

Voluntary Adoption Agency Advice Guides  
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Advice from adopters:

# Adopting brothers and sisters

## Adopting brothers and sisters

We are delighted to share with you our advice guide for people considering adopting siblings, created by Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) along with the Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies (CVAA), with very special contributions from adoptive parents who have adopted brothers and sisters.

In this guide, families share their experiences of adopting siblings, talking about why they think it is beneficial to adopt brothers and sisters together, as well as providing practical advice for potentially welcoming more than one child into your household.

**We hope you find it both interesting and useful as you embark on your journey to adopt!**

## What is a Voluntary Adoption Agency?

VAAs are independent, not for profit organisations which are smaller than most statutory agencies and offer a personalised service to adopters from all backgrounds.

VAAs work in partnership with local authorities and regional adoption agencies across the whole of the UK to find families for children in care who are unable to stay with their birth relatives. There are 36 registered Voluntary Adoption Agencies covering every region and country of the UK, 23 of which are members of CVAA.

**Learn more and find details of your local VAA via: [cvaa.org.uk](http://cvaa.org.uk)**



## Keeping children together

Adopters talk about the unique bond that brothers and sisters have, often considered as the most long-standing relationship in life, and for children who have already had a tough start in life, it is very important to maintain it:

“ These little people have experienced so much uncertainty and change in their short lives. **The only consistent factor has been their brothers and sisters** - and this is something we were determined to protect.”

– Ellie\* and Andrea\*, PACT



Their story is one that is intertwined so they are a great support for one another. It's a joy to be able **to keep them together** when so much is changing for them. It is happy and complete chaos.

– Sarah, ARC Adoption North East

“ The best thing about adopting siblings is that children are kept together. Adopted children will have suffered a lot of loss already, including familiar people, places and things. **They deserve to be with their siblings.** They should not lose a brother or sister. **Watching them grow up together is beautiful.** The gift you'll give to the children by keeping them together is very precious.”

– Sam, Caritas Care

“ It's **unthinkable in our minds that our girls would have been separated had they not come to us.** They have an incredible bond that even we can't have with them - not only biological but due to sharing their early experiences together. This is something they can always relate to with each other and something I truly hope will help them not to feel alone or alienated in the world as they grow up.”

– Sophia, Coram

\*Names changed to protect privacy



## Brothers and sisters have a shared history

Adopters talk about the power that comes from brothers and sisters' shared history, enabling them to support each other in a unique way that no one else can:

“ Much as we can guide our children as they discover themselves and their identity **a sibling has a shared history** and that is extremely important.”

- Sam, Caritas Care

“ We felt that if we wanted two children anyway, we should go for siblings and that way we are keeping a set of siblings together and reaped all the benefits of adopting siblings together. **It's really nice to know that as our boys get older, and we have to have difficult conversations with them about their past that they will have each other and have got the same history.** It can be hard work with two, but the rewards far outweigh the difficulties. **Just watching them give each other a hug and telling one another they love each other is amazing.**”

- Scott, Yorkshire Adoption Agency



“ Our girls came to live with us when they were five and two, and unless you are adopting twins you are likely to have an ‘older’ and a ‘younger’ sibling. **They've been through similar early experiences that try as we might, we could never fully understand, so, for them to have each other still, in an environment to be able to support each other and talk to each other about things is really valuable.** An older child is likely to have more understanding and a unique perspective of their history which is something to be embraced and openly talked about whenever they have questions. **It has made talking about adoption so much easier,** with the younger one being naturally brought into conversations too at a level they understand.”

- Jennifer and Stephen, ARC Adoption North East

## The children have each other

Adopters talk about the importance of the children having each other as they grow. Children often develop important social skills from being part of a sibling group playing and learning together, as well as learning to share their feelings too:

“ There is really nothing sweeter than seeing our two girls grow together as siblings, **build these strong bonds and grow into these beautiful little girls** - our beautiful little girls.”

- Sophia, Coram

“ **They are true friends.** We feel as if Laura\*, even though she is younger, is helping Lily\* to make up for the years when life was too chaotic to play by initiating intense playtime and games. It gives us such pleasure to witness this; it is a real gift that a sibling partnership can give to each other that possibly no therapy could match.”

- Kirsty\*, Coram

“ The best part of adopting siblings is witnessing their **unique bond** and **seeing them grow** and learn together. Having each other often means they can keep each other company, which not only allows them to build their relationship but also gives us a moment to catch our breath (and have a cup of tea).”

- Richard\*, CCS Adoption

“ Watching and being a part of play time, seeing their imaginations and the **games they play together, seeing them teach each other, comfort and support each other**, and make each other laugh, it really is a bond like no other.”

- Jennifer & Stephen,  
ARC Adoption North East

Whilst there are the obvious sibling disagreements and fallings out, there is also lots of love and laughter. **They adore each other** and miss each other during the day when they are in school and nursery.

- Ellie\* and Andrea\*, PACT



\*Names changed to protect privacy



“Once we saw the pictures of our two boys, we knew they were going to be part of our forever family. We are now ten years on, and it is still the best thing we have ever done.”

