



# ccs adoption



## ADOPTION INFORMATION PACK

The overall feeling is that I am in very good hands choosing to embark on this journey with CCS.

**CCS Adopter**

CCS staff are highly trained, competent, friendly and encouraging while maintaining professionalism with everyone they engage with.

**CCS Adopter**



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Jeśli nie mówisz po angielsku, możemy zapewnić tłumaczenie tego dokumentu.  
Haddii aadan ku hadlin Ingiriisiga waxaan ku siin kamaa turjubaan dukumiinti ah.  
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## Welcome to CCS Adoption

**Hello. Thank you for taking the time to explore if adoption might be right for you and for downloading this information pack. We appreciate that this is an important step in your life that needs a great deal of consideration from the head and heart.**

Here at CCS, we are always interested in talking to people who are considering adoption. Whether you are in the earliest stages of exploring it, or want to get started as soon as possible you can always give us a call 0117 935 0005 and talk to one of our adoption advisers – most of whom are adoptive parents. Alternatively, join us at one of our regular [Information Events](#) and talk with social workers and adopters there. Or email us at [advice@ccsadoption.org](mailto:advice@ccsadoption.org)

CCS Adoption has an 'outstanding' Ofsted rating and works closely with local authorities and our, to prepare, assess, match and support you and your children. Our adopters often say they chose us because of the lifelong support we can offer throughout the adoption process and beyond.

However, in these pages, we wanted to show you what Adoption looks like now, tell you a little about the children who are waiting for families and talk about what it takes to be an adopter. We also wanted to share with you the stories from some of our CCS adoptive families about how they made their families through adoption and why they particularly chose us.

There is no such thing as a typical adopter these days and we are keen to spread the word that all sorts of people can and do adopt. Age, ethnicity, faith, marital status or sexual orientation are not what determine if you will make a good adoptive parent. Rather, we look for warmth, flexibility, a child-centred approach, stability, security and resilience as the qualities that will help most when you adopt your children. We hope very much to be hearing from you.

Best Wishes,



**Maggie Pitts**

CEO



## Thinking about Adoption?

**If you are thinking about adoption then there is a lot of information available, particularly on the internet. However, there is so much that sometimes it's difficult to know where to start. Here are a few ideas...**

Anybody in the early stages of exploring adoption should have a look at the resources on [First4Adoption](#) or [YouCanAdopt](#), which are both official, national information services for people interested in adopting. You Can Adopt has [some recent podcasts](#) covering a range of issues in adoption that are well worth a listen. There are some [interactive quizzes and modules in the First Steps section](#) of the First4Adoption site and some useful information sheets for adopters about starting the process and [thinking about adoption in their downloads area](#). Some people find it helpful to hear the adoption stories of others. We have a few of these [here on our CCS website](#). Another website to explore is [www.adoptionuk.org](http://www.adoptionuk.org) which is a national membership organisation and charity focussed on supporting adopted children and people.

There are whole worlds of conversations about adoption on Twitter (where people wanting to talk privately about adoption often create an anonymous profile to do so) together with adoption organisations and [groups](#) to join on Facebook. And of course, you can follow our social media posts about adoption on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

LGBT prospective adopters will find joining [New Family Social](#) and following their social media pages and forum a useful and supportive place to learn about adoption and hear the stories of other LGBT adopters. CCS has a good track record in working with LGBT couples and singles and runs a monthly LGBT coffee morning.

There are also anonymous forums that discuss adoption e.g. [Mumsnet](#) and [Adoption UK](#) which are useful places to connect and read up about adoption, although we would advise you to approach these carefully. Sometimes they can be very supportive and genuinely informative, particularly in the early stages, and other times they can be places that seem only to be frequented by people who are having a hard time and need to vent their difficulties.

Our adoption advisers often recommend that people read the book [No Matter What](#) by Sally Donovan, as an example of an adoption journey. And there is a very good podcast series on Radio 4 called [The Adoption](#) which explores an adoption through the eyes of the children, their social worker, their birth family and their adoptive parents. Adoption blogs also give a great idea of the joys and challenges of becoming an adoptive parent. Hannah Meadows' blog has [a great post with advice for those considering adoption](#).

If you have read our [Can I Adopt](#) page then you will hopefully have realised that there are very few absolute barriers to someone being considered as an adopter. However, it's fair to say that the adoption assessment process is very thorough and requires a lot of self-reflection about your past, your present situation and what your future might look like with adopted children. There is no such thing as the "perfect" adopter but ultimately, we will be looking for evidence of these positive qualities (\*with thanks to Families for Children, our fellow Voluntary Adoption Agency in Devon for the following wise words).



