Adoption Service

Glasgow CITY COUNCIL

families for children
glasgow cares for their future... could you?

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Vision

To improve outcomes for vulnerable children in Glasgow by delivering and maintaining a high quality and effective fostering and adoption service

Adoption Service

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Introduction

Glasgow City Council welcomes your enquiry about becoming an adoptive parent. Adoption is a life changing process so we would encourage you to consider carefully all the information we have included in this pack. This will help you to decide whether or not you would like to take the next step. Glasgow's experienced staff team will be happy to offer any information, help and support to take your enquiry further.

What is adoption?

Adoption is a service for children who cannot live with their birth families. The legal process releases them from local authority care, and enables them to become a full, permanent member of another family for life.

Who are we?

Glasgow City Council is the largest authority in Scotland with the highest number of children who require adoptive families. Glasgow has invested in its adoption service and we have experienced staff who will guide you through the adoption process.

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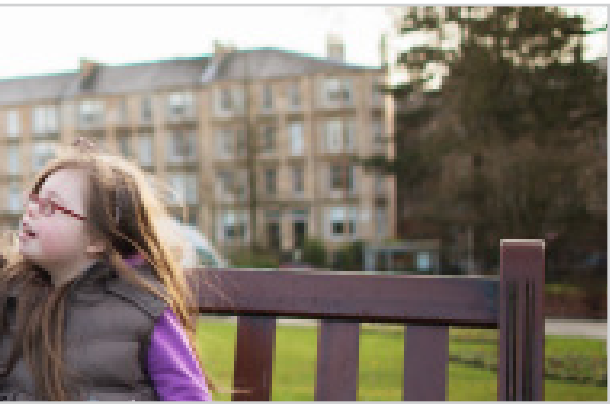

Testimonial

It's hard picking up the phone to find out more about adoption but what made the difference was agreeing to take one step at a time in the early stages.

It's hard being 'the real you' in the early stages of the process, but the more we thought about the importance of a life-long commitment to adoptive children, the more we realised the value of authenticity.

It's hard waiting to be matched and knowing that it's something which can't be controlled but it really helped that we had such a positive and realistic relationship with the social worker.

When we got the news that we had been matched and saw the first photograph, we cried with joy and talked for hours and hours. We felt a huge sense of gratitude although it was hard to make sense of it all.

Hand on hearts our honest view of adoption is that it is the most challenging and most wonderful thing we could ever have imagined...

an adoptive parent in Glasgow

Adoption

We are looking for adoptive parents who feel able to support children through the challenges as well as the rewards of adoption. There is a particular need for us to recruit adoptive parents who can care for brothers and sisters in order to keep them together in a new family.

We need adoptive parents from a variety of backgrounds who can make a lifelong commitment to Glasgow's children. You don't need to own your own home or be married to adopt.

Prospective adoptive parents must have the ability to offer a stable, loving home to a child who, for whatever reason, is unable to remain with their own family.

Adoption is different from parenting a child of your own. This means having a secure sense of identity – which is the understanding all of us need about who we are and where we came from. For the adopted person, the sense of identity depends upon them knowing, from the earliest possible stage, when they were adopted. Their birth family will, in one sense or another, always be part of their lives, and they have both a need and a right to grow up knowing about them. They also need to know that if they want to search for their birth family at some point, they will have the goodwill and support of their adoptive family.

Many people think of adoption as healthy infants being placed voluntarily by their birth mothers for no other reason than that they are not in a position to look after them. Adoption has changed. The children being placed for adoption these days are older, and they may have developmental complications as a result of the lifestyle and health histories of their birth parents. The most common factors are drug and alcohol abuse and mental illness. Some children will be known to have additional learning needs and will require continuing support from education, health and Social Work Services.

In many cases the birth parents may be actively opposed to adoption, which may mean that the process will be long and complicated. During this time the child may have contact with their parents at least until the point when they are adopted. There maybe indirect and some level of direct contact between the child and his/her birth family members after the adoption order is granted.

