

Who can adopt?

Here are some of the questions we are regularly asked.



Am I too old to adopt?

Anyone 21 or older can apply to adopt a child – at Diagrama Adoption we have no upper age limit, but your age and general state of health will be taken into account when considering the age and needs of the child you wish to adopt.

Do I need to be married to adopt?

Absolutely not – we welcome applications from single people who have support from family, friends, or communities. Looking after a child who has experienced a difficult start to life can require a lot from someone so we will need to be assured that you have a robust support network to help you with this important role.

Applicants can also be married couples, couples in civil partnerships or unmarried couples (heterosexual or same sex). If you are in a relationship, it is important this is stable and enduring. Couples need to have been cohabiting for a significant period before an assessment starts. Placing a child/ren can challenge any relationship so there would need to be evidence that you have managed a variety of situations together.

Can I adopt a child who is a different ethnicity to me?

This is a possibility although Diagrama aims to place children within families of a similar ethnic background to their own to enable children to identify with the adoptive family culturally, visually and emotionally.

Children from Black or black mixed backgrounds often wait longer to be adopted so Diagrama is always looking for people from Black or Black mixed backgrounds to apply to adopt.

Where children cannot be placed in families who match their own ethnicity, Diagrama will look at an applicant's family connections, support network and wider community to determine whether the child or children being placed would feel a sense of belonging within the family and the wider community.

I live abroad – Can I adopt with Diagrama?

We are only able to accept applications from people who are permanent residents of the UK, or habitually resident for at least one year.

I only moved to the UK a year ago – is that okay?

Yes – we welcome enquiries from people of all nationalities that have lived in the UK for at least 12 months. We will need to see written confirmation of your residency status- confirming you have been in the UK for at least 12 months and are now habitually resident. As part of an adoption assessment, we will need to know about any substantial time that you or your partner (if adopting as a couple) have spent abroad as an adult. This is because we will need to undertake an overseas police check for this period of time.

I live in a flat – can I apply to adopt a child?

Yes! Families live in different sizes of homes, including flats. As part of the adoption assessment a social worker will need to ensure there is sufficient space to bring up a child, including for the adopted child to have their own bedroom. They will also undertake a health and safety check to ensure your home is safe and appropriate for a young child to live in.

I plan to move house soon, can I start the assessment process?

We would encourage applicants to remain in their home for a significant period following approval and the placement of a child. This is because children may well have experienced considerable numbers of changes already, prior to being placed for adoption.

Who can adopt?

My partner is a smoker, can we still adopt?

We encourage applicants to be non-smokers, and, if a previous smoker, to have given up for at least 12 months. It is Diagrama Adoption's policy not to place children under the age of five in households where there are people who smoke.

What about vaping or e-cigarettes?

Research suggests that e-cigarettes and vaping are less dangerous than smoking, although they still are considered harmful. Therefore, if adopters or other family members use e-cigarettes/vape, they are advised to do so away from the family home and not when children are present. They are also advised to lock away and e-cigarettes or vaping materials to ensure that children cannot access them.

You should also be aware that local authority social workers may decide not to place a child under 5 years old with prospective adopters who vape.

We have been through fertility treatment; can we still adopt?

If you have undergone infertility investigations and/or treatment, it is important that a sufficient period of time has passed since this ended to allow you to process this before being ready to start the adoption assessment process. The amount of time will vary for each individual, but it is vital that the timing is right for you to be able to focus on adoption. Moving house is a significant life event, which can be stressful, and it would be better for this to happen before the assessment commences, to allow you time to settle.

What about my job? Can I still work after adoption?

Adopters can be employed, have their own business, or be unemployed. You will need to demonstrate that you are financially stable enough to provide for a child. Therefore, as part of the adoption assessment a financial assessment is undertaken. Adoption applicants may have debts; these will be discussed as part of the financial assessment. A social worker will need to be assured the debt is manageable as you increase your household outgoings by taking on the financial implications of caring for a child. The financial assessment will include checking bank statements and checking if you have had any County Court Judgements. You may be entitled to Adoption Leave – similar to maternity leave. For Government advice on this, see Adoption Pay and Leave.

