



# **Supporting Previously Looked After Children & Children in Kinship Care Policy**



**2025-2026**

# Supporting Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) & Children in Kinship Care

## Introduction

This statement describes the provision in place from Telford & Wrekin Virtual School to support the education of Children Previously in Care (known nationally as Previously Looked after Children) and Children in Kinship Care arrangements.

In September 2018, a new statutory duty on Local Authorities to provide support for **Previously Looked after Children (PLAC)** through a Virtual School Head (VSH) came into effect. The Virtual School Head *'will be a source of advice and information to help their parents to advocate for them as effectively as possible. VSHs are not acting as part of the corporate parent role in these circumstances but are there to promote the educational achievement of these children through the provision of advice and information to relevant parties.'*

*Local authorities have a duty under section 23ZZA of the Children Act 1989 (inserted by section 4 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017) to promote the educational achievement of previously looked-after children in their area by providing information and advice to:*

- *Any person that has parental responsibility for the child;*
- *Providers of funded early years education, designated teachers for previously looked-after children in maintained schools and academies; and*
- *Any other person the authority considers appropriate for promoting the educational achievement of relevant children.*

*Previously looked-after children are those who:*

- *Are no longer looked after by a local authority in England and Wales (as defined by the Children Act 1989 or Part 6 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014) because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order; or*
- *Were adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales. 'State care' is care provided by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other organisation whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society.*

*The duty applies to children who are in early year's provision (secured by the local authority under section 7(1) of the Childcare Act 2006) and continues throughout the compulsory years of education where the child is in provision funded in part or in full by the state.* VSHs are integral to ensuring that local authorities discharge their duty to provide suitable advice and information for the purpose of promoting the educational achievement of previously looked-after children. They can also undertake any activity they consider appropriate where that activity will promote the educational achievement of such children in their area.

From September 2024, the remit of the Virtual School expanded further to include championing better outcomes in school attendance, educational attainment and progress of **children in kinship care**. Kinship care is when a child lives full-time or most of the time with a relative or close family friend, usually because their parents are not able to care for them. In the UK, there are more than 180,000 children in kinship care. Grandparents are the most common kinship carers, but older siblings, aunts, uncles, and people who know the child well can also take on the role. Kinship carers may also be referred to as 'family and friends carers' or 'connected people' by local authorities and in some documents.

Children who grow up in kinship care have better outcomes than children who grow up in other types of non-parental care. However, their outcomes fall behind those children with no social worker involvement. The [Championing kinship care: national kinship care strategy](#) set out the plan to support, empower and champion kinship families. This included a commitment to invest £3.8 million in 2024 to 2025 to adapt the role of Virtual School heads to specifically include championing better outcomes in school attendance, educational attainment and progress of children in kinship care, with updated statutory guidance issued in October 2024 for local authorities: [Kinship Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities](#).

[The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) DFE, updated 2018.

[Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) DFE, updated 2018.

## **Role of the Virtual School Head for Previously Looked After Children & Children in Kinship Care**

The role of the VSH for previously looked-after children and children in kinship care is to promote their educational achievement through the provision of information and advice to their parents, carers, educators and others who the VSH considers necessary.

VSHs must discharge their duty from the point at which the child becomes eligible for free early education, which is currently the start of the term following a child's second birthday and conclude when s/he has completed the compulsory years of education.

The duty relates to children who are in education in the area served by the VSH irrespective of where the child lives. This avoids the need for education settings to work with more than one VSH and prevents cross-border complications.

VSHs, in conjunction with the Director of Children's Services, should decide the extent of their offer to parents, early education providers and schools but as a minimum, the VSH must:

- Respond to parental requests for advice and information – e.g., advice on school admissions in their area. Where appropriate, the VSH should signpost parents to other services that can offer advice and support.
- Respond to requests for advice and information from providers of early education, designated teachers in maintained schools and academies, and providers of alternative provision in their area in respect of individual children supported by the local authority. In particular, the VSH should develop/build on existing good working relationship with designated teachers for previously looked-after children & children in kinship care in their area; and
- Make general advice and information available to early years' settings and schools to improve awareness of the vulnerability and needs of previously looked-after children & children in kinship care. This should include promoting good practice on identifying and meeting their needs, and guidance on effective use of the PP+ for those children who are previously looked after. There is currently no PPG+ available for schools to access for children in kinship care.

