



## Regional Intercountry Adoption Assessment Service

### **'THE 10 STEP GUIDE TO ADOPTING FROM OVERSEAS'**

*"International adoption, properly conducted and well-regulated, may offer the possibility of a permanent family for a child where a suitable family within the child's country of origin cannot be found"*

*Save the Children – 2010*

#### **What is Intercountry Adoption?**

- Intercountry Adoption is the adoption of a child from another country outside the United Kingdom. In order to adopt a child from another country you must be approved as suitable to do so by your local Health and Social Care Trust. **You cannot be approved to adopt from overseas as well as to adopt domestically.**

#### **Who can adopt from overseas?**

- When considering adoption from an overseas country it is important that you research fully the criteria for the specific country that you decide you wish to adopt from as some countries have specific laws in relation to age, marital status and sexual orientation.
- Couples can apply providing one of the couple is domiciled in the United Kingdom or both of you must be habitually resident.
- Single applicants can also apply but must be domiciled or habitually resident. However some countries will not accept applications from single applicants.

## What should I do next?

- **Step one** – Contact the **Regional Intercountry Adoption Service (RIAAS)** Email – [RIAAS@northerntrust.hscni.net](mailto:RIAAS@northerntrust.hscni.net) or telephone **02894488285**
  - You will be provided with information both verbally and in writing
  - You will be offered a meeting with an Intercountry Adoption Social Worker
- **Step two** – Training
  - You will be invited to attend an Information Day
  - If you feel you wish to pursue an application, you will be invited to attend a 3 day preparation course.
- **Step three** – Application
  - If you wish to proceed you must have decided on your country of choice and have checked that you meet that country's eligibility criteria before you make a formal application.
- **Step four** – Assessment
  - All prospective adopters must be assessed as suitable to adopt by The Regional Intercountry Adoption Service. The assessment – often referred to as a 'home study' – involves in-depth interviews with an Intercountry Adoption Social Worker, as well as medical, financial and police checks together with professional and personal references. This ensures that prospective adopters are able to provide the child with a safe, secure and stable home.
  - The areas discussed in the assessment will include:
    - Your own upbringing and experience of being parented
    - Your support networks
    - Your lifestyle
    - Your parenting capacity
    - Your current relationship and experience of previous relationships
    - If you do not have birth children how this has impacted on you
    - The additional needs of children adopted from overseas
    - If applicable – your partner and children from previous relationships will be interviewed by the Social Worker in respect of their views on your application and suitability.
    - You will have the opportunity to read your assessment and make any written comments prior to circulation to the Adoption Panel.
- **Step five** – Adoption Panel
  - When the assessment process is complete, applications are considered by your local Health and Social Care Trust's Adoption

Panel, which will make a recommendation on whether the applicant(s) are suitable to adopt. An approval decision, informed by the panel's recommendation, will then be made by your HSC Trust decision maker – a senior manager with your HSC Trust.

- **Step Six – DHSSPS**

- If approved by your local HSC Trust, your application and supporting documents are then passed onto the Intercountry Adoption Team within the DHSSPS.
- This team then checks that all the paperwork is in order and that it complies to the relevant UK and relevant sending countries legislation.
- Once the application is ratified by DHSSPS a certificate of eligibility will be issued and your papers will be sent to the relevant authority in your chosen country.
- You will be informed by DHSSPS that your application has been submitted.

- **Step seven – Matching**

- When they have received the application, the relevant foreign authorities will attempt to match the prospective adopters with a child. ***Depending on the number of applications and the children available for adoption, this can take up to several years.***

**Please note** – The UK authorities are not able to provide updates on the progress of applications at this stage. Prospective adopters are free to contact the relevant authorities in their chosen country, but are advised not to do so.

- **Hague Convention Cases**

Once a match has been made the documents on the child will be sent directly to the DHSSPS. They are then forwarded via RIAAS to the prospective adopters. The RIAAS and the prospective adopters will meet with a paediatrician to discuss the proposed placement and the support services available.

