

Adoption UK Strategy

2024 – 2027



Who we are

Adoption UK is the leading charity for adopted and care experienced people, adoptive families, and others parenting children who can't live with their birth parents. Set up in 1971, we'll be here for adopted and care experienced children, adults and their families for as long as they need us.

Many of today's adopted and care experienced children have suffered violence, neglect and abuse in their earliest years, with lasting impacts on their relationships, learning and health. Growing up away from birth parents also creates lifelong challenges. Adoption and other forms of permanence have transformed the lives of millions of the most vulnerable children in the UK, but support is often needed to help overcome these challenges. With the right support at the right time, adopted and care experienced people can lead full and happy lives.

The way in which the state views children who are unable to live with their birth parents is changing. The voices of those with care experience are beginning to be heard. There is increasing recognition of the lifelong trauma and loss of not growing up with your birth family. Supporting children to stay within their first families, and increasing openness in adoption are rightly high priorities for policy makers and practitioners.

Adoption UK will continue to campaign for recognition of the lifelong impacts of adoption and early childhood trauma and for adopted people to get the support they need throughout their lives. For younger children, this often means supporting the families who raise and care for them so that they are well equipped to meet their children's needs. As children move into adulthood and beyond we will continue to support them and ensure that their voices can be heard.

There is now a greater understanding of the different ways of providing permanence for children who cannot grow up with their birth parents. We have developed services supporting those growing up in kinship care arrangements and their families. Our FASD Hub UK provides information and advice about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder to any family affected, not just adoptive families. Our work with kinship carers and long-term foster carers shows that many of the experiences and needs of people unable to grow up with their birth parents are similar, while acknowledging the different needs and experiences of these families. Adoption UK is determined to build on the support we currently provide to ensure that every child who is unable to live with their birth parents has an equal chance of a bright future, in childhood and into adulthood.

We will always:

- advocate for the best support, and well-being of the entire adoption and permanence community

- promote improvements to the care, welfare, and support of adopted people as children and in adulthood, as well as those growing up in other permanence arrangements
- promote improvements to the care, welfare, and support of potential and existing adopters and permanence carers
- provide services and create communities of support for children and families in adoption and other permanence arrangements and adults who have grown up in such families
- advance the education of the public and professionals about all aspects of adoption and other permanence arrangements and the impact of prenatal and early childhood trauma.

About us

Our vision is a society where every child or young person unable to live with their birth parents can thrive in childhood and has an equal chance of a bright future as an adult.

Our purpose is to secure the right support at the right time for children and young people who are unable to live with their birth parents, from childhood into adulthood.

Our values

We are Open

- We champion everyone unable to grow up with their birth parents, and the families who raise and care for them.
- We value equity, diversity and inclusion.
- We're honest about the realities of adoption and permanence and about what needs to change. We stand up for great ideas and good decisions.

We are Stronger Together

- We pioneer peer support in adoption and permanence. We bring together peer support and professional expertise.
- We work constructively with others.
- We enable people to build and strengthen their networks.
- We work hand in hand with people with lived experience to build an expert case for better support together.

We are Determined

- We won't stop until everyone who is unable to grow up with their birth parents has an equal chance to thrive.
- We will empower every adopted and care experienced person, and every adoptive and kinship care family to ask for, and get, what they need.

Together our community is a powerful force for change.

Our priorities

We have listened to the voices of adult adoptees and others with care experience, including through our Barometer survey and our Advisory Group, to understand what needs to change about adoption and permanence, and how we as an organisation need to evolve. This process has helped us to set an exciting new strategic direction for our charity. to ensure that adopted and care experienced people are at the heart of what we do, and to focus on lifelong support.

We are making this shift in recognition of the lifelong impact of adoption and early childhood trauma, and the pleas from our community to be there for them for as long as they need us.

We are determined to work in partnership with all parts of the adoption and permanence community to ensure that adopted and care experienced people get the support they need. We have identified key strategic priorities that we believe have the potential for the highest positive impact in the lives of adopted people and others with care experience. These are to:

- Support **children and young people** to have an equal chance of a bright future.
- Work in partnership with **adult adoptees** to raise awareness of the lifelong challenges involved in adoption, and to provide information, connection and support.
- Become the 'go to' provider of high-quality **information, advice, learning and development** on adoption and other forms of permanence and the effects of prenatal and early childhood trauma.
- Provide safe spaces for people in adoption, kinship care and other permanence communities to **connect** with their peers.
- Become a **centre of excellence in the provision of support for adoption and other forms of permanence, including peer support and expert psychological therapy for adopted and care experienced people and their families.**
- **Influence** the modernising world of adoption and permanence so it works better for adopted and other care experienced people and their families.
- **Engage with the public and corporate sectors as allies** to ensure that adoption and other forms of permanence are integral to their approach to equity diversity and inclusion.

What we need to deliver this vision

- To complement our existing strengths in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland we will continue to grow our delivery capability for parts of England where there are large members of the adoption and permanence community. This includes London and the Southeast, the North West, and Yorkshire and Humber.
- We will develop, motivate & support our diverse team working closely together across all our nations and teams.
- **We will have a continued focus on quality improvement: we will gather and analyse robust data and feedback to demonstrate our impact. We will also learn from the latest research & evidence to develop cutting edge services – extending successful innovation of new services across the UK.**
- We will build our sustainability by continuing to grow our unrestricted income, and our reserves, through community fundraising, increasing our service reach and partnerships with the state and corporate sectors.
- We will ensure we have a consistent and managed approach to our campaigning and engagement model across all four nations ensuring consistency of message and measurable impact.

Note on language



Language can be powerful and contentious, especially in a system like adoption and permanence which has an enormous impact on the people growing up within it. It is therefore our responsibility to continue to listen and reflect on the language we use. Within this strategy, we have attempted to be sensitive to different views, for example using the term 'adopted people' and 'adult adoptees' as different people prefer both terms. Similarly, we also use the terms 'birth' or 'first' parents or families. We are committed to continuing to listen and reflect as the debate about language within adoption and permanence continues to evolve.