



# Adoption and

# Muslims in England



Toolkit 2: For The General Muslim  
Community And Wider Population

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# Who We Are

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My Adoption Family was launched in 2019 with the primary aim to raise awareness about the need for more adopters from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and Muslim communities and to improve the experience and support available to these families throughout the adoption process.

My Adoption Family is a member of the National Adoption Recruitment Steering Group (NARSG) and the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board (ASGLB) Racial Disparity Group.

We hope you find this toolkit useful. On pages 18-25 you will see a list of frequently asked questions and answers and information on how we can support your journey in to adoption.

Muslim adopters may also require guidance and reassurance as adoption often brings up specific concerns regarding lineage and naming, inheritance, Hijab, Mahram, wet nursing and concerns about privacy and boundaries. My Adoption Family offer clear and confidential guidance around these areas to both adoptive parents and professionals.

For any questions not covered in this toolkit, you can email visit our website [www.myadoptionfamily.com](http://www.myadoptionfamily.com) or email [imam@myfosterfamily.com](mailto:imam@myfosterfamily.com) for confidential advice.





# About the National Adoption Recruitment Steering Group (NARSG)

The NARSG brings together all the major stakeholders in the delivery of adoption services across England and is made up of representatives from regional and voluntary adoption agencies together with the Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies (CVAA), Adoption UK and CoramBAAF with representation from Home for Good, My Adoption Family and New Family Social.

The NARSG are working towards four ambitions:



## Ambition 1: Reducing Delay



To reduce delay in children moving to their permanent family: we will reduce the time from entry into care to children moving in with their adopters, by recruiting the right adopters to meet their needs.

## Ambition 2: Diversity



To increase the diversity of adopters to better meet the specific and emerging identity needs of all children: we strive to ensure that adopters are prepared to understand and address the needs of the diversity of children with adoption as their plan for permanency.

## Ambition 3: The Adopter Journey



We will welcome all potential adopters and will ensure that everyone is treated with respect and receives an open, honest and caring response throughout their journey.

We will create a service that is inclusive of our diverse communities and groups, ensuring all feel equally supported and enable to adopt. We will build on the strengths and needs of applicants to prepare and support them to meet the lifelong needs of the children they will care for.

## Ambition 4: Raising The Profile And Understanding Of Adoption



We will raise the profile of adoption, by recognising and valuing the experiences of adopted people and their families. We will reach out to new audiences from all socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds to explain the life changing possibilities of adoption for children and families and increase the number of adopters registering their interest.

# Why We Decided To Develop Toolkits For The Adoption Sector

We developed Toolkits for the adoption sector with the aim to support prospective Muslim adopters, social workers, recruitment professionals, and Imams and other influencers who have an interest in adoption.

**The Toolkits are designed with multiple audiences in mind. They intend to give professionals in the field and prospective adopters a deeper understanding of the interplay between cultural and jurisprudential matters.**



At a communal level it will give community leadership, Imams, scholars and other influencers a better insight into UK legal frameworks, policies and procedures, and the challenges around them. It will also help quantify the care sector and the mammoth challenge of addressing the needs of the

estimated 4,500 children of Muslim heritage<sup>1</sup> and other 102,000 children in care<sup>2</sup>.

We have extensive knowledge and experience of the challenges faced by Muslim communities around adoption. Over the past few years we have engaged with over 60 leading figures from across the Muslim community, including researchers, adopters, faith leaders, influencers, care professionals and politicians. We have held three successful focus-group meetings on adoption and Islam, and documented first-hand accounts and life stories from over 30 care professionals and social workers, as well as 10 Muslim adopters and a range of Imams and faith leaders from across the UK. We have continuing engagement with a number of scholars from the Muslim community giving us access to a range of scholarly views and fatawa (ruling points on Islamic law) on topics related to adoption, and we have compiled a large number of questions and answers from our regular monthly Q&A sessions with Muslim adopters, social workers and faith advisors.

We identified a need to develop Toolkits for the adoption sector in order to meet recommendations that had been raised in various NARSG ambition group discussions and to address challenges that had been raised in several previous reports (Kutty, 2014, O'Halloran 2015, Karim, 2017, Karim et. al. 2018, Cheruvallil-Contractor & Halford, 2019, Miller & Butt, 2019).

1 Cheruvallil-Contractor, S.; Halford, A.; Phiri, M.B. (2021) 'The Saliency of Islam to Muslim Heritage Children's Experiences of Identity, Family, and Well-Being in Foster Care'. Religions 12 (6):381.

