

A photograph of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a white t-shirt, smiling warmly while holding a young boy in a dark blue shirt. The boy is also smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a bright, slightly blurred outdoor setting. The image is set against a white background with orange geometric shapes on the right side.

pennyappeal

Adoption & Fostering

Guide for applicants

pennyappeal
at Home



Penny Appeal philosophy

Penny Appeal was established in 2009 to provide poverty relief across Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. In 2015, the UK aid and development programme, Penny Appeal at Home, was launched to respond to immediate and ongoing concerns more locally. This established a model that twins its overseas programmes with equivalent projects on the ground in the UK.

Since its inception, Penny Appeal has transformed lives and empowered communities in more than 30 countries around the world, helping to break the poverty cycle and build brighter futures for all.

The Penny Appeal way of doing charity is simple but has a massive impact. We make charitable giving both affordable and rewardable, ensuring that everyone can help those in desperate need by donating just a few pennies each day.

Here at Penny Appeal, we take small change and use it to make a big difference.

All our projects are carefully planned and designed to be accessible and effective. They are a blend of emergency support, short term relief and longer term sustainable interventions.

This multi-focus approach means we can save lives immediately, improve situations in just a few days or weeks whilst transforming communities for years to come.

We can offer desperate people the support they need depending on their situation.

Aamer Naeem CEO



The Penny Appeal Adoption and Fostering Project

The Penny Appeal Adoption and Fostering team recruits adopters and foster carers so that children in care can be offered suitably matched homes.

The best way to support children in care, is to provide safe, loving homes that are appropriate for each child.

Ultimately, the best way to make this transition easier for these children and young people is through the recruitment of foster carers and adopters, from a wide variety of backgrounds, cultures, races and religions. Without the recruitment of carers, many vulnerable children will remain in situations that do not meet their emotional, psychological and identity needs. It

is because of these needs, that Penny Appeal has launched its Adoption and Fostering project.

We offer a wide range of support with the fundamental goal of finding diverse families and safe homes for children in care. We do not have any partnerships, so our advice is impartial and independent. Furthermore, as this is a charitable project with the children and applicant's needs at the heart of our practice, our referral service is entirely free of charge to both applicants and service providers.



Adoption and fostering - facts & figures

There are around 70,000* children in care and this number has been subject to a steady increase over last 8 years.

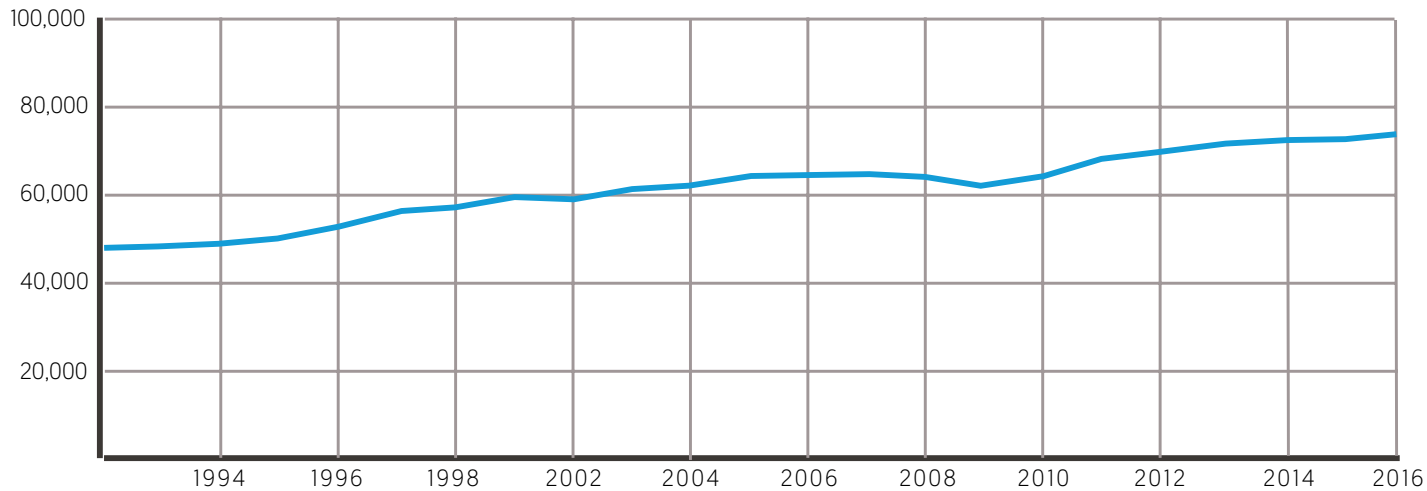
Of these children, around 50,000* of them are placed in foster-placements. Due to the large numbers of children in foster care, this has led to a severe shortage in foster placements for children of all backgrounds and levels of need.

