



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu
Cenedlaethol

National
Adoption
Service

Adoption in your business

A guide to support prospective and approved adopters, inside and outside of your business.

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A photograph of a woman with blonde hair hugging a young child with blonde hair. The woman is smiling and has her eyes closed, resting her head against the child. The child is also smiling and looking towards the camera. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent red overlay.

Who we are. What we stand for.

The National Adoption Service: created to improve services for all those affected by adoption in Wales.

Since 2014 we've been paving the way for better adoption services in Wales. We are a collaborative of five regional agencies which cover all 22 local authorities along with three voluntary adoption agencies. Together we provide the best support for children and their adopter(s) in Wales. And this wouldn't be possible without your help. Why? Because we achieve more when we work together.

Who we are

North Wales

0800 085 0774
adoption@wrexham.gov.uk
northwalesadoption.co.uk

Mid & West Wales

0300 30 32 505
adoptionenquiries@cararthenshire.gov.uk
adoptionmwwales.org.uk

Vale, Valleys & Cardiff

0800 023 4064
contact@adopt4vvc.org
adopt4vvc.org

South East Wales

01495 355766
adoption@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
southeastwalesadoption.co.uk

Western Bay

0300 365 2222
enquiries@westernbayadoption.org
westernbayadoption.org

Across Wales

Barnado's Cymru

029 2057 7074
cymru@barnardos.org.uk
barnardos.org.uk/wales

St David's Adoption Service

029 2066 7007
info@stdavidscs.org
stdavidsadoptionsservice.org



Choosing adoption

Adoption is a significant, life-changing decision and one of the biggest that anyone could make.

People may choose to adopt on their own, whereas others may adopt as a couple. Some may have tried to conceive but this hasn't worked for them. And some may choose adoption as their first choice for starting or expanding their family. There are also people who adopt a family relative or a child they have been fostering.

Going through the process requires commitment, time and focus, plus support from family, friends, and employers.

All prospective adopters are expected to attend a series of meetings such as informal information events, home visits with social workers and preparatory training courses both during the evening and some days. An in-depth assessment is undertaken over a period of four months and the applicant is

also expected to attend an Adoption Panel at the end of the process. Panels generally meet during the day but some do meet in the evening.



Remember

- Take time to understand the person's unique circumstances
- Don't make assumptions and don't ask sensitive personal questions that may be unnecessary for your process
- Unsure on the adoption process? Ask the person you're talking to. If they are unsure, advise them to ask their social worker who will explain the process further
- Research adoption by visiting adoptcymru.com



Understanding adoption

Parental leave

People may choose to adopt on their own, whereas others may adopt as a couple. Currently, parental leave in the UK varies between employers. But most employers are now offering the same benefits to adoptive parents as they would in their policies for birth parents.

What this means for couples

Where couples adopt, they have the option to share parental leave or one of them may decide to take most of the leave. The general expectation is that, if one person is taking most of the leave, this will be nine to twelve months. For the secondary parent they will be expected to take a minimum of four weeks parental leave.

Why? Because during the first two weeks of leave the parents will start 'introductions'; usually a two-week intense process of meeting the child and building a relationship with them whilst the child is still living with their foster parents. After introductions have ended a child will move into their new family home. As you can imagine, this is a huge adjustment for everyone involved. So, the day that the child moves in shouldn't be a day that either of their new parents return to work.



Understanding adoption

Supporting new parents

In traditional 'paternity policies' a birth father may return to work after two weeks leave, but the adoption process isn't as straightforward. Once a child moves into their new family home, the parents and child will have regular meetings with social workers that they are legally required to attend. The child will likely have experienced trauma and will need more time to begin the bonding process with their new parents.

In some cases the male partner may wish to take the majority of leave available. Our recommendation is to make all parental policies equal and available to new parents regardless of gender.



Remember

Encourage managers and HR departments to consider how they can support the new parent post parental leave. This will support the person when completing their workload alongside adjusting to life as a new parent.



Understanding adoption

Wales Early Permanence

Welsh Early Permanence (WEP) is the practice of placing children with foster carers who will go on to become the child's adopter if adoption becomes the plan for the child.

This means they will either care for a child until it is deemed safe for the child to return to their birth family or they will become the child's adoptive parent if this is not possible.

This new practice is much less traumatic for a child as they will only do one move from their birth family to a new home, rather than endure multiple foster placements, faces and unfamiliar environments.

Carers who are dually approved as prospective adoptive parents and foster carers aka WEP Carers are eligible for statutory adoption leave and pay from the date the child has been placed with them as foster carers.

[Click here](#) for further information about Welsh Early Permanence. Additional information about their rights can also be found by clicking on the link and scrolling down to the document entitled WEP Carers and Finances.





