

Children and Young People Committee

AD17

Inquiry into Adoption

Prospective Parents

How effectively are prospective parents supported throughout the adoption process, particularly through the assessment and approval process?

Since being appointed a social worker to carry out our assessment we have been pleased with the time it has taken to complete the assessment. We have had regular visits (weekly) and have completed the assessment within three months. However it will have taken a further three months for the assessment to be written up in preparation for panel. We feel this is too long a time and is a result of the nature of the assessment and the pressure that the social worker is under (she has a large workload and understandably finds it difficult to meet deadlines that we would believe are reasonable)

One particular issue that we have found with the assessment process is the expectation that prospective adopters must have significant previous experience of caring for children. We are fortunate in that we do have this experience and have been able to demonstrate this, however I am sure there will be prospective adopters who are not in our position. Considering that it is not a prerequisite and not necessary for having a child naturally I do not understand why it should be the case with adoption. The specific challenges that we are likely to face as adopters are not those related to the raising a naturally born child but will be linked to dealing with the issues surrounding neglect, abuse and subsequent attachment issues.. I would see a more useful and beneficial approach to be to provide specific training to prepare adopters to deal with the issues that they are likely to face which will be unique to those children placed for adoption (for example the incredible years training programme).

We have also been told that our medical assessor may be concerned that there are still issues surrounding our infertility as a couple. We have found this a highly unsupportive and discouraging as we have clearly demonstrated to our social worker that we have moved on from this and are dedicated to the adoption process. More consideration should be given to the effect that such statements can have on people especially where there may be other evidence (social workers report) that will answer any concerns.

What action is needed to encourage prospective parents to pursue adoption as a route?

It has now taken us over a year from deciding to adopt to being almost ready for Panel (March 2012). The 4 day training course and time taken for the assessment process have been good but there has been a significantly greater period of time waiting for things to happen, (waiting for training dates, placement with a social worker, writing up of assessment to, going to panel).

I believe that the majority of the processes that happen during the adoption approval process (training, assessment, panel) are good and required but I believe many people could be put off by the fact that it will take such a long time to become approved and the perception that the process is incredibly intrusive.