

How to start a conversation?

- Keep it generic and away from personal questions
- Ask if the person feels comfortable talking about adoption before diving in
- Everyone feels differently about their childhood, remember that
- It takes time to build trust and share things about ourselves
- If we don't want to talk about it, we don't want to talk, so please don't push it
- It is ok to be curious, but it's not ok to assume

Want to learn more?

Website: www.adoptteens.org.uk

Phone: 07773878699 / 07960801226

Email: adoptteens@pac-uk.org

Twitter: @AdoptedTeens_ID

Location:

PAC-UK Leeds Office,
Hollyshaw House, 2 Hollyshaw Lane
Leeds, LS15 7BD



www.adoptteens.org.uk



One
Adoption



What is adoption?

Adoption is when a child is either removed from a parent because they are felt they **cannot currently provide safe care for their child** or the parent decides they are currently unable to care for their child.

A child is only adopted after all other avenues for support have been explored such as other family members. It is a very serious decision that has lifelong impacts for all involved.

Even when a parent decides they cannot care for their child it is not because they **do not want their child or do not love them**. It is usually because a parent can't physically and / or emotionally look after a child, depending on their situation. For example it might be that a parent already has a large family, becomes pregnant and decides they cannot manage a fifth child. Or it might be because the parent has **mental health problems** and/or are **too unwell** to care for a child.

Almost always children are placed into foster care before they are adopted.

Sometime children may have several different moves before they move in with their adoptive parents.

Families come in all different forms; from single parents, step parents, same sex parents, to children living with other relatives, such as grandparents or aunts. Adoption is no different, we are just another type of family. So please **be careful when making judgements** about someone's family because you don't know the journey they have been on, or are currently on.

Difference between fostering & adoption

Foster care means that the child is under the care of the local authority and fosters carers are paid to care for children. It also means that children often still see their birth parents.

Foster care is often used as a short-term measure to support parents through difficulties. However, sometimes children do stay in foster care until they become adults, this is called **long term foster care**.

Adoption is different, because when someone adopts, they become the child's legal parents and their birth parents no longer hold any parental responsibility for them. So they no longer make any decisions about the child's care.

The child's surname is changed to the adoptive parents surname and this name is protected by law. Sometime the adopted persons first name is changed but wherever possible it is kept the same.

We want you to know the difference between adoption & fostering because **getting it wrong can be hurtful** and ultimately, we want to be understood!

'open' & 'closed' adoptions

In historical cases of adoption children and their birth parents would not have had any contact with each other following the adoption. This is known as **closed adoption**.

However in more modern adoptions children often have **contact** with their birth parents via the **exchange of letters** and sometimes **face to face** because research tells us that this is very important for peoples understanding of their **life history** and their **identity**.

However it is **very different for every child** and there are a whole **variety of reasons** why a child and birth parent may or may not have any contact. **Never assume** that any two adopted people have had the same experience in their adoption journey, **no two experiences are the same**.

What language is not helpful?

'So you're an orphan then?' – An orphan is someone whose parents have died, our parents have not died, they were unable to look after us. Very different.

'So what's Tracy Beakers house like then' – Tracy Beaker is a fictional character who lives in a care/ children home. Most adopted children have not lived in a care home, they are likely to have lived with a foster family before moving in with their adoptive parents.

'So do you know who THEY are?' – This is a very personal question about family and can be very upsetting for people to be asked.

'So when do you see your mum' – Another very personal question which can be very difficult for someone to answer. It's ok to be curious, but do you really need to know that information? Can you ask a more general question.

'So your parents aren't your REAL parents' – What does 'real parent' even mean? Adoptive parents are just as real as birth parents and vice versa.

