



Welcome to Adoption Tees Valley

We are committed to supporting families living in our area the Regional Adoption Agency for the Tees Valley Local Authorities of Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton.

Our vision for Adoption in Teesside is:

“To achieve the best possible adoption outcomes for children and adopters, through provision of high quality and timely services delivered by an effective and financially sustainable organisation.”

Adoption Tees Valley aims to provide timely and accessible support to adopters and children, throughout their childhood and beyond where needed, to help maintain stable family life and positive relationships for good emotional wellbeing for children; adoptive parents and families; and birth relatives.

We believe it is crucial to your child and your family’s future wellbeing that we provide you with support to help you when you need it, as far as we reasonably can, and that where we can’t provide the right service, we signpost you to the right place to help you.

We know that for all adopted children there will be times when it is natural for them to want to know more about their early history, and for some, there will be times of challenge, as they work through understanding of their early life experiences as well potentially also being impacted by emotional, learning and physical challenges individual to each child. This can be daunting for adoptive parents- you may sometimes feel out of your comfort zone and wonder how you can best help.

This brochure sets out the Adoption Tees Valley support offer to your child, and your family, as you grow and build your family relationships together over future years.

We encourage you to be involved with ATV, right from the start, by coming to our engagement events and support groups. This will help you to get to know the team, and other adoptive families, where we know you will find friendship and support.

Adoption Support Guide



Tier 1

- Regular support groups
- Access to our online support group
- Family fun days
- Access to The Adopter Hub
- Peer to peer support

Tier 2

- Themed training sessions and workshops such as:
- Life story work and supporting families in telling about adoption
 - Nurturing attachments and trauma difficulties
 - Understanding adoption for family and friends
 - Introduction to Non Violent Resistance
 - Managing life at school

Tier 3

- Therapeutic interventions including:
- Assessment of therapeutic need
 - Child counselling
 - Play therapy
 - Cognitive behavioural therapy
 - Intensive adoptive parent support
 - Support for schools
 - Training for professionals and parents

The right level of support at the right time



Tier 1 – Available to all families

The Adopter Hub

The adopter hub is an online community of information and support for adopters, special guardians, foster carers and the professionals who work with them. Families can access:

- Peer Support from other adopters via live web chat, email, and exclusive adopter forum.
- Programme of Webinars on topics ranging from severe behaviour to emotional resilience
- E-Learning to top up your knowledge on attachment and how to support your child/ren
- Resources for schools – a range of specific materials to help children in education

Facebook

Would you like to be part of a closed Facebook Community? This is run by Social Workers at Adoption Tees Valley and is a group that aims to share research and interesting articles about adoption and child development. It will also include details of local groups run by other agencies which families may like to access. To find the group click on Adoption Tees Valley main Facebook page and then click on the sub-section groups – you will be asked 3 joining questions to verify your ID and connection to ATV.

<https://www.facebook.com/AdoptionTeesValley/groups>

Monthly drop in support groups

Would you like to meet up with parents and children for a cup of tea/coffee and cake? This is an informal group that does not require booking – details will be posted in our Facebook group and newsletters.

Mailing list

We add all families who contact us to our mailing list, this means you will get our regular newsletter providing you with up-to-date information with everything that is happening at Adoption Tees Valley including new support initiatives and events.

Activity Groups

These are activities where you can meet other families whilst having fun doing different activities in our local area. These usually run during school holidays and will involve a small cost to families. Some of the activities that have been planned for the coming year include a teddy bears picnic, Clip and Climb, Air trail and water inflatables. Details of upcoming activities will be posted in our Newsletter and Facebook groups.

Contact Workshop

Would you like the opportunity to talk about the letters that you are writing to birth family. Do you have questions about the agreement and how that is managed? We will be running quarterly workshops where we explore all things letterbox.

Loud and Clear Music Project

We are excited to bring the Loud and Clear Project to Adoption Tees Valley. We will be working in partnership with the musicians from Sage Gateshead and Youth Music to bring a music-making event to our children and families.

