



# Adoption

INFORMATION PACK



# Our Criteria

Coram aims to offer loving and secure families to children in care who cannot live with their birth parents. We are looking for a variety of adoptive parents who can offer a child love and support throughout childhood and beyond.

We welcome people with a whole range of backgrounds and life experiences, who are able to reflect and support the needs of the children waiting for adoption.

Our criteria for adopters are designed to ensure that the children's needs are paramount in the adoption process.

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES GUIDELINES

The aim of Coram Ambitious for Adoption is to place children in permanent families and so enable children and adults who seek our services to have a positive experience of family relationships which helps redress past traumas and losses. We achieve this by enhancing their sense of identity; respecting their personal histories and culture.

## Who can adopt?

### We welcome applications from people who are:

**Living within an hour's journey** of our offices in London. This is so our social workers can offer the appropriate level of support.

**Single adopters or couples** whether you are in a civil partnership, married or cohabiting, and whatever your sexual orientation. Couples must have lived together in a stable and committed relationship for at least 3 years.

**Already parents or those without children.** Adopted children are likely to have additional needs which may have an impact on children already in the family – an adopted child would usually need to be at least 3 years younger than the youngest child already in the family.

**Homeowners, or those renting;** though you must have a **spare bedroom** to accommodate a child.

**Aged over 21;** legally, you must be over 21 to adopt. There is no legal upper age limit however applicants should have the potential to care for a child throughout their childhood and offer support for some years beyond.

**Non-Smokers.** A non-smoker is classed as anybody who has completely stopped smoking for a period of at least six months before starting the adoption process. This includes e-cigarettes. We can only consider non-smokers as we know that Local Authorities will prioritise non-smokers for vulnerable children.



At the end of **fertility treatment**. Families must have completed any investigations or treatment at least 6 months before starting the adoption process. Infertility treatment is stressful and you will need a break before applying to adopt.

In addition, applicants will not be considered who have criminal convictions or cautions in respect of offences against children.

# Further things to consider

## Needs of Adopted Children

Children needing adoptive families have complex needs and backgrounds and part of the adopter's task as a parent will be to help their child make sense of his or her story as they grow up, at the child's pace, and to help the child develop feelings of self-worth and self-esteem. These issues need to be considered and how these fit with the skills and experience of the prospective adopters. Please refer to the children's profiles available [here](#).

## Health

It is a statutory requirement for adoptive applicants to have a medical with their GP, which is considered by the Ambitious for Adoption Medical Advisor. Both physical and mental health will be considered.

Adopters need to be able to care for their adopted child throughout childhood and to continue providing support into young adulthood. In relation to weight, potential adopters must have a BMI under 40. If a BMI is over 30, the Medical Advisor will consider any potential implications for adoption. Hip-Waist ratio is also a risk factor that must be considered by the GP and the Medical Advisor. If your waist measurement is greater than 90cm (females) or 100cm (males) our Medical Advisor may need further information. Find out more [here](#).

## Work Commitments

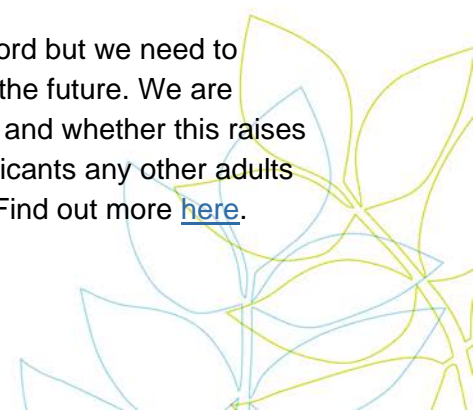
Any child who has been placed with a new family needs a period of time to settle down and build relationships with his/her new parent/s. We normally expect that one parent will be at home for at least the first six months, and longer if at all possible, in order to spend time with the child.

## Finances

Whilst adopters do not need to be 'well off', you must be able to demonstrate that you can support a child financially. Financial support may be available for some children, usually because they have additional needs. Adoption Leave, including Shared Parental Leave and Statutory Adopter Pay is now available to those who are in employment.

## Criminal Offences

Applicants will not be automatically excluded if they have a criminal record but we need to understand the circumstances at the time and any likely implications in the future. We are required by law to discuss with applicants if they have a criminal record and whether this raises concerns about their suitability to be a parent through adoption. All applicants and other adults living in the family home are required to have police and other checks. Find out more [here](#).



## Safety Issues & Pets

We need to be sure that any pets which applicants own do not pose a threat to a child's health or safety. A report from a vet may be required.

## ADOPTING A CHILD

# The process



### Enquiry Stage

If you decide you are interested in adopting through Coram Ambitious for Adoption, you can come along to one of our Information Meetings. The dates are on our website under 'Adoption Events'. You may also email [adoption@coram.org.uk](mailto:adoption@coram.org.uk) or request a telephone call with one of our Duty Social Workers.

After the Information Meeting you can request a Detailed Information form, which will give you an opportunity to review your own individual circumstances. This is reviewed by our Duty Social Worker. If our Duty Social Worker believes you meet our criteria, an initial interview will be carried out. This will usually last about two hours and is a great opportunity to ask any questions you may have.

Following the initial interview you will be given a Registration of Interest (ROI) Form. This is the formal application form to adopt through Coram Ambitious for Adoption.

We will let you know the outcome of your ROI within 5 working days.

