



Young persons guide to Adoption Support

Transform a child's life...

About this guide

This guide is for young people who have been adopted to tell you a bit more about adoption and the help and support you can receive, if you feel like you need it.

We will tell you a bit about us here at Adoption Tees Valley. Points we will touch upon are who we are and what we do do, so you know exactly where to go if you want any help, support or advice.

You may have lots of questions about being adopted and we are here to help answer those questions.

You are not alone! There are lots of different ways that families are created and many children are adopted every year.

At Adoption Tees Valley we celebrate diversity and respect everyone's identity, culture, ethnicity, religion, language, disability, gender and family background. We know that every young person's story is different, and we are here to support you in a way that feels right for you.

About us

Adoption Tees Valley is an adoption agency. One of our jobs is to help find families for children waiting for adoption and then provide help and support to them.

We can offer you help and support in lots of different ways through one of our social workers. ATV have a team of people who are experts in **supporting** families and young people just like yourself. They are trained in working with children and young people and have lots of experience.

We can offer you things like:

- Talking to you about adoption and how we can help you
- Listening to you
- Helping you understand why you were adopted
- Helping you talk to people about being adopted
- Meeting other young people who are adopted

You may not want to do any of these things **right now**, but this guide will let you know about all the things we can help you with if and when you want help and support.



Your identity and feelings

It's completely normal to have lots of feelings about being adopted or perhaps you don't have many right now. We know from talking to young people that adoption can sometimes feel like such a **BIG** thing in your life. We are here for you to talk about any feelings you may have, as young people have told us how much this has helped.

As you grow up, you may have questions about your culture, ethnicity, race, religion, language, family history or heritage. These questions are completely normal. We can help you explore and understand different parts of your identity and help you access information about your background if you would like to.

Young people who are adopted sometimes have lots of questions. Some adopted young people have asked us...

Where is my birth family right now?
Will I ever hear from them again?

Why do I feel so angry and sad sometimes?

Am I the only one who is adopted, can I meet other young people who have also been adopted? Is there anything I can read about adoption?

Why was I adopted?

Who should I tell about being adopted?
How much can I tell?





Drawn by one of ATV's adopted young people

Questions

Who should I tell about being adopted?

You can choose **who you tell** and **how much you tell** about your life. You don't have to tell people if you don't want to. But if you feel comfortable, then of course tell them. As you grow up, you may have questions about your culture, ethnicity, race, religion, language, family history or heritage. These questions are completely normal. We can help you explore and understand different parts of your identity and help you access information about your background if you would like to.

Families are created in many different ways. Some children live with adoptive parents, birth parents, grandparents, kinship carers, foster carers, step-parents or other people who care for them. Families may have different cultures, religions, languages and traditions, and every family is unique." If it helps, you can talk to your family or someone at school about how to answer other people's questions and of course you can talk to us too.

Can I see or hear from my birth family more or less than I do now?

In our jobs seeing or hearing from your birth family can mean letters, cards, photographs or sometimes visits. When you were adopted, the court decided what was the best sort of contact for you and your family.

If you are not happy with your keeping in touch arrangements, you can talk your family and talk to us about your wishes and feelings.

How do I find out more about why I was adopted?

You may have a book, a letter or both that tells you about your life before you were adopted. A lot of young people have questions or want to know more about their life as they grow older. If you have questions or need to know more you could ask your parents or even us here at ATV.

What else can we do to help?

We are here to listen to what you have to say and make sure that the people involved know and understand how you feel at any time you need us.

Can I meet other adopted young people?

Yes, we can help you to meet other adopted young people! All of our young people tell us how much they enjoy our events. We have different events throughout the year and we run lots of groups for adopted young people. Such as:

Friendship Group

This is a group for young people aged 8 and over who meet monthly to have fun and create friendships. Some of the activities include bowling, pizza, arts and craft and we have also had a choir!

Everyone is welcome and we love to welcome new members.

Voice and Inclusion Group

This is to make sure your experiences help to shape our service plans. This group is aimed at Secondary aged students. The group has recently had fun on the River Tees Bell boating!

Our website below gives the most up to date lists of what's happening.

We would also love to hear your ideas on what type of events and activities you would like. You can email us or ask your family to share your ideas, whatever you prefer!

