

**News Release**  
**03 May 2013**

**\*\*EMBARGOED TO 00:01 FRIDAY 3 MAY\*\***

### **New 'Passport to Support' for adopters**

**a new guide for adopters to easily identify the support they can access  
new research shows provision of adoption support is variable  
changes to speed up the process for adopters and foster carers**

From today adopters will be able to see exactly what support is available for them and their child with the new Adoption Passport: A Support Guide for Adopters.

The Passport sets out the support services adopters can expect from local authorities. It coincides with research published today which shows access to adoption support varies across local authorities.

Edward Timpson, Minister for Children & Families said:

“For too long children have been left waiting – in many cases over two years - for the stable, loving homes whilst prospective adopters have been dissuaded from offering those children the security they need.

“So we’re overhauling the system to encourage more people to adopt, and making it swifter, more effective and robust.

“The Children and Families Bill will place a new duty of local authorities to inform adopters about the support available to them. Alongside the Adoption Passport this will tackle misconceptions which we know put off potential adopters.

“We’re also making it easier for adopters - launching the First4Adoption online service and infoline which provides all the information and advice they need in one place and speeding up the approval process.

“We’re also speeding up court processes so decisions about taking children into care are made much more swiftly, and we are offering children much more stable foster placements - allowing foster carers to make many more day to day decisions.”

Research published earlier this month suggests up to 650,000 people are considering adoption but many are put off because of misconceptions about the process – including over lack of support.

With over 4,600 children waiting for loving homes last year, the Government acknowledges there is a need to rectify the problem of councils not informing adopters about the help and support available to them. The ‘duty to inform’ in the Children and Families Bill addresses these concerns.

We’ve made the £150m Adoption Reform Grant available to local authorities which they can use to improve the support available, alongside developing new approaches to encourage more people to adopt.

The Passport is available on the First4Adoption website ([www.first4adoption.org.uk](http://www.first4adoption.org.uk)), and sets out the support adopters could be eligible for, including:

- paid adoption leave at similar rates to maternity and paternity leave;
- priority access to social housing, and access to additional support to cover a spare room whilst adopters wait for their child to arrive in their new home;
- priority admission for school places, including Academies and Free Schools; and
- a range of adoption support services, including access to counselling, information and advice for both adoptive parents and their children, who may have complex needs.

The Government is taking significant action to reform the approval process for adopters and foster carers to make the system faster and more efficient so that the children who need them find stable and loving homes quickly.

Also published today is the Government's Response to the *Adoption and Fostering: Tackling Delay* consultation, which sets out the legal changes which will come into force by the Summer, including:

- introducing a two-stage approval process for adopters, making the system swifter and more focused on the adopter and replacing unnecessary bureaucracy so the majority of adopters are approved to adopt within six months;
- introducing a fast-track procedure for approved foster carers and previous adopters who wish to adopt, and removing the requirement for lengthy criminal records checks for those people who have already fostered or adopted;
- placing a legal obligation on all adoption agencies to refer prospective adopters to the Adoption Register within three months of approval, and ensure that the information on children waiting to be adopted is kept up to date;
- taking forward the "fostering for adoption" initiative, enabling children to be fostered by approved adopters who could go on to adopt them if the court agrees to make a placement order.
- an increased focus on giving foster carers the authority to make day to day decisions about their foster children - such as haircuts and school trips – allowing them get on with the job of looking after the children in their care.

Today's package is the latest in a series of reforms the Government has made to tackle the chronic shortage of adopters and reform the way they are recruited. Alongside the measures in the Children and Families Bill and the launch of the First4Adoption online service and telephone information line (0300 222 0022) we've set out a national-level strategy to tackle the chronic shortage of adopters and the systemic failings in the way they are recruited.

## ENDS

### Notes to Editors:

1. The Adoption Passport is available on the First4Adoption website here:  
[www.first4adoption.org.uk](http://www.first4adoption.org.uk)
2. First4Adoption is the dedicated information service for people interested in adopting a child in England. Callers to the service can speak to friendly trained advisors to get information about adopting a child - from who can apply to become an adoptive parent to how to begin the adoption process. The service can also put callers in touch with adoption agencies in their area.

First4Adoption is run by the charities Coram Children's Legal Centre, Coram and Adoption UK. It is funded and supported by the Department for Education.

Anyone interested in adopting can call the First4Adoption information line on 0300 222 0022 (open 10am - 6pm on Monday – Friday) or visit the website at [www.first4adoption.org.uk](http://www.first4adoption.org.uk)

3. The “Understanding attitudes, motivations and barriers to adoption and fostering” research conducted by Kindred and Work Research is available here:  
<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/fostercare/a00209484/>
4. More information on the Children and Families Bill and the new ‘duty to inform’ is available here: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/2012-2013/0168/2013168.1-7.html#i0161>
5. The research report ‘Post Adoption support; A rapid response survey of local authorities in England’ completed by the Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre is available here:  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?keywords=&publication\\_filter\\_option=research-and-analysis&topics%5B%5D=all&departments%5B%5D=department-for-education&world\\_locations%5B%5D=all&direction=before&date=2013-05-01](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?keywords=&publication_filter_option=research-and-analysis&topics%5B%5D=all&departments%5B%5D=department-for-education&world_locations%5B%5D=all&direction=before&date=2013-05-01)
6. See the [Government’s response to consultation \*Adoption and Fostering: tackling delay\*](#) here.