has involved the applicant living with their partner and / or was long in its duration i.e. two years plus.

If the applicant raises concerns about Leicestershire County Council seeking an ex-partner reference, additional advice should be sought with a Senior Practitioner or Team Manager of the Recruitment Team or Assessment Team. Where it has been decided that an ex-partner reference is not being sought from a previous partner, a corroborating Reference will need to be taken from a third party.

### ***Recruitment Outside of County Borders***

Enquiries from applicants outside county borders will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Applicants may be referred to their local adoption agency.

### ***Social Media Check***

Adoption applicants need to be made aware that the assessment process will require that we undertake social media checks.

### ***Joint Working***

There is an expectation that applicants should provide accurate information to staff. The assessment social workers will seek additional information from third parties including character references, health professionals and employers. Refusal to consent to such checks and references will likely result in Leicestershire County Council being unable to proceed with the application.

### ***English as a second language***

On the whole, children and young people who are in our care speak English and will need their carers to be able to speak English with and to them too. Whilst we value the richness of individual cultural practices and with this, other languages spoken in the home, we believe it is vital that children and young people living and growing up in the United Kingdom, do so in homes where their primary language is English to enable them to ultimately engage in their communities and society as a whole.

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Also, it is vital that during the assessment process, each applicant is able to engage with and communicate appropriately their opinions, values, thoughts and emotions to the assessing social worker directly. *We do not believe this can be achieved by using an interpreter to translate in these circumstances.*

Therefore, in respect of both points, Leicestershire County Council expects that all applicants can speak English competently enough to take part in the assessment process. Where a potential applicant is not able to speak English to this standard, then we will offer information about local ESOL courses.

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