

Thinking about adoption if you are single

There is nothing unusual about single parenting – around 25% of households in the UK with dependent children are headed by a single parent. Many people plan to have children but as the years pass by they may not find the right partner. Others may be happily single and not looking for a partner. The desire to build a family, to love, nurture and care for a child is not limited to heterosexual couples, and nowadays the diversity of family life is recognised and accepted.

It has been possible for single people to adopt from the earliest days of adoption and over the years many single people have successfully adopted. 10% of children, 420 children, adopted between 2012 and 2013 were adopted by single adopters. Single people should not experience discrimination on the grounds that they are single, whatever their gender or sexual orientation, and adoption agencies welcome enquiries from single people.

Things to think about

If you're considering adopting as a single person there are a number of things you may want to think about.

- **Your life goals.** If you have unfulfilled career or personal goals, think carefully about how adopting a child will impact on your life and your ability to pursue other ambitions. Are you comfortable with how you will feel?
- **Your support network.** All parents need support and if you are single you will need other people. You will also need to feel comfortable asking for help. Without support even everyday tasks like shopping or hair appointments, let alone an evening or weekend break, may be hard to manage. Family and friends that support your decision to parent alone and are willing to be involved in caring for your child will be invaluable.
- **Your finances.** As a single parent, having sole financial responsibility for a child can feel daunting. Although you don't need to be wealthy to adopt, you will need to be financially stable and able to support yourself and your child or children. Some financial support may be available, depending on the child or children you adopt and your personal circumstances, but to avoid unnecessary stress, consider carefully how you will make ends meet in the short and long term, and whether you need to build up savings in advance.
- **Employment.** Most single parents need to work, so consider how family-friendly your employer is and, realistically, how compatible your current career is with single parenting. You will need to take time off when a child first comes to live with you, and you may be entitled to adoption leave and pay. Check what your employer's scheme offers. Some single adopters choose to adopt school-age children because it can make working while parenting more

manageable.

- **Romantic relationships.** You may not want to be single forever, in which case you will need to think carefully about when and how to begin dating after you adopt. Your child will need your undivided attention for several months; it may even take years for them to feel completely secure with you. As well as practical issues such as time and babysitters, you will need to consider carefully when and how to introduce your child to a new relationship and how to teach a new partner about adoption and how to support your child's needs.

If you think you can do it, you probably can! Don't let these questions and issues stop you from getting in touch with adoption agencies if you are keen to adopt. You will have opportunities to discuss single parenting issues during the preparation and assessment process and you can also ask to speak with a single adopter who is happy to share their experience.

Advantages of adopting as a single parent for you and your child

- Not having to negotiate or consult with a partner means you can parent and do your best for your child the way that you want to.
- Your child will also not be competing for your attention with anyone else. You may build a very special 1:1 relationship, and for some children a single adopter is preferred for this reason.
- Research shows that children adopted by single adopters do just as well as other adopted children emotionally and in other outcomes.

Success stories

You may want to look at these single adoption stories:

www.first4adoption.org.uk/success-stories-single-mum

www.nationaladoptionweek.org.uk/adoption/stories/carols-story

www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2013/nov/02/adoption-success-story-one-for-the-boys

We hope this information has helped answer some questions you may have. If you feel ready to approach an adoption agency you can find local agencies by visiting our website www.first4adoption.org.uk. Alternatively call **0300 222 0022** and speak with one of our advisers who will provide you with details of adoption agencies. Agencies are happy to give information and answer questions even if you're not yet sure about adoption, so do contact them if you want to find out more.

We are also here to provide information and answer questions at any stage along the way, so don't hesitate to get in touch. Good luck with your exploration.