Adopters will need to demonstrate their commitment and be able to give sufficient time to the assessment process, the family finding after approval, and to be able to take time off work for introductions and allowing the child to settle in. It is preferred for an adopter to be able to take at least one year off work to focus on building a relationship with their adopted child. If you are adopting as part of a couple, it is good if one of the adopters is able to take a year off work when the child is placed.

I have a criminal record - would that prevent me from being able to adopt?

It depends on the type of offence(s) committed, and the context and how long ago this was. We would encourage you to be honest about any offences and discuss them openly with us. Some adopters are approved who have committed minor offences. These may have been many years previously in youth or be a one-off, in a particular set of circumstances, which would not necessarily prevent people from adopting.

Enhanced DBS checks are carried out and any historical offences committed would need to be discussed with a social worker to establish the impact on the overall assessment to become a prospective adopter. Certain offences would not be permitted, such as any offence relating to children, violent and sexual offences etc.

Who can adopt?

How much childcare experience do I need before I can start the assessment process?

It is vital for applicants to be as prepared as they can be before embarking on the assessment process. You may already have experience looking after your own children, your friends or family's children without their parents or carers present.

However, to start the adoption process, you (and your partner, if a couple) will need to have gained recent experience helping, supporting, and spending time with children who are not familiar to you. It is preferable if you can build up experience of engaging with a range of children of different ages and with different needs, including children with more complex needs.

This is necessary because children in need of being adopted will often have experienced significant trauma. Many children will already have been removed from the care of their birth parents and placed into a foster home. They can find it difficult moving again to a new home with lots of new experiences and they will need time to adjust, building trust and an attachment to you.

We encourage you to gain experience with children who would depend on you whilst they are in your care, building a good rapport with them. Spending regular time helping and supporting children you do not know, will enable you to understand more about building confident relationships, trust and understanding.

Chat to a member of our team who can help you consider how best to gain further relevant childcare experience.

Can I adopt if I have a medical condition?

Prospective adopters have to be able to demonstrate they have sufficient good health to be able to care for a child throughout childhood to independence. Being fit and healthy is important when adopting a child as parenting can be very demanding as well as rewarding. You need lots of energy, so being in good physical health is important. We, therefore, need to be made aware of any history of mental or emotional difficulties as well as your physical health, as all aspects of your health may impact on your ability to care for a child. During the process we will explore how you manage, or have managed, any health conditions and how these could affect your ability to look after a child.

Within stage one of the assessment, you will be required to have an adoption medical examination with your GP and the report will be sent to our medical advisor who will consider if there are any physical or mental health issues which would impact on the role of adopter. There may be other serious medical conditions, physical and/or mental, which may have implications for adoption. These will be explored and discussed according to individual circumstances.

Can I adopt if I am overweight?

Applicants' weight will be considered as part of the adoption medical examination. Guidance from the Agency's Medical Advisers would be: Those in the "morbidly obese" category (BMI of 40 and over) are advised to seek medical advice and to reduce their weight and BMI, as a minimum, to below 40, before proceeding further with the adoption process. Those with BMI over 30 should consider issues of diet, lifestyle, exercise, and general health and discuss these with their GP as appropriate.

Am I allowed to drink alcohol as an adopter?

Use of alcohol is explored within the medical and discussed within the assessment. This needs to be at an appropriate level (see Gov guides for recommended daily intake), and any alcohol stored safely away from children. Applicants need to be mindful of the impact of alcohol use given that many children with plans of adoption or early permanency have a family background involving alcohol or substance misuse.

Who can adopt?

Can I adopt if I have pets?

Yes, as long as pets are safe to be around children. Pet assessments are carried out within the adoption assessment to ensure that they do not pose a risk to children.

Can I adopt if I live with my extended family?

Living with extended family members can be beneficial and supportive for new parents but it will be essential those family members are a part of the assessment process and that they understand the needs of adopted children. This may mean that they attend a course for family members adopting and make themselves available for the time when the child will be introduced to the family.

