

## Adoption support

You may already be familiar with us if you are adopters or adopted but equally, you may not have heard of us! When the 2002 Adoption and Children Act came into being, with it came a statutory duty to provide support to families after adoption. This duty is shared between Social Services, Education and CAMHS and our partners, KISKA. You may well think that it was about time too! We were set up as a response to this legislation and we are a small, experienced group of practitioners who try very hard to understand the complexities of the highs and lows that you experience as adopting families. We know that parenting is one of the hardest things to do and being an adoptive parent is even more challenging. There are no easy answers and sometimes things change very slowly indeed.

We are a very small team with only 3.5 Social Workers and 2 Social Work assistants. We are there to offer a service to all the children who are adopted in Kent and that includes those children who live in Kent and come from Kent as well as those who have moved from another local Authority and have been here for 3 years. Bearing in mind that there has been an average of approximately 100 children adopted every year in Kent alone for the past 5 years, there are a lot of families, children and young people out there in Kent affected by adoption.

Your first contact with us is likely to be a visit from someone, if you would like it, when your son or daughter first comes to live with you. If they are 'pre-school' we will invite you to come to a Buddy group. These are groups of parents and children who meet on a monthly basis at a local soft play activity centre for a few hours. Adopters tell us that sometimes these are good places to be and that it can be really hard using usual parent and toddler groups. People are still talking about pregnancies and ante-natal care etc and you don't want to explain that your child is adopted! There are such particular things that you will have experienced as adopters that you won't have to explain... and it is really nice to get to know other adopters in your area that you can meet up with at other times as

well. Parents tell us that they want their children to grow up knowing other adopted children and this is a good way of starting those relationships.

Once your children have gone to school, there is an 'over 5s' buddy group that is a drop in support group for adopters. We only hold this in one part of the county at the moment and hope to have a group like this in the east and west of Kent once a month. Please ring us to ask where and when this is held. We also hold 3 family fun events in the year for families to come to. It is another good opportunity to meet other adopters and for your children to meet other children who have been adopted.

We run a number of workshops over the year and these are really important events to put in your diary. As you know, adopted children often struggle with a lot of things and this sometimes makes it a constant challenge to care for them in a way that helps them now and will help them in the future. They may have real difficulties with behaviour and helping them learn to manage that behaviour is a long haul task!!! Although we do sometimes work individually with children, we would first always urge you to come to our workshops so that you can find new ways of caring for your children, understand why it is that they behave in ways that you don't always understand and talk to other adopters. Our workshops include a 'Telling workshop', 'Parenting adolescents', 'Parenting the angry child', 'Keeping your cool' and a 7 session set of workshops about managing behaviour. Many of these are run twice a year. Adopters tell us that one of their greatest supports is the support of other adopters! This is a really good way of pooling ideas, finding new ways of understanding and managing things and talking about your very unique everyday life with other people who 'know what you mean'.

We know that some of you often feel exhausted, frustrated and as if you are constantly in battle trying to sort things out at home and sort things out for your child at school or with other agencies. Your son or daughter may still need you to be as reliable and predictable in everything you do as they did when they first came to you, years ago. They may still get really angry about something that

didn't seem to happen and you will still need to parent the child in front of you who may need what a toddler needs even though they are 14!

Below is a haphazard map of the things that we do. The team looked at all the things that services from adoption support do and have placed them around the child. You will notice that some of the things are done by our partner, KISKA (Kent Independent Service for Kinship and Adoption) who cover services for birth families, contact and services for adult adoptees. There are some things you may feel you or your child needs like therapy that we do not provide. What we will do however is help to make a referral to your local CAMHS and sometimes we will call a multi-agency meeting so that all the adults around the child can sit down and plan how everyone can best help them.

In response to your ideas about children growing up knowing other adopted children, we are considering beginning some groups for children and young people. These are not intended to be only activity based but will be a space for children to spend time with other children who are adopted and perhaps (aged 7-11) look at particular difficulties that we have noticed seem to be quite common. These might include making and keeping friends, sharing, managing feelings, talking about feelings etc. These would not be regular events as you and your children have your own communities and we are guessing that you and your children might like to 'dip in' to something like this from time to time, perhaps a day in each school holiday. It will be another opportunity for adopters to meet each other for coffee while the children are with us. We also wondered whether our teens would like a group set up for them to talk about issues around adoption. We could look at issues that affect them at home and school but we would be guided by them. Let us know what you think about these ideas as you know your children better than us! We have added a questionnaire to the website that would encompass any feedback you would like to give us and we would be really grateful if you would let us know what you think.