There was an increase of 56%* of applications from unaccompanied asylum seeking children between 2014 and 2015, to 3,043 applications.

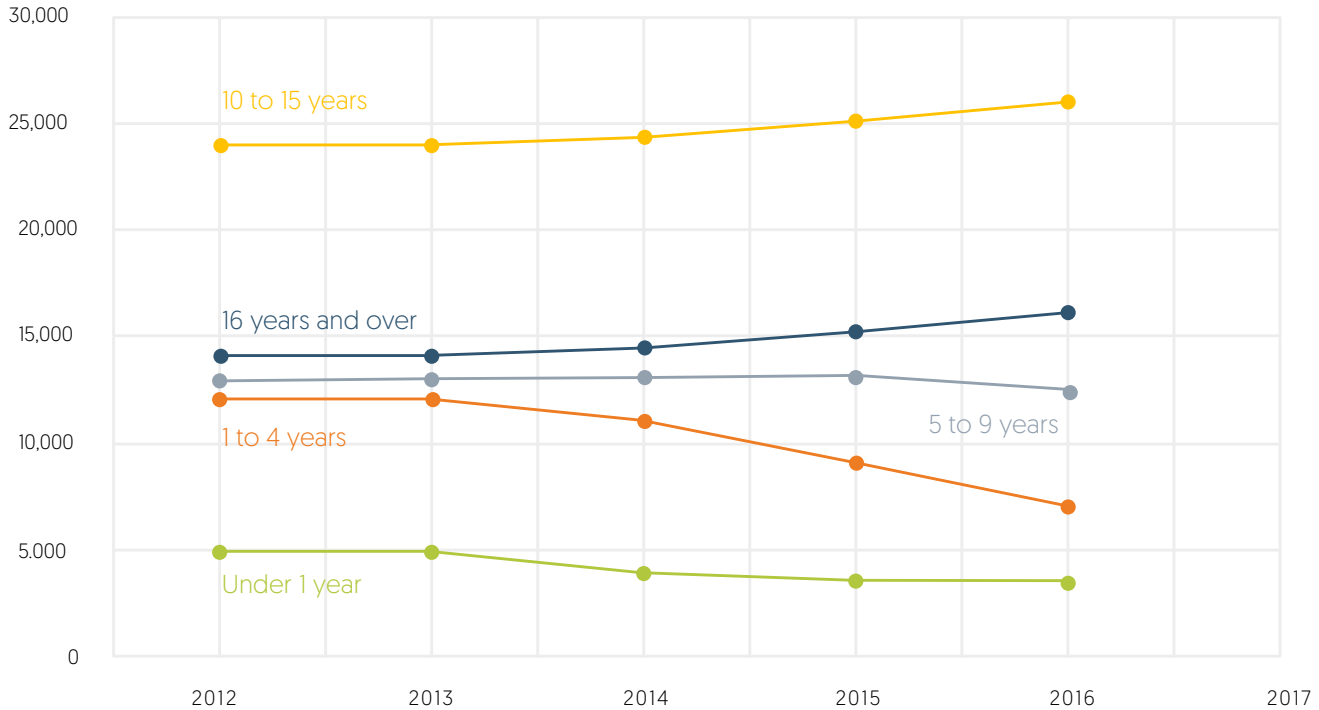
The majority of applications were from Eritrea, followed by Afghanistan and Albania.