2 Statistics briefing looked after children, 2021, NSPCC

## These challenges include:

- A lack of targeted marketing reflecting diversity within the Muslim community
- A sense of additional scrutiny for those of Muslim backgrounds and how they are perceived
- Experiences of an unfair approach to questioning during the assessment process
- A lack of trust in authorities; fear of discrimination, prevent policies and Islamophobia
- The impact of poverty, multigenerational households, and lack of fluency in the English language
- Gaps in knowledge and understanding of the children's care sector and the adoption process
- A perception that Muslims will not consider or are not suited to adopting children of different backgrounds
- Stigma in the community about adoption
- Concerns around compatibility of Islamic laws with English adoption laws and policies
- The misconception that adoption is not permissible in Islam
- Lack of support for recruitment teams and social workers in managing faith and culturally sensitive questions
- A need for peer led support networks for Muslim Adopters
- The need to establish a safe space for social workers for reflective practice

We found that these challenges related to three distinctive areas of concern, each requiring its own Toolkit specifically aimed at audiences within that area and addressing the challenges that they faced.

We therefore developed three separate Toolkits:

### Toolkit 1

Aimed towards **recruitment and marketing professionals and social workers** from within the adoption sector.

This Toolkit will have a specific focus on addressing barriers to recruiting adopters and give advice on improving the journey and experience of BAME and Muslim potential adopters through the system.

### Toolkit 2

Aimed towards the **general Muslim community and wider population** to address issues around the process of adoption, Islamic perspectives on adoption practical guidance on adoption from a faith-based perspective.

### Toolkit 3

Aimed towards **Imams, leaders, and influencers in the Muslim community** and how they can promote adoption and raise awareness amongst their communities around the topic and need.

# What Is Adoption?

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In the UK, adoption is the legal process in which parental responsibility for a child is transferred from their birth parent or anyone with parental responsibility to their adopter.

When an Adoption Order is made, the adopted child loses all their legal ties with their birth parents or legal guardians and becomes a full member of their new adoptive family. An adopted child would also assume the same rights and privileges as if they had been born to the adoptive family including the right of inheritance and while keeping their first name the child would typically also take on the family name. An Adoption Order is a significant legal order that lasts for the whole of an individual's life and is not usually reversible.

It is also important to remember that children who are looking to be adopted are in the situation for a whole range of significant and serious reasons. However, most children who need adoption have been removed from their birth families by a local authority and the court because their parents and wider families were deemed to be unable to provide the care the child needed. Some children who need adoptive parents may have attachment issues or experienced trauma and may have developed coping mechanisms for these that may affect future relationship building.

**“When you adopt or foster someone you open up the world for them and they too can achieve so much in their own life and through that you of course improve society as a whole”**

– Afzal Khan, MP Manchester Gorton, Shadow Immigration Minister



# How Is Adoption Seen In Islam?

Adoption is a permanent arrangement for the care of a child, similar to looking after a **Yateem**. The term **Yateem** is often translated as 'an orphan' however the act of looking after a child like an orphan extends to include a child that is left alone and helpless in society and is need of care, in some cases an adoptive child may also be a **Yateem**.

Islam includes a rich tradition of caring for the **Yateem** and as adoption is similar to this it is seen as a highly commendable deed, a communal responsibility, and is held in high regard from an Islamic perspective. The Prophet Muhammad himself was orphaned as a young child and taken under the care of his grandfather and his paternal uncle. Later on, he himself became an adoptive father.

The theme of adoption is mentioned in the **Qur'an** and there are numerous verses in the **Qur'an** that describe the spiritual benefits of caring for the **Yateem**, as well as prophetic sayings which exalt those who care for them. In one story, the Prophet says that whoever takes care of a **Yateem** will be side by side with him in Paradise. These religious instructions have resulted in a long history of Muslims striving to care for children in need through fostering, adoption, or financial support.



around adoption emphasise looking after and fostering children in need of care, but forbids claiming adoptive children as blood relatives. Because of this, adoption presents some unique challenges for Muslims in the UK who wish to comply with the **Shari'a** (Islamic Law) but also provides a very contemporary perspective on adoption and one that we appreciate.

For example, the **Shari'a** only permits blood relatives to hold rights to an estate and would consider an adopted child as an inheritor of their birth parents if they are alive and known. Under the UK intestacy laws if a child is adopted before the death of their biological parents and the adoption is formalised, the legal relationship between the child and biological parent is severed and the child loses the legal right to inherit from their biological parents. Furthermore, under Islamic inheritance laws an adopted child would not automatically receive

**Adoption and fostering are different and many people usually confuse the two**

The ideas and laws around adoption have been mentioned in the **Qur'an** and are different to the way adoption laws of the UK. Islamic laws



an inheritance from their adoptive parents unless it was stipulated as a bequest in a will.

Islam maintains that every child should have a legal connection to their birth family and that adoptive families shouldn't claim the child as part of their lineage, either through explicit statements or through naming of the child as the 'son' or 'daughter' of the adoptive father. These religious rulings should in no way be interpreted as treating the child differently to one's own children and are there to essentially emphasise the right of a child to know about their birth family. The **Shari'a** stipulates that an adopted child has the right to know about their true identity and lineage and it is an obligation as a Muslim to fulfil these rights of the child, whether immediately or at a later date.

