

PREPARATION FOR ADOPTION

Before your consent to adoption can be given, a counselling process is entered into.

This is a thorough process, during which aspects of the parents' situation are discussed and explored.

During this time the nature of consent to adoption will be examined in great detail.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR CONSENTING TO THE ADOPTION OF MY CHILD?

If you decide to place your child for adoption, you will need to formally sign consent papers. There are steps that must be taken as follows:

- if the father is not present, the mother will be asked to name the father and all available steps will be taken by Adoption and Family Information Service to locate him
- if the father is named on the certificate, or if he is recognised by a Court as the father, he must be given the opportunity to be involved in the decision making about the child's future, and if he wishes for the child to be adopted, his consent is necessary
- if the father has not been named on the registration form but has indicated that he wants a say in the child's future, the Adoption and Family Information Service must take into account any steps he may take to establish paternity
- if the father wishes to parent the child himself, he has the right to do so
- signing of consent can only be arranged and witnessed by a Department for Families and Communities Social Worker, or a person formally appointed by the Department
- consent forms cannot be signed until at least 14 days have passed since the birth of your child (except in very unusual circumstances)
- by law, counselling must be completed at least 3 days before signing consent, to make sure you understand the process of adoption and the consequences of giving consent
- you must also be given written information about adoption (that is, a copy of the booklet)
- if parents cannot agree on their child's future care and custody, either party can take the matter to the Family Court for a decision
- after signing the consent, there is a period of 25 days during which you can change your mind and cancel (or revoke) your consent. This 25 day period can be extended by 14 days, on application, to give you more time
- during this time the guardianship of your child is transferred to the Chief Executive of the Department for Families and Communities. This means decisions about your child and in particular, the placement of your child in an adoptive family, once the revocation period has expired, will be made by the Department
- if you do change your mind within this revocation period and cancel the consent to adoption, your child will be returned to you as soon as possible and full legal rights and responsibilities as parent to your child are restored
- once the 25 days consent period has passed and if the consenting parent(s) have not changed their mind, we will then discuss with you the placement of your child with an adoptive family
- you will have the opportunity to express your views and preferences about the family you wish for your child
- you may meet with the adoptive parents if you all agree for this to occur
- the child is then placed with the adoptive parents.