However, it is important to note that the local authority and VSH are not the corporate parent for previously looked-after children or children in kinship care, and the VSH role in relation to these children reflects this.

Since September 2024, the role of the virtual school head (VSH) has been [extended to include championing and supporting a wider group of kinship children](#), including those who haven't ever spent time in local authority care.

Clause 6 in the Bill places a new statutory duty on local authorities to deliver this, bringing a more consistent approach to how VSHs are expected to champion the educational attendance, attainment and progress of children in kinship care across the country.

Any intervention in the education of a previously looked-after child or child in kinship care must be with the agreement of the person(s) who have parental responsibility for the child. They, like all parents, are responsible for overseeing their child's progress in education.

VSHs will want to satisfy themselves that the child is eligible for support by asking the child's parents for evidence of their previously looked-after or kinship status. For children adopted outside England and Wales, the child must have been looked after by a public authority, a religious organisation or other provider of care whose sole purpose is to benefit society. Where parents are unable to provide clear evidence of their child's status, VSHs will need to use their discretion. In such circumstances, VSHs should discuss eligibility with the Designated Teacher at the child's school to agree a consistent approach.

What might providing information and advice look like?

- Providing advice and information to frequently asked questions online.
- Providing advice to individual parents/carers and schools where they have a query.
- Advising schools on how they can support previously looked after children & children in kinship care to improve behaviour to help avoid exclusion becoming necessary.
- Advising schools on how to best use Pupil Premium to support previously looked-after children (not applicable for children in kinship care).

## Advice for Parents

The Virtual School Extended Duties Team consists of a deputy head and two advisers. The team have extensive experience in Early Years, Primary, Secondary, Post 16 and specialist settings. All members of the Virtual School Team can be contacted through the Virtual School Inbox: [virtualschool@telford.gov.uk](mailto:virtualschool@telford.gov.uk)

Advice may also relate to:

- how best to support the young person to make progress
- developing consistency between home and school in meeting the needs of the young person
- how to be an advocate for the young person in an education setting
- school admission arrangements
- special educational needs
- attendance
- suspensions and exclusions
- homework
- choosing GCSE options
- managing challenging behaviour
- promoting positive educational and recreational activities
- further education, employment and training options
- the Virtual School in collaboration with Attachment Research Community (ARC) are currently working with schools in relation to the Attachment and Trauma informed school accreditation programme.

In addition, the Virtual School Head Teacher, can be contacted via [virtualschool@telford.gov.uk](mailto:virtualschool@telford.gov.uk) and will be able to provide further advice, in particular on education outcomes and schools' offers for a child previously in care or in kinship care.

**As an underlying principle to our work with children previously in care and children in kinship care, we respect the need for anonymity that some parents request. We will therefore not proactively contact parents of children previously in care, but we will be available to advise and support if parents contact us.**

## **Advice for Schools**

In accordance with the regulations (section 20 of the 2008 Children and Young People's Act and regulations) to promote the educational attainment of looked-after and previously looked after children including those aged 16-18 who are registered at the school, schools must appoint an identified staff member to undertake this role.

The Virtual School is also able to provide advice and support directly to schools to help them provide for the needs of children previously in care.

This advice and support might include:

- Ensuring PPG+ is available for children previously in care
- Using the PPG+ to provide appropriate interventions to meet the needs of the young people who were previously in care
- Developing high expectations and interventions to meet these expectations
- Whole school approaches to supporting children previously in care & in kinship care (as well as children in care) for example, attachment awareness training
- Encouraging education settings to share expertise on strategies to support children previously in care and in kinship care.
- Signposting other professionals who might provide further support, including health professionals as well as those in education.