- **Non-Hague cases**

Once a match has been made documents on the child may be sent directly to DHSSPS from the authorities abroad, or to the RIAAS or the prospective adopters. On some occasions the applicants will have to travel to meet the child and gather medical and social information themselves. Once all appropriate information is received the prospective adopters the RIAAS and a local paediatrician will meet to discuss the proposed placement and the support services available.

- **Step eight – Meeting the child**
  - If the prospective adopters wish to pursue the match, they must visit the child in his/her state of origin. The regulations state that, in the case of adoptions by couples, each prospective adopter must visit the child.
  - Depending on the status of the country (Hague or Non-Hague) will decide on how many trips to the country should occur before the child can return with the applicants.
- **Step nine – Returning to UK**
  - Applicants must notify RIAAS of their return home within 24 hours of arrival ( or the next working day if at a weekend or bank-holiday)
  - Meet with the family GP within 7 days for an initial medical examination of the child.
  - Meet with a Health Visitor within 7 days so the medical needs of the child can be monitored.
  - Meet with your local Trusts Designated Paediatrician so an overall assessment of the child's development and needs can begin.
  - Your local HSC Trust will organise a 'Post Arrival Support Meeting' to ensure all appropriate supports are in place. These supports will be reviewed as required.
- **Step ten – Other things you need to know**
  - Charges – there is a fee charged for all aspects of the process, it is important to discuss these costs with the RIAAS Social Worker. You should consider these costs carefully to have a realistic expectation of the total costs before embarking on the process. The charge will be reviewed regularly.  
Applicants will also need to meet all additional costs related to processing the application in the child's country of origin.
  - Most countries require post placement/adoption reports on your return to UK and for varying times afterwards. A further fee will be charged for completion and processing of these reports.

## **What you should do now**

If you wish to pursue your interest in Intercountry Adoption you should contact the **Regional Intercountry Adoption Assessment Service** at [RIASS@northerntrust.hscni.net](mailto:RIASS@northerntrust.hscni.net) or telephone **02894488285** to request a meeting with an Intercountry Adoption Social Worker. You can also [enquire online.](#)

**Michael Robinson SSW**  
**Regional Intercountry Adoption Assessment Service**

## USEFUL WEBSITES

Hague Convention, ratifications and Central Authorities (no 33 Authorities)

[www.hcch.net](http://www.hcch.net)

Home Office Immigration/Nationality Department & Visas

[www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk)

Department for Education

[www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/adoption/intercountryadoption](http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/adoption/intercountryadoption)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

[www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)

Legislation

[www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk)

[www.niassembly.gov.uk](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk)

Intercountry Adoption Centre (formerly Overseas Adoption Helpline)

[www.icacentre.org.uk](http://www.icacentre.org.uk)

Central Authorities for Hague Countries (no 33 Authorities)

[www.hcch.net/e/conventions](http://www.hcch.net/e/conventions)

## RECOMMENDED READING

There is wealth of publications about adoption – fiction and non-fiction. This list represents a small and varied selection.

### NOVELS:

- FOSTER M.      **HIDDEN LIVES**  
Author's account of the lives of her mother and grandmother. Relinquishment and abandonment are central themes.  
PENGUIN
- FOSTER M.      **SHADOW BABY**  
A tale of two young women who give birth to, then, illegitimate babies. The emotions of the children and mothers are portrayed in their separate worlds.  
PENGUIN
- FOSTER M.      **THE BATTLE FOR CHRISTABEL**  
When a young girls mother dies, family, friends and the local authority struggle to plan for her future.  
PENGUIN
- HARRIS P        **THE COLOURS IN ME**  
Writing and Poetry by Adopted Children and Young People  
BAAF (available as book and DVD)
- INGMAN H.      **SARA**  
About a woman who longs for a child and plans to adopt from Ecuador.  
POOLBEG
- MOSSE K.        **ESKIMO KISSING**  
A story about adoption and a young woman's search for identity and reunion.  
CORONET BOOKS
- WELLS S.        **WITHIN ME, WITHOUT ME**  
Collection of personal stories by mothers who have given up children for adoption.  
SCARLETT BOOK

WICKS B.