The vast majority of asylum seeking children are male, for British children in care there is a more even split of genders.

Many adoption and fostering applicants state a preference for caring for female children over male; however, approved applicants tend to report that there is no difference in the difficulty of caring for either and indeed, some carers find it easier to care for boys.

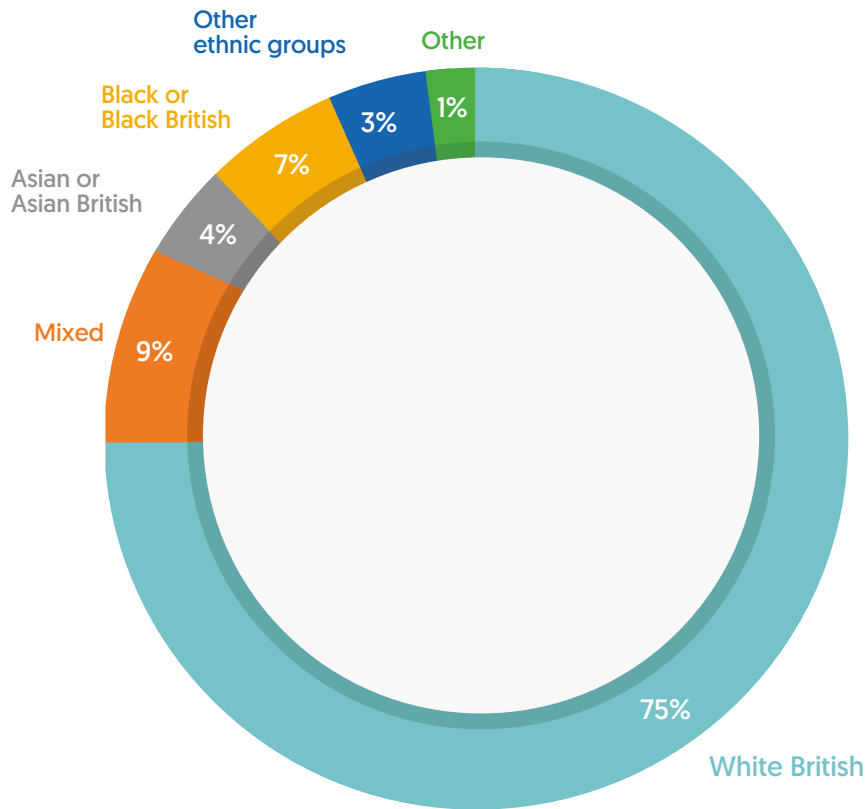


Children looked after in England (including adoption) year ending 31 March 2016 (Department for Education, September 2016)



Babies and children under the age of one are the fewest in care, and make up less than 5,000. The numbers of children in care under the age of 4 is also decreasing, as adoption rates have increased. Therefore, applicants wishing to adopt

are encouraged to adopt older children. Foster carers are expected to have a much wider age range than adoption - with many fostering providers only approving carers if they are willing to care for teenagers.



According to the 2011 Census 87% of the general population identifies as white British. However, as we can see from the chart on the left [from the Department for Education], only 75% of children in care identified as white British. This raises many questions about the reasons why children enter the care system and how we can support families so that they are better able to care for their birth children. Furthermore, adoption and fostering providers need to be supported to ensure that the children in their care have appropriately matched placements.

The Penny Appeal Adoption and Fostering programme aims to address these issues by targeting diverse groups of carers for recruitment.

