Intercountry Adoption

Adoption - it’s the magic of being a family
What is intercountry adoption?

Intercountry adoption is the adoption of a child from another country outside the British Isles. This is a term used by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to describe the United Kingdom, including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

Who can adopt from overseas?

**Couples**
- providing that at least one of the couple is domiciled in the United Kingdom
- or both of you must be habitually resident

**Single applicants**
- must be domiciled or habitually resident
- you must meet the specific requirements of the country of your choice. Some countries have an upper age limit, all have a lower age limit, and some accept applications from married couples only.
- you must be approved as suitable to adopt by a registered United Kingdom adoption agency. In the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea this will be the local authority.

What are the differences between adopting from the United Kingdom and adopting from overseas?

Very few children adopted from within the United Kingdom are given up at birth by their parents. Most are children who have been looked after by local authority foster carers because their parents are unable to look after them. Most adopted children have particular needs because:

- they may have suffered neglect, physical, sexual, and emotional abuse
- their experiences can mean that many have complex needs
- their parents may feel they cannot cope with parenting them

Many more children adopted from abroad have been relinquished at a very young age. However, children adopted from overseas have additional needs.

Challenges faced by children adopted from overseas and their adoptive families

- children from overseas who are placed for adoption often come from orphanages where they are cared for by several carers, often working on a shift system. This can make it difficult for them to bond with their adoptive family.
- it is often the case that little is known about their family of origin. Some babies do
not have birth certificates.
• this means adoptive families may not have all the information they need to understand their child’s health needs. For example, there might be hereditary conditions not known to the adopters.
• many inter-country adoptions are trans-racial, meaning that the children are separated not only from their families and countries, but also from their ethnic, cultural and linguistic heritage. A child who is noticeably different from their adoptive family may have difficulty feeling that they belong in their new home and may feel they stand out at school and in public.
• when they become adults and visit their country of origin, they often feel estranged from the people and culture

What other things should I consider if adopting from overseas?

• it is an opportunity to give a family to a child who otherwise may not have one
• in contrast with domestic adoptions, there is usually no contact with birth families
• it takes longer than domestic adoption – see process sheet
• children are often younger at placement
• it is expensive. A leaflet on costs is enclosed in your information pack.
• some countries require regular reports from your United Kingdom local authority after the adoption order has been made.
• there are some countries where child protection is not as rigorous as in the United Kingdom. In extreme cases there may even be child trafficking.

How should I choose a country from which to adopt?

• you may share the same ethnic and / or cultural origin, or
• have an affinity with your country of choice
• you may speak the same language
• you may wish to consider international law, as the United Kingdom does not recognise all adoptions that are made overseas. See the following section entitled ‘What is the law on international child adoption?’ for further information.

The Hague Convention on International Adoption

• children who cannot live with their birth parents should be found a placement with a family member, or given the opportunity to live with a family within their state of origin
• intercountry adoption may be considered as an alternative means of providing a family for a child who cannot be found a family in their state of origin
• intercountry adoption must only take place where it is in the best interests of the child
• profit should not be made from the process
The United Kingdom is a signatory of the Hague Convention and recognises all adoption orders made in other Hague countries. Adopted children of British parents who are adopted in a Hague country can obtain a British passport in their country of birth and enter the United Kingdom as British citizens.

Some countries are designated countries under the Hague Convention, but are not full signatories. Children of British parents adopted in these countries will not be entitled to a British Passport and will need entry visas to come to the United Kingdom.

However, if the country you have chosen is a non-designated country under the Hague Convention, the United Kingdom does not recognise the adoption and you will need to re-adopt your child in a British court.

What should I do next?

- attend an information meeting with Inter-Country Adoption Centre
- check the requirements of your chosen country and ensure you meet them
- if you wish to take your interest further, two social workers will visit you at home to advise on your particular circumstances
- if we decide to accept your application, we will allocate an adoption social worker to carry out an assessment and invite you to a three day preparation course. At this course you will be able to gather more information and meet other people interested in adopting from overseas.
- the assessment process can take up to 12 meetings. The meetings will be between you and an adoption social worker, and will usually take place in your home. We will also ask your doctor for a medical report, take up personal references and ask the Criminal Records Bureau to run a check.
- your social worker will present a report about you to the Adoption and Permanency Panel. If the panel agrees that your circumstances are appropriate, the adoption agency decision-maker will approve you as an adoptive family for a child from overseas. The panel will also advise on a particular age range.
- the process from your application to approval by the agency can take up to eight months
- you can decide to withdraw your application at any stage. If we have reason to think that you should not proceed to adoption we will discuss this further with you.
- after approval, you will receive a certificate of eligibility to adopt from overseas from the DCSF and your papers will be sent to the country of your choice for matching with a child

What do I do now?

If you are interested and feel that you could offer a home to a child or children through adoption, please contact the Adoption Team on 020 7598 4684 (9am to 1pm only) or Freephone 0800 183 2500, or visit www.rbkc.gov.uk/adoptfosterus