There are often many misconceptions surrounding adoption in Islam. One of the fundamental differences is the issue of the term **Tabanni**, which is often translated as adoption. **Tabanni** is where the adoptive

**"Our daughter is from a mixed race and religious background. She had a non-Muslim first name and a Muslim surname. We did not want to change her name but quickly realised that referring to her with a non-Muslim first name in our community was an obvious sign that she was adopted, so we gave her a middle name that was a traditional Muslim name to protect her privacy. Now, as a teenager, she chooses which names she uses (she uses both), and she is proud of her adoption and happy to speak about it openly."**

– Muslim adoptive mother

parents bring up a child and claim them as their own, while hiding the child's true identity from them, this is something prohibited in Islam. Present UK adoption law preserves a child's birth parentage in a child's birth certificate and adopters are trained to keep a 'life story book' that has a record of the child's birth history with photographs of birth parents. Adoptive parents are supported to have conversations with their adopted child about their adoption and family history and identity. As such, it would be grossly incorrect to translate adoption as **Tabanni**.

In the Qur'an, Allah revealed, '**Call them by [the names of] their [biological] fathers**' (Qur'an: 33:5). Upon the revelation of this verse the name of the Prophet's adopted son was changed from 'son of Muhammad' to 'son of Harithah' his biological father. This verse highlighted the significance of keeping the child's identity by preserving their lineage. Under the present adoption laws in the UK adoptive parents may change a child's birth surname if they want to. However, under the **Shari'a** changing a name would be fine if it was done in a way that ensured the lineage of the child to the birth parents would not be severed.

In cases where a child has their name changed for safeguarding reasons, and where disclosing a child's true identity would bring risks, both UK law as well as the **Shari'a** state that the safety of the child is paramount. Therefore, a child's true identity would only be disclosed when either the child is no longer at risk of harm or reaches an age where they would understand the risks around why their identity had to be hidden. In any case the true identity of a person would never be completely erased, only hidden.

**Toolkit 3 looks deeper into the Islamic jurisprudential aspects of adoption.**

# The Story of Zayd

In the biography of the Messenger Muhammad, one finds an insightful story about adoption. That is none other than the story Zayd ibn Harithah.

\*Whenever Muslims read the name of the Messenger of Allah 'Muhammad' it is considered to be respectful to say 'peace be upon him', and when they read the name of one of his companions they would say 'may Allah be pleased with him'.

The story contains core teachings around the archetype of the Muslim persona towards children in care. The story is so significant it is giving special reference in the Qur'an in a way that no other event in the biography of the Messenger has received. Allah mentions Zayd by name in the Qur'an, and, despite there being companions that Muslims hold in higher regard such as Abu Bakr or Ali, it is only Zayd who receives this honour. This, together with his commonly known title of 'the beloved of the beloved', and his mention amongst one of the first five people to have converted to Islam, gives Zayd a special status amongst the companions of the Messenger.



## The Story of Zayd

Zayd was ethnically Arab and dark-skinned. He was kidnapped from his birth parents at a young age and sold to traders, eventually being sold as a slave to a Makkan Arab who gifted him to the noble lady Khadijah. From the very start, Khadijah treated Zayd well and made him part of her household. However, his separation caused his birth parents much grief and they never gave up the search for him, hoping to find closure.

When Muhammad married Khadijah, Zayd was 15 years of age, and only 10 years younger than Muhammad. Muhammad was immensely fond of Zayd and Khadijah saw that so she gifted Zayd to him. Just as Khadijah did, Muhammad would also treat Zayd as one of his own family. Zayd would sit with the family when they ate together and would not be treated any differently to Muhammad and Khadijah's own children.

A few years passed, and Zayd's birth parents heard that Zayd was in Makkah so both Zayd's father and uncle went there to find him. They met Muhammad and explained the emotional backstory, petitioning Muhammad to return Zayd and offering him anything he wanted. Zayd's father said 'name your price and I will pay'. Muhammad called for Zayd and asked him if he knew the two men. Zayd said that he recognised them both, one was his father Harithah, and the other his uncle. Upon hearing that Muhammad asked Zayd to return with them as a free man.

The moment was full of emotions and Zayd was a young adult now and he had freedom in front of his eyes. He made his decision and turned to his father saying, 'I have seen something special in Muhammad and I will not choose to depart from his company'. His father, taken aback with these words, responded 'Zayd, do you choose slavery over freedom, and over your mother, father and family? What special treatment have you seen?' To which Zayd replied, 'He treats me better than his own children and his family'. Upon hearing this, Muhammad immediately took Zayd by his hand and made a declaration that Zayd was his son, saying: 'I testify that Zayd is my son, he inherits from me and I from him'. Zayd's father was pleased with this, as it brought closure for him to see that his son was happy, well looked after, and no longer a slave. From that day onwards, Zayd was treated by Makkan society as the son of Muhammad or, 'ibn Muhammad'.

