



Department
for Education

Adoption support that works for all

Guide for children and young people

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Contents

Overview	2
Support if you need it.....	2
What we are trying to do	4
Our questions.....	4
Our ideas	5
Idea 1: Give every adoptive and extended family a strong start	5
Idea 2: Connecting with others who understand	6
Idea 3: Offer support during important life stages	6
Idea 4: Make support plans clear, fair, and checked regularly	7
Idea 5: Make assessments more consistent across the country	7
Idea 6: Make sure clinical therapies meet NHS standards and other help has proof it works	8
Idea 7: Give more control to local teams	8
Idea 8: Make sure money is used wisely so more families benefit.....	8
How to Tell Us What You Think	9

Overview

Every child should grow up feeling safe, loved, and supported. Being adopted or cared for by relatives can make this happen for many children who have had a tough start in life.

But sometimes we all need a bit of extra help. This help can be from social workers, health workers, schools, and community groups. These people should work together, so children and their families get the right support at the right time

This document will tell you:

- What we are trying to do;
- The questions we would like you to answer;
- Our ideas for how things could be better; and,
- How you can share your thoughts with us.

Support if you need it

If there is anything here that you do not understand, you can ask an adult to explain it to you. This could be a parent, social worker, teacher, or another adult you trust.

If you are worried about anything you read, talk to an adult about it. You can talk to someone you know in person or use one of the services below. These are here to help you.

If you are being harmed, or you know another child who is, tell a teacher, nurse, social worker (if you have one), or any other trusted adult straight away. It is their job to help keep you and other children safe.

Childline is a safe, confidential place for children with no one else to turn to.

Whatever your worry, whenever you need help, you can contact Childline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year on 0800 1111 or through the one-to-one chat on their website.

The Children's Commissioner's Help at Hand team can offer free support, advice, and information if you are:

- in care;
- leaving care;
- living away from home; and/or,
- working with children's services.

This is to help you with any challenges you are experiencing. You can call the team for free on 0800 528 0731 or find [more information on the Children's Commissioner's website](#).

CoramVoice provides advice and advocacy for looked after children, care leavers and young people on the edge of care from 0 to 25 years old. If you need advice or advocacy services, you can get in touch for free on 0808 800 5792.

What we are trying to do

Not all adopted children, or children who live with other relatives, need extra help. But for those who do, we want to make sure they get the right support, at the right time, from adults who understand them.

Some children have had a tough start in life, and this can make some parts of growing up harder. We want support to be there early, not only when things begin to feel difficult.

We want families to know what help is available and how to get it. We also want all the services that support children - like social workers, health workers, schools, and community groups - to work well together. Our goal is for every child to feel safe, confident, and able to learn, grow, and do well.

We would like your help to shape this new system over the next two years.

Our questions

Part 1: For adopted children and young people or those who live with relatives:

a. What kinds of support have helped your mental health and wellbeing?

This support might have come from:

- **Family:** birth parents, adoptive parents, carers, relatives, or other family members.
- **Social care:** a social worker or someone similar who supports your family.
- **Healthcare:** therapists, doctors, nurses, or other health staff.
- **Education:** teachers, school staff, college staff, or lecturers.
- **Community:** youth workers, support groups, faith groups, sports clubs, or activity groups.

b. Why do you think this support helped you?

(For example: Did it make you feel safer, calmer, understood, or more confident?)

c. What could be better about the support you received?

(For example: Was anything confusing, too slow, or not helpful enough?)

Our ideas

We want to know what you think about the following ideas:

For each idea, do you agree with what we have said?

- Strongly agree.
- Agree.
- Somewhat agree.
- Disagree.
- Strongly disagree.
- Don't know.

Is there anything you would like to tell us about our ideas?