It's a good thing when you are starting to think about whether you believe you have these and then how you can show evidence of them to your social worker: -

- **Tenacity** – Many adopted children had no stability or guidance in their early lives. They will need positive boundaries in their lives which need to be reaffirmed again and again.
- **Willing to Learn** – Parenting an adopted child is different to parenting a birth child. All adopters need to undertake learning around therapeutic parenting, and the needs of the children they care for. Adopters who are willing to learn will take the best of practice and make it their own – reading, watching, training and listening.
- **Resilience** – You will need to carry emotions for your child sometimes, and need to talk the difficult talk about why your child was adopted and what may have happened to them before they came to live with you. You will need to prove to them you can cope with anything, as they need your resilience to enable them to build their own.
- **Empathetic** – Adopted children come from a range of backgrounds, and many have experienced early traumas. Empathising with this, and seeing the world through their eyes will support them to learn and grow into a positive understanding of themselves and others. Empathy towards their past and how it may shape their future will be essential.
- **Good Advocate** – Your child may well have difficulties “out there” away from home, be it socially, educationally, physically or emotionally. Your job on occasions will be to go out there and fight for what they need.
- **Flexibility** – Flexibility is one of the key attributes in being a successful adopter. Flexible during your assessment, flexible about the type of child you may consider, flexible in how you approach parenting and flexible in meeting the needs of your child.
- **Good Sense of Humour** – Although parenting a child through adoption is no laughing matter, it doesn't mean it has to be serious all of the time. The most successful adopters are those who can laugh at themselves, and find humour in difficult situations.

You can find out about our next [Information Events here](#) where you can come along and speak with adopters and social workers about what it is like to adopt and ask any questions you have about your particular situation.



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Registered charity no. 286814

Registered charity: Clifton Children's Society

## What is Adoption?

**Adoption gives a child a new family when living with their own family is not possible. It is a way of giving a child who has had a difficult start, a second chance at childhood – a legal process and permanent commitment which should be undertaken after careful examination of the head and heart.**

Adoption is a way of providing families for children, creating a new relationship that can provide the long-term security and love that children need. In adoption, we always seek to put the needs of children first.

A total of 3,440 children were adopted in 2020. You can find out more about the legal aspects on the [government website relating to adoption](#). There are very few absolute barriers to adoption but to hear the answers to some of the typical questions we are asked, view our [frequently asked questions page](#).

Besides the traditional route to adopting children who are currently in foster care, there is an emerging practice called Early Permanence (sometimes also referred to as Concurrency, or Fostering for Adoption) which [CCS has been at the forefront of promoting and developing](#). We were the first adoption agency in the country to be awarded a quality assurance mark for our work in developing Early Permanence.

We know from research that it is damaging to children if they are moved any more than is absolutely necessary around the care system from carer to carer. Permanence is needed for children to thrive. Early Permanence is a relatively new practice that aims to reduce the number of moves a child in the care system potentially makes. A young child, often a baby is placed with adopters who are also approved foster carers and when a legal decision is finally made about the child's future and adoption is the plan, then these adopters will go on to become the child's new parents.

However, if the courts decide that the child should go back to their birth family then they will return the child, happy in the knowledge that they have given them a secure start and built a positive attachment. Early Permanence takes a very child-centred person, where the adults take the risk but it has huge benefits for the children. [For more information read this book of Early Permanence stories we compiled](#).

If you choose to adopt with CCS you will be asked to explore whether Early Permanence might be a route you would consider taking, alongside the more traditional route to adoption. If, after discussion with your social worker, you decide that this route is not for you then that is absolutely fine, we just ask you at this point, to keep an open mind.



## Why Choose CCS Adoption?

**If you have decided that you want to apply to adopt you then have a choice about who you do this with. You can choose between adopting with your regional adoption agency/local authority, or with an independent voluntary adoption agency like CCS. Here at CCS, we would encourage you to explore both routes in determining what is right for you.**

Each agency will have a particular offer in terms of how they can help after adoption and a different feel and emphasis. If you want to find out which agencies might cover your postcode then visit the [YouCanAdopt](#) agency finder.

There have been several studies that compared the performance of voluntary adoption agencies (like CCS) with those of local authorities where the voluntary adoption agencies have performed very well.

