



The Children's Centre
Children, Young People and Families First

Job Description for Adoptive Parents

What matters most is your ability to provide a permanent, caring and stable home which will meet the needs of a child.

About half the individuals and couples approved to adopt by About Adoption have already had the experience of caring for children by birth or adoption.

We have no fixed age limits for adopters and have approved as many people over 50 as we have approved people under 30.

The greater the diversity of people and families wanting to adopt, the better our chances are of finding a family to suit each child's needs. We welcome applicants from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Single people, married couples, cohabiting couples and same-sex couples can all adopt.

Although we want to help individual adults and couples to achieve the family life they desire, our fundamental purpose is to meet the requirements of children currently in need of adoption in the Isle of Man. Although there are younger children waiting to be adopted, very few of the children placed for adoption nowadays are babies.

Qualification criteria

We are looking for people who are likely to become good adopters, and ultimately offer a home. There are very few set criteria at the outset – although they are important and all potential applicants must be able to evidence and demonstrate these during the assessment process:

Legal requirements:

The Adoption Service works to the Manx Adoption Act 1984 and the Children and Young Persons Act 2001.

Prospective adopters must be over **21 years old**.

Prospective adopters must be **living on the Isle of Man**, or have been a habitual resident in part of the Isle of Man for at least one year before application.

A person **cannot be considered suitable** if they have been **convicted of serious offences** such as offences against children, murder, serious violent or sexual offences or serious fraud.

Additional criteria:

Adoption is not a decision to be taken lightly; we will need to see **an obvious and well thought out motivation to adopt a child**.

Primarily, **Adoption is a plan to meet the needs of the child**. Therefore you will need to be able to prioritise the needs of the child for a loving, stable therapeutic family over your

own needs. Although parenting an adopted child is a rewarding experience, it has many challenges that need to be worked with.

Any birth children in the family will need to be at least two years old. This is because an adopted child needs to be the youngest in the family, often by a couple of years.

We like you to have **experience of caring for children** – preferably children with challenging behaviour, or the same age as the child you are considering adopting and, if at all possible, in your home. We understand that not everyone has nieces and nephews or friends with children, but having some experience will stand you in very good stead. Not having experience wouldn't necessarily prevent you from moving through the process at this stage, but we would be keen to know how you plan to get the required experience, and would be happy to give advice and support on where to do this. We have had many adopters able to join football coaching, Brownies, Cubs, after-school clubs, reading with reception children or helping out in crèches and day care facilities. This experience will help inform your assessment, as well as help you decide what kind of children you will best be suited to.

Smoking. Being a smoker will severely restrict your chances of having any child placed post-approval, especially as we would not place any child under five in a smoking household. Therefore by the time you get to the assessment stage of the adoption process we hope you will be a non-smoker. So, if you have been thinking about giving up, perhaps this is the motivation you need! You can talk to your GP about support to give up smoking. In most cases we ask to see evidence through a medical professional of being smoke free.

Your house will need to be in a suitable condition for children to live in. If you are having extensive building work done, for example, we may suggest you wait until this is nearer completion. Certainly, children would not be able to be placed in an unsound or unsuitable house so, to avoid delay after approval, it is best to get the bulk of the work done before you embark on the adoption process. Adopted children will need their own bedroom; it would be very difficult for them to share with a birth child already in the family. However adopted children who are joining your family as a sibling group, could share a room with their birth siblings if they have previously done so. You will need to know if your house is flexible enough to grow and change as your children grow and change.

Recent IVF or other fertility treatment. Our general rule is that you need a good 12 months after your last attempt at fertility treatment before embarking on the adoption process. This hopefully enables you to come to terms with your fertility issues, to find acceptance that you will not be birth parents, and to get past anniversaries or difficult times of year. Although many prospective adopters who have had recent fertility treatment are disappointed when we tell them this, they all, without exception, have told us afterwards that they had needed that time and space to be emotionally robust for the future. There are exceptions to this rule, and we consider individual circumstances on a case-by-case basis but, in general, this is what we advise

Recent life events. If you have had a major bereavement, lost your job, moved house or had a bout of significant illness – anything that impacts on your emotional state, we may advise you to wait for a few months so you can fully focus on the adoption process. Likewise, if you are part way through the process and a major life event happens, we may recommend you put the adoption process on hold until other issues have been resolved.

Significant medical issues. If you have a physical or emotional health condition, please let us know from the start, and we can seek advice from our medical advisor about the implications of your condition.

Financial stability you will need to be able to comfortably afford the additional costs of raising a child or children. This will also include considering 'Adoption Leave' during the crucial early months when a child or children moves into your family.

If you are a couple, you will need **strong enduring relationship** to ensure that you are able to work through any additional strain and tensions that adopting a child or children may bring.

You will need a **strong support network** of people around you who can provide both emotional and practical support.

Working with professionals. Initially you will need to work closely with your assessing social worker. Once you have been matched with a child or children, many professionals will become involved in your life to ensure that a good match has been made and that the child's transition into your care is well planned. Ongoing involvement will continue to support your family as you settle into your new life together. Once the Adoption Order has been finalised, there is an expectation that you will continue to be involved with the service to offer support, advice, training and therapeutic services throughout their childhood.

Personal Specification

All of our Adopters are individuals and these differences enable us to be able to place the right child with the right family. However, our adopters all need:

- **Time-** adopted children need additional time spent with them to help them feel safe, secure and a sense of belonging. In addition to this, there are often additional services that an adopted child may require, such as health appointments, therapy session and educational support.
- **Patience-** adopted children need parents who are very patient with them and understand that very often their behaviors are due to emotional issues that need to be resolved by consistent, calm, loving parents.
- **Resilience-** parents need to be able to dig deep within themselves, at times, to be able to love, parent and support children who are displaying challenging behaviours, very often directed at their new parents. This can be very difficult for parents to cope with when they feel rejected by a child who they want to love and care for.
- **Coping with stress-** adoptive parents will need good, robust coping strategies to help them to deal with the challenges that adoption will bring to their lives.
- **Training and support-** parents will need to be able to attend training sessions and to be able to implement their learning within the home. About Adoption will be there for you at every stage of your adoption journey. However, you will need to be able to recognize that you need some help and to be able to ask for it.
- **Birth children-** if you have children, you must consider the impact that an adopted child will have on the family. It is also important to consider the impact that your birth children will have on a adopted child.
- **Understanding the differences between adopted children and birth children-** training will be given at all stages of your adoption journey to help you to understand the impact that early life experiences have. Additional reading and research into this is an expectation.
- **Identity-** is important to us all. As adoptive parents, you will need to promote and adopted child's identity of both your family and their birth family. This acceptance of the child's history enables a child to become part of your family much easier as they feel fully accepted by you.