

Comfort Cases

By [Comfort Cases UK](#), a registered charity

Comfort Cases UK, the UK branch of [Comfort Cases](#), **offers children entering the care system a specially curated backpack, known as a 'comfort case,' filled with essential and comforting items.** These bags are designed to give children a sense of ownership and security during one of the most traumatic transitions of their lives.

Each comfort case contains items such as books, pyjamas, toiletries, soft toys, blankets, and SIM cards for older children. These items not only meet practical needs but also provide emotional comfort, offering children a small but significant sense of normality and care during times of upheaval.

Care-experienced children often move multiple times a year, and four out of five children report having their

belongings transported in bin bags. This practice risks losing or damaging precious keepsakes, further compounding their sense of instability and loss.

Comfort Cases UK believes that no child should have to carry their life in a bin bag. These backpacks provide more than just physical items—they offer a sense of belonging, dignity, and care.

Comfort Cases UK partners with over 100 local authority teams, charities, NHS trusts, and residential care homes to distribute these backpacks to children in need. The charity relies on a network of dedicated volunteers who assemble the backpacks, ensuring each one is carefully filled with thoughtful and essential items.

The contents of a Comfort Case are tailored to meet the specific needs of children entering the care system, providing both practical necessities and items that bring comfort. These

backpacks are distributed to children transitioning into care, moving between foster homes, or being supported by organisations working with care-experienced young people.

In 2023, Comfort Cases made a significant impact across the United Kingdom and the United States:

- 31,500 Comfort Cases were distributed.
- 14,250 Comfort XLs (larger bags designed for older children or those with greater needs) were delivered.
- Volunteers contributed an impressive 12,520 hours of service, ensuring the initiative reached as many children as possible.

A Comfort Case is much more than a collection of items. It represents care, dignity, and support for children navigating the uncertainty of the care system. By providing a special bag for their belongings, Comfort Cases UK offers children a small sense of control and

Step Up Family Finding

By [Coram](#), a registered charity

Step Up, developed by Coram's Adoption Activity Days team and funded by Adoption England, aims **to reduce delays in finding adoptive families for children with priority characteristics—often referred to as 'harder to place' children.** This group includes children from minoritised ethnic backgrounds, sibling groups, children over five years old, and those with complex needs. These children often face longer family finding periods and are at greater risk of their adoption plans being changed if a match is not found within 12 months.

The Step Up programme offers a flexible and tailored package of intensive family finding services for a six-month period. **This bespoke support is designed to meet the specific needs of each child or sibling group and includes:**

- Funding for children to attend Adoption Activity Days.
- High-quality and dynamic profiling through professional videos and photographs of the child or sibling group.
- Therapeutic support, distinct from that provided under the Adoption Support Fund.

By using a personalised approach, Step Up enhances opportunities for children to be successfully matched with adoptive families, reducing delays and ensuring priority children are not left waiting unnecessarily.

During its first year, the programme received referrals for 24 children with priority characteristics, each at different stages in their family finding journey. Of these, 11 children had completed the full six-month programme by the time of evaluation, while the remaining 13 joined later in the year and had not yet completed their six months of support.

The evaluation highlighted several benefits of the programme:

- Children referred to Step Up were linked with a wider network of professionals and prospective adopters, significantly increasing their chances of finding a family.
- Referrals improved children's participation in Adoption Activity Days and Exchange Days, where positive outcomes included expressions of interest from prospective adopters.
- Step Up practitioners provided additional support to potential adoptive families, helping them make informed decisions and facilitating smoother progressions to adoption.

- The extra time and resources enabled experienced practitioners to work closely with family finders to assess adoptive families more efficiently and with greater confidence.

The evaluation made the following **recommendations for the next two years of the Step Up programme:**

Explore Step Up as a targeted offer to increase opportunities for children with a combination of priority characteristics, complex cases, experience of placement disruption or a lack of expressions of interest.

Consider the feasibility of increasing Step Up support from six months to 12, in line with the needs of the child.

Increase referrals specifically from children of Black African or Black Caribbean backgrounds in the next cohort.

Record outcomes of children who were not placed, or who were placed after the programme of support ended, to complete data.

[Read the full Coram Institute for Children evaluation report here.](#)