

Foreword

We become adopters for a huge range of reasons. Infertility, the wish to help a child, a drive to expand our families, because adoption has featured in our own lives – any combination of these and many other motivations lie behind the decision to parent a child not born with our genes.

As we move along our adoption journeys, we quickly discover an enormous volume of information – anecdotes, articles, books and blogs – exploring aspects of adoption. While we're lucky, as a community, to have access to such an array of perspectives, experiences and expertise, it's easy to become confused and overwhelmed. What adopters need is a go-to source of clear, practical information about the adoption system.

The Adopter's Handbook is that source. It provides a crisp, factual guide to everything you need to know before, during and after the adoption process. From whether adoption is the right choice for you, to considerations around approval and matching, with chapters on financial and legal matters, schools and education, and adopted children's development and health needs, the handbook is packed with accessible and comprehensive explanations of processes, issues and sources of help. Richly signposted with links to additional resources, *The Adopter's Handbook* cleverly strings together all of the stages, questions and guidance connected to adoption, without getting bogged down in any of them.

But it isn't all PARs and panels. *The Adopter's Handbook* recognises that this is a human process, fraught with hopes, fears, doubts and excitement – for adopters and children alike. Now in its sixth edition, it has been updated to reflect developments in policy and practice, with a new chapter on adoption support for both children and adopters – including the all-important need for self-care for adoptive parents. We can't absorb and heal the trauma our children have suffered without taking the time to look after ourselves.

The majority of children adopted today are placed from care. Many of them will have suffered abuse and neglect, and none will have experienced the continuity of care and love that all children need and should have. These are among the most vulnerable children in our society. Adoption is an opportunity to transform these children's lives, breaking what can sometimes be a generations-long cycle of dysfunction, offering them the stability and encouragement to become all that they can be.

Around 4,000 children will be adopted this year in England. All of them deserve adoptive parents who will love and support them to overcome the trauma of their pasts. They need us to be the best parents we can

be, well-supported with information, guidance and practical help, an understanding of our rights, and equipped with the knowledge we need to secure a bright future for our children, as well as ourselves.

The Adopter's Handbook provides a much-needed roadmap for our adoption journeys. Whatever our reasons to adopt, and whatever the unique and wonderful children we parent, we will all benefit from this beautifully complete and transparent explanation of how the adoption system works.

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