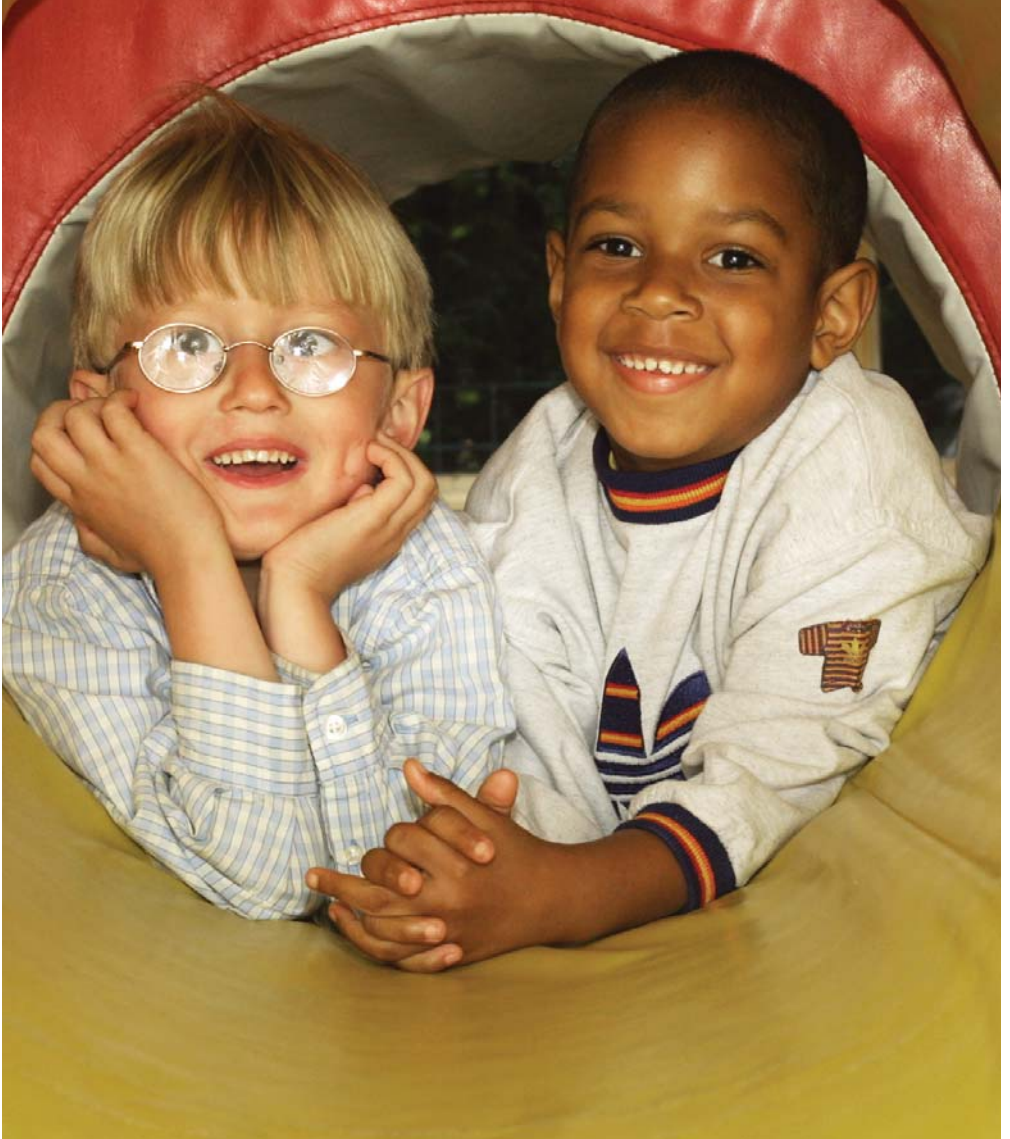


Coram's Adoption and Permanent Families Service provides loving and secure families for children in care who cannot live with their birth parents.



Adoptive parents

We need a variety of adoptive parents who enjoy children and want to help them develop their own personality and talents. You can apply to become an adoptive parent regardless of your marital status, sexuality or residential status.

We welcome applications from:

- A wide range of ethnicities, races and religions
- Single People
- Couples in a stable, committed and long-term relationship
- Those who currently have no children as well as those who are parents already

And those who are:

- Employed or on benefits
- Homeowners or those in rented accommodation
- Over 21 years of age (we do not have an upper age limit but applicants should have the potential to care for a child throughout their childhood and offer support for some years beyond)
- Normally resident in the UK
- Without any criminal conviction against children

We are looking for people who live within:

- a 35 mile radius of central London
- one hours travelling time of our East Midlands office in Shepshed
- a 50 mile radius of Cambridge

Finance

Financial assistance for adopters includes:

- Paid adoption leave (26 weeks with adoption allowances, 26 weeks unpaid)
- Child benefit
- Child tax credit
- Additional financial support from local authorities may be available for some children with special needs or for groups of brothers and sisters
- Settling in grant (available for most adopters)
- State benefits for children with disabilities



Children

The children who need families include:

- Pre-school children
- School age children who have had unsettled lives
- Brothers and sisters who need to remain together
- Children of all ages who have disabilities

All these children will have had unsettled lives and need parents who can offer them love and reliable care to help them rebuild their trust in adults. There are children from many different backgrounds needing to be adopted. Where possible, we try to place children with families of similar race, ethnicity and religion.