- 70% of VAA users rated the quality of service as “good” or “very good” compared to only 44% of users of LA adoption services (Source: Coram, VAA Lost Customer Research Report, 2015)
- The adopter experience of VAA services is better overall (scored 8.4 out of 10 on average, compared to 6.95 in local authorities) and the gap between their rating of VAA and LA services grows as their journey progresses – post-placement services score 8.15 with VAA adopters and only 6.29 with LA adopters. (Source: Adoption UK, Adopters’ Experience of their Agency, 2015)

The process and guidelines are laid down by the government and are the same for both, although there are some differences that you should be aware of. The main distinction is that local authorities have several children in their care whom they are looking to place with adopters. The number, ages and needs of these children will vary over time. A voluntary adoption agency, like CCS, trains, assesses and approves adopters and then finds children for these adopters from across the country. At CCS we work with you to find your children whether they are near or far and have experience of working with local authorities across the country. The local authority/regional adoption agency adoption team will in the first instance look at the children in their care and then if there isn’t a suitable match, will look to other agencies. In this region, the Local Authority adoption teams from Bristol, North Somerset, Bath and North East Somerset, Gloucestershire, South Gloucestershire and Wiltshire all came together in 2019 to form one, new, separate body operating from three sites, called Adoption West which is the new Regional Adoption Agency.

- Ofsted Outstanding – CCS is the only adoption agency rated Ofsted Outstanding in the area – and has been so for the past four inspections over the last 11 years. [You can find our most recent Ofsted report here.](#)
- We offer a unique adoption support service that is free, bespoke and genuinely lifelong. It’s what our reputation is built upon.
- When you adopt with CCS you will be assessed and supported by a social worker who, once you are approved, will likely be the same person who then finds your children and takes you through all the stages of them joining your family. Our staff turnover is low and we pride ourselves on building genuinely lifelong relationships with families.

- CCS families can call on not only “their” social worker for support but also, should they need it, our [Therapeutic Services Team](#) (funded through the government’s Adoption Support Fund) which is provided by our [Centre for Adoption Support and Education](#), run by CCS. Our adoption social workers have over 250 years’ experience of working in adoption between them.
- CCS runs [The Centre for Adoption Support and Education](#) which operates from the same offices and all our families have access to its wide range of groups, workshops, courses and social events – all designed to support you and your adoptive family.
- CCS employs a large number of adopters and people whose lives have been touched by adoption. Many of us have been where you are now and we understand how it feels.
- For more about why we think you should choose us see our [Why Adopt with CCS page](#).

## Meet the “Front Door” team – Nicola, Lisa, Andy and Becky

If you call us 0117 935 0005 to talk to someone about adopting then you will be put through to a member of our advice team, all of whom are adoptive parents. They are here to help you explore if adoption might be for you. Alternatively, you can email them at [advice@ccsadoption.org](mailto:advice@ccsadoption.org)



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Registered charity no. 286814

Registered charity: Clifton Children's Society

## Who are the Children Waiting for Families?

**The children who are waiting for families have all had a difficult start in life. They have been removed from their birth families by social services because of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect. They are living in foster care until a permanent adoptive family can be found for them.**

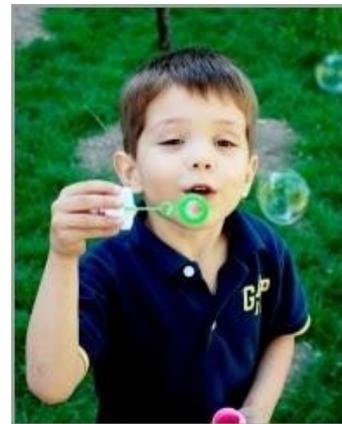
There are about 2,500 children in England who are waiting for a new, forever family. About three-quarters of these are under 4 years of age and the majority are waiting to be adopted with at least one brother or sister. Their additional needs, ethnicities and cultural backgrounds vary. Children of colour wait longest for families which is why we are particularly keen to talk with prospective adopters who are also people of colour, or who are in a position to adopt transracially. What all the children have in common is that they have had unsettled, difficult early lives and have been taken into foster care while they wait for their new family.

In 2018-19 the average age of the children that CCS found new families for was just under 3 years old. And in 2018 - 19 we found families for 47 children. Below are some example profiles of typical children. Their names and some of their details have been changed to protect their identity. If you would like to read further profiles of children then click through to our [About the Children page](#).

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### Gareth

Gareth (aged 7; ethnicity White UK) has been with his carers for almost a year, having spent 5 years in the care of his birth parents, and then a year with grandparents. He is starting to show some signs of an attachment with them. Gareth enjoys school and he takes part in a wide range of social activities, although continues to struggle to maintain friendships. He enjoys playing with his cars, Legos and dinosaurs. He also enjoys dressing up in his Spiderman and Batman outfits. Gareth is a talkative little boy who has excellent communication skills. Gareth is articulate for his age and has a charming and entertaining manner. Gareth has some understanding of his situation but will need adopters who can help him understand his birth history now and in the future. Gareth has disclosed sexual and physical abuse from his step-father and wasn't protected by his mother. Gareth has been prescribed an asthma pump but has hardly used this since he has been with this foster carer.



Direct Contact: yearly with birth mother.