The Virtual School provides ongoing support and training for Designated Teachers and Nominated Governors for children in care, previously looked after children, children in kinship care and children with a social worker. There are network meetings and an Annual VS Conference. In addition, the VST also offers a variety of training packages. Schools are requested to contact the VSHT/VST directly to discuss this.

For further reading, the Virtual School highly recommends:

[Meeting the needs of adopted and permanently placed children – A guide for school staff; PAC-UK](#)

[Introduction and advice - Previously Looked After Children \(PLAC\) - Telford & Wrekin Council](#)

### **Previously Looked After Children & Children in Kinship Care:**

To meet the needs of adopted children & children in kinship care, schools need to recognise the impact of early life experiences. Having a key adult in school will allow for good communication between home and school. In your school, know who the previous looked-after children are as identified by parents/guardians (parents/guardians are not required to disclose).

### **Pupil Premium Plus for Children Previously in Care – Compulsory School Age**

Children who have ceased to be looked after by a local authority in England and Wales because of adoption, a special guardianship order, or a child arrangement order will have their entitlement to Pupil Premium Plus paid directly to the school. The school will need to work with the adoptive parents to ensure the status of the young person is recorded on the census return - the Pupil Premium Plus funding will then be received through the normal school funding routes. However, it is the right of the parents to decide whether to declare the status of the child or not. The school should not pursue parents to include this information if the parents choose not to.

There is no direct responsibility for the Virtual School Head to monitor the use of this Pupil Premium Plus and there is no expectation of a PEP. Children in kinship care arrangements have no PPG+ funding from the Virtual School. [Looking after someone else's child - GOV.UK](#) [What is kinship care? - Kinship](#)

### **Pupil Premium Plus for Children Previously in Care – Early Years**

Children who have ceased to be looked after by a local authority in England and Wales because of adoption, a special guardianship order, or a child arrangement order will have their entitlement to Pupil Premium Plus paid directly to the setting (see eligibility criteria 9.1: [Early years entitlements: local authority funding operational guide 2025 to 2026](#)). The setting will need to liaise with the Early Years Funding Officer and provide evidence of the child's status. However, it is the right of the parents to decide whether to declare the status of the

child or not. The setting should not pursue parents to include this information if the parents choose not to.

**The Virtual School strongly recommends to parents that they do declare the previously looked after status to the school or setting; this will enable the school/setting to access the PPG+/EY PPG+ funding and therefore provide additional support.**

### **Admissions:**

The schools should give looked-after children and previously looked-after children the highest priority on their admission arrangements. "Such children **must** take precedence over those on a waiting list and **cannot** be refused a place because of challenging behaviour."

The 2021 School Admissions Code requires children who appear (to the admission authority) to have been in state care outside of England, and who have ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted, to be given equal first priority in admission arrangements alongside looked after children (LAC) and children who were previously looked after by English local authorities (PLAC). The advice refers to these children as internationally adopted previously looked after children – "IAPLAC".

[School admissions code 2021 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/92222/school-admissions-code-2021.pdf)

### **Role of Governors:**

- To appoint a designated teacher in accordance with the regulations (section 20 of the 2008 Children and Young People's Act and regulations) to promote the educational attainment of looked-after and previously looked after children including those aged 16-18 who are registered at the school.
- The designated teachers should be given the appropriate level of support to fulfil the role and be up to date even if they currently do not have looked after children on roll.
- Governors in partnership with the head teacher ensure that the Designated Teacher has the opportunity to undertake appropriate training.
- The governing body and the Designated Teacher must have regard to this guidance and any other relevant guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- Ensure there are appropriate monitoring arrangements in place.
- Ensure that the Designated Teacher:
  - Contributes to a deeper understanding of looked-after children and previously looked-after children in the school and the resource implications to support them in their role.
  - Is a member of teaching staff with appropriate seniority and skills to work with the school leadership team.



- Has appropriate professional experience and status to provide leadership, training, information, challenge and advice to others.