If you think that you or your family need a service from us, you need to make a referral through our Social Services County Duty System. The number for this is: This is the only way that we can

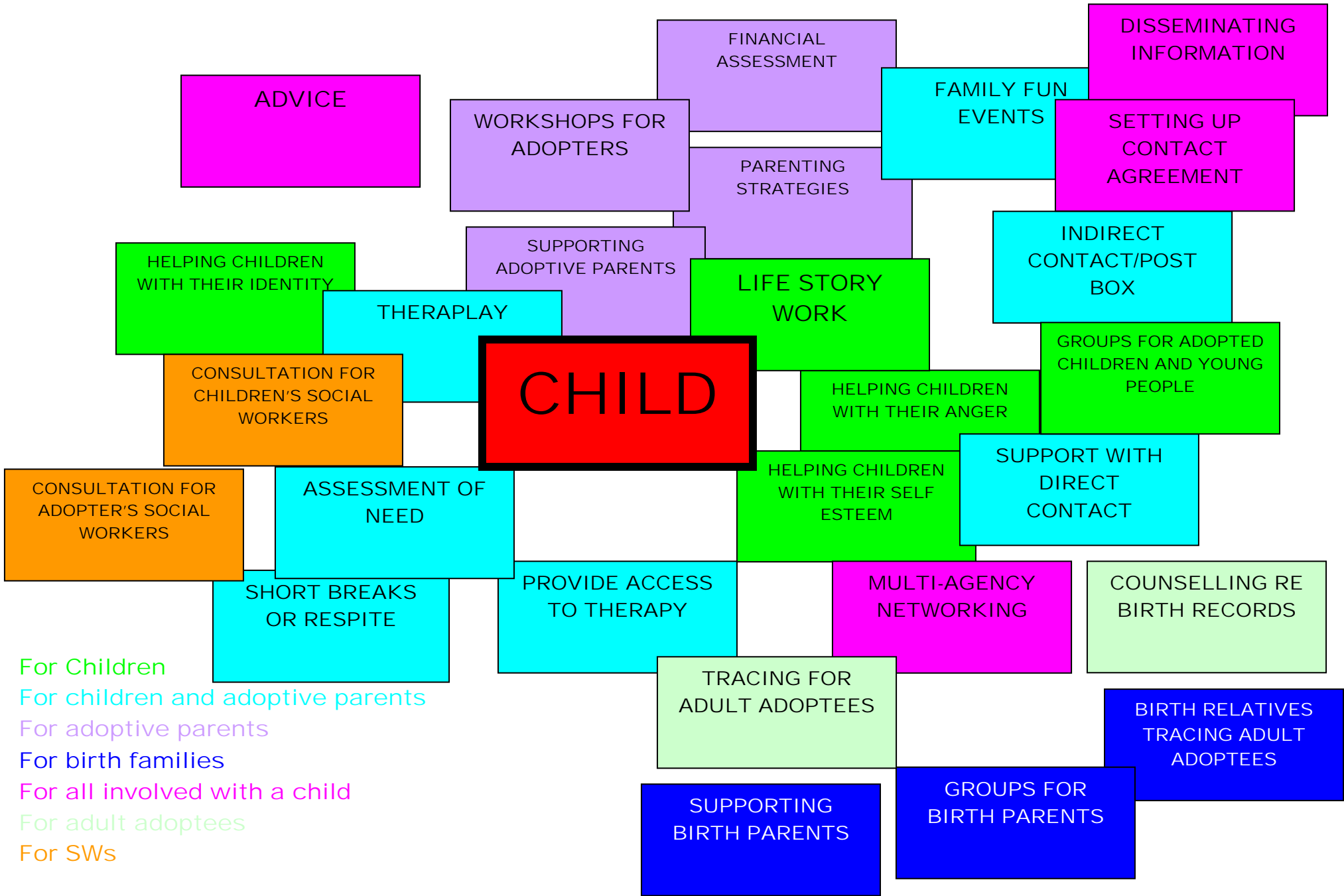
receive a referral and we will follow that up with an assessment of need. As we are such a small team, there may be a wait before we can do this.

If you are an adopting family and you have not heard from us and would like to be on our mailing list, please contact Jackie Harris. Once we have verified that you are an adopting family we will add you to our mailing list and send you flyers for our events. Jackie can also send you details of our local Buddy groups. Please think about coming to our workshops as other parents say that these are useful.

I would be very grateful if you would spend a few minutes filling in our questionnaire on the website – your ideas about what you find useful can only help us improve the service.

Thank you

**Tessa Brown**  
**Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Team**



<http://www.postadoptioncentre.org.uk/>

<http://www.baaf.org.uk/>

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/adoption/>

<http://www.adoptionuk.org/>

[http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020038\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020038_en_1)

<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2005/20050691.htm>

<http://www.helenoakwater.co.uk/index.htm>

[http://www.ncb.org.uk/ncercc/ncercc%20practice%20documents/ncercc\\_understandingwhy\\_nov06.pdf](http://www.ncb.org.uk/ncercc/ncercc%20practice%20documents/ncercc_understandingwhy_nov06.pdf)