## Leroy and Atilla

Ethnicity: Birth Mother White English. Birth Father White English/Black Caribbean

Leroy and Atilla (aged 4 and 5) are brothers who are active and enjoy stimulating toys and games. Both boys need to wear glasses. Difficult early life experiences have had an emotional impact on both boys and they need to be placed together in a stable, secure and affectionate adoptive family. The boys and their younger brother have lived together with the same foster family since becoming “looked after”. Their younger brother has special needs and we are seeking a separate adoptive family for him.



Leroy is an inquisitive boy who seeks attention and reassurance and thrives on being loved. He enjoys playing outdoors especially at the local park. He also has a passion for drawing and colouring. He has settled within his foster care family and responded well to the structure of routines. In his foster home, Leroy has shown affection and closeness towards his foster siblings and carers. It is expected that he will make significant attachments to his new family but needs support to recognise that affection shared is not affection diluted. He missed out on early education but since being with his carers he has started reception class and is enjoying learning and socialising with peers.

Atilla is an outgoing little boy with a cheeky smile. He loves to give affection and receive it. He needs help to recognise that he is significant and does not need to resort to attention-seeking behaviour to be loved and receive attention. He enjoys playing with Leroy and being in the garden. He has started nursery school which he enjoys. Because his attention-seeking behaviour can affect his ability to concentrate, he has some learning needs and will receive support in the future when he attends school, to help him reach his potential.

Contact: twice-yearly letterbox contact is envisaged with their birth parents, as well as twice-yearly contact with their brother. Leroy and Atilla’s adoptive parents may need to reflect the children’s ethnic, cultural and religious background if appropriate.



## Katie

Ethnicity: White British

Katie (aged 8 months) is a happy baby who usually wakes up smiling. She has lived with her current carers since she was 5 months old. The local authority is looking for Early Permanence carers ([more information on Early Permanence](#)) who will care for Katie whilst the court case finishes. Katie's 2 older siblings were previously moved and placed for adoption. Katie has poor muscle tone which means she has to be handled as if a new baby. Katie has been identified as a child with special needs; the extent of these needs is not yet clear due to her age. Tests have proved inconclusive, but it is thought Katie will have special educational needs and may need continuing care. She is having physiotherapy to help her develop the right muscles to develop her mobility. Katie is just starting to explore food for fun.



Katie's carer describes her as being a delightful little girl and says her smile makes everything worthwhile. Katie is aware when her carer leaves the room and is responsive when she returns. Katie is aware of new environments and can be unsettled by change, taking time to settle down.

Katie likes having close contact with people and being cuddled. She thrives on attention, enjoys watching people, and loves company and other children. Katie likes having baths, she needs great care at bath time as she appears to have no muscle control and can have spasms in the bath. However, Katie now has special equipment which gives her support and helps her feel secure.

Contact: Letterbox contact is envisaged with her birth parents.



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## Adoption Stories

### Susan and Matt Adopt Three Sisters

Some four years ago Susan and I sat in our car just outside a hospital and cried. We had just met, for the last time, with our consultant who had confirmed the news to us that our chances of conceiving were slim at very best. The reality of this for Susan was immediate, the pain very obvious. In true bloke fashion I postponed, or, probably more rightly, denied the pain. I recall vividly my mind turning to what next? A life of tropical beach holidays, luxurious weekend city breaks, low handicap golf, fast cars and champagne?! For those who want to be a family the truth is none of these things – lovely as they are – hit the mark.

Whatever your philosophical or religious persuasion there is something profound in being family. It seems to me that there is no greater happiness, no bigger challenge and no greater sadness than having the responsibility for a child's life. I know that because eighteen months ago Susan and I adopted three little girls. It thrills me to witness their progress. To see something of their childhood restored. And more than this, that with them we are family. We would not want it any other way. Being a parent is a challenge; being an adoptive parent is asking you to take a child and love them as your challenges and all. It's a big ask.

Occasionally Susan and I will sit and try to imagine our lives without the girls. We think this is a healthy exercise to do from time to time. It helps to put in context those thoughts that I'm sure most adoptive parents have most days that go back to when life was easy, restaurant eating was enjoyed and summer holidays were about uninterrupted reading time! It isn't long though before our conversation turns to how life would be downright weird without the girls. They complete us.

And now for a few words...

A word on the thrills, of which there are many. Nothing beats seeing the girls develop and grow, seeing them play with happy abandon, hearing them laugh and sing, watching them dance, watching them explore and learn. Teaching them how to ride scooters and bikes, build sandcastles, paddle in the sea. Watching their personalities flourish, their confidence grows, boundaries being pushed. Witnessing them take on your traits, like drinking the milk out of their cereal bowl! It is a thrill.