People come to adoption for a variety of reasons but for the majority it is because fertility has been an issue and perhaps they have had many

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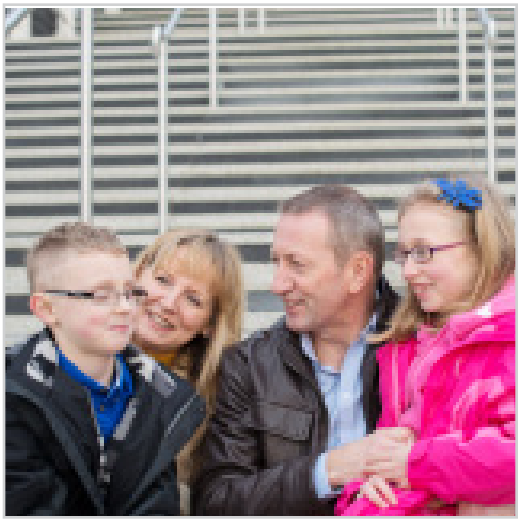

emotionally painful years trying to have children of their own. Adoption may seem the obvious next step, but it is important that people take time to come to terms with their infertility. People often find that this process is very like dealing with bereavement and may feel varying degrees of grief, loss, guilt and anger. Some find it helpful to seek counselling at this stage.

It is only when people have come to terms with their infertility that they may be emotionally ready to think about adoption. They then need to think about whether adoption feels right for them as individuals and – if they have a partner – as a couple.

Also, will their extended family be able to accept an adopted child? Adoption demands complete commitment.

Adoption is not right for everyone, and there are some who feel that they could not parent a child who has not been born to them.

Criteria for applicants

Age

Prospective applicants must be over 21 at the time of application. Single prospective adopters, or the younger member of a couple who wish to adopt children aged 0-4, must be under 45 when an application is made.

While there is no strict age criteria for older children and some sibling groups, care will be taken with the matching in terms of adopters' age as well as health and lifestyle.

Status

Glasgow welcomes applications from single people, and from couples who are married or in a stable relationship, with someone of the same or opposite sex. Guidance is that partners must have been living together for at least two years. We welcome enquiries from families who have children of their own.

Ethnic origin, language and religion

Applications will be accepted from all sections of the community.

Health and Lifestyle

- We are unable to accept applicants who are undergoing infertility treatment or on a waiting list for treatment.
- Applicants will be asked to have full medicals, where issues such as weight, smoking and mental health will be considered (see appendix on health and lifestyle).
- Applicants who smoke will be asked to delay their application until they are able to evidence that they have stopped smoking.

Room Space

Applicants must have sufficient room for the child/children whom they plan to adopt.

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Local Authority, Health and Police checks

All applicants will be subject to Local Authority, health, employment and Disclosure Scotland checks.

References

Applicants will require to provide the names and addresses of referees who are known to the applicants. For a couple, these should be people who have known both applicants during their relationship and who can testify to the relationship, character and behaviour of the applicants.

The Service also requires employers' references for each applicant.

Health and Lifestyle

Health and lifestyle issues for prospective applicants

Caring for children is demanding, both physically and mentally. The majority of our children have had a difficult start to life and will have experienced separation from their birth family.

Glasgow Adoption Service is looking for people who are able to care for and support our children throughout their lives.

Prospective adopters therefore need to be fit and healthy, both physically and mentally.

The health and lifestyle of applicants wishing to adopt is considered carefully when an enquiry is made.

Enquirers will be asked to complete an initial health declaration after attending an information meeting. This asks for detailed information about health and lifestyle and it is important that enquirers alert us to any health issues at the earliest opportunity.

Those who wish to continue with the process should complete the forms and return them. If there are any health issues, the forms will be passed to our Medical Adviser, who will advise whether further enquiries need to be made.

If the Medical Adviser finds it necessary to seek further information from your GP or Consultant you will be asked to complete a mandate to give your permission. You may be asked to undertake a full medical at this stage of the process.

Where there are no particular health or lifestyle issues, enquirers will be invited to continue with the process and will be asked to undertake a full medical once the assessment process has started.

