



A Guide to the  
Adoption Support Fund:  
A lifeline for adoptive families

After Adoption . . . the heart of adoption support.  
Hope for the future

# Foreword - Sarah Hill, adoptive parent



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My husband and I have been the parents of two adopted boys for nearly nine years now. They are two gorgeous boys full of character, quirks and lots of energy. Each and every day they make me smile and I love them both so very much, however things have not always been easy.

Nine years ago, when two adorable boys, aged two and three came to our home, forever, we would never have imagined that nine years down the line our family would have faced, and would still be facing, the variety of challenges and difficulties we see.

We were of course 'prepared' by our local authority in the form of a four-day course and we did have an excellent social worker. However, much of the information on attachment we were provided with related, in the most, to the children's early years. Maybe with a little misguiding on the authority's side and a little naivety on our part, we did not see the enormous challenges the later years would bring. I also read a couple of books but at the time there were far fewer books available, and many that were around were geared towards professionals. I tried

very hard, with one book recommended to me by our social worker, to understand the medical jargon and many references to other scientific works and it would just hurt my head.

Please don't get me wrong, both boys have actually made massive progress and come such a long way since that weird and wonderful day, when we became a family of four. My oldest boy could not look at himself in the mirror at the age of three, he rarely laughed or smiled, he was so ashamed and hateful of himself. Whilst positive self esteem is still, and probably will always be, difficult for him, we now have many moments of him beaming with pride over his achievements and much family fun and laughter. He's slowly learning to love himself and accept there is good within him.

When he can't see the good inside himself, things are very difficult. We have seen, and still see, violent, aggressive and destructive outbursts at home, and school can have a very volatile young man on their hands.

Our youngest son has enormous issues over control and finds compliance very difficult indeed. School has therefore been massively stressful for him and we have had continuing problems over him attending school. With a lot of support he is, at the moment, doing well in school. However, at home he can be very challenging, as a way of counterbalancing all that compliance he's now achieving in his educational setting.

When things have been extremely hard we have, of course, requested support from our local authority, with varying levels of success. Even when the support is good and meaningful, it is mostly lacking in substance. In this I mean that the authorities are restricted in how much support they can offer by their own financial restraints.

At times it has felt like we have tried every parenting approach in all the different books, listened to all the advice we can possibly absorb, from support groups and social workers and still nothing has worked. Over the years our confidence in our ability to know what's right, and how best to respond to the ever

changing and difficult behaviour, has deteriorated. When you then find that there is no professional help available to you, our experience is that an adoptive family can feel very alone and very scared. In my opinion, no family of adopted children should ever have to feel like this.

We have, my husband and I, often wondered if things would be different if we could only access/afford to do this, that or another. This is why the Adoption Support Fund is such an incredible life line for adopters, finally we can have our needs not only identified, but also met. This gives us the opportunity to provide the much needed support our children need and deserve.

*Knowing that our local authority now has the capacity to apply for funding which will provide this support has brought us great relief. With the Adoption Support Fund in place, it feels a little as if there is a brighter future for post adoption support.*



## What is the Adoption Support Fund?

The Adoption Support Fund (ASF) became available nationally in May 2015. It was established because many families need some kind of support following adoption and too many have struggled to get the help they need. The Fund will enable them to access the services they need more easily in the future.

