



What happens if your application to adopt doesn't proceed?

At Adoption Tees Valley we know that the journey to becoming an adoptive parent is one which is filled with many emotions: with hopes for becoming a future parent, excitement about parenting a child, planning changes to your life, and uncertainties about what this will be like. We also know that for prospective adopters there is often experience of past losses and worry about how the process of becoming an adoptive parent will unfold.

It is an emotional journey, through life changing decisions and we know that this can be daunting.

You will have decisions to make about who in your family and network to share information with about your decision to apply to adopt. This means that the process can become one which is more open within your network and managing your own and others' emotions can be hard. If you are worried about any of these emotions and issues, please talk to your social worker and they can help you think through what support you may need.

For many prospective adoptive parents, the stage 1 process goes ahead, and checks and references are received back with few questions. If there are any questions arising from checks or references, these will be shared with you at the earliest opportunity by your social worker, to let you know if we feel there are any vulnerabilities. These will be fully discussed with you and will be further explored in stage 2.

You will also be asked to attend Preparation to Adopt Training during stage 1, and this is a further investment you make in your journey, where you will receive more information and preparation. ATV will be seeking to understand that you are aware of what adopting a child is going to mean for you, and your family, as well as for a child.

You will be asked to nominate family and friends for the ATV Family and Friends Preparation Group: we know that having the support of your network will help them be prepared for supporting you and a child in the future. There is flexibility for this to take place at a later stage, so please let us know if you would prefer this.

The outcome of checks, references and your attendance at Preparing to Adopt Training Programme will lead to a shared decision about whether you are ready to embark on stage 2.

Once ATV has received the required checks and references, the social worker and Team Manager will make a decision about inviting you to commence stage 2. You will have a decision to make as to whether you are ready to start that stage, which will be the full assessment, and which will go to the Adoption Panel to consider.

Some prospective adopters decide at the end of stage 1, or even before then, that they do not wish to continue the journey and may withdraw. We respect these decisions and will work with you to understand reasons, and whether there is something that we can help with, or whether a future time may be better for you and your family.

For some prospective adopters, ATV will decide that we do not feel that it is right to progress with you to stage 2 at this time. These decisions are based on the outcome of checks and



references and will be carefully thought through. The decisions will be fully discussed with you, and you will be treated with respect and dignity throughout.

Being advised that ATV does not feel able to progress to stage 2 can be a difficult message to hear, and we understand this. We want to make sure that any family in this position receives this information in a respectful meeting, with reasons explained. In some cases we are unable to fully share all information, however this would only be where confidentiality has been given to those providing the information.

If you are in this situation, you may ask for a second follow up meeting, which will usually be with the social worker, and a manager, to go through again the information you have been given. You will have the opportunity to ask questions and to find out if there is more you can do, or changes you can make, which will help a future application, at a more suitable time.

This decision does not have right of appeal; however, Stockton's complaints process is available if you feel ATV has not met its statutory duties; if you feel that the service has not been provided in accordance with our policies, or if you feel you haven't been treated fairly.

Finally,

Please consider the following, to help reassure you:

- People don't progress to stage 2 for a variety of reasons. No one else can make assumptions about why not, and ATV will not share this information about you with anyone else*.
- Sometimes this decision is made by the family. It is not always ATV.
- It may be "now" is not the right time, but a later date will be.
- You have rights to go to another Adoption Agency, however, you must tell them that ATV has concluded stage 1.
- ATV will provide support to you, if your adoption journey ends at this time. We know it is a big decision, and one which the family have invested in. We are respectful of all families and recognise that not progressing to stage 2 can be a loss for people wanting to become parents through adoption.
- Where it is felt necessary, ATV can signpost to services who may be able to help with counselling.

*If you decide to go to another Agency you are obliged to let them know you applied to ATV, and we will be obliged to share summary information about why the application did not proceed)