Adoption Week Scotland highlights urgent need for families considering adoption to come forward

Friday 13 November, 2026

EMBARGOED 00:01 MONDAY 16 NOVEMBER

Children in Scotland are waiting longer to find permanent adoptive families as the number of prospective adopters coming forward continues to fall.

The latest figures from the Care Inspectorate show that, at the end of December 2025, there were 131 approved adoptive households waiting for children, the lowest number in five years. At the same time, 206 children were waiting for families.

Around a third of these children were siblings whose social workers were seeking families able to keep them together. Children from global majority backgrounds, those with significant health or development needs, and those aged five and older can also face lengthy waits before being placed with families.

Overall, more than a quarter of the children waiting for a family have done so for a year or more.

Adoption UK Scotland, Scotland's Adoption Register (SAR), and the Association for Fostering, Kinship and Adoption Scotland (AFKA Scotland) are calling on people who could offer children safe, loving homes to find out more about adoption during this year's Adoption Week Scotland.

Kate Richardson, Manager of Scotland's Adoption Register, said: "Delays in family finding increases feelings of uncertainty, insecurity and instability for children. We know from listening to adoptive parents how beneficial it is for children's wellbeing to be provided with a permanent home where they are loved and nurtured.

"We know there are many people across Scotland who have the commitment, skills and strengths to provide safe and loving homes for children. We would encourage them to reach out to their local adoption agency and explore the possibility of growing their family through adoption."

Fiona Aitken, Director, Adoption UK Scotland, said: "You don't need to fit a particular mould to adopt in Scotland. Whether you're single, a member of the LGBTQ+ community, have children or not, adoption is open to a diverse range of people aged 21 and over. What matters most is your ability to provide a child with a safe, loving and permanent home where they can feel valued, supported and able to thrive."

Adoption can bring unique challenges, and support is available to help families at every stage, from the early days to the demands of childhood and adolescence. This can include support from social workers, therapeutic services, and education and health professionals, as well as opportunities to connect with other adoptive families through peer support groups.

Angie Gillies, AFKA Scotland Director, said: "All adoptive families, and anyone with experience of adoption, can ask their local authority or adoption agency for support and this can be provided in many forms.

"Adoptive families will need support to learn about their child, how best to respond to their needs, and how to take care of each other through the ups and downs of childhood, adolescence and beyond. Adoption support provides this at all stages of the adoption journey."

The value of that support is reflected in the experience of Jamie, who adopted two brothers with his partner Craig more than three years ago. The couple have worked closely with their children's school to help ensure the right support is in place, while also building vital connections with other adoptive families.

Jamie said: "We've not really changed who we are or what we enjoy doing, but we've adapted our lives around the boys. It's another chapter in your life, and it's been great."

Adoption Week Scotland, which runs from 16 to 20 November, is an opportunity for anyone considering adoption to learn more, ask questions and find out about the support available. Find out more by visiting the Adoption in Scotland website.

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Notes to editors:

- The Care Inspectorate figures relate to the year ending 31 December 2025.
- Scotland's Adoption Register figures relate to children referred to the Register and do not include all children waiting for adoption in Scotland.
- Adoption Week Scotland provides an opportunity to find out more about adoption and the support available to adoptive families. The full range of activities available can be found on the Adoption in Scotland website: https://www.adoption.scot/
- To arrange interviews with our media spokespeople or case study Jamie, please contact Gavin Stuart, Adoption UK media lead, at gavin.stuart@adoptionuk.org.uk / 07462 068 913

Case study: Jamie's adoption story

Jamie and his partner Craig always thought adoption would be part of their future, but it was not until 2020 that they decided the time was right to start the process.

After a comprehensive assessment and approval process, the couple were introduced to two brothers who were looking for a family together. Now, more than three years after their adoption order was granted and the boys moved in with their new family, Jamie says they have no regrets.

"They are just unbelievable," he says. "For us, it's been amazing. We've not really changed who we are or what we enjoy doing, but we've adapted our lives around the boys. It's another chapter in your life, and it's been great."

The family have embraced their new life together, sharing adventures, holidays and everyday activities from playing videogames to learning basic car maintenance.

There have been challenges, particularly in ensuring the right support is in place for their older son, who has significant learning and developmental needs.

Jamie and Craig have worked closely with their local school to find an approach that recognises his individual strengths as well as the areas where he needs additional help. After gathering evidence about his learning and abilities, Jamie approached the school about creating a more tailored lesson plan.

"I said, 'I want a bespoke timetable for him. I want more of this, less of that,'" he explains.

The school agreed to make changes, including more time for subjects such as drama and home economics, with additional support put in place for English and maths. Jamie says the difference has been significant.

"He's got three periods of drama a week rather than one," he says. "He's been in school for a term and a bit and he's acing it because it's built around him. He goes to school every day, willingly, and comes home happy every day."

Jamie also highlights the value of connecting with other adoptive families. After meeting another adopter through an online call, he made contact and the families have since become friends, meeting several times a year.

"It's good just to share our experiences of adoption and get through the journey together and talk about it," he says.

Jamie believes that while adoption brings unique challenges, the rewards for the whole family can be enormous. He hopes other people considering adoption will take the opportunity to find out more about what's involved – and that those children currently awaiting adoption can be matched with families that are right for them.

Jamie's advice for adopters

1. Be open and honest. Be prepared to talk to children about their birth family and their history. Follow their lead, answer questions honestly and make sure conversations happen as they grow up.

2. Be prepared to adapt. Your life will change, but that doesn't have to be a bad thing. Be open to doing things differently and shaping family life around your children's needs.

3. Connect with other adopters. Sharing experiences with people who understand the adoption journey can be invaluable. Don't underestimate the friendships and mutual support that can develop.

4. Be persistent when seeking support. If you know something isn't working for your child, don't be afraid to challenge decisions and keep pushing for the right help.

5. Look for solutions, not just problems. When approaching schools or other services, think about what would actually make a difference for your child and be clear about what you are asking for.

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