

Voluntary Adoption Agency Advice Guides
2025

Advice from Adopters
Adopting children of
Black and other diverse
ethnicities

cvaa  uk

Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies

www.cvaa.org.uk



Voluntary Adoption Agency Advice Guides: Adopting a child of Black or other diverse ethnicity*

Becoming a parent through adoption is a life-changing and deeply personal experience, and for those from certain ethnic backgrounds, it can come with unique considerations and perspectives.

This guide is created with warmth and understanding, drawing from the lived experience of adoptive parents who have already navigated this path. Some of those parents have adopted a child of similar ethnicity to their own, while others have welcomed a child of another heritage or culture into their family.

We recognise that adoption can feel complex but our network of VAAs across the UK are passionate about finding loving and secure families for children waiting to be adopted and committed to supporting you from the very first time you enquire, to when your family is established and beyond, for as long as you need us.

Black and other minoritised children currently wait much longer in the care system for an adoptive family. The voluntary sector is known for its experience and success in supporting a more diverse mix of families than other agencies, with the hope of ending this disparity in how long children wait.

As you read this guide, we hope the insights shared by those who have already adopted, and the outlined support available from VAAs, will empower you to embrace the joy and fulfilment of adoption.

What is a Voluntary Adoption Agency (VAA)?

VAAs are independent, not for profit organisations which are smaller than most statutory agencies and offer a personalised service to adopters from all backgrounds. VAAs work in partnership with local authorities and regional adoption agencies across the whole of the UK to find families for children in care who are unable to stay with their birth relatives.

There are 21 Voluntary Adoption Agencies, covering every region and country of the UK, which are members of CVAA. Learn more and find details of your local VAA via:

www.cvaa.org.uk/agency-finder

***A note on language used within this guide:**

We are mindful of different language used in reference to race, culture and heritage. In this guide we have chosen to use the term 'Black and other diverse ethnicity' to acknowledge groups which are also sometimes referred to as 'ethnic minority' or 'global majority' and we recognise that people favour different terms. When we work with people considering adopting, we take care to understand how they define themselves and use terms they use and prefer.

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We are a Black British couple of Nigerian descent, and the adoption process blessed us with a beautiful daughter who was 3 months old when we got her back in 2016.

Our only regret is that we didn't start the process sooner – it is a wonderful and very rewarding thing. Our daughter is now 9 years old and she has been an absolute joy and blessing!

”

Helen and Kola, ARC Adoption North East



Black children as well as those from other diverse ethnicities wait longer to be adopted.



— “

Aspects of your ethnicity and culture are probably what will make you the ideal forever family for a child. There’s an overrepresentation of children from ethnic minority backgrounds waiting to be adopted, so when a potential adopter shares part of a child’s cultural identity, it’s seen as a strength rather than a barrier.

” —

Geoffrey and Fred, PACT

— “

Our Link Maker profile was up for less than an hour and the laptop did not stop pinging with social workers wanting to link us to their children. It was actually extremely overwhelming. I thought back to the comment made to us on training. It just showed that there was such a need for minority ethnic adopters.

” —

Monique and Alice, Adoption Focus



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We knew there were children from Muslim backgrounds waiting longest as there often aren’t as many Muslim adopters, so we were keen to adopt a child from a Muslim background.

”

Asma, Coram



A shared cultural heritage can benefit a child's sense of identity and belonging

“ My partner and I are an interracial couple. I am Black Caribbean, and she is white British. We knew that being adopted would already give our children a label in society, and us being a same-sex couple could have added complexities to how our family could be viewed, and how they may be viewed by their peers. So, it was important that our children resembled us in regards to ethnicity and had similar heritage to us to avoid any other labels or barriers for them in the future.

We also wanted our children to be able to relate to us and see themselves in us. We felt it was important to be able to support them through challenges in life to help build them into strong, confident and ambitious individuals. ”

Monique and Alice, Adoption Focus

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The fact that our daughter is Black with similar heritage to ours made things a lot easier explaining things to her. Even though she is primarily British in her outlook, she enjoys wearing beautiful African dresses and enjoys some of the African delicacies. Basically, she enjoys the very best of both worlds.

Helen and Kola, ARC Adoption North East

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Love is absolutely paramount, but when reality kicks in and challenges arise, it's crucial to be able to step up and provide the support and understanding your child needs. Sharing a cultural or ethnic connection can make a big difference in helping your child feel seen, valued, and understood.