Around 20 years later, Allah sent down the revelation of Surah Al-Ahzab (Qur'an, 33) with the following verses:

***"...Nor has He made your adopted sons your real sons, that is your saying with your mouths whereas Allah says the truth, and He guides to the (right) way. Call them (adopted sons) by (the names of) their fathers, that is more just with Allah."*** (Qur'an 33:4-5)

***"Muhammad is not a father of any man among you, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the last of the Prophets"***

(Qur'an 33:90)

It was the revelation of these verses that prompted Zayd to drop 'ibn Muhammad' and revert to the use of his birth father's name 'ibn Harithah'. Some of the Arabs began to criticise this change in law as an affront to their social norms, but this was only one of the many societal changes that Allah was to bring about through His Messenger.

The verse also made it clear that the way the Messenger had treated Zayd was the right way: he treated him as his own son, and not as a slave or servant.

So the favour Allah bestowed on Zayd was to bring him into the family of the Messenger and make him a believer; and the favour that the Messenger bestowed on Zayd was to make him feel like he was a member of the family, to free him from slavery and give him the status of the son of Muhammad. And when Allah eventually removed that status, He replaced it with the mention of his name in His revelation.

Whenever Zayd's name is recited, it carries with it the reward of an act of worship for the reciter. From the revelation of the Qur'an till the end of time, no one else has had such a favour given to him or her as was given to Zayd.

# Mandatory Requirements To Become An Adopter

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**"It's not okay for young people to just survive, it is important for them to thrive"**

Naz Shah, MP Bradford West, Shadow Minister Housing and Communities

There are various regulations and requirements surrounding adoption that applies to all prospective adoptive parents who wish to adopt a child in the UK. These regulations are to be adhered to in the first instance when considering adoption and complied with throughout the adoption process.

To be considered as an adopter you have to be 21 or over. You may adopt regardless of your marital status, disability, gender, religion, sexual orientation, income or whether you have parenting experience or not. You will however, certainly need to be happy to make space in your life and home for a child and be reasonably aware of the general issues of becoming a parent and the specific issues of adoption. You will also need to be patient, flexible and energetic, and determined to make a real difference to a child's life.

## You can adopt...

- At the age of 21 and there is no upper age limit to adoption
- Regardless of your marital status, disability, gender, religion, sexual orientation, income or whether you have parenting experience or not.
- If you are single.
- If you are an unmarried couple.
- If you have a physical or mental disability as this is not a barrier to adoption but will be assessed to ensure you can provide the right care for the child.
- Whatever ethnic background you are from.
- If you don't own your own home - if you have the space and security to care for a child as they grow up you will be considered.
- Even if you are on a low income or benefits - you may be eligible for support or benefits.
- Even if you already have children and you can adopt more than one child at a time as some children have siblings also waiting to be adopted.





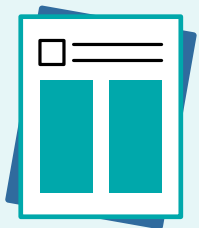
# The Adoption Process

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## Stage One

- Initial Checks and exploration
- Checks and references
- Group Training



## Stage Two

- Assesment with social worker
- Adoption panel meeting



## Stage Three

- Matching you with the right child
- Getting to know the child
- Moving in



# The Adoption Process – How It Works



## Stage One:

Once you have had the initial telephone conversation with an agency, you are likely to have an initial visit to discuss your interest further and find out more about the process. Following this you will make a decision if you want to proceed and formally 'Register Your Interest' to become adoptive parents and enter Stage One of the process where statutory checks are undertaken and preparations are made for training.

Normally this stage will take up to two months. However, it would depend on a number of factors including how quick you are in returning the application forms as well as the documents which the agency or local authority may be requesting from you to carry out the checks. The adoption agency will be responsible for getting to know you and your family during this time and you are likely to undertake the initial preparation training.

### During this stage you will be asked to provide the following information:

- Factual information about you and your household
- Information on you and your partner – such as health, occupation and income
- Contact details of at least three referees the agency can contact, one can be a family member, the remaining two must be friends or colleagues
- At this stage, you can let the agency know about the preference of the child you would like to adopt.
- There are likely to be legal disclaimers for you to sign, including one that states you are not in the process of applying to be adopters with any other agency.

## Checks and References

This application form will include permission to seek references. The agency will request a medical report and a criminal background check, known as a full Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. They will contact your referees to gain written references, usually two non-family members but in some cases this may be more than two – either family or non-family members.