Idea 1: Give every adoptive and extended family a strong start

When a child joins a family, we want everyone to get a basic set of support to help them settle in and feel confident

This support could include:

- **Easy to understand training** for parents or carers to help them be the best parents and carers they can be for you.
- **Clear information** about common challenges families might face.
- **Online tools**, like how-to guides.
- **Help from people who understand adoption** and living with relatives.

What this means for you: You and your family would get support right from the beginning, so you don't have to wait until problems start or get bigger.

Idea 2: Connecting with others who understand

Talking to people who have had similar experiences helps us feel less alone. We want to grow support groups, mentoring schemes, and community activities for adopted children and those who live with relatives. Parents and carers would also have more chances to connect with others.

What this means for you: You could meet more people who understand what your life is like. This might be through local groups or online activities. It could help you feel more connected and less isolated.

Idea 3: Offer support during important life stages

Times like starting secondary school, becoming a teenager, or getting ready for adulthood can feel harder for some young people.

We want to give support before these big moments happen. This could include workshops, guides, or extra help at school.

What this means for you: You and your family would get support before a big change, instead of only after things start to feel difficult.

Idea 4: Make support plans clear, fair, and checked regularly

Support plans would explain:

- What help you should get
- Who is responsible for giving that help
- How your views will be listened to

For children who live with relatives, there would also be clearer “family-led” plans to show how everyone will be supported.

These plans are shared only with professionals, adopters, and carers who need it in order to provide safe, effective support.

What this means for you: This idea would mean the adults who help you will make a clear plan together about what support you need, check it often, and listen to what you want, so you feel understood and well looked after.

Idea 5: Make assessments more consistent across the country

Right now, assessments can be very different depending on where you live. These assessments are to agree what help you need and why - for example, steps to help you manage your feelings.

We want one clear and shared way of doing assessments across England, where people from social care, health, and education work together.

What this means for you: Your needs would be understood in a fairer and more accurate way - especially if you need extra help with your feelings, learning, or health. The support you get would be based on good information and what works best.

Idea 6: Make sure clinical therapies meet NHS standards and other help has proof it works

Clinical therapies are sessions where you talk or work with a helper who knows a lot about feelings and wellbeing. They use activities, games, or talking to help you feel better.

Some therapies help many children, while others are not proven to work as well. We think clinical therapy offered to adopted children, or children who live with relatives, should meet NHS standards so it is safe and helpful. We also think other help should have evidence to show we know it works.

What this means for you: If you receive clinical support, it should be something that has been shown to help children and young people — not just something offered because it is the only option available.

Idea 7: Give more control to local teams

Right now, a lot of the money for support is managed nationally. We want local authorities or regional adoption agencies to have more control over this money.

What this means for you: People who understand your area — and the families who live there — would have more power to plan and shape the support you receive.

Idea 8: Make sure money is used wisely so more families benefit

The government would check how much therapies cost and set fair prices, so the people who pay for them are not overcharged.

What this means for you: Money would be spent more fairly and sensibly, helping make sure that families everywhere can get the support they need.

How to Tell Us What You Think

Respond online

The best way to share your views is by using the **online form**.

This helps us look at everyone's answers more easily.

You can find the form on the **DfE consultations page on GOV.UK**.

Other ways to respond

If you **can't** use the online form, you can ask for the questions in a different format.

By email

You can email your answers to:

AdoptionSupport.CONSULTATION@education.gov.uk

By post

You can also write your answers and post them to:

Gladys Mugugu – Head of Adoption,
Department for Education,
Sanctuary Buildings,
Great Smith Street,
London,
SW1P 3BT,
UK.

Deadline

The consultation closes on: **05 May 2026**

Make sure you send your answers before this date so they can be included.

What will happen next

We will read all the answers you have given us and think about them carefully. We will also talk to groups of children and young people about what they think of our plans.

Later this year, we will publish a document showing what people told us and what we will do about it.

We will keep talking to children and young people as we make changes to find out what they think. We want to make sure that changes make a positive difference to children's lives.



Department
for Education

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