The most frequently occurring issues concern weight, use of anti depressant medication and smoking.

Weight

Obesity is an increasing problem in the UK population, and it has serious implications for health. In adults it is associated with higher mortality and increased risk of cardiovascular disease and other associated health complications. The relationship between a person's height and weight is described as The Body Mass Index (BMI). A BMI between 20-25 is regarded

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as healthy whereas a BMI of 26 -29 is overweight and is associated with increased risks to health. Clinical and morbid obesity (BMI over 30) are associated with even greater risks.

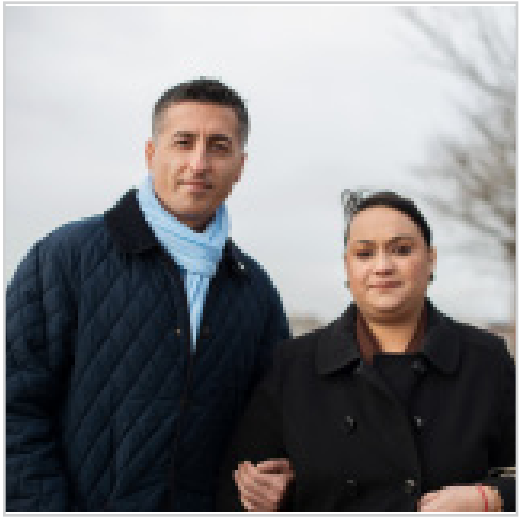
Some women may have infertility problems as a result of polycystic ovary syndrome, and some, but not all, will have coexisting weight problems. These women may find it more difficult than others to achieve significant weight loss, but should seek support from their GP and possible referral to specialist clinics.

Weight loss must be sustained, however, by repeated lifestyle modification as repeated weight loss and regaining of weight is possibly even more harmful to health in the longer term.

Being overweight will not in itself preclude you from applying to adopt with Glasgow City Council. Enquirers should note, however, that a BMI within the morbid obesity range may preclude adoption. The primary considerations would be about the implications of excess weight for health and life expectancy. Furthermore, where obesity is associated with an unhealthy lifestyle there would be concerns about the impact of this on any children who might be placed in a family. We are looking for adopters to model and promote healthy lifestyles for the children in their care.

We recommend that anyone interested in adoption, and who is aware that they may be in the obesity range, should make it their priority to seek advice about reducing weight. They should contact their GP practice with a view to getting an assessment of their weight problem and help with a weight reduction programme.

Losing weight is – and should be – a slow process, but it is worth bearing in mind that even a small loss of 10% of body weight substantially reduces the risks to health.



Smoking

Glasgow City Council is looking to place children within non-smoking households. If prospective adopters are smoking at the time of making their enquiry, there will be discussion about what attempts are being made to stop.

If an enquirer is smoking they will be asked to delay their enquiry for a period of time until they are able to evidence that they have stopped smoking.

No child will be placed with any one who is deemed a smoker. Enquirers need to be aware that no one will be considered a non smoker until they have stopped smoking for a minimum of one year.

Prospective applicants who smoke even a small amount should consult their GP or Practice Nurse for advice about giving up. There are a number of anti-smoking measures available, and supports for people going through the process.

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Depression/Mental Health problems

It is an inevitable part of life that at some point there will be an event which is experienced as stressful and may lead to a period of depression.

Bereavement, illness and relationship problems are common triggers. The experience of infertility can be an extremely stressful experience, and can be likened to the sense of grief and loss.

For some people medical intervention may be necessary and their GP may have prescribed medication.

Being on anti-depressant medication for a period will not in itself preclude enquirers from adopting, but we would wish to have a discussion with you about the circumstances which led to the use of medication and again our Medical Adviser may wish to speak further with your GP or Consultants. This may also be reason for requesting an early medical.

The adoption process and adopting children can be stressful. If applicants have a history of repeated or prolonged periods of mental health issues they should consider how the stress of the adoption process, and indeed dealing with the challenges which our children can present, may impact on them.