Do I need to speak English?

It is advisable for adoptive parents to be reasonably fluent in English so that they can advocate for a child once that child is placed, so that the concepts of adopting a child can be fully understood. If you aren't fluent in English, we would recommend that you attend one of the readily available English courses prior to enquiring about adoption.

Which children require adoption?

The vast majority of children who require adoption in the UK are children who have been removed from the care of birth family and the court has decided it is not safe or appropriate for them to live with birth family for the duration of their childhood. Most of these children will have spent some time living with their birth family before being removed, although some children will have been removed at birth. In most cases children will have spent time in a foster placement before being adopted.

At Diagrama we aim to recruit adopters who are able to adopt children who are over the age of 3 years old, or who need to be adopted with their brother or sister. We are looking for adopters who can care for children who have complex health and/or emotional needs.

Can I adopt a baby or child under 2?

Many of the children waiting to be adopted in the UK are over three years old and Diagrama is keen to hear from people who feel they have the skills required to adopt a child in this age group.

There are some children who are younger than three and often social workers are looking to place them with permanent families as part of early permanence arrangements. Early permanence placements allow infants and young children, to be placed with families who may go on to adopt them. These children will usually come from complex family backgrounds and have some additional uncertainties. The courts may decide to place these infants with early permanency carers while long term decisions are made about the child. In some cases, the courts will decide these infants will need to return to their birth families. If the court decides adoption is the long-term plan for the child, then the early permanency carer can apply to do this.

If you would like to know more about Early Permanency, please contact one of the members of our social work team.

What adoption support can I expect from Diagrama when I adopt a child?

When you adopt a child through Diagrama we will support you for as long as you require this. We are a small and friendly agency, with social work staff who hold significant experience in supporting adopters. If you choose to adopt with Diagrama you will be allocated a social worker to undertake your assessment. Once you are approved to adopt, that social worker will support you with the process known as family finding. Once a child is placed with you your social worker will visit you often and be in regular contact until you decided to submit your adoption application to court. Following the granting of the adoption order, you can keep in contact with Diagrama and attend drop-in sessions, picnics and training. You can also request one to one support and advice via the duty system.

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How much will I have to pay to be assessed?

Prospective adopters will need to have medicals, which usually costs approximately £85, although can be as high as £250. This fee is set by the GP and not by Diagrama. There are no other direct costs involved in adoption, but you may find you need to make lifestyle changes such as reducing your working hours, which will have an impact on your income.

When an adoption application is made to court, there is a one-off court fee. This fee applies to each child in a sibling group, however large. The local authority looking after the child usually covers the court fees on behalf of the adopters and should also make a commitment to pay any additional legal fees or court costs, so this should not be a cost to you.

Can I adopt if I have a child?

Yes! This is certainly not uncommon and can work well for lots of families. It is important to consider there being an age gap of approximately 2 years or more between birth children and adopted children.

I have been married or had a civil partnership before, does that matter?

We will need to know about previous significant relationships you have had and will require ex-partner references for applicants who have co-parented a child or lived to together for two or more years. We are aware that many relationships end acrimoniously, and this is taken into consideration when carrying out these references.

What might contact with my adopted child's birth family look like?

Adopted children need to know and understand their history in order to help them make sense of their past. Having contact with birth relatives and significant people, including previous foster families, from their past can help children understand their identity and contact with these people may help the adoption be more successful. You will receive help and support from the Diagrama social work team in relation to contact arrangements.

It will be expected that you will keep contact with an adopted child's birth family, where this has been deemed to be in their best interests and whilst it remains to be so. This could be with their siblings who are living elsewhere or their birth relatives or other significant adults. The contact can be indirect, through information sharing or direct contact ie. video calls or meet ups.

**Thank you for your interest in adopting a child with Diagrama.
If you have any further questions or would like to discuss your own situation with someone, please reach out to our team at:**

adoption@diagrama.org.uk or call 0800 802 1910

A member of our team will be happy to answer your questions or will be able arrange a call with a social worker for a more detailed discussion.

We wish you the best of luck in your journey.