Following a Freedom of Information request in 2015, Penny Appeal found that a third of local authorities do not record religion because it is not a government requirement to do so. However, from the information available, results did indicate that over 3,000 Muslim children enter foster care every year. Furthermore, approximately 50% of these children spend time living in non-Muslim homes



Adoption and fostering - facts & figures

Adoption offers a child a permanent home, which gives the adopters legal rights that are also afforded to birth parents. Adoption is a legal process which means, when a registered adopter is matched with a child and the adoption order is granted, that child is a permanent member of the adopter's family. The adoptive parents have all the legal rights and responsibilities that they would over a biological child. Adoption is the chance to expand and complete a family, for life.

Fostering is a way of caring for a child and positively impacting their lives in a less permanent way. That is to say, a registered foster carer may have a number of children placed into their care, but only for temporary periods at a time. Some placements may be long [potentially from a very young age to the age of 21] and some may be shorter [sometimes only one night]. Foster carers will need to offer care, safety and support to vulnerable children; however, they would not consider themselves, or be considered by anyone else, to be the child's legal parent. Foster carers have more support from, and contact

with, social services, as do the children in their care. Foster carers are required to give the same level of time, attention and nurturing to their foster children as a biological parent would give to their biological child. However, the child will simply not be with the foster carer forever, although they may well maintain a positive relationship after the placement ends. Foster carers are required to attend ongoing training and are paid an allowance of £150 to £550 per week per child, which will cover expenses for the child and payment for the carer.

Parents who wish to adopt can also register to 'foster to adopt': this means that while the child is going through the court process with a view to being granted an adoption order, the child can live with the potential adopters, in a foster placement. There would be a relatively small chance that the court may not grant the adoption order; which could mean that the child would be moved out of the placement. However, these placements are in the best interests of children who go on to be adopted because it means that they do not have to change placements.

Adoption and fostering - facts & figures

	Adoption	Fostering
Parental responsibility and legal status of the child	The adopters have the same rights and responsibilities as birth parents do in relation to a birth child. Parental responsibility gives parents rights such as being able to change the child's name, give permission for the child to go on holiday (with or without them) and make non-emergency medical decisions.	Foster carers provide safe homes and temporary (albeit sometimes long term) care. Foster carers never have parental responsibility, but they can make decisions which are necessary for the basic care of the child. For example, a foster carer can attend school meetings and do what is necessary for the day to day care of the child.
Length of placement	Permanent	Varies depending on needs of the child
Taking the child on holidays	Free to take child on holiday	Whoever has parental responsibility for the child has to give written permission for the child to go abroad. Parental responsibility may be with birth parents, previous guardians or with the local authority.
Changing the child's name	The adopters can decide on the child's surname.	It is illegal for foster carers to change the child's surname.

	Adoption	Fostering
Carers development training	Training is usually prior to the adoption order, but it can also be offered subsequent to adoption if required. In order to engage in assessment and training, the main carer (or both if there are two) are required to have moderate English reading, writing and speaking skills	Being a foster carer is similar to a professional role, which requires training before and after approval. In order to engage in assessment and training, the main carer (or both if there are two) are required to have moderate English reading, writing and speaking skills.
Allowances	Adopters do not receive ongoing allowances.	Foster carers are paid a weekly allowance by the service provider. The allowances cover a nominal amount of pay and the costs of caring for the children. Different providers offer different allowances and can vary from £150 to £550 per child per week.
Age range of applicants	Applicants must be over the age of 21 and in good health. Younger applicants are expected to have high levels of experience caring for children, perhaps as an older sibling or as part of an adoptive or fostering household. There is no upper limit, however, good health is vital and the future needs of the child should be considered.	As Adoption