A word on the grind. I don't want to paint an inaccurate picture of domestic bliss. Being a parent is an unrelenting task. The days become rhythmic blurs of getting the girls up, breakfasting, teeth cleaning, wiping bottoms and streaming noses, dressing, school runs, pickups, clothes washing, ironing, dinner making, bath time, bedtime, flake out, glass of wine, 10 O'clock news, our bedtime. All this is interwoven with seemingly infinite questions and requests! This is parenting. Remorseless!



The adoptive parent also has to work through, patiently, the various issues that come with your children: The damage that has been done to them, their insecurities, some of their behaviours. I knew as a child that bad behaviour (fighting and lying) would be punished. I also knew that being punished didn't alter how much my Mum and Dad loved me. Susan and I grew up in a secure place – emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Adoptive children's behaviours are born out of abuse, anxiety and insecurity, out of not knowing what will happen to them next. So, it's no good getting cross when pants are wet for the 3rd time in a day. It won't be an accident; learning to find a language that is age-appropriate and gets to the root of the issue with our children is something I've not found easy. It can be frustrating. Working out what behaviour is born out of insecurity and what is 'children being children' is mentally hard work.

A word on our relationship. We've been married for six years. The biggest challenge to our relationship is time. Between work and looking after the girls, time together gets marginalized. Not only does it get marginalized the quality of that time gets compressed. Very often the best we can do is sit next to each other and watch a film. No talking. Once a week, on a Monday evening, we try and sit together and talk. We do talk about the girls, but we try and talk about each other and what's on our hearts and minds. In short, we try to catch up. We don't always manage to do this, but we try. Eighteen months after having the girls we are also trying to go out on our own once in a while. It's a novel experience dating!

A word on our support network. I have no idea of how we would have coped without our friends, family and understanding bosses. As a family, we have been much loved. Not only do the girls have their adoptive grandparents they have several surrogate ones too; people who consistently give the girls their time so that we can have a break.

A word on CCS. Their pre and post-adoption support have been nothing short of tremendous. Not once have we felt on our own throughout the process. Not once have we ever felt like a number or 'just another couple looking to adopt'. The pre-adoption assessment work was done robustly but sensitively. The bizarre and difficult task of 'matching' was similarly completed sensitively. Post-adoption our social worker has just been there: to listen, to allow us to download/offload, to give helpful suggestions where it has been needed. I commend them to you.

Adoption has brought me to this place: I now watch DIY SOS Big Build and Alan Titchmarsh's 'Love your Garden' and weep! A bit of love, a lot of effort and a load of patience change lives – ours as much as our girls! Adopt and weep! We have no regrets.



## Craig and David adopt two brothers

### What brought you to adoption and can you remember when you decided to adopt?

We always thought that we'd like to have kids at some point in the future, but it wasn't until a few years after we had our civil partnership that we considered options. That would have been around 2013. As a gay male couple, our starting point was either surrogacy or adoption. We went to an event in London on surrogacy, and we left feeling like it wasn't right for us – it felt too complicated and expensive, particularly when there are lots of children out there in need of a good home. So, we decided to start looking into adoption.

### Why did you choose CCS Adoption?

We attended an LGBT event in Bristol – in early 2016 I think – and got chatting to a social worker there. She seemed nice and was from CCS. We also liked the look of the website and the materials they produced. My husband called a few other agencies and local authorities – we just didn't get as good a feeling from them. It all felt like a huge leap into the dark – but we felt a bit more comfortable doing that with CCS!

### How did you find the assessment process and training?

I found it really tough to, effectively, give up my privacy during the assessment – and some of the training sessions covered very challenging topics. We took a break between stages 1 and 2 to gather our thoughts, and make sure we were definitely up for it – and we went on a lovely holiday after we were approved.

Despite how tough it was at points, ultimately it made us feel much more ready for kids – and stronger as a couple. I've had quite a few friends with kids say they wish they'd gone through something similar to prepare them for the impact of parenthood! We also made some great friends who we met during training.

### Can you remember hearing about and then meeting your children for the first time?

Our elder son's profile came across our social worker's desk, and she mentioned him to us – he was a very cute baby, and we both felt he looked a little bit like my husband and my brother's little boys. So, there was an immediate connection - it wasn't 'love at first sight' (if such a thing exists) – it was more like 'hope at first sight'.

I'd count the 'blind viewing' of him ahead of the matching panel to be the first time we met him, as he was only about a year old. We were incredibly nervous in the moments leading up to seeing him – like we were connected to a live wire. A little shoe being thrown out of a car door was the first glimpse. He was and is a wild, joyous little boy.

Our younger son was born a few days after his brother was placed with us. We immediately felt connected to him through his big brother. We first met him when he was about six months old – ahead of the matching panel again. He squawked and smiled and we went away hopeful he'd be a more chilled-out version of his brother. The jury's still out on that.



