

Falkirk Council Social Work Services

Adoption/Permanence Application Criteria

CONTEXT

Falkirk Council is an approved Adoption Agency in terms of the Adoption (Scotland) Act 1978. The council acts as an agency by recruiting, assessing and supporting permanent carers, registering children for permanent placement, and matching such children with appropriate permanent carers.

In recruiting carers, Falkirk Council is seeking families for children.

The Council's prime responsibility is to recruit prospective adoptive/permanent carers who can meet the needs of children requiring adoption in the Stirling, Falkirk and Clackmannan areas. These factors will be taken into account in accepting and prioritising applicants.

The Council do not discriminate, and welcome approaches from all backgrounds and persuasions. All factors are taken into account in the assessment period, with the aim of assessing if applicants can meet the needs of children requiring permanent substitute families.

Parenting children is a strenuous task, and where a prospective applicant has a serious health problem or disability this can affect ability to parent, and may require a medical assessment prior to application and assessment which may preclude approval as adopters or result in restrictions to the age group or type of child an applicant may be approved for.

CRITERIA

Outlined below is the Council's criteria for acceptance of an application to become a permanent carer.

1. Enquirers must live within the bounds of Falkirk Council or within a thirty-mile radius of Falkirk.
2. All enquirers must be aged over 21 and possess a level of maturity and life experience. There is no fixed upper age limit but, as a general guide, there should be no more than a 45-years age difference between the youngest adoptive parent and the child unless there is an existing relationship.

3. Single people, married couples or couples living together may apply. In the case of a single person, they must be able to demonstrate that they have a support network of relatives and / or friends living close by who are supportive of their application and who will offer assistance if a child is placed. For people recently moved to the area the commitment to make supportive links will be evidenced. Married and cohabiting couples must have lived together in a stable relationship for a minimum of 3 years. Enquiries from gay and lesbian individuals or couples will be treated in a non-discriminatory way.

4. Smoking – due to the health risks to young children from passive smoking, Falkirk Council will only place children under 5 years, or who have a respiratory illness or other risk factors, in non-smoking households.

The Council will not therefore accept an application from applicants who smoke and who are seeking adopt a child under the age of 5.

5. Enquirers with any previous criminal convictions must disclose these. Any offences involving children, or offences involving serious violence, will preclude assessment as adoptive parents. Other offences will be discussed with the enquirer and will not necessarily preclude the enquirer from the assessment process and approval as adoptive parents.

6. Undergoing infertility treatment is a stressful experience and undergoing an adoption assessment is also stressful. Experience has shown that it is not advisable to attempt these two processes at the same time. This agency will not accept applications for assessment as adoptive parents while infertility treatment is ongoing, and would advise that a gap of a year would be expected after finishing infertility treatment before making any application.

7. A miscarriage, the death of a child, or any other significant loss or bereavement is a harrowing experience and people require time to grieve their loss. Any enquirer who has suffered such a loss will be made aware that the council will need evidence that the applicants have come to terms with their loss.

8. Falkirk Council will not accept an application from prospective adoptive parents who have a current application with, or who are already approved by, another Adoption Agency, other than with the explicit agreement of that agency and in exceptional circumstances.

9. Most children requiring adoption are older and will have suffered difficult life experiences which are likely to have lifelong effects for the child. Applications will therefore only be accepted from prospective carers where they will consider older children or children aged 0-5 in one of the following categories:

- Emotional disturbance and difficult behaviour;
- Physical disability;
- Learning difficulties;
- Medical problems;
- Complex legal problems;
- Groups of brothers and sisters who need to stay together;
- A child who requires to maintain some degree of contact with their birth families

10. Falkirk Council will only accept an application and register prospective adoptive parents for either domestic or inter-country adoption, at any one time.

Enquirers seeking to adopt children not represented in 9 above will be advised of the option to approach other Adoption Agencies.