Adoption and fostering - facts & figures

	Adoption	Fostering
Age range of child in placement	Very few babies (under 1) are adopted. The majority are between age 1 and 6.	Ages of children who are fostered range from babies to 18 year olds. The children can stay in placement until 21 years old (if child is in further education).
Location of child's birth family	The child can be from anywhere in the UK	Similar/close area to the home of the carer, to allow contact with the birth family and access to school (where appropriate and relevant)
Contact with birth parents	Where it is safe for the child to do so, it is recommended that adopted children have 'letter contact' with birth parents, which is facilitated and monitored via the local authority. However, ultimately it is the choice of the adoptive parents what level of contact they would like their child to have.	The child's social worker will determine what level of contact with birth parents is appropriate: this can range from no contact at all, to several weekly unsupervised visits.
Matching ethnicity and religion of child to placement	Legally there is no requirement to match religiously and the emphasis on ethnic matching has been reduced due to the shortage of ethnic minority adopters.	Ethnic and religious matching is preferable, but it depends on the availability of foster carers in the child's area.

	Adoption	Fostering
Shortage of placements	Over 5,000 children are looking for adoptive families in the in the UK [source: CoramBAAF].	It is estimated by The Fostering Network that there is a shortage of 9,000 foster carers in the UK.
Length of assessment	Expect a minimum of 9 months, but it depends on outcomes of checks.	Foster carers are advised that the assessment can take up to 6 months, or sometimes longer if the checks are not clear.
Checks	Checks include: DBS (police check), medical, home conditions, references and overseas checks (where appropriate).	Fostering and adoption checks are equally comprehensive.
Harder to place groups	Adoption providers have reported to Penny Appeal that they have a particular need to place children over the age of 4, sibling groups and children with disabilities.	The majority of fostering services contacted by Penny Appeal state they struggle to find foster carers for teenage children, ethnic minority children, children with disabilities and sibling groups.



Penny Appeal adoption and fostering services:

■ Referral to all the providers in the applicant's area

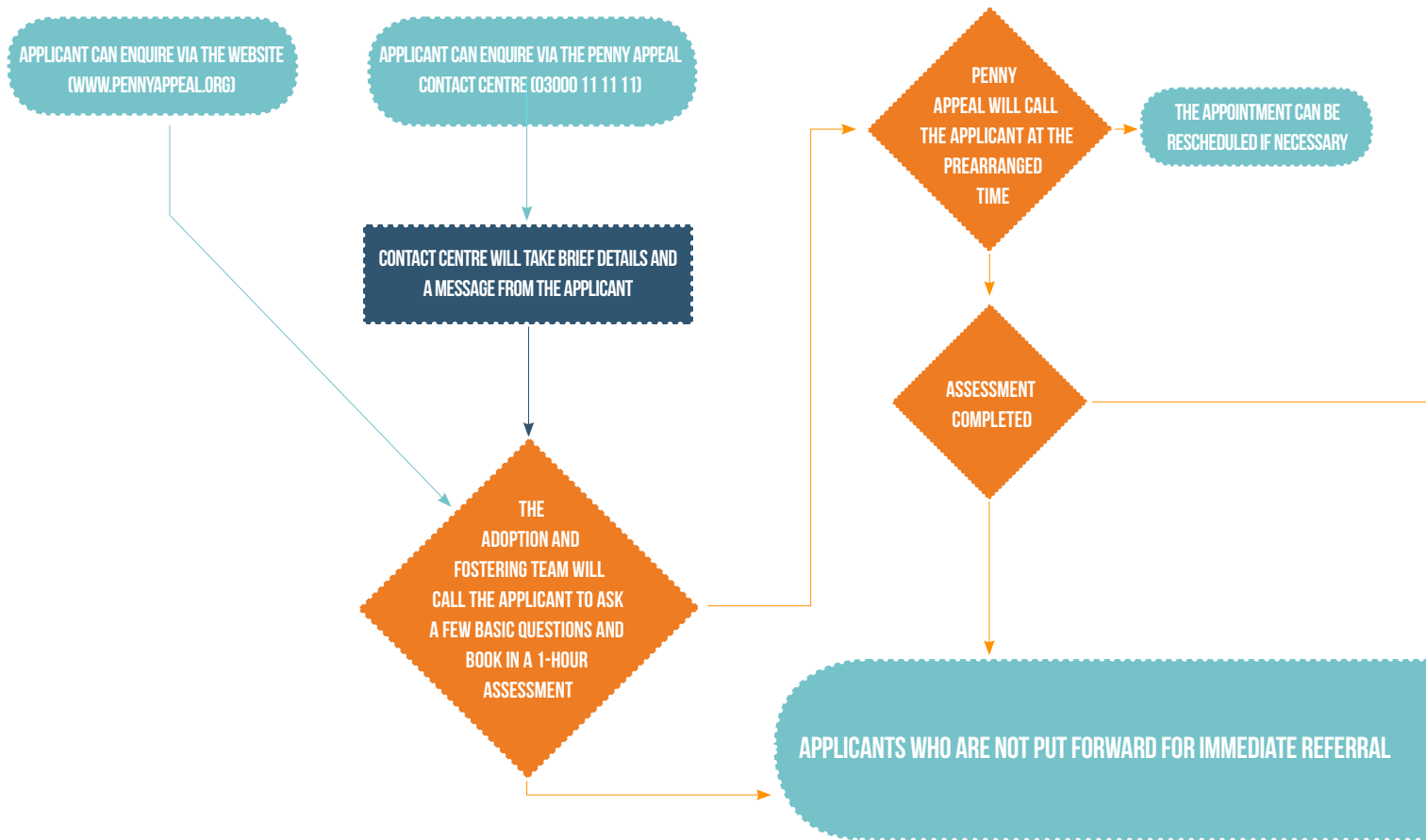
Our trained team carry out short and simple telephone assessments with our applicants. These assessments give applicants the opportunity to ask questions and gain clarity about adoption and fostering before approaching providers. Together we can ensure that applicants are ready to approach providers.

