

## Thinking about adoption again: Second time adopters

Many adopters who have experienced the joys of helping a child to settle into their family wish to adopt again. They will however want to consider how this will affect them and the children already in their family. There is also a particular assessment process for second time adopters.

### 'Fast Track' Assessment

Adopters and approved foster carers will have gained considerable experience and have already been through a thorough preparation and assessment process. Therefore if they wish to adopt again there is a 'Fast Track' assessment process which should take no longer than 4 months.

The 'Fast Track' assessment is available to:

- Adopters approved in England and Wales since 30<sup>th</sup> December 2005, including adopters approved for overseas adoption
- Approved Foster carers who were assessed under the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011.

The 'Fast Track' assessment means that you enter the adoption process at **Stage 2** ([bit.ly/adptnstg2](http://bit.ly/adptnstg2)) rather than Stage 1. Adoption agencies are not legally required to obtain DBS checks, medical reports or references, if they are satisfied with the information already held by them, or provided to them (with the applicant's consent) by the previous agency. They will decide whether to repeat statutory checks based on the length of time since approval and, for foster carers, since a child was placed with them. The assessment should nevertheless be completed and a decision on approval made within four months.

The assessment should be a tailored one and take into account previous experience. The agency should offer any additional relevant training (e.g. if the needs of the child the adopter/foster carer is hoping to adopt are different to those already fostered/adopted).

### Which Agency?

You may want to contact the agency that assessed you and supported you with your previous adoption. They will already hold information about you in their records and their staff and location may be familiar to you. Alternatively, you may wish to apply to a different adoption agency. You should be offered the fast track assessment whichever agency you apply to, as information may be shared between the agencies with your consent.

Foster carers may wish to apply to their own local authority, or the one responsible for the child that they are fostering, but are also free to choose any adoption agency including a voluntary adoption agency. There is further information below about how to find adoption agencies.

## Things to think about

If you're considering adopting for a second time there are a number of things you may want to think about.

### **The length of time since previously adopted children joined your family**

It is important to give a child who has joined your family plenty of time to feel secure before thinking of adopting again. The time needed will vary depending on the child's age at placement and the experiences they may have had before joining the family. Even a child who was relatively young when placed, will need time to enjoy being the centre of attention before learning to share with another child.

Most adoption agencies would expect the family to have had **at least two years** to adjust to living together as a family before considering placing another child.

### **Age gap between children**

Adopted children will have a range of insecurities when they join your family and you will have worked hard to help that child grow in security with you. If you adopt for a second time, the child joining your family will probably be another child with an unsettled history and adoption agencies will not want to do anything to undermine your existing child's security.

Agencies will generally only consider placing a second child as the youngest child in the family. Research evidence shows that giving each child space is advisable and therefore a wider age gap (**a minimum of two years, in some cases more**) between the children may make it easier for each child to feel that their place in the family is secure, reducing any conflicts due to children being at similar developmental stages.

### **What if my adopted child's birth family had another child?**

If no-one in the birth family was able to care for the child, the adoption agency would approach your family to discuss placing this child with you to enable the siblings to grow up together. There would be an assessment to establish whether this plan would be manageable for you and in the interests of all the children. The agency may consider **Fostering for Adoption** ([bit.ly/fost4adopt](http://bit.ly/fost4adopt)) to reduce delay if there was a clear plan to place this child for adoption. Either way the 'Fast Track' assessment process would be used.

### **Be prepared for your child's reaction**

Your older child may regress when another child joins your family. Adopters can be taken aback when a child who seemed very settled and ready for a younger sibling is suddenly demanding and challenging. Earlier feelings of insecurity may surface unexpectedly for both child and parents. For this reason it is helpful to talk through with your adoption team the timing of a second application and the age and backgrounds of children that you can consider.

### **Will my age prevent me adopting again?**

Adopters who were in their 40's when first adopting may be worried that they won't be considered for another child. Remember that there is no upper age limit for adopters and that, as an experienced adoptive parent, you will have much to offer that is valued by adoption agencies.

## Next steps

If you feel ready to approach an adoption agency you can find local agencies by visiting our website [www.first4adoption.org.uk](http://www.first4adoption.org.uk). Agencies are happy to answer questions even if you're not yet sure about adoption, so do contact them if you want to find out more. Alternatively call our information line and speak with one of our advisers who will provide you with details of adoption agencies and answer questions at any stage along the way.