## Who is eligible for the Adoption Support Fund?

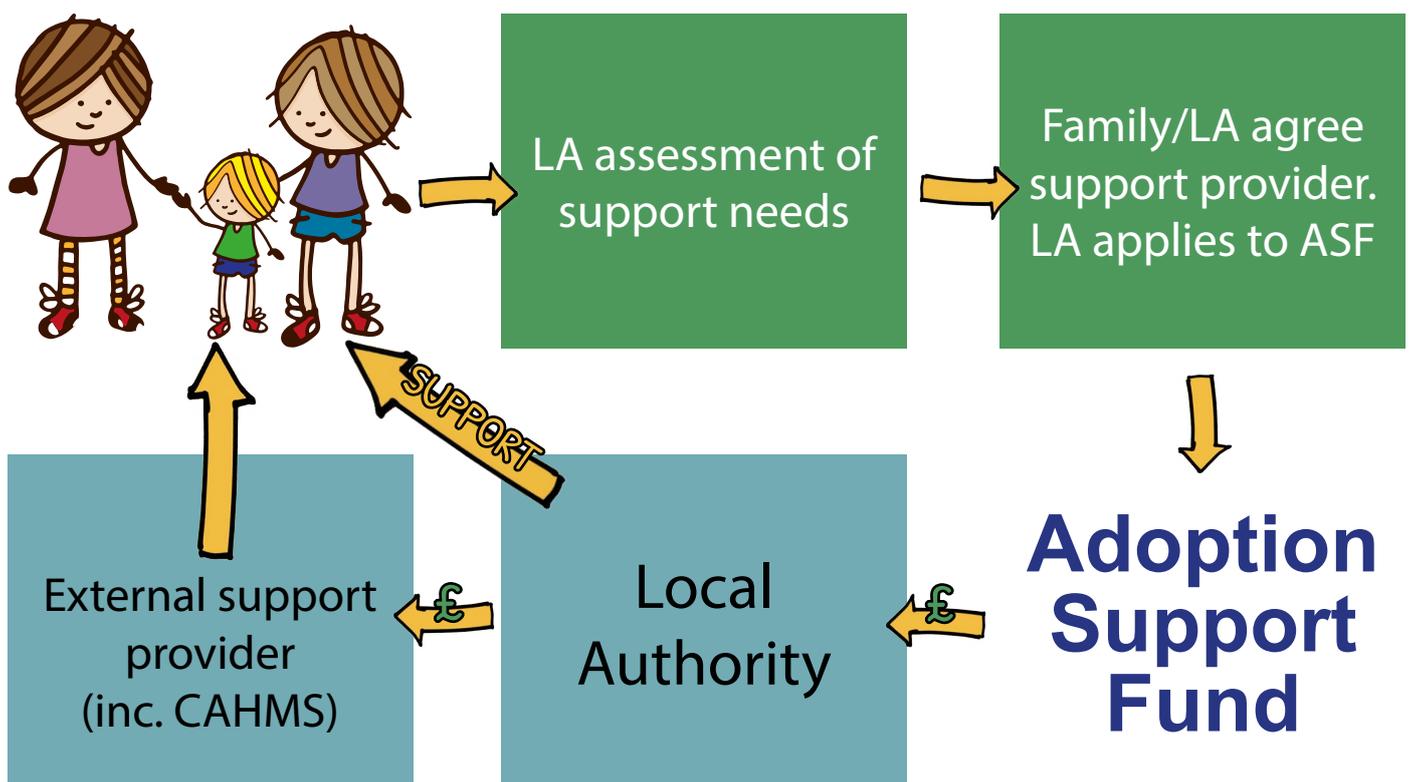
The Fund is available for children living in England up to and including the age of 21 (or 25 with a Statement of Special Educational Needs or Education Health & Care Plan) who:

- are adopted and were previously in local authority care in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- are adopted from overseas.
- are subject to a Special Guardianship Order.

## The process

1. Approach your local authority for an assessment of adoption support needs. The local authority that places the child with you is responsible for assessing your adoption support needs for three years after the adoption. After that, it becomes the responsibility of the local authority where you live. Local authorities will be able to submit applications for funding before an Adoption Order, so adopters can receive a continuous package of support from the time of placement.
2. The local authority considers if therapeutic support is needed, the type required and if it is eligible for payments from the fund.
3. The adopter and the local authority will look at the support that is available.
4. The local authority applies directly to the Adoption Support Fund on behalf of the adopter.
5. The Adoption Support Fund approves the funding and the funds are transferred to the local authority who then purchase the support.

## How it works



## Who will provide the services?

Local authorities, independent providers (OFSTED registered, or the local authority making the application assumes responsibility for quality assurance as an Ofsted registered organisation) and NHS providers e.g. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), offering services within the scope of the ASF, can all provide services through the ASF.

## What support can I access?

The Fund will provide money for a range of therapeutic services that are identified to help achieve the following outcomes for you and your child:

- Improved relationships with friends, family members, teachers and school staff
- Improved engagement with learning
- Improved emotional regulation and behaviour management
- Improved confidence and ability to enjoy a positive family life and social relationships

It will pay for therapeutic services that are not currently provided by local authorities. These include, but are not restricted to:

- **Training for adoptive parents**  
Therapeutic parenting courses, including After Adoption's SafeBase
- **Further, more complex assessment where required**  
CAMHS assessment, multidisciplinary assessment, including education and health, cognitive and neuropsychological assessment, other mental health assessment
- **Psychotherapy**
- **Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy**  
Integrative method of psychotherapy developed for the treatment of children and young people who manifest serious psychological problems associated with complex trauma and serious failure to establish secure patterns of attachment
- **Theraplay**  
Interactive play between child/young person and parent to strengthen the parent-child attachment. Sessions guided by a therapist
- **Filial Therapy**  
Specific type of therapy where the parent usually conducts the session
- **Creative therapies e.g. Music, Art, Drama**
- **Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR)**  
Psychological treatment method which stimulates the brain to reduce intensity of distressing memories, for example a therapist asking a child to move their eyes from left to

right to stimulate blocked information

- **Sensory integration therapy**
- **Multi Systemic Therapy**
- **Specialist clinical assessments where required (e.g. Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder)**
- **Non-violent resistance training**  
A psychological approach for overcoming destructive, aggressive, controlling and risk taking behaviour
- **Therapy such as those mentioned above, when provided as part of a short break, course or package**
- **Therapy such as those mentioned above, when commissioned pre-adoption but delivery extends post-adoption order**
- **Therapeutic support where the child is under a section 20 order and there is a possibility of the child being reunited with their adopted parents**
- **Extensive therapeutic life story work**



