Transracial Adoption

Our National Commitment

Adoption England
regional adoption agencies working together

cvaa uk

Every child deserves a safe, loving and stable family

We believe that every child who needs adoption should be placed with a permanent family as quickly as possible. This helps children experience stability, belonging and consistent care from the earliest stage.

We are committed to:

- Anti-racist practice
- Respecting identity and lived experience
- Reducing delay for children
- Supporting families to meet children's needs

Identity matters

Children have the right to grow up in families who understand, value and support their racial, ethnic, religious, cultural and heritage identity. This is an important part of who they are and how they experience the world.

When finding families for children, we are committed to carefully considering:

- Their racial, ethnic, religious and cultural background
- Their lived experiences and identity needs
- Their wider support needs, including ongoing adoption support needs
- The birth family relationships, community and connections that will support their sense of belonging and wellbeing

Approach to matching and identity

Wherever possible, we will seek to identify families who can reflect and sustain a child's racial, ethnic, religious, cultural, and heritage identity. However, this should not be understood as requiring a full or exact match in all circumstances.

We recognise that identity is complex and cannot be reduced to a binary concept of "match" or "no match". This is particularly important for children with mixed or complex heritage, where a full match may not be realistic or clearly defined.

Decisions about matching will be made holistically, taking into account:

- the child's identity, heritage and lived experience
- the availability of families able to reflect aspects of that identity, including religion

- the capacity of adopters to actively support identity development, including responding to racism and discrimination as well as preventing identity related trauma.

This includes individual practitioners', agencies', adopters, and the sector's commitment to ongoing reflection and learning in relation to race, identity and bias as well as addressing systemic racial disparities.

When a racial, ethnic, cultural and heritage match is not possible

While family finding should seek to identify families who can reflect and support a child's identity, we recognise that no home will provide a complete alignment with every aspect of a child's racial, ethnic, cultural, heritage, family and community background.

Early family finding should prioritise identifying families that are able to reflect and sustain important aspects of a child's identity. Family finding plans should include clearly recorded, child specific timescales and regular review points, taking account of the child's needs and the availability of suitable families. Where identifying a family who shares important aspects of the child's identity is unlikely, or the search is not progressing, we will consider a wider range of families, including transracial adoptive families, without unnecessary delay.

In this context, transracial adoption refers to children being placed in families where there are racial differences between the child and the adults. For a transracial placement to be made, adopters must demonstrate their capacity and readiness to support the child's understanding and experience of their own ethnicity and identity, and to promote their sense of belonging.

Review points should guide practice rather than create a fixed waiting period before considering transracial adoptive families. Where this is in the child's best interests, a wider range of potentially suitable families should be considered concurrently from the outset, with careful assessment of how each family can meet the child's individual identity and wider needs.

The Anti-racist Framework for Decision-making and Transitioning children from minoritised racial and ethnic groups into transracial adoptive families (AFDiT) (Cane, 2024) will be applied to support holistic, culturally attuned and child-centred practice.

Any transracial match must be based on:

- Careful assessments of identity awareness
- Anti-racist, thoughtful and well-informed decision-making

- A clear understanding of the child's unique and nuanced identity needs and evidence of the adopters' capability to intentionally and actively provide for those needs
- Confidence that adopters can actively and intentionally support the child's racial, cultural and heritage identity
- Long-term planning for belonging, connection and community

Support for families

We are committed to ensuring that each child's and adoptive family's support needs are considered as part of matching and reviewed as needs change. Where support is agreed, an Adoption Support Plan should set out the support to be provided, who will provide it and how it will be reviewed. Depending on assessed needs, support may include:

- Support for racial and cultural identity development
- Help to build community and heritage connections
- Support in responding to experiences of racism
- Therapeutic, educational and peer support

Respecting identity and terminology

We recognise that language around race, ethnicity and identity is socially constructed, and constantly evolving, and that people use different terms to describe themselves.

We also acknowledge that terms such as *"global majority"* are increasingly used to describe children from Black, Asian and Mixed heritage racialised minority groups, and that some agencies will use terminology based on consultations with people with lived experience and relevant communities in their regions. While there remains no universal agreement on the most appropriate terminology, it is important not to lose sight of the reality of racial disparities, as evidenced by statistical data, and their impact on children.

Individuals and communities define their own racial, ethnic, cultural and heritage identity. We therefore commit to using terminology that is factually accurate, non-generic, and guided by the language that children, young people and families use for themselves.