### What were the early days like?

It's a huge change to almost everything you do – particularly if you're giving up work. Your identity is changing. You probably sleep less. You're learning lots of new things. You're building a bond with a little human. I found it pretty overwhelming at first – not in a bad or good way – just very full-on and tiring. And in the middle of that you'll have moments of sheer delight and enormous irritation – and maybe flashes of 'oh god, was this a mistake' and 'I'm the luckiest person in the world'. We talked to people about how we were feeling (particularly to each other), but basically, we found that if we just got on with the day-to-day jobs of childcare, it all slowly settles down and becomes the new normal.

### Can you tell us a bit about your children?

The older one is a very energetic, inquisitive and cheeky little chap. He's got a great sense of humour and loves to dance. He can also be very sweet – he's even started being nice to his little brother (sometimes).

The little one is very easygoing – loves to smile and laugh. The only time he gets really grumpy is when he's tired or it's a mealtime – he takes his food very seriously. If you're too slow at feeding, he'll let you know.

### Has there been anything that surprised you?

Oddly, we didn't expect how much of a physical impact it would have on us at the start particularly – not just how tired we'd be (that was stressed) – but how much we'd ache from carrying heavy little ones around so much!

### Do your children have contact with their birth family and what impact does it have on them?

Just letterbox – we've not received anything from them yet, and they're too young to understand at the moment. (Though we try to talk about tummy mummy and daddy now and again anyway, just to get into the habit.)

### What have been the best and hardest bits of adoption for you?

Building a family – and seeing our children develop – that's been really amazing. I found the assessment process very hard – but, ultimately, rewarding. Making a decision at the family finding stage felt hard too – though our eldest was one of the earlier profiles we looked at.

### What has been your friends and families involvement in your adoption journey?

They've been really involved throughout. They supported us throughout the assessment – and they're huge support now we've got children. Help from others is so important – particularly when something unexpected happens. Two weeks before introductions for our youngest, I sprained my ankle and was on crutches – trying to look after a lively toddler. Help from my family and friends was invaluable then!



### What advice would you give to anyone thinking about adopting?

Speaking personally, I found it very hard to know if it would be right for me – I find it hard to make big decisions like this, where you don't get to do a practice run beforehand. But we always felt that we'd really regret not doing it. So even when the process was difficult, we felt it was right for us to continue – so we persevered.

So, if you think adoption could be for you (even if you're not totally sure), I'd encourage you to find out more. Don't worry if you find the assessment and training tough – it's meant to be. It does provide helpful preparation, and you'll make friends (who you can have playdates with, potentially!).

Also, I'd say, for what it's worth – you shouldn't worry that you might have a lesser connection with your child because you're an adoptive parent. I feel that society and culture sometimes suggest that's the case. Being an adoptive parent doesn't feel any different from a more traditional kind of parenthood (so far as I can tell) – if you care for them every day you build a bond with them. Through your care and thought, and their need for it, you build love.

## Mark and Joan Adopt Three Times

Thirteen years ago, we decided to pursue adoption as a means of fulfilling our desire to become parents. It would be fair to say that our lives have now changed beyond all recognition. We are now a family – our house is noisy, busy, happy, our children special – precious. It is, without doubt, the best and most fulfilling decision we have ever made – to date we have adopted 3 children.

That's not to say it's all been plain sailing, we've had to work extremely hard to do things we doubted we were capable of and we are no means perfect parents but we are the perfect parents for our children.

Which agency you use is very much a personal decision. CCS Adoption felt right for us – they were professional, friendly, enthusiastic and extremely efficient. We have been fortunate enough to work with the same social worker each time we have adopted. We have also gained childcare experience and attended study days run by CCS where topics covered included attachment, loss, identity and so much more. We learnt so much about ourselves and each other during the assessment stage – who would have known my husband likes roller coasters! Our assessment (PAR) has needed updating each time we have adopted.

Once approved the search for 'our' child was on – and believe you me you just know when it's meant to be – this 'feeling' has been spot on 3 times now – fortunately for us everyone else agreed.

When we met Joseph 12 years ago he was 2 1/4 with a background of neglect and developmental delay. I can remember the nerves and excitement about meeting him – we knew he liked large bald men so my husband was a huge hit. I had to work much harder to gain this little boy's trust, but with consistency and patience, we got there. For practical reasons we decided on a bit of role reversal, I was to go to work and my husband was to be a househusband. Over time it became obvious that his developmental delay was more than that – we needed help, a referral to a paediatrician who after assessment diagnosed ADHD later followed by autism. We hadn't signed up for this but perhaps this has made us who we are today. We had to be proactive advocates for our son getting statemented, finding the right school and getting support from other professionals. CCS were right there for us – providing advice, being a sounding board and on a more practical level writing letters of support. Today at nearly 14 he is happy, a computer whizz, doing well at school and towering way above me!