## **Special Educational Needs & Disabilities - SEND:**

SEND professionals must work closely with other relevant professionals including parents involved in the child's life to ensure that the child's **Education Health Care** plan works in harmony with his/her **Adoption Care Plan** and transition **Personal Education Plan** so that it adds to, but does not duplicate, information about how education, health and care needs will be met. When referencing information contained within the EHC plan, the PEP should only include relevant information to the child's SEN from the looked after children care plan.

SEND Code of Practice - updated September 2024 [SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25-years)

SEND Review – updated August 2024 - [Special educational needs and disability: an analysis and summary \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/publications/send-review-2024)

## **Mental Health and Well-Being:**

Children in Care and previously looked-after children are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health issues (as identified in the Special Needs and Disability Code of Practice 0-25 years) than peers. They may struggle with executive functioning skills, forming trusting relationships, social skills, managing strong feelings (shame, sadness, anxiety and anger), sensory processing skills and coping with transitions and change. All of these can impact on educational attainment.

[Designated Teacher statutory guidance DfE - Feb 2018](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-teacher-statutory-guidance)

Designated teachers are not expected to be mental health experts; however, they have an important role in working with other staff in school who link with mental health services ensuring they and other school staff can identify signs of potential issues and understand where the school can draw on specialist services, such as CAMHS and educational psychologists. Collectively with the VST as a multi-agency approach, we can advise schools further to understand the impact that trauma, attachment disorder and other mental health issues can have on Children in Care and previously looked-after children and their ability to engage in learning. The VST can support the school to become “attachment aware”, i.e. ensuring that the school understands attachment theory and the impact of attachment disorders on a child's emotional development and learning, and adopt a whole school approach to identifying and supporting pupils with attachment difficulties. The VS offers a Youth Mental Health First Aider course via the T&W CPD booklet (at a cost) to support schools further.

[Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill 2024: policy summary - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-wellbeing-and-schools-bill-2024-policy-summary)  
[Keeping children safe, helping families thrive - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-helping-families-thrive)

Additional useful resources in addition to the VS website:

[Emotional, mental health and wellbeing - Telford & Wrekin Council](#)

[Mentally healthy schools | Primary, secondary school and FE settings mental health resources \(annafreud.org\)](#)

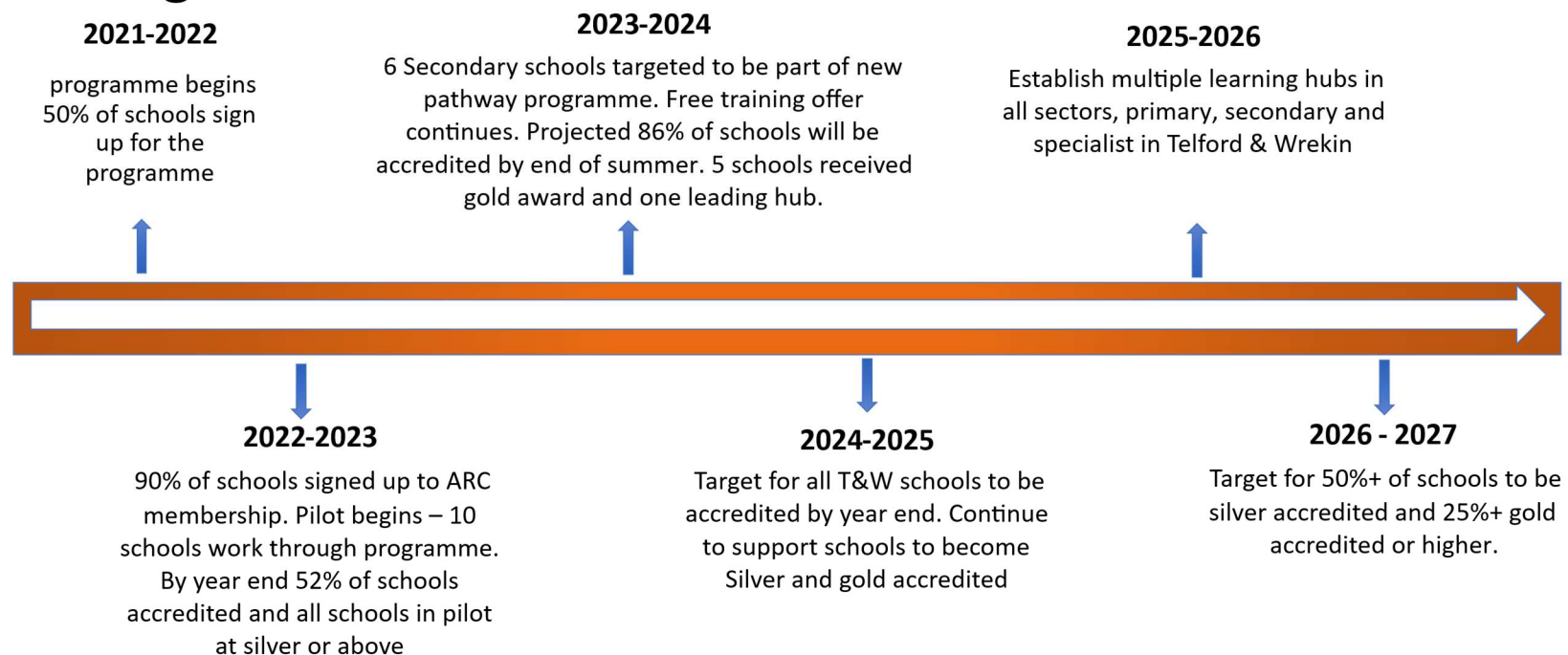
[Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