The Loud and Clear project has been running for the past 6 years with foster carers, adopters and their children in the Newcastle area and we are excited they are able to offer the intervention with our families in our area.

Research tells us that it's often in those very early years where having the chance to make music has the most impact. Under-fives change very rapidly, and music-making helps enhance their development in many ways. The Loud and Clear Early Years project is supporting young children to grow socially, emotionally, and physically; with vital speech and language skills developing in tandem with musical ones. In addition to all these essential developmental outcomes, music-making is also bringing joy and happiness to young children and their families: in my view, that's equally important.

Youth Music's vision is that one day every child will have the chance to make music. We know it's those children experiencing challenging circumstances who often miss out on these valuable opportunities. The children in the Loud and Clear project have had a difficult start in life, and it's wonderful to see how music-making has allowed them to bond with their adoptive parents.

This is part of our early intervention offer at Adoption Tees Valley with an emphasis on proactive support that will bring families together in the early years of placement, promote the bond between children and their parents and enable families to connect and share their experiences whilst offering support to each other. Ultimately it is a safe space, that will offer fun, friendly and playful opportunities for individuals to connect through the medium of music.





Education Support Worker

Leanne Albeson is an experienced teacher who is full time member of our support team. Leanne offers support to families pre and post placement with a wide range of education issues. Leanne works closely with the virtual school teams and has strong links to the local authority so can support families who may be experiencing challenges with their child in their school setting. Leanne can offer advice and guidance to families when they are choosing an appropriate school placement and she support parents to visit placements and speak with the staff group in a chosen setting. Leanne is knowledgeable around all SEND related issues and can support families who are trying to access additional support for their child.

Young Peoples Group

Would your child be interested in taking part in a young people's group? Previous groups have completed media projects, contributed towards service development and have been involved in interviews for staff recruitment. The groups offer an informal space for your children to spend time with other young people who are also adopted. We try to offer activities that will appeal to the different age groups and pizza dinners usually goes down well.

If you would like to be part of any of the tier 1 services mentioned please email info@adoptionteesvalley.org.uk

Tier 2 - Training and workshops

Future Stars

Adoption Tees Valley is proud to be able offer to families in our area a brand new intervention which combines sensory integration and attachment focused therapy and has been named the Future Stars Programme.

This intervention has been developed by experienced attachment and occupational therapists alongside therapeutic social workers who have specialised in the impact of childhood trauma. It will be delivered over 14 weeks as a group programme to parents and children.

The course has been designed to support adopted children who have had adverse early life experiences, trauma, and loss. This programme will be offered as an early intervention programme with the aim of supporting the early attachment relationships between children and their parents. The intervention will support children to develop their regulatory systems, emotional and behavioural responses, sensory-motor foundations, and positive attachment relationships. The programme will support the children to meet their full potential, enabling them to progress and meet their developmental milestones, regulate their emotions whilst promoting social skills and peer and family relationships. The sensory integration and attachment therapy is research and evidence based and the programme has been designed so that outcomes for individual families can be evidenced. Children who have participated in similar interventions have been seen to make progress in the way they respond to their environment, decision making and ability to understand and express their feelings. The programme aims to promote children's relationships, their ability to learn and future attainments.

The programme will be offered in small groups over a 14 week period and will be delivered by Future Steps and Advancing Attachments. Sensory Integration activities will be delivered weekly in a group to parents and children. Therapeutic parenting education sessions which are based on Kim Goldings Nurturing Attachments programme will be delivered to be parents on alternate weeks at the end of the joint sessions whilst the children get the opportunity to participate in supervised sensory rich play based activities. The group programme features safe therapy spaces, music and attuned non-directive sensory play. It will allow adopters and children to share their experiences and support one another over the course of the intervention and for some may promote longer term support and friendships.

NVR

Non Violent Resistance (NVR) is an innovative form of systemic family therapy, which has been developed for aggressive, violent, controlling, and self-destructive behaviour in young people. We have been the first to use this approach in Britain and have adapted it to families involved with Social Services, and for Looked After Children.

NVR has been specifically developed for responding effectively to aggressive, violent, self-destructive, and controlling behaviour in children, adolescents, and young adults.