Four years later the time was right for a little addition to our family and we consciously made the decision to adopt a child with special needs, this little boy was Alfie, 16 months old and born with a physical disability. This time, during introductions, I was so lucky to experience such a special moment when he crawled into my lap cuddled in and fell asleep.

Our joy at bringing him home was marred by an unexpected medical development. With the level of care, he needed I was very aware that my returning to work after adoption leave was not in anyone's interests so after 20 years in my profession I resigned! Probably now one of my best ideas as I'm the stay at home mum I always wanted to be – I'm even on the PTA!

Not surprisingly, help for Alfie was more readily available as his disability was so visible, CCS were consistent as ever, always there, and the placing authorities have also been very supportive both financially and practically and 6 years post-adoption they remain so.

Alfie is the most amazing little superhero, feisty and determined – he loves life.

...but we weren't finished yet! In 2012 a beautiful little girl joined us all, Grace 22 months at placement, from a lovely foster family where she was adored. Again, we wanted a child with special needs, she has developmental delay and sensory issues. She is perfect, settled brilliantly and doing well, she's added a splash of pink and is definitely a princess.

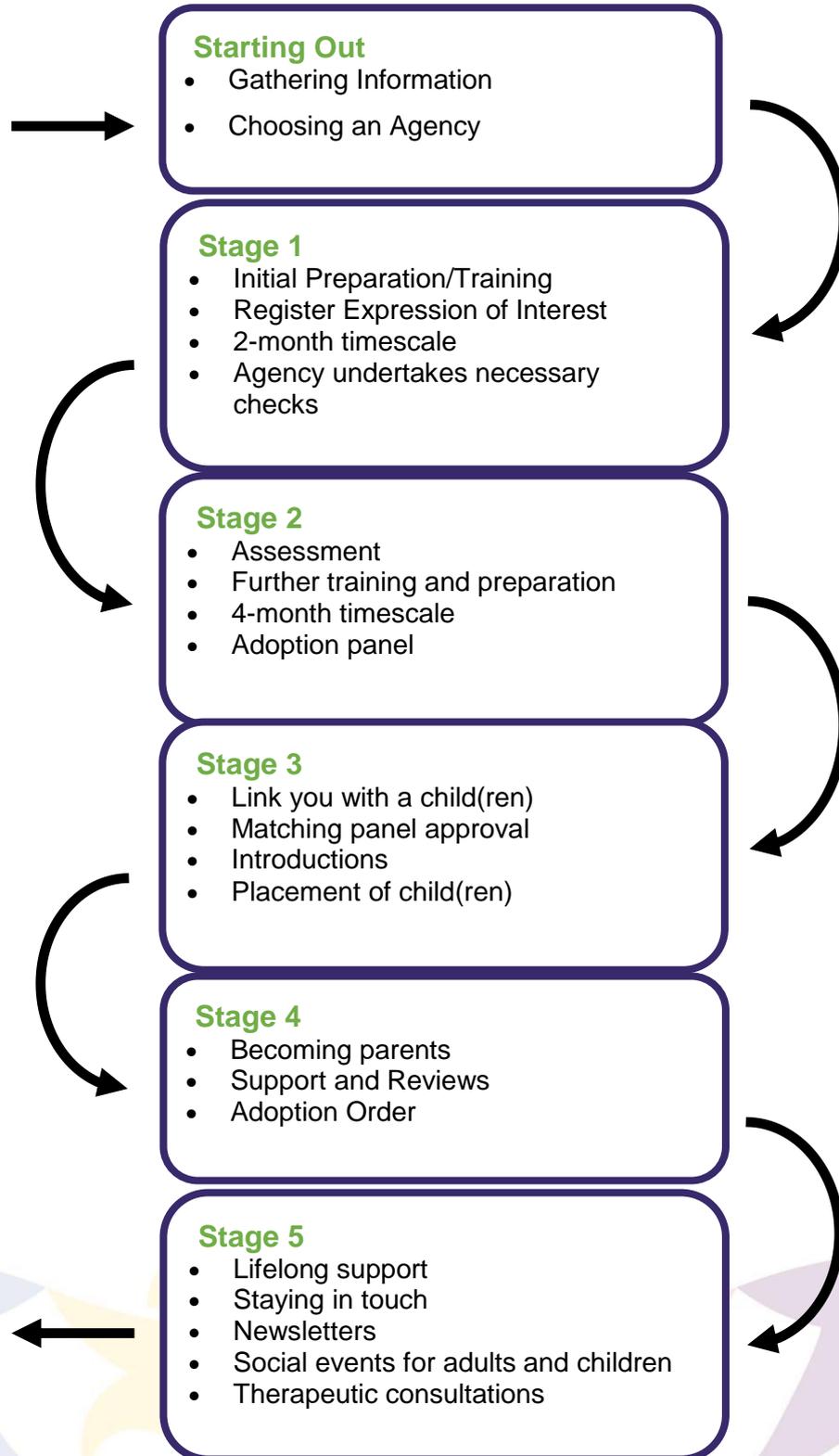
We have been fortunate that with each adoption our children have coped amazingly well. We were honest and open about each adoption, realistic with time scales and had them help with preparing for a new sibling. We are extremely proud of our children and their relationships with each other.