### Stage 1

Stage 1 lasts about two months, although it may be longer if checks and references take more time to be returned. A social worker will be allocated to work with you and will visit you at home. Statutory checks will be taken up, including medicals, DBS checks and personal references. You will also attend the first two days of our adopter training. When all of your references and checks have been returned we will review them. If everything is satisfactory we will formally agree that you can proceed to Stage 2.

### Stage 2

Stage 2 lasts about four months. At the start of Stage 2 there is an Assessment Agreement Meeting with your allocated social worker to plan the work needed to complete the assessment – usually 6 meetings are required at weekly intervals. During Stage 2 you will attend a third day of training.

Once the assessment meetings are complete, your social worker will write your Prospective Adopter's Report (PAR).

### Approval

Your PAR will be considered at Coram Ambitious for Adoption 'Adoption & Fostering Panel', which you will be invited to attend. The panel's role is to decide whether or not to recommend

your approval as a prospective adopter. You will be informed of the panel's recommendation on the day. The Agency Decision maker will then consider the report together with the panel's recommendation and will make the decision whether to approve you as a prospective adopter. You will be notified of the decision in writing within 5 working days of the decision being made.

### Family Finding

Once you have been approved, the family finding stage will begin. The length of time it takes to be linked with a child varies but usually adopters are linked within 6 to 12 months of being approved. Your social worker will offer you a lot of support and help in identifying children that may be a good fit with your family.

In the event that you are still waiting to be matched with a child a year after being approved, your approval will be reviewed in line with the regulations.

When a possible child is identified for you, Coram Ambitious for Adoption will ensure that you receive all the information that is available about the child. You will also meet the child's social worker so you can discuss the child's needs and what you can offer as parents. There will be lots of opportunities to ask questions.

### Placement

Once the placement has been agreed, there will be a meeting to plan the child's move, and to ensure that everyone received appropriate support.

The next step is the introductions. This is when you meet your child for the first time and start to get to know them. The length of the introduction process between you and the child varies according to the child's needs.

When the child is placed with you, your social worker will continue to visit and be available to offer support. The child's social worker will regularly visit after placement as well.



## CORAM AMBITIOUS FOR ADOPTION

# Early Permanence

As well as mainstream adoption, Coram Ambitious for Adoption is also committed to placing children in Early Permanence placements. Early Permanence puts the needs of the vulnerable babies first and asks the adults to manage the uncertainty involved.



Young children, usually under 2 years old, are placed with carers who are approved both as foster carers and prospective adopters (Dual Approval) while the courts decide whether it is right for the child to return to a member of the birth family, or be placed for Adoption. When the children are placed, the carers act as the child's foster parents. Placements are selected on the basis that return to their family is unlikely in the view of the history, but is still a possibility. The first option would be to support the child's parents if they are able to demonstrate that they can care for the child and keep him or her safe. During this phase, the carers will need to be supportive of the birth family's efforts to regain the care of their child, and they will probably need to bring the child to Coram regularly for contact meetings which are carefully supervised.

If the courts decide that the birth family has shown that they are capable of meeting the needs of the child, the baby will be returned to their care. If another close relative comes forward and wishes to care for the baby they will be assessed and the baby may go and live with them. However, the majority of the children are not able to return home. If the court's decision is that there is no one in the wider birth family able to provide the security and care that is needed, the children will remain with their concurrent carers and be adopted by them.

Early Permanence carers must be able to respect and work with the children's birth families.

## Why adopt with us?

### Our vision

Coram runs one of the UK's largest and most highly acclaimed independent adoption services with an excellent success rate. We have been helping children find new parents through adoption for more than 40 years.

We are able to work with every local authority across the UK in order to help the children who need a permanent home through adoption, find loving families. All the children we place are looked after by local authorities.

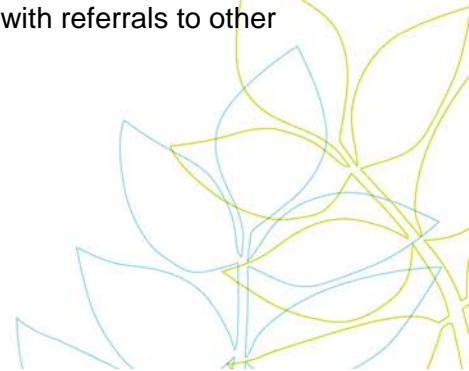
We are also a VAA commissioned regional adoption agency working in collaboration to deliver effectively to children with a plan for adoption with, London Boroughs of Harrow, Redbridge, Bromley, Waltham Forest, Hillingdon, Kensington and Chelsea, the City of London and Slough Borough Council.

### Coram Ambitious for Adoption, Adoption Support

Our adoption support is a factor in the success of our adoptions.

We have a dedicated adoption support team of experienced social workers who will help you to build strong family relationships throughout childhood and adolescence. We are able to offer you support of various kinds, including art and music therapy for adopted children and young people, parenting skills groups, regular workshops, social events and support groups.

Adoption support is available to all Coram families for as long as they need it. This includes the provision of direct services such as parenting courses and also support with referrals to other services.



# What now?

**There are a number of things you can be doing whilst you consider starting the adoption process:**

- Double check our [eligibility criteria](#) on page 2 and 3.
- Look through our previous [children's profiles](#) [here](#).
- Go to [CoramBAAF](#) to see the range of [reading materials](#) available.
- Build your knowledge with 'First Steps' e-learning [here](#).
- Get some [childcare experience](#) – we advise that our prospective adopters all have good levels of childcare – this may be with relatives, community groups, or through work. If you currently don't have any experience, begin looking for ways you can volunteer.
- Fill in the [Contact Form](#) on the Coram Adoption website.
- Come to an [Information Meeting](#).