Geoffrey and Fred, PACT

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www.cvaa.org.uk/agency-finder



Children need families who value, celebrate and preserve their cultural heritage

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The beauty of it all is that our child is growing up in a multicultural society, and that’s something we fully embrace and celebrate in our home. It’s about weaving all the threads of our identities together to create a rich and supportive environment where he feels proud of who he is.

Geoffrey and Fred, PACT

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We embrace and celebrate both of our heritages, ensuring that Amelia feels connected to her own culture while also being fully included in our family’s traditions. We want her to feel proud of and confident in who she is, with a deep appreciation for both backgrounds ... Our home is a place of love and laughter, we’re just like any other family.

Elmina and Michael, Caritas Care

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Being able to understand the world these kids will grow up in—whether it’s through shared experiences of racial challenges or simply celebrating a common cultural heritage—is such an important thing. It provides a foundation for children to feel seen, understood, and celebrated for who they are.

Geoffrey and Fred, PACT

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Being from the same ethnic background isn't always necessary though

The most important thing is that you can dedicate the thought, time and effort to preserving and supporting a child's cultural identity.

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My family, friends, and colleagues have been nothing but accepting of Zaria being of a different heritage to me ... Of course, there have been learning curves, such as caring for her hair, which is very different from my own. I'm learning every day—reaching out to other parents of mixed-race children, doing research, and experimenting with different techniques and products. It's been fun discovering how to care for her hair properly, and I have had many comments on how well I am styling her hair – I'll take that!” ”

Charlotte, ARC Adoption North East

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As a white man, I knew that adopting a Black child meant I had to really think about how I would support our son in developing a strong, healthy sense of his identity. It wasn't something I took lightly, and I had a number of conversations about it with our social worker and, of course, with Geoffrey ... I'm lucky to have a husband who's always been willing to educate me on aspects of the Black experience that I haven't lived firsthand. From the moment we met, he's been open about sharing his perspective, and that's helped me a lot in understanding the unique challenges our son might face and how I can support him.”

Geoffrey and Fred, PACT

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As Zaria grows older, I'm sure she'll have questions about her heritage and where she comes from. Together, we'll explore her background, and learn more about her culture, traditions, and celebrations. I've already started by finding age-appropriate books, found local festivals, and will incorporate cultural play into our lives with role-play costumes and activities. ”

Charlotte, ARC Adoption North East



Recognising children's cultures and traditions in everyday life means different things to different families

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Celebrating our diverse cultures has brought so much love and laughter into our household. We love exploring different foods, music and traditions; this has given us an appreciation of each other's heritage. Our shared love for food has helped us to bond and try new dishes. Attending events like the Manchester Carnival has allowed us to embrace and celebrate both our African and Afro-Caribbean backgrounds. For us, cultural identity is something to be cherished.

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Elmina and Michael, Caritas Care



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My son's heritage is the same as mine so we have lots of children's books about Jamaica, it's in the food we eat and the way we cook, the dialect in my wider network and the way we live our lives ... its about involving him in a child centred way.

A huge part of our routine is maintaining my son's hair as I do it myself, so washing, combing, drying and plaiting it every few weeks. He loves his hair and it's a big part of his identity; it takes lots of time so we make it into an adventure.

Jane*, Coram

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We've made it a priority to help Amelia stay connected to her culture in ways that feel natural. She has regular contact with her sister and maternal aunt, which helps her maintain important family connections. We also work closely with her Social Worker on her Life Story Book, giving her a strong sense of her background as she grows up. We also spend time talking about Trinidad and Tobago, where her birth mother is from, so she can feel proud of her roots. As a Christian family, we celebrate Christmas and birthdays just like any other family.

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Elmina (pictured with Amelia), Caritas Care

www.cvaa.org.uk/agency-finder

**Names changed to protect identities*



Going through the adoption process can be daunting but most people find it a positive experience

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There's a lot of myth and misunderstanding around the adoption assessment process ... but honestly, when we started the process, we found ourselves really enjoying it. It ended up being a great learning experience for both of us. In the end, we understood why the process is as thorough as it is. It isn't about delays or red tape—it's about making sure you're fully prepared for the journey ahead. For us, it was a meaningful and necessary step toward becoming parents.

Geoffrey and Fred, PACT

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I had heard stories about it being a long and difficult journey, but I'm an optimist, so I went into it with a positivity and that's exactly what we experienced ... I felt fully supported by my agency and it was reassuring to know that my ethnicity was never a factor. Everything went smoothly from start to finish and looking back, it was such a positive experience. We couldn't have been happier with how it all went!