Overcoming barriers

Your workplace may already have a policy for people who experience miscarriage or complications during pregnancy. If this is the case, you may want to consider extending this policy to include people seeking to adopt. For example, if a match falls through pre-placement, if introductions are disrupted, if there's a breakdown and the child returns to foster care or if a person is unsuccessful in adopting or decides to withdraw. There are many reasons why this might happen and it can be extremely stressful and upsetting for prospective adopters.

If you don't have these policies in place, you may want to think if this is something that you can offer to staff moving forward. Policies like this can be hugely valuable to an employee experiencing the trauma linked with these experiences.

How you can support adoption

Here are some tips on how you can show your support for adoption internally and externally:

Review or create your company's adoption policies

We recommend having a separate adoption policy for adoption leave as it can differ from other parental leave policies in some key areas. The adoption process will change from time to time so make sure your policies are reviewed regularly.

Speak to any adopters/adoptees in your business

Talk to people within the company who have already been through the adoption process. This can give useful insight into adoption and could potentially help dot the Is and cross the Ts when putting policy into practise.

Know which regional area service your employees fall under

Knowing which adoption region your employee lives in can help support and encourage anyone who's thinking of adoption. The adoption region your employees will fall under is at the top of this pack. That said, bear in mind that they may also choose to adopt through a voluntary adoption agency or to a region where they are not geographically located too.

You can also remind adopters who need support later that their region or VAA have an adoption support service they can use.

Provide employees with additional leave

The adoption process involves several meetings and training events. Supporting employees with taking time off for this is extremely helpful.

Having an adopter speak at an away day

In-depth conversation, first-hand stories, and myth busting can really help educate everyone on what adoption is like, inspire others to adopt and create a community of support.

Fundraising for local or national adoption charities

If your business undertakes fundraising events, why not consider looking into supporting a Welsh adoption charity such as Adoption UK Cymru, St David's Adoption Service or Barnardo's Cymru.

Talk publicly about your support for adoption on your digital channels

Talk about your progression in policies on social, ask an adopter to write a blog for your intranet. Being open about your support will create a community of support for (prospective) adopters in your business. Support for adoption should be year-round but we've provided a list of national awareness days and key moments in the adoption calendar along with suggested posts on the next page.

Sharing online

Social media

Here are some key dates where you can support our message of finding families for the children that are waiting to be adopted, and the support that adopters can access.

Event	Date	Suggested social media posts
LGBT+ Adoption and Fostering Week	First full week of March	We are proud to support [@NAS_handle]/[@Regional_handle] during @newfamilysocial LGBT+ Adoption and Fostering Week. Here's [PERSON] talking about how we've supported their adoption journey.
LGBT+ Adoption and Fostering Support Week	During September	Here at [business_name], we care about our staff and customer well-being. This week is @newfamilysocial LGBT+ Adoption and Foster Support Week. If you require adoption support or want to find out more about adoption, then [@Regional_handle] are available to answer your questions.
National Adoption Week	During October	During #NationalAdoptionWeek, we are working with [@Regional_handle] and [@NAS_handle] to help find families who can provide safety and security for the children waiting to be adopted. If you have considered adopting, and want to discover more, then visit [@regional_website]
World Adoption Day	9th November	We support #WorldAdoptionDay. Today is a day to lift up all voices in the adoption community, to share your story, to reflect on your adoption journey and to connect with those touched by adoption. To learn more about adoption please visit [@nas_handle]'s website www.adoptcymru.com

Sharing online

Social media handles for the National Adoption Service and Regional Services

	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
National Adoption Service	<u>@nationaladoptionsservice</u>	<u>@nas_cymru</u>	<u>@nas_cymru</u>
Adoption Mid and West Wales	<u>@adoptmwwales</u>	<u>@adoptmw_wales</u>	<u>@adoptmwwales</u>
North Wales Adoption Service	<u>Gwasanaeth Mabwysiadu Gogledd Cymru - North Wales Adoption Service</u>	<u>@nw_adoption</u>	n/a
South East Wales Adoption Service	<u>@SEWASAdoption</u>	n/a	<u>@sewasadoption</u>
Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption	<u>@VVCadoption</u>	n/a	<u>@vvcadoption</u>
Western Bay Adoption Service	<u>@WesternBayAdoption</u>	<u>@BayAdoption</u>	<u>@western_bay_adoption</u>
St David's Adoption Service	<u>@StDavidsChildrenSociety</u>	<u>@AdoptionWales</u>	<u>@stdavidsadoptionsservice</u>
Adoption UK	<u>@aukcymru</u>	<u>@aukcymru</u>	n/a
Barnardo's Cymru	<u>@BarnardosCymru</u>	<u>@BarnardosCymru</u>	n/a



Businesses getting it right

There are lots of organisations in Wales going above what is statutory to support adoptive parents in their business.

cowshed

Cowshed Communication LTD

“Last year we carried out an extensive piece of work to enhance our benefits and policies. Inclusion was at the heart of our decision making and with employees choosing to have a family in different ways, making sure our policies were equitable was important to us.

