



Adoption

INFORMATION PACK



Adoption Criteria

FOR ADOPTERS AND CARERS

Could I adopt?

Coram Ambitious for Adoption 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.

Who can adopt?

To adopt a child in the UK you need to be:

- over 21 (there is no upper age limit but you should be able to care for a child throughout their childhood and offer support for some years beyond)
- domiciled or habitually resident in the UK for at least the past 12 months
- without any history of criminal caution or conviction for certain criminal offences against children or specified offences against adults.

You can apply to become an adoptive parent whatever your marital status, sexuality, gender identity or residential status.



Yes! You can adopt if...

- You are **single** or in a stable and committed **long-term relationship** (whether married, unmarried or in a civil partnership)
- You are **heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender**
- You are from any **ethnic or religious background**
- You, or your partner, are a **UK national, domiciled** in the UK or **habitually resident in the UK** for at **least the past 12 months**
- You **don't have children** or if you are **already parents**
- You are **employed** or you are **on benefits**
- You are a **homeowner** or living in **stable rented accommodation**, with a **spare bedroom for a child**
- You are a **non-smoker**, or have given up at least six months ago – this includes **e-cigarettes**
- You have undergone **fertility treatment**, as long as it has finished and you have had at least 6 months to recover

Other Considerations

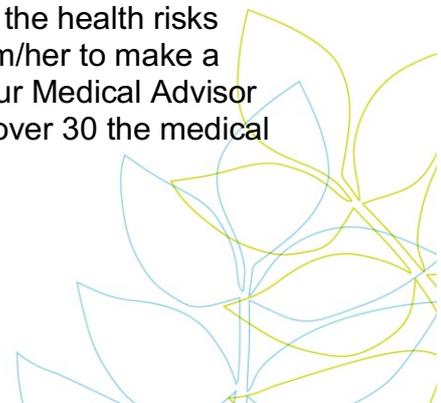
Your health

Adopters need to have energy and to have the expectation of being able to care for their adopted child throughout childhood and to continue providing support into young adulthood – and beyond.

There is a statutory requirement for adoptive applicants to have a medical, which is considered by our Medical Advisor. Both physical health and any issues regarding mental health will be considered. Parenting adopted children is frequently stressful and demands particular resources and resilience – thus an applicant's medical history will be important in considering any application. If there is a significant risk that an applicant may not be able to care for a child throughout their dependent years the Medical Advisor will seek further information.

S/he will advise the Adoption Panel about the medical issues and the implications for a child's future care and security.

In relation to weight, the current advice to Medical Advisors is that the health risks associated with a BMI of over 40 would usually be too great for him/her to make a positive recommendation. If a potential adopter's BMI is 35 – 40 our Medical Advisor currently recommends this is reduced to 35 or below and for BMI over 30 the medical advisor will consider any potential implications for adoption.



In addition, in respect of current public health advice regarding associated risk factors in relation to obesity our medical advisor may advise prospective adopters to consult further with their GP if their waist measurements are more than 90cm for women & 100cm for men. The GP may be asked to include Waist/Hip measurements in order to complete the adoption medical form for our medical advisor to review where BMI is of concern.

To find out more please visit: www.nhs.uk/Tools/Pages/Healthyweightcalculator.aspx

Smoking

We do not automatically exclude applicants who are smokers but given the known medical risks of passive smoking for young children we discuss this with applicants and encourage them to give up smoking on the basis of the children's welfare.

Research has shown that:

- children under two years of age are at more risk of cot death if someone in the home smokes (even if they don't smoke indoors);
- children of all ages whose parents smoke have more health problems including chest and ear infections;
- children with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to the effects of smoke; and
- in the UK, 17,000 children under the age of 5 are admitted to hospital every year with illnesses related to smoking – BAAF Practice Note 51.
- Children are known to model their own behaviour on that of their parents, thus growing up in a household with parents who smoke increases the risk of the child becoming a smoker at a later date.

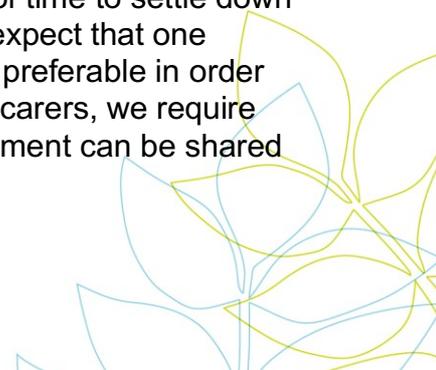
For these reasons Local Authorities will generally choose non-smoking adoptive families for children who need families in preference to smokers, which includes e-cigarettes. Coram will prioritise applications from non-smokers because of the ongoing health risks. A non-smoker would be any applicant who has completely stopped smoking for a period of at least 6 months before being presented to the Adoption Panel, which means stopping smoking before starting stage 1 of the assessment process, and maintaining complete cessation from then onwards.

Fertility

Applicants should have completed investigations and treatment before applying to adopt a child. This is because of the emotional stress involved in fertility treatment and the need for applicants to be ready to devote their energies to adoption by the time they make their application. We advise that there is a break between the ending of fertility treatment (or the realisation that applicants will not be able to conceive or the decision not to undergo treatment) and starting the adoption process, to give people time to process this loss and come to a considered decision to build a family by adoption. Our current advice is to wait for a period of at least 6 months.

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 or her new parent/s. We normally expect that one parent will be at home for at least the first 6 months, and longer is preferable in order to be available for and to support the child. For early permanence carers, we require one carer to be at home full time for up to 12 months. This commitment can be shared between two carers.



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 wish to have a telephone call with one of our Duty Social Workers. If our Duty Social Worker believes you meet our criteria, an initial face-to-face interview will be carried out at our office. 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.



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, and the City of London.

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
- 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 and or Speak to a Duty Social Worker](#)