NVR is now being successfully used with anxious young people, whose obsessive-compulsive behaviour controls the family, or who isolate themselves socially, have become addicted to the internet, or refuse to go to school. A further area in which the approach is proving very helpful, is working with families in which young adults show 'entitled dependency', and young adults with ongoing serious mental health problems.





Nurturing Attachments

the “Nurturing Attachments” course developed by leading clinical psychologist Dr Kim Golding who has over 30 years of experience, Kim works to improve the lives of children affected by early relational trauma.

The course will be facilitated by Aspire Psychological Services who are an independent psychological service supporting local adoptive families in our area. The training will be delivered by an experienced Clinical Psychologist at our offices at Adoption Tees Valley in Stockton.

This is a short programme (18 hours) designed for those who parent children and young people who have relationship difficulties, especially those who have experienced attachment problems, trauma, loss and/or separation early in their life. It is hoped this programme will be helpful for any parents who are having parenting challenges and enable them to increase their emotional connection with the children and young people in their care.

This is a Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) informed programme (Dany Hughes, 2009; 2011). It introduces parents/carers to the four significant challenges of parenting children whose capacity to emotionally connect with them has been compromised. These are:

- The child experiencing blocked trust
- The child fearing intersubjective connection within reciprocal relationships
- The child experiencing high levels of shame
- The child misconing their attachment needs through a pattern of expressed and hidden needs

Aims of the programme:

- Gain an understanding of these challenges and explore ways to build emotional connections with these children and young people. This can increase trust in reciprocal and attachment relationships leading to increased attachment security and reduced levels of shame.
- Understand how to provide support for behaviour alongside building these connections. This has been termed ‘correction before connection’.
- Explore the dangers of blocked care when caring for children with blocked trust and understand the importance of looking after themselves.
- Understand the significance of exploring one’s own attachment history when caring for children and young people with attachment difficulties.

The first part of the programme focuses on attachment theory and the development of different patterns of attachment. Participants will be encouraged to think about these patterns as adaptive to the child’s early environment and how certain behaviours developed around this time continue to be maintained as they provide a level of safety and security for the child living in an adverse environment.

Small and large group discussion and specific exercises will be used to help participants to link this theory to the fostered/adopted children they care for or work with, enhancing their understanding of the particular behaviours and emotions displayed.

The second part of the programme considers the application of attachment theory to practice. Special consideration is given to the parenting model employed by Dan Hughes (1997). In this model, participants are encouraged to provide a positive family atmosphere where they are in a position to be able to control the emotional rhythm of the house.

The model also considers ways to avoid being drawn into confrontation that resembles the child’s early experience. Through this, the participants are encouraged to think and learn about how to create a secure base within which the child may potentially develop the ability to regulate their own emotions. Of particular focus is the importance of emotional attunement and how discipline is recognised as important but should be accompanied by empathy.

While much of the training focuses upon the child and caring for him or her, part of it also addressed the needs of the carers and professionals involved with the child/YP, identifying their own personal stressors, when to seek out support and the importance of looking after themselves





Tier 3 – Assessed Support Needs

Therapeutic Lifestory Story Training

Adoptive parents often worry about how and when to talk to their children about being adopted. Many adopted children have had a difficult and traumatic start to their lives. It is a huge responsibility for adoptive parents to communicate the circumstances of a child's complex, fragmented and often painful past in a way that will lead to understanding, resolution, and a positive sense of self. Many adoptive parents feel ill equipped for this unique parenting challenge.

Who should attend?

Adoptive parents who have children placed with them. This will be helpful those to pre and post adoption order.

These workshops will enable parents and carers to:

- Understand why it is important to explain to children about their past and the circumstances that led them to being adopted
- Explore some basic principles of child development and identity
- Explore some of the challenges and dilemmas in telling and explaining
- Think about age appropriate explanations according to a child's developmental stage and level of understanding
- Develop confidence in talking with and supporting your child with their early history and identity
- Consider how contact arrangements impact on your child and their understanding of why they are adopted.
- Develop confidence in managing the impact of social media on your child's relationship with their birth relatives
- Choosing the best time and thinking of ways to share difficult information and for your child
- Practice telling and explaining and review some of the resources and tools available to assist in this on-going task.
- Theory to practice. Use case examples to apply the knowledge learnt over the 2 day workshop.