## What will the Adoption Support Fund not pay for?

Local authorities and adoption agencies should already be providing a certain amount of support to their adoptive families:

- Information, advice, guidance and signposting
- Counselling
- Opportunities for adoptive families to meet, socialise and support one another (e.g. family days, support groups)
- Managing and mediating contact with birth families
- Mediation when an adopted family is at risk of disruption
- Financial support
- Basic life story work
- Short break care where now therapeutic input is provided

The ASF will also not pay for:

- Support for physical medical conditions
- Speech and language therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and other universal health services
- Education support
- Membership of clubs and organisations
- Legal support
- Support provided by private and third sector organisations that are not Ofsted regulated
- Training of staff
- Support not delivered in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
- Ex-local authority (associate) social workers

## What Next?

- To access the Adoption Support Fund contact your local authority. They will then organise your assessment and identify the best support for you. They then make an application to the Adoption Support Fund. If you have any questions about the process, or encounter any problems, then get in touch.
- To find out about the comprehensive life long support we offer adoptive families and for advice **call our ActionLine on 0800 0568 578**



# Adoption Support Fund: Q&A for parents

## Is there a limit to how much funding a family can access?

No, it is not about how much, but about what is required. This will be determined through the statutory assessment of your family's adoption support needs carried out by your local authority.

## What if I disagree with the assessment of our support needs?

Adoptive families will not be able to approach the ASF directly for funding. If you disagree with the local authority's assessment of your need they will need to resolve this with the local authority using the current appeals mechanisms. When an assessment is carried out, the local authority notifies the adopter in writing of the outcome and must inform them of the timescale to appeal if they wish (28 days is recommended good practice). The local authority cannot make their final decision until the period of time for making an appeal has expired, or the adopter informs them that they are satisfied with the proposed decision.

## Why won't the ASF fund pre adoption order support?

The most common need identified is post-adoption therapeutic support, and this is not often provided, hence the focus of the ASF on this type of support.

Until the Adoption Order is issued, a child remains the responsibility of the local authority and should receive support as a looked after child. This is a core duty of the local authority. The ASF will, however, be able to approve applications submitted prior to the Adoption Order for services to be provided after it is issued. That will enable local authorities to provide a more continuous service between placement and post-adoption.

## Why is the ASF not available to children adopted from overseas?

At present, only children who have been in local authority care under the terms of the Children Act 1989 immediately prior to adoption, are eligible to access funding from the ASF. A looked after child is defined in the Children Act 1989 as one who is in the care of, or provided with accommodation by, an English or Welsh local authority. When a looked after child is adopted, the Government's policy is to continue to offer support for the child and their new family. This is in recognition that the child remains vulnerable and may have a high level of need.

Parents of children adopted from overseas are, however, entitled to ask their local authority's adoption team to undertake an assessment of their child's support needs. Once an assessment is completed, the local authority can consider what support is available.

## Is the Fund available to other children who leave the care system for other permanent routes such as under a Special Guardianship Order or a Child Arrangement Order?

The Fund is only available for children who have left care under an Adoption Order. However, local authorities have legal duties to support children who leave care under the legal orders and carers should discuss any needs with their local authority.

## What about Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)?

Many adopted children need the support of mainstream and specialist health services, but sometimes struggle to obtain these. Therefore all national and local health service commissioners have been asked to specifically consider adopted children's needs when developing local services (NHS Mandate Priority) and the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) has been commissioned to develop guidance on attachment issues to help respond to the specific needs of many adopted children.

The Government has also set up a taskforce to overhaul the way CAMHS are commissioned, to ensure young people are offered the most appropriate care, whether in the community or in hospital.

After Adoption was founded to meet the needs of all parties to adoption and we are the largest single focused provider of adoption support in the UK. We develop Adoption Support Services in response to need and our reputation is built on 25 years' delivery of quality services. Our experience is that a lifelong perspective enables us to offer, develop and co-produce services that are more accessible and effective for the people we work with.

**Find out more about our services.**

**[www.afteradoption.org.uk](http://www.afteradoption.org.uk)**

**0800 0568 578**

The information in this brochure was, to the best of our knowledge, accurate at the time of going to print. Some information may change.



after   
adoption

After Adoption is committed to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults and promoting their welfare. We work within statutory guidelines, regulations and seek to set and attain the highest standards of developing practice.

Find out more: [www.afteradoption.org.uk/safeguarding](http://www.afteradoption.org.uk/safeguarding)

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