On the successful completion of the assessments, our Adoption and Fostering team would then anonymise the assessment and send it to all adoption/fostering providers in the area in order to begin the referral process. Of the providers who then respond positively, we send the applicant's contact details to the top three providers. Providers are chosen based on their contract level with the local authority, Ofsted ratings and their allowances [for fostering providers]. By doing this, we

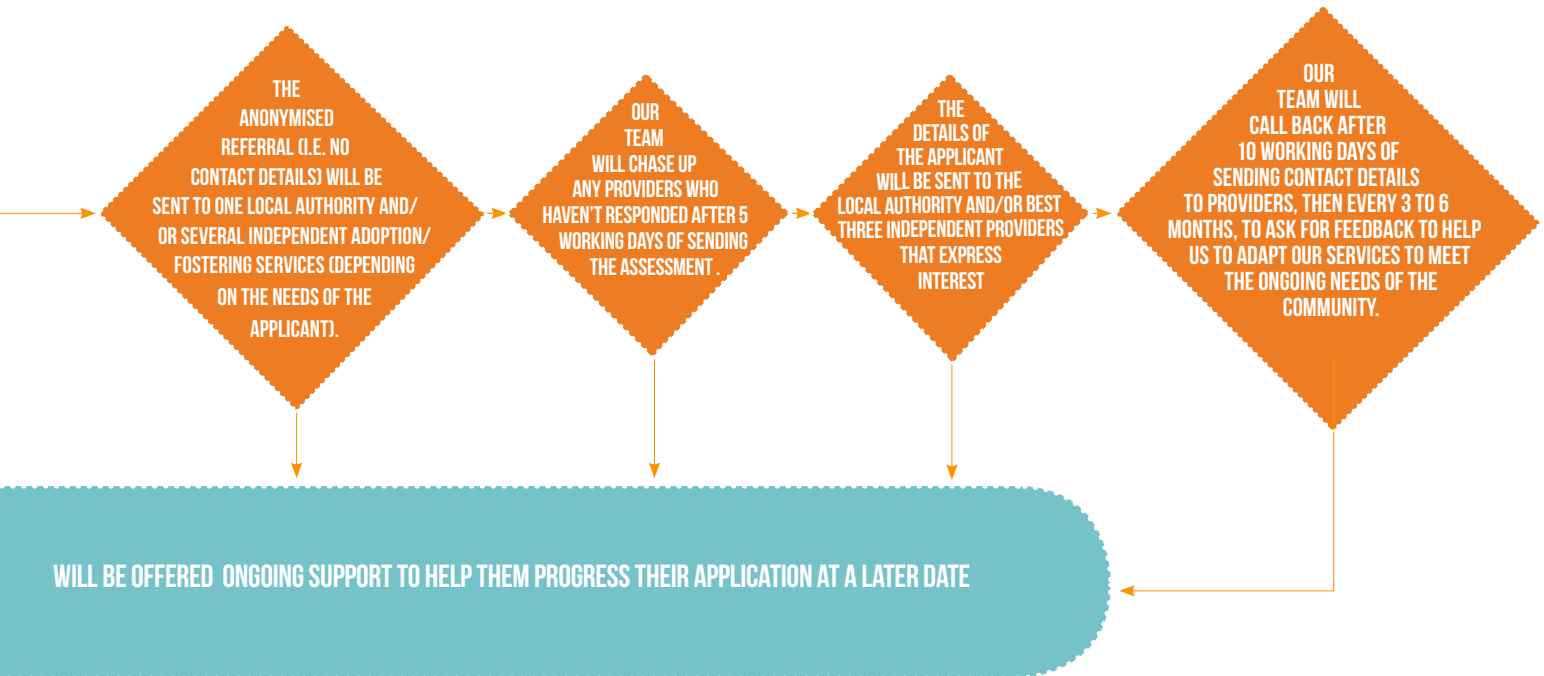
ensure that all our applicants are referred to the best adoption and fostering providers in their area.

We don't have any partnerships because we only select based on the criteria stated. We believe that our applicants are more likely to be happy with their provider and are more likely to complete their assessments, become approved and have a child placed with them, because they will be working with the best providers.

This referral system is unique; it is not offered by any other agency/provider or initiative in the UK. The service is free of charge and confidential, it seeks to help applicants begin their journey into adoption and fostering by using our expertise to help make the process an easier and more successful experience.



Penny Appeal referral process





Local drop-in events

Penny Appeal Adoption and Fostering is raising awareness within our local and national communities about the need for adopters and foster carers. Locally, we hold drop-in sessions. We invite all local adoption and fostering providers to the events and aim to have three of each provider there, so people who are interested can ask the service providers questions directly. We also support organisations and individuals in other parts of the country who would like to hold adoption and/or fostering recruitment events; if you would like to hold an event in your area, please contact us for advice and support.

Volunteer ambassadors

We are currently building our team of volunteer ambassadors to support us in accessing and meeting the needs of the local community. All ambassadors are expected to have some knowledge or experience of adoption and fostering. Our ambassadors will undergo our volunteer training programme and will receive regular support from their ambassador coordinator. If you would like to participate, please contact us.

■ Specialist support for Muslim applicants

Sadly, the number of vulnerable children, both Muslim and non-Muslim, placed into care every year is staggering and should undoubtedly be one of the main issues of concern for Muslim communities. This is very much an issue which affects whole communities, not just individuals. Children in care are vulnerable and have often lived very hard lives. We have a duty of care on a humanitarian level as well as a religious one as was the prophetic way.

Treat your children [small or grown] fairly [with equal justice].” (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Our initiative aims to gain justice for vulnerable children in the UK. To unite our communities in the goodness of caring for vulnerable children in care and providing them not only with loving homes, safety and nurturing but also aiding them to mould and fuse the Muslim identity and provide them with examples of being upright moral citizens in society.