**YESTERDAY THEY TOOK MY BABY**

True stories of adoption.  
LIME TREE BOOKS

CATHOLIC  
CHILDREN  
SOCIETY

**Audio Tape: "ADOPTION IN MY LIFE – THE  
INTERCOUNTRY EXPERIENCE" - with  
accompanying notes**

Young people talk about their experiences, feelings  
and (Nottingham) thoughts about their adoption and  
their countries of origin.

**GENERAL ADOPTION:**

AHMED S  
J CHEETHAM  
SMALL J

**SOCIAL WORK WITH BLACK CHILDREN AND THEIR  
FAMILIES**

Includes chapters on black self-concept and issues,  
which arise in trans-racial placements.  
BAATSFORD/BAAF

BAGLEY C  
YOUNG L  
SCULLY A

**INTERNATIONAL & TRANSRACIAL ADOPTIONS -  
A mental health perspective**

The history of adoption and a summary of research  
findings.  
AVERBURY PRESS

BATTY D

A guide to the issues involved in disclosing  
information about origins to children born of incest.  
BAAF

CRUMBLEY J

**TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION AND FOSTER CARE**

Child welfare league of America  
BAAF

FAHLBERG V

**A CHILD'S JOURNEY THROUGH PLACEMENT**

A theoretical and practical guide to understanding  
and dealing with common issues in adoption  
placements.  
BAAF

HARRIS P

**IN SEARCH OF BELONGING**

Reflections by transracially adopted people  
BAAF

HOWE D  
SAWBRIDGE P  
HININGS D

**HALF A MILLION WOMEN**

Mothers who lose their children by adoption.  
BAAF

- McNAMARA J      **BRUISED BEFORE BIRTH**  
 Considers the impact on children of mothers who  
 abused drugs, alcohol & other substances pre-birth.  
 BAAF
- MCWHINNIE A    **CHILDREN OF INCEST**
- MORRISON M    **TALKING ABOUT ADOPTION**  
 BAAF
- PATEL J          **MIXED UP KIDS?**  
 Race, identity and social order  
 Russel House
- SEYMOUR N      **IN BLACK AND WHITE**  
 BAAF
- TURNPENNY P    **SECRETS IN THE GENES**  
 (ED)  
 An explosion of inheritance and genetic disease in  
 adoption.  
 BAAF
- Whitehead S     **FINDING OUR FAMILIES**  
 The story of our children adopted overseas  
 BAAF

**NB** - Should you wish to obtain some of the books listed, any good local bookshop should be able to advise you in respect of the general publications.

BAAF publications can be obtained from:

**BAAF (British Association for Adoption and Fostering)**

Botanic House

1-5 Botanic Avenue

Belfast

BT7 1JG

Tel: 028 9031 5494

The Children's Society Publications can be obtained from:

**The Children's Society**

Edward Rudolf House

69-89 Margery Street

London, WC1X 0JL

Tel: 0171 837 4299

Adoptive Families of America, Inc.  
3333 HWY. 100 N.  
Minneapolis  
MN 55422  
USA  
Tel: 612 535 4829  
Fax: 612 535 7808

**Further information can be obtained from the following agencies:**

**BAAF (British Association for Adoption and Fostering)**

Botanic House  
1-5 Botanic Avenue  
Belfast  
BT7 1JG  
Tel: 028 9031 5494  
<http://www.baaf.org.uk/ni>

**Northern Ireland Fertility Support Group**

113 University Street  
Belfast, BT7 1HP  
Contact: Ms Margaret O'Rourke  
Tel: 028 90 790628  
*Meet last Thursday of each month at 8.00 pm*