

# Step-parent Adoption



## What is step-parent adoption?

Those who legally adopt their partner's children are known as step-parent adopters. They become the child's life-long legal parent and share parental responsibility for the child with their partner, bringing to an end the legal relationship between the other birth parent and the child.

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 put the needs of the child above all else and introduced new legal alternatives to adoption.

If you wish to apply to a court for an Adoption Order you must fulfill certain criteria:

- You must be at least 21 and your partner, the child's birth parent, must be at least 18
- The child must have lived with you for at least six months (although many courts will not consider applications from those who have been together for less than a year)
- You must give notice to the local authority for the area in which you live of your intention to apply for an Adoption Order at least three months before the application can be started.

## Things to consider

The law recognises that step-parent adoption may not be in the best interests of the child. If you are considering this option you should carefully look at your reasons for wanting to adopt and how and why changing things will benefit the child.

We have a duty to investigate the circumstances and will present a report of our findings to court. In all cases, the court will consider the views of the child as well as yours and will decide whether adoption, one of the alternatives, or perhaps no change, is in their best interests.

## The legal alternatives to adoption:

**Parental Responsibility Agreement/Order** – this enables you to share parental responsibility with the child's parents, provided you are married to, or in a civil partnership with, the child's birth parent.

**Residence Order** – this will also enable you to share parental responsibility with the child's birth parents with some exceptions. Additionally, all those with parental responsibility must agree before the child's surname can be changed or for the child to live abroad, unless a court has given permission.

## Your step-by-step guide to applying for step-parent adoption

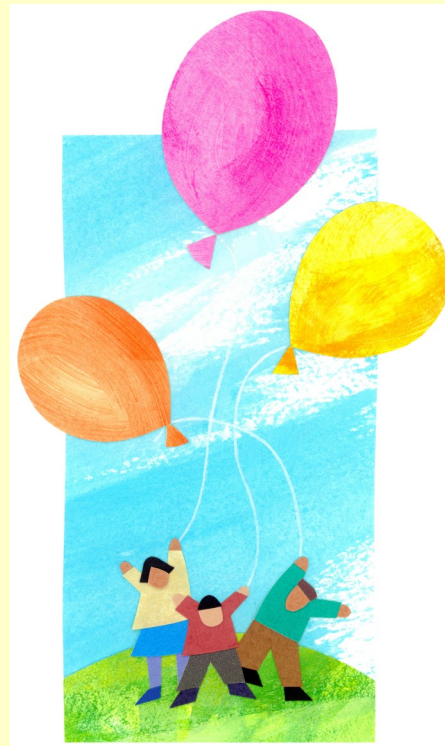
1. You register an interest in step-parent adoption with us (see our contact details below).
2. We arrange an initial interview with you
3. You give us at least three months' written notice of your intention to apply to the court
4. We carry out your assessment and checks
5. Your application is made to the court
6. We submit our report to the court
7. The court considers your application and our report and makes a decision.

## What to do next

**Contact us** and express an interest in step-parent adoption. You can complete our online Adoption Enquiry Form, email: [adoption@rbk.kingston.gov.uk](mailto:adoption@rbk.kingston.gov.uk)

call us on 020 8547 5004 or write to us at:

Kingston Adoption Team  
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames  
First Floor West  
Guildhall 2  
High Street  
Kingston KT1 1EU



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