A medical report is completed by your GP which will then be passed on to the agency medical adviser to check and to ensure that you are fit enough to cope with the rigours of parenting. Any medical issues that arise from this report will be discussed with you, and sometimes further information will be sought. There may be employer references, including previous employers, that will be sought.

A police check will be conducted to confirm that you have no convictions or cautions that would prevent you from being an adoptive parent. Past convictions do not necessarily exclude you, but it is important to be open and honest with the adoption agency staff about any health issues or past convictions so these can be discussed early on. Finally, if you have lived outside the UK you may be asked to provide relevant evidence from that country as well as a foreign good conduct check.

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## Groups Training

You will be invited to attend a preparation group training session, during this meeting you will get to meet with other prospective adopters. This will help you explore the benefits and challenges of adoption.

Typically this training would take place during Stage One of your journeys into adoption. During this meeting, you will also have the opportunity to meet experienced adopters and talk to them about the realities of adopting.

As well as key parenting skills, the preparation groups help you think about approaches you can use to care for children who may have experienced neglect and abuse. The aim is to develop the knowledge understanding, insight and skills you will need to become an adoptive parent.



## Stage Two

This stage consists of two main parts: assessment of your suitability to adopt and the adoption panel meeting, who will have full access to all the information collected by the adoption agency.

This stage typically completed by four months, during which time you will be assessed and a decision will be made on whether you are suitable to become an adopter.

The main part of the assessment is a series of visits made by a social worker from the adoption agency to your home. However, since the lockdown many of these now take place online. During this time, the social worker gets to know you and your family and spends time helping you think about what strengths you could bring to adoptive parenting as well as any significant challenges. They then present their findings in a report to the Adoption Panel, as well as a decision maker responsible for approving you as a suitable adopter.

**The assessment process is extremely important as it would help the social worker to get a rounded picture of you and your family set up.**

This process involves conversations with you, and your partner if you are a couple. Your social worker will also meet any children you have and other people who live with you, as well as some of your wider friends and family who are your personal referees. The assessment process is extremely important as it would help the social worker to get a rounded picture of you and your family set up.

During this time, the social worker will have conversations with you and your partner about your childhood and your experiences of growing up. Please note, any information the social worker is collecting is going to be recorded. They will ask you about how you have dealt with past



experiences, how you feel about your family and what sort of parent you want to be. Your capacity to reflect on your own past experiences may well be important in the future as you help your child reflect on things that have happened in their early years.

Your agency will contact previous partners, especially if there have been children involved in the relationship, and any adult children you or your partner might have. While this might seem intimidating, remember that like the whole adoption process this is done with the best interests of the children in mind. The social worker may want to discuss with you why your relationship ended and what you learnt from it.



Once the assessment process is complete the social worker will gather all of the information together into a Prospective Adopters Report, which is then taken to the agency's independent Adoption Panel. You will be provided with a copy of the report to check and if there is something that is inaccurate or you feel you need to add, you can do so at this stage. Once you have approved this report, it will then be sent to the panel and a date and time for the panel meeting will be set.

The adoption panel is made up of social workers and other professionals as well as experienced adopters and others with lived experience of adoption and is independent of the adoption agency. It is their responsibility to make a judgement on your suitability to be an adoptive parent. The panel meets to consider all the evidence presented to them and then make a recommendation back to the agency. At the panel meeting, if the panel is unsure about anything they will discuss this with you and will make recommendations. At this stage, your adoption agency's decision maker will decide if you are suitable to adopt. The decision maker is a nominated person within the adoption agency who has the legal responsibility to make an approval decision. In most circumstances, the decision maker accepts the adoption panel's recommendation.

## Stage Three

Once you have been approved you are now an approved adopter. The search for your child now begins. Your social worker and the adoption agency will work with you to identify children whose needs you could meet. As well as this, you may use online resources such as [www.linkmaker.co.uk](http://www.linkmaker.co.uk) to identify children you feel you might match with.



When a match with a child has been identified and agreed by the adoption agency, your social worker will support you with introductions with the child and a matching panel will be convened to discuss and approve the match. If the child is with foster carers, you may find you are spending more time in their home and they are there to support you and the child bond. Once the match has been approved, you will spend more time getting to know the child with the support of your adoption social worker. A series of visits and short stays lead up to the child moving in.

After the child has lived with you for 10 weeks you are entitled to apply to the court for an Adoption Order. Your agency will support you with this application, so that you can be legally considered as the child's parent.

## Kashif and Samira's Story

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Kashif and Samira decided to adopt a child after experiencing problems having a child of their own. They said they had a positive experience with the adoption process and told us that,

*"We adopted our first child many years ago after we were told that me and my wife could not have children. After adopting two children and being a parent to them I can't see my life without them and would do it all again. For us the process was relatively straightforward which is why we chose adoption for our second child. Sometimes people in the community have apprehension about adopting or fostering a child or do not know enough about it, but from my experience of having been through adopting children at the end of the day and the bond you establish with them is truly rewarding."*





## Single Mother Tahera's Story

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Tahera is a single mother who has four children of her own that are all married. She decided to adopt two boys one is now 15 years old and another boy is 9 years old who she originally fostered.

