

Hello, my name is Harry. I'm adopted.
What's your name?

Like you I was told that I am going to be adopted. I thought it might be helpful if I told my story to help you learn what adoption means. You could read this with your social worker or foster carers and ask them about anything you don't understand.

Draw a picture of yourself in the frame
so people know this is your book.



My social worker told me that every baby has parents that they are born to. We call them our “birth family” and this might include a mummy, daddy, brothers and sisters, grandparents, aunties, uncles and cousins.

She said, sometimes the families that children are born into cannot look after them. Some parents find it difficult to manage to look after children properly. Some parents hurt their children in different ways and it is important that children do not get hurt. Some birth families might understand that they can't look after their child properly and agree that it would be better for their child not to live with them. Some birth families don't want their children to stop living with them even though they can't look after them properly or keep them safe.

Like you, I couldn't live with my birth family anymore. My birth mum and dad had problems they couldn't sort out which meant they couldn't look after me and keep me safe and this made me sad.



My social worker says that all children need to be loved, cuddled, and kept warm and safe. When birth parents can't do this children will sometimes live with adoptive families who can.

Living with an adoptive family means we will grow up in a new family. Our new family will provide us with the things that all children need to grow up and be strong, healthy and safe.

You and I are not the only children that are adopted, there are thousands of babies, young and older children adopted every year. Some are adopted with their brothers and sister and some are adopted from different countries around the world.

Before you are adopted, children live with a foster family who will look after you and care for you while plans are being made and an adoptive family is being looked for. This is me with my foster mummy and foster sister. They had a cat called Tommy too.



Whilst we live with our foster families we might still see our birth family. Sometimes our social workers will plan for us to see our birth families at a family centre, or park.

My social worker also made sure that my important belongings were with me when I moved.

Why don't you write down the things you like and don't like and give the list to your social worker?

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Your social worker will work with a group of people who belong to The Best Interests Panel. They will then decide the best way for you to grow up safe and happy. Once they have decided that everything has been done to support your birth family to look after you, they will ask your social worker to speak to a judge. She will ask the judge if it would be OK to look for a new adoptive family for you.



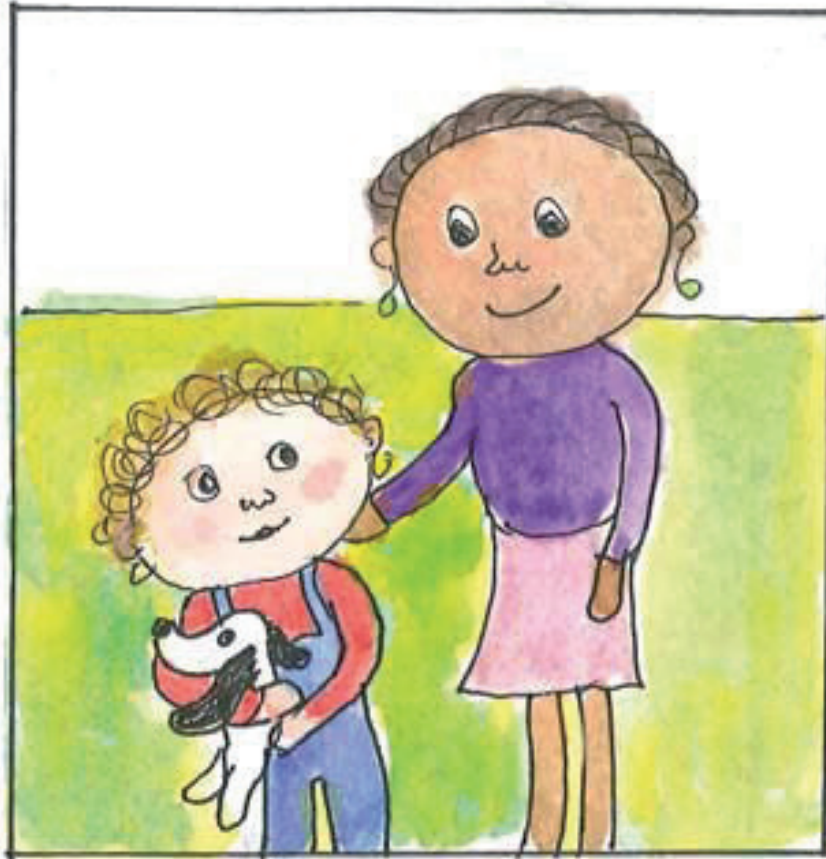
Like with me, social workers and a judge will learn all about you and your birth family, and the judge will listen to everyone before making that decision.

A judge is a person who is very wise and clever and will make sure that being adopted is the right decision for you in your best interests.

What would you like the judge to know about you?

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When the judge made the decision that I should be adopted I asked my social worker “Who will find me a new adoptive family?” She told me that social workers do this. They will speak to us, our birth families, foster carers and other people who are important in our lives.

The social worker will ask about things we like and don't like, and what we will need as we get bigger.

Our social worker will find out about different adoptive families. They will get help to find the right family before they make a decision. It might take a long time and lots of searching to make sure they find the right family for us.

My social worker told me that she'd found an adoptive family for me. Before I met them she gave me lots of information. I joined them last month. This is a picture of me with my new adoptive family.



My adoptive family listen to me and keep me safe. When I get muddled, confused and all jumbled up inside they help me to understand why I feel like that. They tell me it's OK to feel the way I do and give me lots of reassurance, love and cuddles. They sometimes help me to look at my life storybook so I can understand about my birth family.

Just because children are adopted does not mean they forget their birth family. Some adopted children see their birth family from time to time and some swop letters and photos with their birth families.

I really enjoyed telling you my story, I hope you learnt lots about adoption. Adoption can be confusing and we might have lots of questions about being adopted. Make sure you ask the important people in your life... and don't forget to tell your social worker what kind of adoptive family you want. I did and now I'm happy and cared for.

Bye Bye, from Harry

What the Adoption Service wants to offer children in West Sussex?

- We believe you should grow up as part of a loving family that can care for you as you grow up.
- We want to help you to understand about adoption.
- We will listen to what you tell us, about what you want and how you feel.
- Finding a family can take a while, but we will do our best to make sure you do not wait too long.
- If it is decided that it would be good for you to have contact with your birth family, your social worker will do their best to help. This might mean helping with visits or it might mean passing on letters.
- We will do our best to make sure you can live with your brothers and sisters.
- We will remember that family backgrounds and religion are important to you.
- We will help you to settle into your new family.
- Adoptive families will be given help and support to care for you. Your birth families will also be offered help and support.

Tell us what you think

If you are not happy about what we are doing, ask a grown up to talk to Jacquie Currie or Ian Forbes. Their job is to listen to children in West Sussex and try to help. You can reach them on 01403 229553 or write to us at:

West Sussex Adoption Service

West Sussex County Council

Adults and Children Services

County Hall North

4th Floor

Chart Way, Horsham

West Sussex RH12 1HA

Email: **adoption.team@westsussex.gov.uk**

Website: **www.westsussex.gov.uk/adoption**

You can also ask someone to contact your Independent Reviewing Officer on 01243 753886.

You could ask someone to contact Roger Morgan on 0800 528 0731 or email him at

roger.morgan.rights4me@csci.gsi.gov.uk

His job is to make sure children are looked after as well.

You could also ask someone to contact Ofsted on 0300 123 4666 or Commission for Social Care Inspection on 0161 879 2400

Floor 11, West Point, 501 Chester Road,

Old Trafford, Manchester M16 9HU