Testimonial

As a young married couple, both aged 31 years old, we applied to our local authority with a view to becoming prospective adopters. Following an information evening, preparation groups and assessment we were approved as adopters, and six months after approval we were matched with a wonderful little girl, whom we are now privileged to call our daughter.

From the very first phone call, we found everyone to be helpful and welcoming. We were provided with plenty of information, often challenging, about the realities of adoption. Our allocated Social Worker was very professional and we felt her dedication to us from the beginning. This positive relationship was crucial to what we believe to be a perfect match with our daughter.

Overall, we feel that Glasgow City Council provided us with a wonderful service. We always felt informed and involved. I should add that we were very anxious about adoption before we started, not being sure what to expect. Although the process can seem lengthy at times, we look back and are glad for that preparation time. We are grateful daily that we made that initial enquiry.
Our amazing, chatty, bubbly little toddler is about to turn two shortly, as she was fairly young at the time of placement. She is very well attached to us and our extended families. She loves the company of other children and is loved by all who meet her. We are keen to extend our family and repeat the process in the new year.

an adoptive couple

Adoption and the Law

Adoption is the legal process by which a child becomes a full and permanent member of a new family. All parental rights and responsibilities are transferred to the adoptive family by means of an adoption order which, except in some extremely rare circumstances, cannot be revoked. The child usually takes the family name, although this is not a legal requirement.

The legal process

The placement of children for adoption can normally only be carried out by approved adoption agencies such as the local authority. Once the child has been placed, the prospective adopters must petition the court for an adoption order. The child must have lived with the petitioners for a minimum of thirteen weeks before an order can be granted.

The birth parents, including an unmarried birth father if he has parental responsibilities and rights, must be asked whether or not they agree to the adoption. If agreement is not given, the court must decide whether there are grounds to dispense with their agreement. The court will hold a hearing for this purpose, and the birth parents will have the opportunity to contest the adoption petition. Contested cases can be very lengthy and expensive, but if the child has been placed by Social Work Services in the belief that adoption is in the best interests of the child and that there are grounds to dispense with the agreement of the birth parents, Social Work will give an undertaking in most circumstances to meet reasonable legal costs.

Children placed against the wishes of their birth parents

These children, who make up the majority of children being placed for adoption, will usually have become looked after and accommodated because it was unsafe to leave them at home. The most common reasons for this are drug and alcohol abuse by birth parents. Some birth parents may have mental illnesses or learning disabilities, which make them unable to care for their children. Many have suffered neglect and some will have been physically or sexually abused. All of these are grounds for children to be made subject to compulsory measures of care (a Supervision Order), under Section 70 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

The Children's Panel make most of the important decisions for children who are subject to Supervision Orders, including where they shall live.

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When Social Work Services have matched a child with an adoptive family, a Children's Hearing must be held to decide whether the child may be moved into the family. There may be further Children's Hearings before the child is adopted, but it is usual for the Supervision Order to be terminated when the adoption order is granted.

Birth parents have the right to attend Children's Hearings, and also to know where and with whom their child is living. Names and addresses may be withheld under certain circumstances, but adopters of children who are on a Supervision Order, need to accept that it is likely that their identity will be known to the birth parents.

The Children's Hearing also make decisions about whether or not birth parents may have contact with their child. If the birth parents want contact to continue after adoption, they may make an application to court, and it is possible – although not usual – for a requirement to be written into an adoption order.

Children placed with the agreement of birth parents

Various social changes mean that there are now very few children placed voluntarily for adoption. Such children are likely to have become looked after and accommodated at the request of their birth parents. They may have decided for various reasons that they either cannot or do not want to look after the child themselves, but in most cases there would be no reason to doubt their ability to parent their child should they wish to do so. These children will be subject to Section 25 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, which gives the local authority very limited rights over the child.