Elmina and Michael, Caritas Care

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We found the adoption process quite long, but by the end of the process, you get to fully understand and appreciate why it is so. As part of the training, they organise different kinds of helpful speakers ranging from adoptive parents who have gone through the process to adopted children who are now adults, as well as medical practitioners. ARC offered us a lot of support too and went at our pace, so there was no pressure at all.”

Helen and Kola, ARC Adoption North East

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It might sound funny, but the adoption assessment process felt like therapy for us... good therapy! It gave us the chance to reflect, talk about ourselves, and even learn new things about each other.

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Elmina and Michael, Caritas Care

www.cvaa.org.uk/agency-finder



Social Workers will welcome and support you without judgement

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Our social worker had a lot of experience. Her calmness and frankness reassured us, she was always upfront with us through the process, managing our expectations and making us feel at ease. She always felt like our shoulder to lean on, she was always there for us.

Asma, Coram

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I have come across people who would like to adopt but are fearful of what social workers will ask, especially if their childhood or teenage years were difficult. From my experience of the assessment and meeting other adopters, people’s backgrounds do not necessarily prevent them from becoming adoptive parents, it is just they will need to talk about it. Social workers are professional and deal with difficulties with respect.

Anne*, Coram

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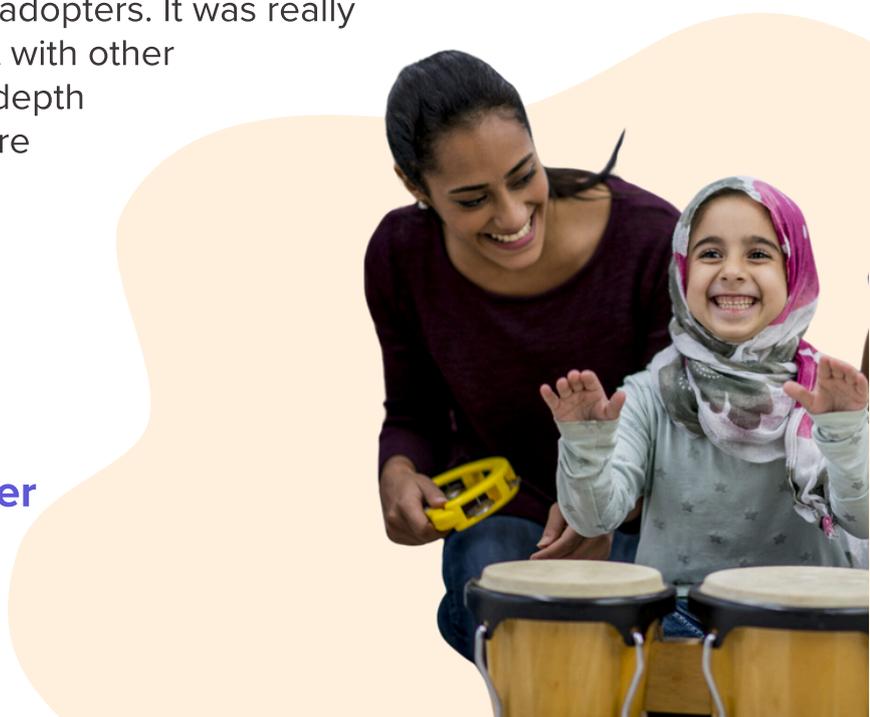
The training was professional and informative. We never felt like we were asking a silly question. It was very open, we could discuss things with the social workers and other prospective adopters. It was really invaluable to have that social element with other adopters as well. The training was in-depth but we understood why, we knew there would need to be insight into our own lives in the process of becoming adopters.

Asma, Coram

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www.cvaa.org.uk/agency-finder

**Names changed to protect identities*



Final messages from adopters and advice for the future



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 Don't worry about what others think—this is your journey, and it will shape the rest of your life. I've seen some people say that their support system weakened after adoption, but for me, it has only grown stronger. I've made so many new friends, and our children will always have a community of others who understand what it's like to be adopted.
 ————— ” —

Charlotte, ARC Adoption North East



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 Don't let cultural barriers hold you back. All people have worries about what others think and it can put people off. Look at the wider picture – you'll be giving a home to a child who would be in care for longer, you'll give each other contentment.
 ————— ” —

Asma, Coram



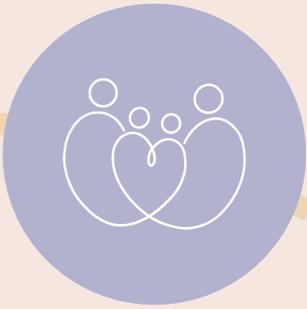
Adopting has been the most incredible experience of my life. The love I feel for her is immeasurable, and I wouldn't change a thing. If you're considering adoption, know that love is what truly matters. Everything else—learning, adapting, growing—will come naturally with time. ❤️
 ”

Charlotte, ARC Adoption North East



A family feel

Adopters often tell us that ‘family feel’ and ‘personalised service’ are key reasons for choosing to adopt with a VAA. Families often form meaningful relationships with the wider team and agency - as well as their social worker.