*"I have found the adoption process overall straightforward but there were challenges nonetheless. At the beginning I had to prove that I was able to look after the children with my own finances and accommodation. I initially fostered and then decided to adopt. I think that there are misconceptions about adoption but it is really rewarding."*





## Frequently asked questions

### **I have a criminal record. Can I adopt?**

Having a criminal record does not automatically exclude you from applying to become an adopter.

However, you cannot apply to become an adoptive parent if you or anyone living in your household has a criminal conviction or has been cautioned for specified criminal offences against children and/or some sexual offences against adults. Agencies will discuss with you any convictions that are recorded against you.

### **How many times do I have to attend a panel meeting before I get approved as an adopter?**

Normally once, unless the panel has further questions.

### **How long would I have to wait for a child?**

This depends on your 'preferences' in relation to a child who needs adopting.

The more flexible you are the easier it will be to identify a match. The key issues will be the needs and circumstances of the child and the strengths and experiences of the prospective adoptive parent.

Many adoption agencies refrain from mentioning a timeframe as this can depend on so many things such as your flexibility, the ethnicity, or other specific matters in relation to the child you are considering, the children available and the availability of other adopters. Many agencies have very few children from Chinese, Indian & Asian backgrounds and if you are approved with them you should discuss ways to access these children through their inter-agency networks.



# Frequently asked questions

## Will the adopted child be like my birth child?

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In the right home an adopted child will grow up like any other child and what is considered a normal childhood is a really wide spectrum.

However, it is worth remembering that issues can potentially arise when a child becomes aware that they have been adopted. Some may feel grief over the loss of a relationship with their birthparents or the loss of cultural and family connections that might have existed, and they may have thoughts and imaginations about these.

Thinking about the mental health of your adopted child will be important, and your adoption agency will support you around this. Children with mental health issues such as feelings of abandonment or unworthiness may present these in behaviours and can be triggered by a loss of a loved one, puberty or even when it comes to finding a partner.

Some families have misconceptions that adopted children who come from birth families where there have been drugs or immoral behaviour and may be permanently damaged. A child's trauma can be overcome and adopted children should not be stigmatised with these behaviours nor should they be seen as having inherited them.

For more support and advice around this please do visit [www.myadoptionfamily.com](http://www.myadoptionfamily.com)

## What financial support is available to adoptive parents?

Once the adoption order has been granted, the adoptive parents take on the financial responsibility for looking after the child or children. Like any other parents, you may be eligible for a number of benefits, grants, depending on your household income.

For further information, please refer to our to the resources page on [www.myadoptionfamily.com](http://www.myadoptionfamily.com)

## How likely is it for an applicant to get a Muslim child under two years old?

This is possible but how long it takes for you to be matched to a child under two depends on how open you are to what ethnicities and mixed ethnicities you are willing to adopt. Social workers often aim to match a child with a family of similar heritage and culture for good reason.

However, if you are matched with a child of another culture or heritage, you should learn about their background and raise them with knowledge and understanding of this, to help them with their feelings around identity.

We would advise that you should be open to adopting children even if they have not come from Muslim parents, especially if the child is under two years of age.

### **What is the average age of a child at adoption?**

The average age of a child at adoption is three years old.

### **Can my children share a bedroom with an adopted child or would I require a spare bedroom?**

Although this is not a statutory requirement, many agencies ask for you to have an empty bedroom that is not currently being used by another occupant of the house.

You need to have suitable accommodation for your family and for the child who will be joining your family. This will mainly depend upon the needs of the child you are adopting and it is important to discuss this with the adoption agency at an early stage. It is important to consider that children need to have some space as they grow and develop and older children may need a private space to call their own.

### **If a child is from a dual-heritage background how do I support their identity?**

It is good practice that your adoptive child has a sense of their biological family history and cultural identity.

By embracing their heritage and culture, you can help assure that they develop into a healthy adult. During your assessment process the social worker will assess your suitability to adopt children of other cultures or dual heritages

### **When can I apply for adoption of the child?**

Once the child has been matched and placed with adopters, they will be able to apply for the adoption to become permanent normally after two months.

This is done through the courts via an application for an adoption order, which when granted makes the adoption legally binding and gives the adopters full parental responsibility.

### **Can a non-Muslim adopted child be raised as a Muslim child?**

You can raise the child as your own, however, if the child is coming from a different faith group then it would be best practice to teach them about the religion of the family they were born into as well as Islam and then allow them to decide which faith they would like to choose as they grow up.