Birth parents have the right to withdraw their agreement at any point up to the granting of an adoption order. If this happens after the child has been placed with prospective adopters, Social Work Services will normally ask them to co-operate in returning the child to the birth parent. If the adoption has been lodged in court, the Sheriff will arrange a hearing to decide whether or not the child should be returned. Social Work will not support prospective adopters who attempt to pursue adoption without parental agreement if, in their view, it is in the best interests of the child to be returned to the birth parent.

Questions and Answers

Is adoption only for childless people?

No. Traditionally most adopters came from this group but enquiries do come from a wide spectrum of people. Glasgow's priority is to recruit people who will best meet the needs of the children for whom we are trying to find families. Glasgow will accept applications from people who have children already, either by adoption or birth children. Care will be taken to consider the need of applicants' own children in the assessment and matching process.

Do adopters have to be employed and own their own homes?

No. When the Sheriff is considering whether to grant an adoption petition, he/she has to be satisfied that the petitioners can afford to bring up the child.

The important question for the Sheriff to consider is not whether or not people have a high income, but whether they are able to live within their means.

We are interested in whether the applicants have a home suitable for the needs of the child/ren.

Is there financial help available to bring up a child?

Help is available under certain circumstances, in the form of Approved Adoption Allowances. These are about the needs of the child rather that the finances of the family and are subject to annual review. The children most likely to qualify for an adoption allowance are older children, sibling groups and children who may have additional needs either now or in the future due to the difficult start in their early lives.

A Placement Grant can be available to help with the early expenses of preparing for a child to be placed.

What does adoption cost, and will there be help available?

The majority of children placed from Glasgow are placed without parental consent.

When children have been placed against the wishes of their birth parents, legal advice will have been obtained that we have the grounds to do so.

We will give an undertaking in most cases to meet reasonable legal costs.

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Why is there so much emphasis on the health and lifestyle of adopters?

It is part of our legal duty to safeguard the best interests of children in all aspects of their health and welfare. Lifestyle factors such as diet and smoking are important because unhealthy eating habits and passive smoking are potentially damaging to the health of the children.

We also have to remember that when making a decision about granting an adoption petition, the Sheriff has to be satisfied that the applicants are sufficiently fit and healthy to bring up the child. The responsibilities – as all parents are aware – do not end with childhood. Young adults also need support and this can be particularly true for adoptees, who may be more vulnerable at this stage.

Do we have to tell a child they are adopted?

Yes, and you should start when they are toddlers. It can be a devastating experience for people to find out later in life that they are not who they thought they were. If you start when they are very young, they will grow up to accept it quite naturally. It does not matter that they do not understand the words, they will become familiar with them, and their understanding will grow, as they get older.

Can we choose a name for the child we adopt?

You should keep the child's name, but it is fine to choose another name to add to it. A child's name has been given by the birth parent, and adopted people often value this. People whose names have been completely changed can be shocked and hurt when they see their original birth certificates and realise that they had a different name.

Should I be making plans about my work?

Yes. It is ideal if adopted children can have a full time parent at home, at least until they go to school.

Children born and brought up by their birth families have bonded with them from the start. Adopted children are different because they may have had a series of different carers, and other damaging experiences.

Adopters can apply for adoption and paternity leave and it is important to discuss these options before a child is placed.

Adopted children need support for longer than a birth child. If you have to return to work after the period of leave is finished we would urge you to consider that at least one parent only works part time.

What support is available to adoptive parents?

Glasgow is committed to offering support to adopted children and their parents.

As an Agency, Glasgow City Council works closely with the Scottish Adoption Advice Service (Barnardo's) and with Adoption UK to provide training and support to our adoptive families. Glasgow City Council pays for the first year's membership of Adoption UK to all approved adopters.

Do you need more information?

If you would like more information on any of the areas please do not hesitate to contact the Adoption Team at Families for Children on 0345 276 5555.

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The Process

Initial Enquiry, leading to phone conversation with a member of Families for Children team

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Attend information evening

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Complete early medical form

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Optional initial interview

↓

Attend Preparatory groups

↓

Home interview

↓

Formal Application

↓

Assessment

↓

Panel

↓

Agency decision

↓

Matching process

families for children

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