- Chris\*, Adoption Focus



\*Name changed to protect privacy

## Preparing for a big adjustment at first

Adopters talk about the challenges of multiple little people joining their household for the first time. It isn't necessarily easy at first but love, patience and routine brings big rewards:

“ We worried about how we would practically manage with two children, and going from zero to two overnight, and how we would cope but we realise now that **you can cope with whatever is put in front of you, one day at a time.**”

- Gemma and Jonny,  
Caritas Care

Juggling work and parenting three adopted children is hard, but we are not superheroes, far from it! **With good routines and structure, it is eminently manageable and enjoyable!**

- Ellie\* and Andrea\*, PACT

“ One of the challenges we face is handling the occasional simultaneous meltdowns or sibling squabbles, which can be intense. Additionally, moving as a family from one place to another can take a bit longer due to individual distractions. We've learned to handle these situations by **staying patient, taking things one step at a time, and giving each child the attention, they need.** Over time, we've found ways to manage these dynamics, and we continue to learn and grow as a family every day.”

- Richard\*, CCS Adoption

“ I remember when they first went to school, they went from needing 50 cuddles, so much reassurance and hiding around my legs, to racing each other through the door. I cried the first time they did that. **Seeing them get more confident and comfortable in their own skin is the best.** Knowing you can give someone the best life, love and a real family unit so they can one day go out into the world, ready to smash life is amazing.”

- Lindsey, ARC Adoption North East

Be prepared for a big adjustment at first. The initial months can be quite challenging, but once you settle into a rhythm, it's incredibly rewarding. It's important to **be patient, understanding, and willing to adapt to the unique needs and personalities of each child.**

- Krishna\*, CCS Adoption

\*Names changed to protect privacy



## Learning how to manage sibling dynamics

**Adopters talk about the practicalities of adopting more than one child and thinking about how you can manage the attention children will need, both together and individually:**

“ **There are lots of practical things to think about when considering adopting siblings.** I'd suggest thinking about the costs, buying double of everything. I always thought that I could pass things down to the younger one – but in our case our younger ones feels left out if his brother gets and he doesn't. So, I always get both so they feel the same.”

- Lindsey, ARC Adoption North East

“ Our girls argue like most siblings. **You have to quickly work out the dynamics of their relationship, and make sure you're giving them equal attention to avoid any jealousy.** But I have seen such tender moments between them that my heart melts. There is a lot of giggling, den building, snail finding, and of course we love the fact we get double the cuddles! “

– Sophia, Coram



“ At the moment, my two are on different paths - one is doing great but the other is struggling. So, I'd say to adopters, think about how you will be able to offer time for each of them on their own when needed, as well as time together. **Think about how you can meet the needs of a child who needs more attention, whilst still offering yourself equally to both children.**”

- Lindsey, ARC Adoption North East



## An Instant Family

Adopters share that when thinking about wanting a big family, adopting brothers and sisters together meant they'd only need to go through the adoption process once to get there:

“ Our desire for a bigger family was the deciding factor in adopting siblings. We were definitely apprehensive at first, and yes, it was challenging in the beginning. However, looking back, we wouldn't change a thing. Seeing the boys settle and establish their bond has been amazing.”

– Anna\*, CCS Adoption

“ With myself being 46 at the time we knew that if we wanted a family of more than one child, a sibling group would be the perfect answer, as opposed to adopting one child and then have to go through the whole process again.”

- Chris\*, Adoption Focus

“ My husband and I always knew we wanted to adopt siblings. We both grew up with siblings and these relationships are so important to us. “

– Sophia, Coram

“ We always wanted more than one child and didn't want to go through the adoption process twice. We also felt strongly about keeping siblings together.”

- Gemma and Jonny, Caritas Care

“ After the children went to bed that first night, we just looked at each other – it felt surreal to have all the bedrooms in our house full. The house we had bought with children in mind two years before they entered our world!”

– Anya and Rhea, Barnardo's

“ Deciding factors for us were... **Instant family**. Yes it was hard work at the very start but the benefits far outweigh that. Life soon settles into a routine.”

- Sam, Caritas Care



\*Names changed to protect privacy

## Leaning on your support network

Adopters talk about the importance of having a good support network of family and friends in place. And of course, choosing an adoption agency that offers good support, pre and post adoption, is a huge benefit:

“ Being organised really helped and creating a support network, including friends, family, other adopters, our social workers and the children's school. Together you are a team supporting the children. People get a bit shocked when you tell them, but I'm no different to the millions of other mums with four kids, mine just arrived differently, and I wouldn't change it for the world. “

- Sam, Caritas Care

“ Think about your support network and how you'll practically manage day to day - **that extra pair of hands, particularly whilst out and about, can be a lifeline.**”

- Gemma and Jonny,  
Caritas Care

“ If you're considering adopting siblings, talk to other adopters, get as much information as you can. Understand the process and understand that it can be rocky but that there'll be great times as well. **Don't be afraid to ask for help. If you're in a couple, be open with one another.** You have to do some soul-searching with yourself, your partner and your social worker.”

- Anna\*, Coram



# Why adopt through a VAA?

## A warm welcome

Whether you already know your stuff, or are just starting on your journey, VAAs will meet you where you are.

## Personalised service

Our members will help you create a family that is just right for you and your children. They are always on your side.

## An excellent standard of quality

Of CVAA's 23 members, almost all are independently rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted. You're in good hands.

## Lifelong support

Your VAA will be there for you and your children for life. Adoption is a lifelong journey, not a destination.

## Find a local VAA agency that's right for you

For support, advice, and information, or to embark on your adoption journey, find a local Voluntary Adoption Agency that's right for you.

Head to the CVAA website and search on the map to find details of VAAs in your local area who can chat to you further about adoption:

[cvaa.org.uk/agency-finder](https://www.cvaa.org.uk/agency-finder)