## Attachment and Trauma Informed Schools - Relationship Model Approach:

Telford & Wrekin Virtual School is currently on an ambitious journey with local educational establishments to ensure they are all accredited through the Attachment Research Community (ARC). Membership has been purchased by the Virtual School for all Telford & Wrekin schools. [Attachment & Trauma Aware approaches in education | ARC \(the-arc.org.uk\)](https://the-arc.org.uk)



# Attachment & Trauma Accredited Schools Programme - Timeline



## Appendix 1 Key Contacts

Service	What they can offer	Key contact details
Regional adoption agency for T&W, Shropshire, Stoke and Staffordshire	<p><a href="#">Together 4 Children – For adoption, for family... we're Together4Children</a></p> <p>Together4Children is a partnership between Shropshire Council, Staffordshire County Council, Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Telford &amp; Wrekin Council. We are the regional adoption agency for the four councils. We also provide other services and initiatives that support children's permanency.</p> <p>The partnership is a new way of delivering our adoption services within your area. Working together means we can offer greater choice and a better support service for both children and adopters.</p>	<p><b>0300 111 8044</b></p> <p><b>Contact form:</b>  <a href="https://www.together4children.co.uk/contact/">https://www.together4children.co.uk/contact/</a></p>
Adoption UK	<p>Adoption UK is the leading charity providing support, community and advocacy for all those parenting or supporting children who cannot live with their birth parents. They connect adoptive families, provide information and signposting on a range of adoption-related issues and campaign for improvements to adoption policy and legislation at the highest levels. With over 8,000 members, they provide a strong, supportive community and are the largest voice of adopters in the UK.</p>	<p><b>0300 666 0006</b></p> <p><a href="mailto:helpline@adoptionuk.org.uk">helpline@adoptionuk.org.uk</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.adoptionuk.org/contact-us">https://www.adoptionuk.org/contact-us</a></p>
Family Rights Group	<p>The Adoption Support Fund and Special Guardians</p> <p>The Adoption Support Fund pays for a range of therapeutic support for adopted children and their adoptive family and, since April 2016, for children cared for by Special Guardians who are eligible. The Adoption Support Fund is available to those Special Guardians living in England who obtained a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) for a child aged 21 and younger (or 25 and younger if they have a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education, Health and Care Plan) who was looked after immediately before the SGO was granted.</p>	<p>Family Rights Group  Second Floor  The Print House  18 Ashwin Street  London E8 3DL  <b>Telephone/Email: Advice</b>  <b>Tel:</b> 0808 801 0366</p> <p><a href="#">Kinship carers - Family Rights Group (frg.org.uk)</a></p>