Our website: www.adoptionteesvalley.org.uk

Email us: info@adoptionteesvalley.org.uk



Social media

We know that social media is a part of most young people's lives.

Social media can provide lots of fun and new ways to connect to friends, watch fun videos and give lots of information when used carefully. We also know that social media can make some young people feel unhappy. The social media 'world' isn't like the 'real world' and it's easy to get mixed up thinking it is. We can help you to manage your use of social media more carefully, as we have lots of information on this topic that we can share with you.

Think before you post!

Social media is public. Sharing information on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tik Tok, Snapchat or YouTube is like having a conversation in public, so please think carefully before you post.

It is important to help keep young people safe in every day life, including on social media. Here are some links and information that we would encourage you to have a look at to help keep you safe. Things change so quickly online so it's good to check the following websites every now and again for updates.

www.thinkuknow.co.uk

A great website that gives you lots of tips and advice about staying safe online. There is lots more great advice from Childnet and YoungMinds organisations here:

www.childnet.com/young-people youngminds.org.uk/our-policies/social-media-guidance/

www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/How-can-CEOPhelp-me-YP/

CEOP is a law enforcement agency and is here to help keep children and young people safe online. They help thousands of children and young people every year who have been in tricky situations online. CEOP are unable to respond to reports about bullying, fake accounts or account hacking. We are here to help and give you advice and you can make a report directly to us if something has happened online which has made you feel unsafe, scared or worried. This might be from someone you know in real life, or someone you have only ever met online.

Remember, if you are ever worried about anything, please talk to someone, sooner rather than later, so we can help.





What do I do if I want to ask for help?

You should begin by talking to your parent(s) or you may choose to talk to a family friend, teacher or another grown up you trust.

Sometimes it helps to talk to a person outside of your family. Your ATV Support Social Worker can help you and your family understand how you are feeling and why you may be feeling the way you do. You could ask your parent(s) to contact us on your behalf or you can contact us directly by visiting: www.adoptionteesvalley.org.uk or **Tel: 01642 526400**. You can contact us at any time, we are here to support you throughout your life.

Once you are 18 years old you can still receive support from us.

There are other people you can talk to if you prefer, such as:

National Youth Advocacy Service: offers advice and information as well as allocating independent advocates to children and young people **Tel: 0808 808 1001 Web: www.youngpeople.nyas.net**

Childline: a free, private and confidential service where you can talk about anything
Tel: 0800 11 11
Web: www.childline.org.uk



Here are some other helpful people you could contact:

The Children's Commissioner for England - If you want to know more about your rights, you can get in touch with The Children's Commissioner. Her name is Dame Rachel de Souza and her job is to make sure adults listen to children's views and respect their rights.

Tel: 020 7783 8330

Web: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

Ofsted - this organisation checks that Adoption Matters is doing things properly and they visit us at every few years or so.

Tel: 0300 123 1231

Web: www.ofsted.gov.uk



What if I am not happy?

If you think that you have been treated unfairly by a worker either from your Local Authority/Regional Adoption Agency or from ATV we will do our best to help you. You may want us to put you in touch with someone who is called an advocate whose job it is to speak on your behalf. If we can't help you then we promise we will try to find someone who can.

We try very hard to listen to young people and do our best for them but sometimes things go wrong. If you think that we at Adoption Tees Valley have made a mistake or got things wrong, please tell us about it because we will want to try to put it right.

This is called making a complaint and you can make a complaint by writing, phoning, emailing or filling in one of our

feedback leaflets. We will give you a leaflet with this guide, or you can download one from our website.

When your complaint has arrived with us, we will have a look at what you feel is wrong. This will usually take around 10 days. Someone will explain to you what will happen in this time and if it is going to take any longer we will talk to you about it.

We hope that we will be able to agree with you about what must happen to make things right quickly and that you have been listened to and understood. If you feel you are still not happy, we would ask a senior person in the agency to talk to you to try to work things out.

I am feeling happy!

We also encourage all the young people to let us know when you think we have done a good job too and/or if you have really enjoyed one of our events. We just don't know how things are going unless you tell us! You will be sent feedback surveys after any event you attend and you can drop us an email anytime at: info@adoptionteesvalley.org.uk

We'd **LOVE** to hear from you.





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If English is not your first language, or if you need information in another format, language or communication style, please let us know and we will do our best to help.