“Through consultation with the team, we equalised our parental leave entitlement for mums, dads, partners whether having a child naturally, through IVF, surrogacy, or adoption.

“From our own experience, we know the devastation unsuccessful treatments and adoption placements can cause so we’ve introduced paid time off to grieve the loss of becoming a parent.

“Our progressive benefits package has already attracted talent from large organisations to our small business.”

Businesses getting it right

Karyn, Swansea Council employee

“Swansea Council has foster and adoption friendly policies which meant I was able to take flexi time to attend sessions with my social worker during the assessment process. I could also use this option to attend training and my adoption panel. Adoption leave at the council is statutory adoption leave so I used 5 days for introductions and then the rest when my daughter was placed with me.

Having the policy in place to allow for flexible working and the support from my manager to prepare for the arrival of my daughter, which is intense to say the least but it meant that there was one less thing to worry about and it was so reassuring to know that I could work flexibly in order to achieve my dream of becoming an adoptive mum”



Businesses getting it right

Welsh Government Adoption and Foster Care support Group Network

Suzanne Moore Osley created the Adoption and Foster Care support group network following her journey of becoming an adoptive parent. The group brings together colleagues across Welsh Government to share their great wealth of experience and provides advice, information and support to those who need it. All employees are welcome to join the group should they be a new prospective adopter, current adopter, adopted person or a foster carer.

The network has grown from simply connecting people to providing a mechanism for monthly online 'meet ups' where many guest speakers have been invited to share critical information relating to adoption such as Adoption UK and the Association of Therapeutic Parenting.

During lockdown and in recognition of the annual adoption week the network organised the first Welsh Government all staff event on LGBTQ+ and adoption. Various speakers were invited including a representative from New Family Social, the National Adoption Service for Wales and the Head of Adoption Policy within the Social Services & Integration Directorate. It was a successful event and offered a valuable networking opportunity.

Through their lived experience, knowledge and constructive feedback, the group are also key in supporting Welsh Government policy officials to develop adoption policy.

"The network gives colleagues the opportunity to meet up in a safe space to share information, and a positive place to talk about what is going on in their lives, ask for help or just check in, without judgement. I am very proud to be a part of this group and to be part of helping other families in whatever way we can"

- Suzanne Moore Osley



FAQs

1. Do I have the right to know if my employee is adopting?

It is up to the employee (adopter) to disclose this information to you. We encourage all applicants to let their employers know as early as possible and when they feel comfortable to share their information.

2. How much should I know or ask?

It is up to the adopter to share as much as they are comfortable with you. It's important to respect this but offer support where needed.

3. What do I need to provide as part of the process?

You will be asked to provide a reference and possibly a supporting statement. A confidential reference is a statutory requirement if your business works with children and young people.

4. How much support should I give?

As much as your business can reasonably provide. We suggest you treat the adoption process as you would for any other parental leave.

5. How much time off is reasonable during the adoption process?

We recommend prospective adopters receive the same time allowance to attend preparation training, visits, and medical checks as a birth parent would for scans and appointments. Adopters are entitled to the same allowance of parental leave as a birth parent and we advise adoption leave is equal to your maternity leave policies.

Most agencies like their adopters to be available for children for at least 6-12 months after the child joins the family.

6. What parental leave and support allowances are suitable?

As much time as the employee needs. Children can be adopted at any age and may require more time to adjust to the new home environment. Care experienced children have also encountered early trauma which may result in additional attachment and behavioural needs. Every experience will differ, so do try to be as flexible as you can. Remember, adopters have the same entitlement to government parental leave. However, the supplementary support allowances are up to you, the employer. The adopter may be able to apply for further support through their local adoption agency/council.

7. Are there different entitlements for men, women, same-sex or transgender adopters?

Entitlements shouldn't discriminate against any gender or relationship status. More and more businesses are making maternity, paternity and adoption leave equal to improve equity in the workplace.

8. How do I support my employee with parental stress?

This will vary from person to person, so we advise you to follow your wellbeing and parental policies to support an employee who is adopting. You can also direct them to Adoption UK's adoption support helpline – 029 2023 0319 Monday to Friday 10am till 2.30pm.

9. Where can I find more information about adoption?

Click [here](#) for more information.

10. And finally, what's in it for me?

Proactively supporting adopters will help your business become more inclusive, creating a positive work culture that attracts talented employees.



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Need more help?
No problem.

Get in touch

Tel: 029 2087 3927

E-mail: contact@adoptcymru.com

adoptcymru.com