

Adoption

FAQS



Diagrama
Fostering & Adoption



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 consideration 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 (whether heterosexual or same sex). If you are in a relationship, it is important that this is stable and enduring. Couples need to have been co-habiting for at least two years prior to their assessment started. Placing a child/ren can challenge any relationship so there would need to be evidence that you have managed a variety of situations together.

I am from a minority ethnic background – can I adopt?

We welcome adopters from all backgrounds. There is a disproportionate number of children in need of adoption who have minority ethnic heritage, and local authorities often prefer to match children with adopters from similar backgrounds.

Do you need to be religious to adopt?

No, we welcome enquiries from people of any or no religious faith. Part of the assessment will be considering if applicants can support children of a different faith to their own.

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 – would that stand against my adoption application?

No, although your adopted child will need to have their own bedroom and your home should be safe and appropriate for a young child to live in, with adequate storage space for the child's belongings. A social worker will carry out a health and safety check within your home as part of the assessment process.

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 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 everyone, but it is vital that the timing is right for you to be able to focus on adoption.

My partner and I plan to move house soon, can we start the assessment process?

Moving house is a significant life event, which can be stressful, and it would be better for this to happen before the assessment commences and for you to allow time to settle into your new home to be

ready and focused on the assessment before starting. We also encourage applicants to remain in this home for a significant period following approval and the placement of a child given the child would have experienced a considerable number of changes already.

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 any e-cigarettes or vaping materials to ensure that children cannot access them.

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.

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

Adopters can be employed, have their own business, or be unemployed. Adopter's will need to be able to give sufficient time to the assessment process, the family finding process after approval, and to be able to take time off work for introductions and allowing a child to settle in. It is preferred that the main adopter is able to take at least one year off work to focus on building a relationship with their adopted child. You do not need to be financially well off to adopt and may be in receipt of benefits, however 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.

Can I adopt if I am overweight?

Applicants' weight will be considered as part of the medical. People with a BMI of over 40 are in the 'morbidly obese' range.

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.

Can I adopt if I have a child?

Yes, however the adopted child will need to be at least two years younger than the youngest child in the family.

Can I adopt if I have pets?

Yes, if the pets are safe to be around children. Pet assessments are carried out within the assessment to ensure they don't pose a risk to children.

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 adoption 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 or they may 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 don't know, will enable you to understand more about building confident relationships, trust and understanding.

This will also link with some of the parenting methods we consider during the assessment and training process, helping you to be a positive parent, with a range of flexible therapeutic parenting techniques.

How do I arrange this childcare experience?

You may already work in a professional child setting, but if you haven't gained these skills, or they aren't recent, start with volunteering in a childcare

setting such as a child minder, after school club, in a nursery/pre-school/primary school or Rainbows/Brownies, Beavers or Cubs. You will need a DBS (Police check) which you may need to pay for or organise with the setting directly. Try searching online for nurseries or childcare establishments in your area and calling to see if you can volunteer on a regular basis before starting your adoption assessment. Alternatively, a member of the Diagrama team will be able to provide you with further information about where to look for relevant voluntary experience with children if you need support with this.

Can I adopt if I have a medical condition?

Prospective adopters must be able to demonstrate that 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.

It is also important for applicants to have good mental health to be able to support the needs of children who have experienced trauma as well as to be able to meet the demands and challenges of working within the professional network. Conditions such as depression or anxiety are not necessarily a barrier to adoption depending on your own personal history. It will be taken into consideration when you make your application to ensure that you are able to meet the needs of a child. This will need to be reviewed by the agency medical advisor. It is generally recommended that there has been a period of at least 12 months stable mental health before an adoption assessment commences.

Within stage 1 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.

There may be instances where the agency's medical adviser provides advice in relation to matters of weight, smoking, alcohol intake or other health related issues. Such advice may require evidence of sustained change in lifestyle habits before the agency can proceed further with the adoption process. If, following advice, enquirers choose not to make the recommended changes, or do not accept the advice offered, the agency may decide not to take an adoption application.

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.

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

We will need to know about previous significant relationships you or your partner 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. We will seek an alternative reference from a third party who knew your ex-partner if for various reasons it is not appropriate to seek the reference or if there is no response from attempts made.

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.

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.

Can I adopt a baby or child under 2?

Most of the children waiting to be adopted in the UK are over four 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 four 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, a member of the Diagrama team will be able to discuss this further with you.

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.

**Interested? Call us today on
0800 802 1910
for an informal chat.**



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