<a href="#">For kinship carers - Kinship - The kinship care charity</a> (previously Grandparents Plus)	Information about kinship care – whether you are an informal kinship carer, have a Special Guardianship Order, Child Arrangement Order or Care Order. Website offers advice pages and further support.	<b>Advice line:</b> 0300 123 7015 <a href="https://kinship.org.uk/support-and-advice/talk-to-someone/contact-the-kinship-advice-team/">https://kinship.org.uk/support-and-advice/talk-to-someone/contact-the-kinship-advice-team/</a>
Kinship Compass (part of Kinship.org.uk)	An independent online information, advice and support hub just for kinship carers. Kinship Compass provide information, expert advice and support for every stage of your kinship care journey, tailored to your situation.	<a href="https://kinship.org.uk/support-and-advice/kinship-compass/">https://kinship.org.uk/support-and-advice/kinship-compass/</a>

## Appendix 2 useful websites

### Useful websites

Adoption UK Education Resources:

<https://www.adoptionuk.org/pages/category/education-resources>

PAC-UK education services:

<https://www.pac-uk.org/our-services/education/>

Beacon House resources:

<https://beaconhouse.org.uk/resources/>

First4Adoption

<https://www.first4adoption.org.uk/adoption-support/education-support/>

Coram Life Education – resources

<https://www.coramlifeeducation.org.uk/>

[Together 4 Children – For adoption, for family... we're Together4Children](#)

[www.together4children.co.uk](http://www.together4children.co.uk)

## Appendix 3

### Legal Terminology:

**Special Guardianship Order (SGO):** Special Guardianship was introduced as a permanence option for children in December 2005. It provides a legally secure foundation for building a permanent relationship between the child and their special guardian, while preserving the legal link between the child and their birth family. The order ceases when the child turns 18.

**Child Arrangement Order (Residence Order):** the granting of a residence order to someone automatically gives him or her parental responsibility for the child if they do not already have it. Parental responsibility obtained as a result of a residence order will continue until the order ceases or until the child is 16 unless the circumstances of the case are exceptional, and the court has ordered that it continue for longer.

**Adoption:** Adoption is a way of providing new families for children who cannot be brought up by their biological parents. It is a legal procedure in which all parental responsibility is transferred to the adopters. Once an adoption has been granted, it cannot be reversed. An adopted child loses all legal ties with their birth parents and becomes a full member of the adoptive family, usually taking the family's name. Recently adopted children will be classed as looked after until the final court hearing (usually 6 months after placement in new family). Adopted children will remain the responsibility of the placing local authority for 3 years from the date of the adoption.

### Exit from Care

Children and young people can exit care for a number of reasons; including returning home to their family, being placed with a family member or put under a post care order; e.g. adoption, special guardianship.

### Section 47

Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 places a duty on LAs to investigate and make inquiries into the circumstances of children considered to be at risk of 'significant harm' and, where these inquiries indicate the need to decide what action, if any, it may need to take to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

### Case Conference

A child will be made subject to a child protection plan at a child protection case conference if the child is at risk of significant harm.

## Looked After Children Care Plan

Care Plans set out what services will be provided to a looked after child and their family. The Care Plan will say what the council and other agencies will do to meet the child's needs around health, education, religion, culture and hobbies, and sets out the longer-term plan for the child's future.

## Private Fostering

Private fostering is when a child under the age of 16, (under 18 if disabled) is cared for by someone who is not their parent or a 'close relative'. This is a private arrangement made between a parent and a carer, for 28 days or more. T&W Council have to be told about a child's living arrangements.

## Kinship Care

Kinship care is when a child lives full-time or most of the time with a relative or close family friend, usually because their parents are not able to care for them.

## Legal parent

During Adoption, Parental Responsibility for a child is transferred from their birth parent or other person with Parental Responsibility to their adopters; it is a legal procedure. An adopted child loses all the legal ties with their original parents. It is a significant legal order and is not usually reversible. When an adoption order is made in respect of a child, the child becomes a full member of their new family, usually taking the family name, and assumes the same rights and privileges as if they had been born to the adoptive family, including the right of inheritance.

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