How long does it take?

Adopting children can't be rushed. It's too big a decision for the parents' and children's future lives. However we aim to be prompt and courteous in our responses to enquirers.

Within a month of receiving an enquiry, we aim to offer an information meeting or a meeting with a social worker to discuss what is involved and to answer any questions you have. We provide an information pack which includes our criteria, the process and timescale, Coram's complaints procedure and a range of other issues.

Once the application is received and references have been taken up, a social worker will start the assessment and will spend time getting to know the applicant/s and what their strengths as adoptive parents are likely to be. During this process (or before the social worker starts the assessment for London applicants), we offer a series of preparation groups which explore various aspects of adoption to help adopters understand the challenges. This is a good opportunity to meet experienced adopters and others who are applying to adopt.

Once the assessment and groups have been completed, the social worker will then write a report for the Adoption Panel which considers all applications from prospective adopters.

Applicants have the opportunity to see and comment on the panel report and to attend panel if they wish. We aim to complete this process (groups plus assessment) within eight months.

Once families are approved as adopters, they are ready to have a child placed with them. The next step is to find a child that feels 'right' for the family. During this time detailed information is exchanged and discussed with the adopters and the child's social worker before decisions are made.

Children may be found via:

- The National Adoption Register
- Be My Parent
- Adoption UK
- Direct enquiries to Coram from local authorities

Before children join their new family, there is time for the parents and children to get to know each other through a programme of visits. There is also a period of living together whilst Coram and the local authority continue to visit and support everyone until the time feels right to apply to the Court for an adoption order.

What about birth families?

After adoption the child becomes the legal responsibility of their new parents. The adopted children will need to know about their roots and to understand their story. Photos and a life storybook are provided to help them remember the important people from their past and make sense of what has happened.

Adoptive parents are helped to learn how best to talk to their children about the past.

Older children often want to be able to keep in touch with a birth relative (possibly a brother or a grandparent) and we hope to find families who can encourage this. Adopters are usually asked to send letters and photographs to the birth family through a confidential address on an annual basis.

What is right for the individual child varies and a contact plan is made for each child which also takes account of the adopter's views.

After adopted children turn 18, they may wish to contact birth relatives and if so there are services to provide advice and support through this process. Birth relatives may **only** seek to contact adopted people after they turn 18, and through an officially approved intermediary, who will respect the adopted person's wishes about whether he or she wants any form of contact or not.





What about after adoption?

The new parents are in charge after adoption. However, if asked we are very willing to help if we can, or to refer parents and children to an appropriate resource in the community.

Coram offers a range of support services for adoptive families and children, available at times of need. There are also social events for adoptive families, such as a picnic in the summer and support groups for adopters and (in Shepshed) support groups for adopted children. Coram is always interested to hear from adopters and their children and will try to help if there are any difficulties. We aim to ensure that children adopted through Coram and their new parents are secure in the knowledge that support is available if needed.

About us

Coram's Adoption and Permanent Families Service is one of the largest voluntary adoption agencies in the UK with three teams, based in London, Cambridge (Coram Adopt Anglia) and Shepshed, Leicestershire (Coram Adoption East Midlands). We place over 70 children with adopters each year.

We:

- pride ourselves on offering a service to adopters and children which is sensitive and professional at all times
- place children with complex needs, who are looked after by the local authorities
- provide ongoing support which is available at times of need to the families and children whom we have placed for adoption
- aim to speed up the process of adoption/permanent family placement for very young children through our Concurrent Planning Project in London

Our teams are staffed by a multi-cultural group of experienced adoption workers and administrative staff. We are very familiar with the difficulties of children who have been in care, and experienced in helping new adoptive families adjust. Since adoption (and permanent family placement) is our priority we can devote more time and attention to the families and children than is sometimes possible in a busy Local Authority.

Our History:

Coram has been working with disadvantaged children since 1739 when Thomas Coram established the Foundling Hospital to care for abandoned children. Today, Coram develops and promotes best practice in the care of vulnerable children and their families. In addition to being a voluntary adoption agency, Coram's other services include: a Parents' Centre in London; housing and support for care leavers and young people at risk; and family support programmes.

Equal Opportunities:

Coram has a positive policy to value diversity and promote equal opportunities and is opposed to all forms of racism and other discriminatory practices. In the Adoption and Permanent Families Service our aim is to place children in families which reflect and/or support children's racial, religious and cultural heritage.

For enquiries about our Adoption and Permanent Families Service Contact:

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