### **Do I have to consider children of all backgrounds to be approved as an adopter?**

It is perfectly acceptable for you to have a preference of what type of child you want to adopt. However, to have the best chance of adopting a child, you should be open to consider children of all backgrounds.

While adoption services will try their best to match you with a child of your preference this may not always be possible in your local area and you may need to look to other agencies. By being more flexible, you increase your chances of being successfully approved and matched with a child in a shorter time.

Once you are an approved adopter you will then be eligible to adopt any child across the country and this should open up options for you to adopt a child closer to your preference (see [www.linkmaker.co.uk](http://www.linkmaker.co.uk)).

### **Do I have to keep in touch with birth parents?**

Under UK adoption laws, the arrangements for maintaining some form of contact with birth parents or other significant people is done on a case by case basis.

However, when children are adopted, most children continue to have some form of contact, direct or indirect with their birth families.

There are many benefits for a child keeping in touch with their birth family. Having regular information or continuing to see their family can help the child with their identity, build their self-esteem and support them to know that everyone who is or has been in their lives loves them.

Your social worker will discuss contact with birth parents with you and every child will have a contact plan regarding keeping in touch with their birth family and this will be developed according to their own circumstances, there may however be reasons why direct contact might not be encouraged. In a case where an adopted child has siblings in another adoptive family direct contact between siblings groups would always be encouraged.

### **What are the issues of Hijab, wet nursing and how can a Mahram relationship be established with the child?**

These issues have been covered in depth in Toolkit 3. For further information on some of the faith-based topics refer to Toolkit 3 and for specific guidance on faith-based issues please email us: [lmam@myfosterfamily.com](mailto:lmam@myfosterfamily.com)

## What are Voluntary Adoption Agencies?

Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) are independent, not for profit organisations that are smaller than most statutory agencies and offer a personalised service to adopters from all backgrounds.

These organisations work in partnership with local authorities as well as regional adoption agencies across the country to find families for children in care who are unable to stay with their birth parents/relatives.

Each year VAAs place almost a quarter of all children in their forever homes in the UK. They also have expertise in finding families for children who have priority needs, including sibling groups, older children and those from BAME backgrounds.

## What are Regional Adoption Agencies?

A Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) brings together adoption professionals from local authorities across a region providing expertise and support at every stage of the adoption journey.

RAAs offer a new, and innovative approach to recruiting adopters, finding families for the children in care in their region and providing long-term adoption support that families want and need.

## Who is My Adoption Family?

My Adoption Family is a not-for-profit organisation that is dedicated to improving the experience of supporting Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) perspectives and approved adopters.

As a member of the National Adoption Recruitment Steering Group and the Special Guardianship Leadership Board we actively work in the sector to help raise awareness and support people from BAME backgrounds to become adopters in the UK.

My Adoption Family caters for a diverse range of families in England looking to begin their journeys in adopting a child. We believe that adopting a child is a rewarding and life-changing decision that can transform the life of a child and give them a family they deserve. Therefore, we aim to ensure that every potential adopter goes away with all the information and training they need to be the best possible adoptive parent for vulnerable children and those who have come from often traumatic circumstances.





## How does international adoption work?

International adoption, or inter-country adoption, is the adoption of a child from another country.

These children are usually adopted from orphanages and are eligible for adoption because their birth parents were unable to care for them due to financial, legal, or emotional issues. International policies have led to a decrease in international adoptions in recent years, but it is still an entirely viable option for hopeful parents but can be expensive.

For more information on this, please see the My Adoption Family website resources page. [www.myadoptionfamily.com](http://www.myadoptionfamily.com)

## How does Fostering to Adoption work?

Fostering to Adopt was a government plan to prevent delay and minimise the disruption when young children, typically babies, are moved from a foster their care placement to adoption.

These young children are usually still in care proceedings, and so there is a possibility that the court may conclude that they need to return to the birth family. Fostering to Adopt prevents unnecessary moves in and out of foster care for the child as they are placed with approved adopters who are also approved as foster carers. If adoption becomes the agreed plan by the court, the foster care placement becomes an adoption placement without the child experiencing any disruption.

Additionally, having consistent care for the child supports the child in developing healthy attachments. Please see the resources page for more information on this topic. [www.myadoptionfamily.com](http://www.myadoptionfamily.com)



## What support can I get from My Adoption Family?

Within My Adoption Family a lot of support and resources are available for adopters and potential adopters. The type of support and resources My Adoption Family offers are:

### 1 Free one-to-one telephone consultation service and a free consultation service with the Head of Recruitment.

This consultation service provides more in depth information on adoption and any queries you may have regarding adoption and the process. During this consultation service the Head of Recruitment will discuss factors such as being open-minded, which is very important if you want to become an adopter. After this call the Head of Recruitment will email you with mandatory requirements and a series of FAQs to help you develop more information on adoption. Within the email, there is also a link to the You Can Adopt website where you can add in your postcode and it will bring up all the adoption agencies which cover your area.

