

Love
Black Country

FAMILIES



SUPPORTING THOSE WHO FOSTER & ADOPT

Every day more than 50 children are taken into care in the UK.

They are removed from chaotic, traumatic, abusive, neglectful or desperate situations. Some will need a home for a few nights, some for a few months or years, while others will never be able to return to their birth families and will become one of the 4,000 children who are currently waiting for a permanent home with a new forever family.

The system can't cope but what about if WE could be part of the solution?

The church is ideally placed to help meet this need – both in terms of finding families to foster or adopt and in providing an excellent community of support to wrap around families that care for vulnerable children.

God makes clear his unchanging desire that his people should 'look out' for the lowliest and the least. Psalm 82:3 exhorts God's people to 'defend the weak and the fatherless' just as he himself does (Deuteronomy 10:18). The same message is conveyed in the New Testament. James tells us, 'Religion that God our father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress' (James 1:27).

As people who have received God's unconditional love and adoption, we are called to reach out and show his love to those in need around us.

"We need our churches to look out for us. We need to know our families are welcome. That we are loved. That our children are valued. My prayer is that churches in the UK would be a beacon of light and love for all families who adopt, foster or offer kinship care." (Adoptive mother, Kent.)

HOW CAN WE HELP?



IT'S GOOD TO TALK

All adoptive parents, foster carers and kinship carers are individuals and their circumstances are different so the best place to start is simply talking to them. Ask what they need, ask how their life is and really listen. However, don't ask personal questions in front of the children.



SUPPORT

Support parents and carers in their parenting, ask them how you can do this as managing behaviour in a traumatised child requires very different strategies – trust they know what they are doing. Our spoken or unspoken disapproval can be devastating.



WELCOME CHILDREN

As a church welcome and accept children who may not have any previous experience of church and may display challenging or disruptive behaviour. Home for Good provides training for Children's and Youth workers and volunteers to help them in understanding and working with children who have experienced care. Ensure your toddler group has a welcoming environment for adoptive parents, foster carers and kinship carers. If there is a waiting list maybe consider reserving an open place for foster carers whenever a child is placed in their care.

ENCOURAGE



Church leaders; encourage and support adoptive parents and foster carers as those who are carrying out a vital part of your church's mission and service to the community. Give a clear message that they and their children are welcomed and valued.

RESPECT THE BOUNDARIES



Some adoptive parents might not want everyone to know their child is adopted. Avoid asking too many questions as parents and carers are often not permitted to divulge much about their children's background. However, take the lead from the parents or carers and show an interest in the children. Remember a child's birthday or attend/show interest in important sporting/other activity events.

CHILD PROTECTION



It's important to bear in mind child protection measures when church members are encouraged to support and possibly befriend vulnerable children. The interests of the child must always be at the forefront. Be sure to be guided by the parents or carers themselves. They will know what is appropriate and must be comfortable with any arrangements that are made.

OFFER PRACTICAL SUPPORT

You might need to take the initiative in this as it can be hard to ask for help. Be supportive so parents and carers can admit when they are struggling without it seeming like a huge failure. Also recognise that sometimes specialist help or therapy will also be required.

There are lots of ways that you can offer practical support to those who foster or adopt:

OFFER TO BABYSIT



Talk to carers about the possibility of getting a DBS check so that you could provide respite/babysitting for them as a couple to have a break and recharge their batteries.

BE A BACK-UP



Offer to act as a 'back-up' if a crisis with a foster child were to prevent a family from picking up their child from a sports practice etc.

PROVIDE RESOURCES



Help carers find suitable baby clothes, toys or pushchairs when a new child is fostered, often at very short notice.

HELP WITH DIY



Offer DIY help to prepare a home for assessment or help to make repairs if a child has damaged the home.

DOMESTIC SUPPORT



Offer to take care of laundry or make a meal a week for a family so parents are freer to spend time forming those important bonds of attachment with the child.

GIVE GIFTS



Gifts and cards or offer support such as meals when foster carers or adoptive parents take in a new child, just as you might do for parent who has given birth to a new baby.

PROVIDE REFERENCES



Offer to provide references for those considering fostering or adoption.

FIND OUT MORE



For many more ways that you can support foster and adoptive families in your community, please visit www.homeforgood.org.uk/about-us

"Adopting our daughter has been far from easy. Especially in the early days, people would ask me what we needed and I just didn't know because it was so hard and overwhelming. We are so grateful to our family and friends and everyone who's stuck by us and are supporting us through it. It is still challenging of course, and we know it will continue to be as that's the reality of adoption, but we wouldn't change a thing!" (Adoptive father, Redditch)

CHAMPION FAMILIES

Our vision is to see Love Black Country Family Champions in every church in our region, championing the cause of families in need in their communities by inspiring the church to reach out and engage with them in practical ways.

Please get in touch with Sam Knight, our Love Black Country Families Champion Coordinator, to find out how you can become a Family Champion in your church.

For more information...

This article has been adapted by Love Black Country Families from resources produced by Home For Good. For more info, visit www.homeforgood.org.uk/about-us. Alternatively, please email us: families@loveblackcountry.org.uk



/loveblackcountry



families@loveblackcountry.org.uk



loveblackcountry.org