

# Information about Non-agency Adoption

## What are Non Agency Adoptions?

Non agency adoptions usually involve children who are **not** in the care of a local authority and include:

- Step parent adoption.
- Adoption by relatives.
- Inter country or overseas adoption.
- Adoption by a long term foster carer.

Where a child has been living for an extended period or with an adult who does not have parental responsibility for him/her but who has taken on responsibility for the day to day care and upbringing of the child, the child's carer may be able to apply directly to the Court for an Adoption Order. Where this is the case this will also be a non-agency adoption even if the child is in the care of a local authority.

## Step-Parent Adoption

If you are the partner of a birth parent and you have a well-established relationship with his/her child you can apply to adopt your partner's child and legally gain parental responsibility for him/her. You will need to be able to demonstrate that you have an enduring relationship with your partner (the child's birth parent) and the views of the child's other parent will in most cases be sought and considered by the Court.

In order to progress a step-parent adoption the birth parent of the child must be at least 18 years of age and the step-parent 21 years or older. The child must be at least 18 weeks old and will need to be aged under 18 years at the point that the order is granted.

A full assessment of the circumstances of the child, the birth parent(s) and the step-parent will be undertaken by the Local Authority on behalf of the Court. If the child is old enough to understand the concept of adoption and to have a view about the application his/her views will be listened to and taken into account by the Court.

## Adoption by a Relative

If you are bringing up, or proposing to bring up, a child who is a member of your wider family, e.g. a grandchild or nephew or niece, you may be able to apply to adopt the child and legally gain parental responsibility for him/her. You will need to be able to demonstrate that you have an established relationship with the child and the views of both of the child's birth parents will in most cases be sought and considered by the Court.

In order to progress a relative adoption the applicant(s) must be at least 21 years old. The child must be at least 19 weeks old and will need to be aged under 18 years at the point that the Adoption Order is granted.

A full assessment of the circumstances of the child, the birth parent(s) and the relative who is applying to adopt the child will be undertaken by the Local Authority on behalf of the Court. If the child is old enough to understand the concept of adoption and to have a view about the application his/her views will be listened to and taken into account by the Court.

## **Adoption by a Non-related Adult**

If you are already bringing up a child who is not related to you but for whom you fulfil the role of a parent you may be able to apply to adopt the child and legally gain parental responsibility for him/her. You will need to be able to demonstrate that you have an established relationship with the child and the views of both of the child's birth parents will in most cases be sought and considered by the Court.

In order to progress a non-agency adoption of an unrelated child the applicant(s) must be at least 21 years old and the child must have lived in his/her/their care for a minimum of 12 months. The child will need to be aged under 18 years at the point that the Adoption Order is granted.

A full Assessment of the circumstances of the child, the birth parent(s) and the relative who is applying to adopt the child will be undertaken by the Local Authority on behalf of the Court. If the child is old enough to understand the concept of adoption and to have a view about the application his/her views will be listened to and taken into account by the Court.

## **Inter-Country (Overseas) Adoption**

Anyone resident in the UK who is wishing to adopt a child from overseas (even if a relative) must first be approved as being suitable to adopt by a registered Adoption Agency within the UK.

Wokingham Borough Council has a formal agreement with [Parents and Children Together \(PACT\)](#), a Voluntary Adoption Agency based in Reading, which provides counselling and information for Wokingham residents who are considering adopting from abroad.

PACT also undertakes the preparation and assessment of prospective applicants who decide to pursue a formal inter-country adoption application and on completion applicants are considered by the PACT Adoption Agency Panel.

PACT charges applicants for this service.