I wanted to mention introduction week, a very emotional and tiring week but so awesome (as my 3 would say). We'll never forget the moment we met each of the children. They too had been prepared by their foster parents and seen pics, books and videos prepared by us so when they saw us there was definite recognition. The bond you share grows throughout the week and by the end, you feel 100% their parents. We were lucky to have the support of my mum during intros to help with the boys which they enjoyed and was a fantastic help for us.

Over the last 13 years as members of the CCS family, we have felt supported and our abilities as parents valued...are we finished yet?... Watch this space!



## Understanding the Adoption Process



## Post Adoption Support

Once a child's Adoption is finalised, the parents have a choice to request help and support as and when they need it. This could be anything from needing a listening ear after a difficult time, to help with choosing schools, or finding therapy for a child. We would hope that, having built a relationship with us, you would trust us and value our experience to ask for this support as you needed it.

CCS also runs [The Centre for Adoption Support and Education](#) where you can find a wide range of [groups, workshops and social events](#) that are all designed to connect and support adoptive families. Our [Therapeutic Service](#) at The Centre works in partnership with local authorities and the [Adoption Support Fund](#) to provide a range of therapies for adoptive families as and when they are needed.

At CCS our social workers stay with a family from assessment through family finding and introductions to after adoption wherever possible. We are certainly always here for you and your adopted child from the early years to much later on in life, since we recognise that the impact of adoption can be lifelong.

## Next Steps?

We hold regular [Information Events](#) at our office in Bristol and online, at which you have the opportunity to hear and speak with adopters and social workers about what it might be like to adopt. You can book yourself into one of these by following the booking process online.

Alternatively, you can always call us on 0117 935 0005 and speak to one of our adoption advisers, who are also adoptive parents, about any aspect of adoption, or your situation as a prospective adopter.

If you want to continue with your enquiry now please complete the attached Initial Information Form and return it to us at CCS Adoption, 162 Pennywell Road, Bristol, BS5 0TX or email it to [advice@ccsadoption.org](mailto:advice@ccsadoption.org). We will then arrange for an Adoption Adviser to be in touch.

**Adoption can seem daunting and it is certainly one of the most important decisions you will make in your lifetime. That's why we take seriously our responsibility to ensure that you are as well prepared and supported as possible.**

**We hope to offer you every opportunity to think, reflect, learn and share, both with other applicants and with experienced adopters so you can make the best decisions for you and your family.**

## Some Useful Reading about Adoption

'No Matter What' by Sally Donovan is written by the author about her own experience adopting two young children and highlights, challenges and joys of adoptive family life.

'Big Steps for Little People' by Celia Foster. Parenting your adopted child.

'Proud Parents' by Nicola Hill. Lesbian and gay fostering and adoption experiences.

'Looking after our own' tells the stories of black and Asian adopters, edited by Hope Massiah. Explores their motivation to adopt, what their social workers had to offer, the roles of their friends and family and what adoption has meant to them.

'Adopting a brother or sister' by Heidi Argent, a guide for young children. Helpful for families who have a birth child or children.

'Therapeutic Parenting in a Nutshell' by Sarah Naish of the National Association of Therapeutic Parents.

'A Child's Journey Through Placement' by Vera Fahlberg.

'First Steps in Parenting the Child who Hurts: Tiddlers and Toddlers' by Caroline Archer.

Other well-respected authors of adoption books include Dan Hughes, Dan Siegel, Bruce Perry, Kim Golding, Margot Sutherland, Karyn Purvis, Heather Forbes and Brian Post.

## Give Us Your Feedback

**CCS welcomes feedback so please get in touch if you have any comments or complaints on 0117 935 0005 or email [info@ccsadoption.org](mailto:info@ccsadoption.org). For further information about CCS Adoption Complaints Procedure please contact: Maggie Pitts, CEO, CCS Adoption, 162 Pennywell Road, Bristol, BS5 0TX.**

\*This Information Pack is available on our website [www.ccsadoption.org](http://www.ccsadoption.org) to download. When read digitally you can link through to other places via all the text underlined. You can read our [Privacy Policy - Families here](#).

