

Bolton's Adoption Passport

1. Support for adopters

We recognise that children who have been looked after and adopted can have ongoing needs. Adopters and adopted children may benefit from additional support at some time in the future.

These are some of the ways we can help together with the entitlements of adopters in England.

2. Adopted children

- Adopted children have priority access to schools in Bolton
- Adopted children are also entitled to free early education from the age of two years.
- If an adopted child needs extra support, adopters can request a reassessment of their needs for adoption support services.
- If an adopted child has special educational needs, adopters can request that these are assessed.

3. Adopters

- Adopters are entitled to adoption leave and pay when a child is placed. (See details at Appendix 1)
- Adopters may have priority for social housing. If they are living in social housing and claiming Housing Benefit or Universal Credit while waiting for a child to be placed with them, they can also apply for funding (Discretionary Housing Payments) so that they are not penalised financially while they have an empty spare room.
- Adopters are also entitled to a summary of their child's health from our medical adviser before he or she is placed (Bolton offers adopters a direct meeting with our medical adviser)
- All adopters will have a life-story book for their child to help them understand their early life and the decisions which were taken and which lead to their adoption.

4. Adoption Support Services

Bolton has dedicated and experienced workers who specialise in Post-Adoption support services.

Support services can include:

- Financial assistance to cover costs of introductions, court application and moving in expenses depending on need
- Access to workers who are skilled in Theraplay and Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy
- Access to a specialist Educational Psychologist, a Children's Mental Health Practitioner, training for schools based on the work of Michelle Bomber and support from the Corporate Parenting Officer
- Priority access to Health Visitors in Bolton for adopters
- Counselling, information and advice
- Help with behavioural, attachment and other problems
- Assistance in accessing specialist services such as Children and Young People's Mental Health Services
- Financial help with special care needs
- Help with contact between an adopted child and his or her birth family (including direct contact with siblings)
- Help with post-box contact
- Meetings and events to enable groups of adopters and adoptive children to get together
- Access to twice monthly drop-in parenting groups
- Access to support groups where mutual support from other adopters can develop
- Training to help adopters to meet the needs of their adoptive child
- Advice and guidance to adults who were adopted as child when they wish to access their birth records
- Help where an adoption breaks down

Adopters can request an assessment at any time, no matter how long after the adoption. The local authority that places the child with adopters is responsible for assessing and meeting adoption support needs for three years after the adoption. After three years it becomes the responsibility of the local authority where the adopters live.

Adopters can also contact national organisations which also offer adoption support, such as Adoption UK, the British Association for Adoption and Fostering or First4Adoption.

The Adoption Support Services Advisor is Jules Clarke, Adoption Team Manager (jules.clarke@bolton.gov.uk) who can be contacted on 01204 337480.

(Appendix 1) Adoption Leave

Adoption leave and pay

Qualifying employees may take up to 52 weeks adoption and may be entitled to 39 weeks of statutory adoption pay.

Key points

- To qualify employees must have worked continuously for their employer for 26 weeks ending with the week in which they are notified of being matched with a child for adoption
- Up to ten keep in touch days can be worked during the period of adoption leave
- Employees may be entitled to 52 week of leave and 39 weeks of statutory adoption pay

Adoption leave is made up of 26 weeks Ordinary Adoption Leave and 26 weeks Additional Adoption Leave. To qualify for adoption leave, an employee must:

- Be newly matched with a child for adoption by an adoption agency
- Have worked continuously for their employer for 26 weeks ending with the week in which they are notified of being matched with a child for adoption.

Adoption leave and pay are available to:

- Individuals who adopt
- One member of a couple where a couple adopt jointly (the couple must choose which partner takes adoption leave).

The partner of an individual who adopts, or the other member of a couple who are adopting jointly, may be entitled to paternity or additional paternity leave and pay.

Employees must give their employer documentary proof to show that they have the right to paid Statutory Adoption Leave. This is usually a matching certificate from the adoption agency. The adoption agency must be recognised in the UK.

Statutory adoption leave can start either:

- from the date the child starts living with the employee

- up to 14 days before the date the child is expected to start living with the employee.

Employees should tell the employer within seven days of being told that they have been matched with a child, if this is not possible they must tell the employer as soon as possible.

Some employers may offer adoption leave and pay that are more favourable than the statutory scheme; this may form part of the terms of your contract of employment. If the employee qualifies it will be payable for 39 weeks at the statutory

Statutory Adoption Pay

From April 2014 the rate of statutory adoption pay is £138.18 per week, increasing to £139.56 per week from 5 April 2015.

Keep in touch day

Both parties should agree when and how the employer will keep in contact, this may be via e mail, telephone contact etc., employees should also agree with their employer if they will work the "keeping in touch" days, these can be used for training days, team events etc.

Up to ten keeping in touch days can be worked, and there is no provision for these days to be paid, this should be agreed between employee and employer. Statutory Adoption Pay may be paid or this may be off set against any contractual pay agreed.

Changes from April 2015

From 5 April 2015 the government is changing the rights on adoption leave and pay. The changes are:

- The main adopter will be able to take paid time off for up to five adoption appointments. The secondary adopter will be entitled to take unpaid time off for up to two appointments.
- Adoption leave will become a "day one" right, so employees will no longer need to have 26 weeks' continuous employment to be eligible.
- The Statutory Adoption Pay will change: - the first six weeks will be paid at 90% of the employee's normal earnings, bringing it in-line with maternity pay.
- Some surrogate parents will become eligible for adoption leave.
- Eligible employees will be able to "opt" into the new Shared Parental Leave scheme.