Diversity and inclusivity

Everyone will receive a warm welcome from a VAA. VAAs get to know their local communities and are more likely to place children with adopters from a diverse range of backgrounds.



you

Why adopt through a VAA?



Lifelong support

Your VAA will be there for you and your children for life. Adoption is a lifelong journey, not a destination.



Exceptional service standards

VAAs are the only adoption agencies which are fully inspected by an independent body, and all are rated highly or very highly.



Going further for the right child for you

As VAAs are independent, they have the ability to match adopters with children from across the UK, as well as within their locality.



Finding families for those who wait the longest

VAAs find families for approximately 20% of children adopted and have expertise in finding families for children with priority needs such as those from an ethnic minority background.



What next? Are you interested in learning more?

If the advice shared by adoptive families in this guide has inspired you to learn more about adopting, VAAs in your local area will be delighted to help you further.

Agencies host regular information events which will help you to find out more about adoption and the support available, and consider if it's right for you. Agencies also offer the opportunity to have a one-on-one conversation with a team member, who will be able to talk you through the process and answer any questions you may have.

A list of agencies can be found via the CVAA agency finder in the list below or on the next page of the advice guide.

Useful links and further information on adopting:

- CVAA agency finder for a list of all VAAs - click [here](#)
- Information on why to adopt with a VAA - click [here](#)
- First4Adoption website - click [here](#)
- Adoption UK Charity website - click [here](#)
- Family Matters podcast from Adoption UK - click [here](#)
- You Can Adopt podcasts - click [here](#)

Useful information on transracial adoption:

- The AFDiT Framework - a tool to support transracial adoption - click [here](#)

Committed to the success of transracial adoptive placements, VAAs have been involved in the development of the AFDiT Framework, and are working towards having an AFDiT champion in place within agencies.



Adopters for Adoption
England



Adoption Focus
Midlands



Adoption Matters
North of England, Yorkshire and Humber, Stoke, Staffordshire and Shropshire



ARC Adoption North East
North East England, Cumbria and North Yorkshire



Barnardo's
Across the UK



Caritas Care
North West inc Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Cumbria



CCS Adoption
South West England



Coram Adoption
London and the surrounding areas



Coram IAC
Across the UK



Diagrama Adoption
London, Surrey, East and West Sussex and Kent



Family Care Adoption Services
Northern Ireland



Family Futures
London



Family Routes
Northern Ireland



Kibble Adoption
Scotland



Nugent Adoption
North West England



Parents and Children Together (PACT)
Southern and Central England



Scottish Adoption and Fostering
Scotland



St Andrew's Children's Society
Scotland



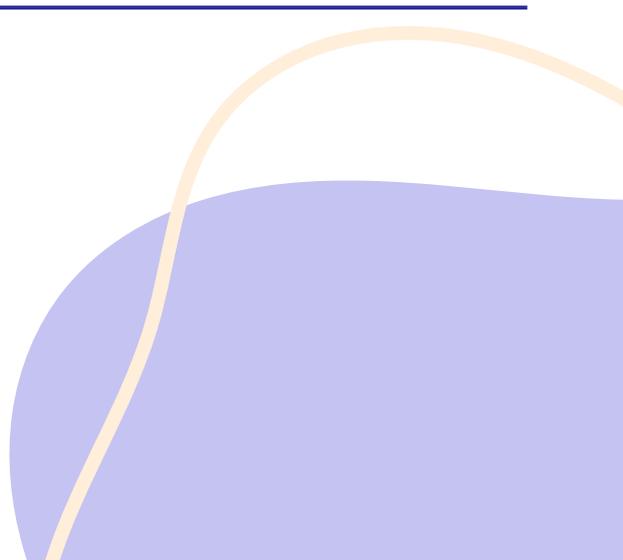
St David's Adoption Service
Wales



St Margaret's Children and Family Care Society
Scotland



Yorkshire Adoption Agency
Yorkshire and surrounding areas





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Charity Registration Number: 1108318

Company Registration Number: 5275491