After this, you will be able to contact your nearest agency individually and set up a meeting with them to discuss the adoption process.

### 2 Support Network

**My Adoption Family also offers a support network via Whatsapp.**

This consists of senior team members as well as approved foster carers, adopters, social workers, faith leaders and people coming from professional backgrounds. The purpose of this support network is if any individual has a specific question which our recruitment team is unable to answer, a member of our team will get in touch with our advisory group who will then explore further and provide us with the correct information.





### 3 Buddy Service

This consists of a potential adopter connecting with an existing approved adopter who will provide support on adoption.

During this conversation, the potential adopter can discuss and learn more on various aspects of adoption such as panel meetings, anxiety on adoption and how the experience of adoption was for the adopter. The existing adopter can offer one-to-one support to the potential adopters to help them with their journey of adoption.

### 4 Adoption Webinars

In these webinars approved adopters as well as faith leaders are invited to give advice on adoption or answer any questions you may have prior to adopting

This webinar is an open forum where anyone involved in adoption can attend i.e. social workers, potential adopters, and people who work in the adoption sector. The webinar takes place on the last Wednesday of every month. These monthly webinars allow people easy access to ask questions without any hesitation and feel comfortable with speaking to our advisors.

### 5 Social Media

My Adoption Family's social media accounts also provide support by providing all the latest information and updates on adoption.

You can visit our social media pages on Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. As well as all the latest and updated information, we share various campaigns that can support you in your adoption journey.

### 6 Website

The My Adoption Family website has various information around adoption, including the Islamic perspective on adoption and about My Adoption Family's services.

Visiting the website will allow you to gain further insight and knowledge about the adoption sector and the different faith viewpoints.

### 7 Training

My Adoption Family has provided training for over 500 social workers and continues to provide educational training resources to help individuals enhance their skills within the adoptive sector.

# Glossary

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**Hijab** is the modest dress code. The Muslim dress code for both male and female emphasises modesty in the way we choose to dress. It includes decorum when dealing with strangers in public as well as behaviour in our interactions with one another in private.

**Mahram** are close relatives. The word 'Mahram' includes individuals that are so closely related to each other that it is deemed impermissible to inter-marry and where the rules of Hijab are relaxed. These include connections such as parent-child, siblings, uncle-niece, aunt-nephew, etc.

**Radha'ah** is the Arabic word for breast-feeding. Islam confers the honorific status of mother to any woman who breastfeeds a child with her own milk during infancy. Islam considers the bond created by nourishing a child in infancy similar to being related to each other through blood ties.

**Shari'a** is Islamic law. It literally means 'a path to life giving water' and is considered guidance on how one should live their life to be in complete harmony.

**Yateem** is an orphan child whose father, or both parents have died and is in need of care and is vulnerable.

**Tabanni** is where the adoptive parents bring up a child and claims it as their own while hiding the child's true identity from them, this is something prohibited in Islam.

**Dharurah** means necessity, as in something that is usually deemed as impermissible but is allowed when there is a pressing need out a necessity.

**Fatawa** are ruling points or edicts on Islamic law. A single ruling would be called a fatwa.

**Kafalah** literally means sponsorship and comes from the root word meaning 'to feed'. The idea in kafalah encompasses numerous terms we use in English such as adoption, fostering, guardianship and other means of meeting the needs of children in care. A core element involves a 'commitment to take care of the maintenance, nurturing and protection of a minor, in the same way as a father would do for his son'.

**Haram** means forbidden or not allowed, something that Allah does not want a person to do

**Halal** means allowed, something Allah has made acceptable to consume.

**Qur'an** is the holy book for Muslims and the primary source of the religion. Muslims consider it as the literal word of God (Allah in Arabic).

**Sunnah** refers to the authenticated sayings, actions and tacit approval of the Prophet Muhammad.

**Ijmaa'** is the unanimous viewpoint of religious scholars on matters through scholarly deliberations based on primary sources though not explicitly mentioned in primary sources.

**Qiyaas** is the use of analogous reasoning to find common denominators that can help interpret general principles found in primary sources in order to reach conclusions on issues not common during the time of the Prophet.



# Resources And Further Reading

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## For general advice on adoption

- <https://www.myadoptionfamily.com> (specialist Muslim advice)
- <https://www.youcanadopt.co.uk/>
- <https://www.adoptionuk.org/>

## For financial support

- <https://www.gov.uk/adoption-pay-leave>
- <https://www.gov.uk/child-benefit>
- <https://www.gov.uk/child-tax-credit>

## For international adoption

- <https://www.icacentre.org.uk/>

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# Adoption and Muslims in England

Toolkit 2: For The General Muslim  
Community And Wider Population

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