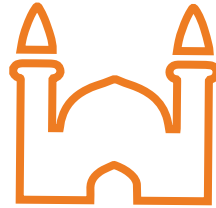
Muslim communities, from the very inception of Islam to

the modern western world we live in, have been based on principles of love, compassion, servitude and humanity. These principles are continuously present in the prophetic teaching and lifestyle.

By this merit, we know that it is our duty to live our lives by these over-arching principles. Although, we may often struggle to contextualise the prophetic teaching and realistically apply the Sunnah, we now have an opportunity to actualise his teaching [peace be upon him] in a practical way to better our communities and society. It is our collective duty to tackle the issue of children in care, as moral people and as believers/followers of Islam.

There is of course a limit to what we can achieve alone. We ask the Muslim communities to unite in supporting us with this task. Not just for Muslim children, but all the children in care who are not receiving the care, love and attention that they deserve.





■ Islamic guidance document

Penny Appeal has worked with prominent Islamic scholars to produce an Islamic guidance document addressing the religious legitimacy and virtues of adoption and fostering.

This is a service for the Muslim community, to support more people who may feel somewhat unsure about becoming foster carers and/or adopters and would like to understand what their faith says about it.

The scholars have made it clear that adoption and fostering are noble and praiseworthy; the document clarifies questions around issues such as mehrum, caring for children of other religions and appropriate cross-gender interactions. We hope this document, will encourage Muslim communities to understand the subject

and therefore work together to meet the needs of all children in care.

The misconceptions within Muslim communities surrounding adoption and fostering are dispelled. Through the dissemination of Islamic knowledge and delivery of regular seminars we will aid the Muslim community to be more effective in supporting the vulnerable children in care. Seminars will be delivered in community hubs by qualified Islamic teachers and the content will be based on the traditional understanding and interpretation of the Quran and Sunnah.

If you would like to hold a seminar or would like to know when and where your local seminar will be held, please contact the Penny Appeal Adoption and Fostering team.





■ Identity boxes for children

Penny Appeal wants to give gifts directly to the children in care, on behalf of the Muslim community. Children in care have lived unsettled lives and have experienced many traumatic events. They often have issues with attachment and identity; therefore, we want to provide the children with a gift box, filled with items which would support the children to develop strong religious and cultural identities.

Muslim children will be given a prayer mat, head covering, prayer beads, a booklet about being Muslim in the care system [written by a Muslim care leaver] which will motivate and inspire the children. All of these gifts will be given in a high quality gift box, which can be used over the long term as a place for the child to store the items most precious to them, such as photos and letters from loved ones. The gift box will be a symbolic

gesture from the Muslim community that the child is valued, and that they will always be valued by the community.

Furthermore, our booklet will help the child to understand that faith in Allah (SWT) can give the child the strength and patience to not only endure, but to overcome and grow stronger through life's hardships.

We believe that these small gestures can make life changing differences for the Muslim children in the British care system. The boxes can be gifted for only £50, and we also offer the choice to donors to send a personalised message with the gift box.

To be part of this wonderful initiative, contact Penny Appeal and speak to our adoption and fostering team.





■ Conclusion

The number of children in care is not only high, but is increasing. Penny Appeal Adoption and Fostering will do all that we can to ease the burden and hardships on these children. We will find homes and families for vulnerable young people and children and we will work together to meet the needs of the children and help them to heal.

The Penny Appeal Adoption and Fostering project was established in 2016 and we have expanded quickly in a short time – our hopes for the future are that we can do even more to help the vulnerable in society, particularly children in care.

For those that are not blessed with the opportunity to become an adopter or foster carer, there are many other ways in which you could work with us to make society better. Just by learning about Adoption and Fostering and reading to the end of this booklet, you have increased your knowledge.

We trust that there will be an opportunity for you to make a difference when the time is right for you. We wish you all the best and we kindly ask for you to remember the children we work for in your prayers.

pennyappeal

Charity Number 1128341

For any more information, please don't hesitate to call
We will be on hand to answer any questions you may have,
and are looking forward to working with you in the future.

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