

Preparation Groups

Fairly early on in an applicant's journey together with DFW Adoption in the adoption process, and following an initial Information Day, we will invite the applicants to join together in the preparation groups over four days, and one or two evenings to discuss some of the core issues around the challenges of adoption. The preparation groups form the initial stages of the assessment process and at a future point you will be asked to make written comments about the benefits of the course and your learning. We will discuss the child's journey from their family of birth through the care system and eventually to their adoptive family. We will think through the issues which affect all parties in these journeys and how they might impact on the child as they begin their life together with the new family. Topics also covered are:

- Trauma, separation and loss
- Attachment
- Openness with children about adoption
- Helping children with their own identity
- The birth parent's perspective
- The perspective of experienced adopters
- Safe caring
- Managing behaviour
- Managing routines and boundaries
- Contact with the birth family
- Child development
- Child abuse
- Support for adoptive families once a child is placed and beyond

The groups are usually small enough so that we can all work and learn comfortably together, and will usually take place at the DFW Adoption office in Durham. On the occasions when there is a group that we feel would be too large to fit into the space here, we will perhaps try and find another venue in the region. These groups are run 3 times a year and we split them up into 2 x 2 day sessions. This usually takes place over two consecutive days one week and then two consecutive days the following week. We try and give people as much notice as possible as we are aware there is a need to juggle other commitments. (SEE HOME PAGE FOR DETAILS OF DATES)

After having delivered the course information for the groups for a number of years, we are aware that some of the information can affect your emotions as we start to consider the early lives and experiences of the children involved. However, there are many reasons to be optimistic, as we reflect on the rewards to prospective adopters of parenting vulnerable and needy children.

The preparation groups are structured so that there is a break in the middle to allow the applicants time to reflect on the issues which we have discussed in the first week, before starting the second week. There will be opportunities for you to work together in small groups, whilst on other occasions there will be a range of external speakers or DVD material to look at and discuss. For separate sessions some of the speakers will be adopters approved through this agency and there may be adopted people and birth mothers; all of whom will share some of their stories and experiences with you. All of the team at DFW Adoption will

be involved to some extent in presenting sessions to the preparation groups, so this will also give you the opportunity to meet the social worker who may eventually do your assessment with you.

To a certain extent, the value of the course will reflect the amount that you put into it, so please come along and be prepared to take part. At this point it's your opportunity to ask the questions that you might think are unimportant, because you never know, it might be exactly the question that someone else wants to know, but doesn't feel bold enough to ask. You are free to share personal information with the group if you wish but will never be placed under pressure to talk about issues that are painful to you. All the information shared within the preparation groups is confidential to that setting and we ask you to respect this.

At the end of the course we hope that applicants will have a good preparation for the journey of adoption. You will be able to work together with your assessing social worker to provide evidence of your understanding of the broad range of issues associated with adoptive parenting, as well as your own unique life experiences, skills and strengths and your ability to provide a safe and secure family for a child or children.