Children adopted from care can have ongoing needs. Sometimes they can find it difficult to form relationships and display challenging behaviour. Adoption Tees Valley are here to find the appropriate specialist help for you and your child when needed.

Our Tier 3 offer to adoptive families starts with a full assessment of your adoption support needs. This will be undertaken by a social worker from our adoption support team. It will help us to identify the most appropriate therapeutic intervention for you and your child.

Adoption Tees Valley work with local agencies who provide a range of interventions for children who may have experienced early developmental trauma and attachment difficulties

Adoption support service and therapies

Here are some of the interventions that are available in our area:

Dyadic developmental psychotherapy (DDP)

Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) is a treatment developed by Dan Hughes who has worked with adopters and their children for many years.

Play therapy

Play Therapy helps children work through difficult emotions/trauma using play. It is non-directive or child-lead and works with the relationship between child, the play and the therapist (known as the transference). Through each activity, the therapist tries to find meaning – a narrative, which she then reflects back to the child. Usually, the parent is not involved with the therapy. Practitioners are accredited by the BAPT and the Play Therapy Register.

Theraplay

Theraplay is a child and family therapy for building and enhancing attachment. It is directive – activities are directed by the adults (at first by the therapist and then by the parent). The parent is always involved in the therapy and the aim is to tailor specific activities and play to regulate the child and strengthen the parent/child relationship.

Filial Therapy

Like Theraplay, Filial Therapy combines family and play therapy principles and techniques and is structured to enhance the parent child relationship. Parents learn how to create a non-judgmental and accepting understanding relationship with their children through play sessions conducted in the home. Unlike conventional therapy the child's parents are full involved in their child's treatment.

Eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing therapy (EMDR)

A psychological treatment method which stimulates the brain to reduce the intensity of distressing memories. A wealth of research has been conducted demonstrating its benefits in treating psychological trauma arising from experiences as diverse as childhood sexual and/or physical abuse or neglect and assault. You can find a therapist in your area at the EMDR Association website.



Non-violent resistance (NVR)

A psychological approach for overcoming destructive, aggressive, controlling and risk-taking behaviour. <https://www.preferredfuturenvr.co.uk/what-is-nvr> conduct training courses and therapy sessions for adoptive parents in our area.

Sensory Integration Therapy and sensory attachment therapy

Sensory Integration Therapy aims to help the child re-organise or re-process sensory information in order to regulate emotional responses. Sensory Attachment Therapy examines how sensory processing and attachment patterns affect our capacity to regulate emotions and behaviour.

Individual sensory integration therapy is provided as direct one-to-one therapy, following a specialist assessment by an Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist or Speech and Language Therapist with postgraduate training in sensory integration.

This is just a brief guide to make you aware of what is available. This is something that you can discuss with your social worker as part of your assessment of adoption support needs.

You may be aware of other interventions that you think might be helpful and again, we urge you to discuss this with your social worker.

The process

The local authority that places the child with you is responsible for assessing your adoption support needs for three years after the adoption order. After three years it becomes the responsibility of the local authority where you live (if different).

Many of the services available in our Tier 3 offer need to be 'bought in'. In most cases they are funded through the adoption support fund (ASF). The ASF is able to fund £2,500 per year, per child for a specialist psychological assessment and £5000 per year, per child in therapy.

Once you are agreed on the kind of therapeutic support package that is right for you, your social worker will formulate a support plan. This is then sent to the relevant local service providers who will provide details of how they would meet you and your child's adoption support needs. You will be able consider the offers from service providers with your social worker to decide who you would like to undertake the work.

Where necessary your social worker will apply to the ASF to fund this work and once this is agreed work can start. It usually takes around six weeks for the funding to be agreed. In order to ensure that any intervention is effective we will hold regular reviews with the organisation providing the service.



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