



## Recruiting Adopters From the Disabled Community

### Information for Adoption Practitioners



Statistical information reveals that, currently, only a very nominal percentage of approved adopters classify themselves as having a disability, while in the population, the percentage of people who are registered as disabled is significantly higher, demonstrating a potential untapped resource. People who have lived with disability are frequently resourceful, resilient, determined and good advocates, which are, of course, some of the qualities needed to be a successful adoptive parent.

Given that a significant number of children who are waiting for an adoptive family have additional needs or a disability, the potential for adopters from the disabled community to fill some of this gap is a worthwhile consideration. Reaching out to those people who, due to misconceptions of the adoption process, may have ruled themselves out of applying to adopt, could perhaps provide families for those children for whom family finding is currently unsuccessful.

The challenges in recruiting adopters from the disabled community are:

- To raise awareness that disability is not necessarily a barrier to adopting.
- To reduce anxiety about the adoption process and what it entails.
- To dispel myths about perceived unsuitability criteria and to challenge discriminatory views about disabled parenting, for example that a child will become a carer for the person with the disability.
- To develop knowledge and expertise that can be used across the sector.

The AdoptAbility project has run for a year and learning points are summarised below;

#### What worked well;

- The formation of a steering group, which included people from the disabled community as well as professionals.
- Partnership working with disability organisations.
- Attending events specifically for the disabled community as well as other mainstream events.
- A dedicated website which included effective, non-patronising videos.
- Using central city locations for awareness-raising events.
- Word of mouth for dissemination of information, alongside leaflets, posters etc.
- Joint panel team training for disability awareness.

#### Lessons learned;

- Changing mind-sets takes time; prepare to be in for the long haul.
- There is a broad spectrum of disabilities, be prepared to learn as you go and commission additional training when needed.
- Consider age as a factor in thinking about the right disability organisations to work with and where you promote your service; some agencies have memberships that are more elderly.
- Use a range of people with disabilities in promotional material.
- Recruit a central list panel member from the disabled community.
- Don't underestimate the additional costs that may be incurred in assessment, such as a BSL interpreter or additional specialist reports such as occupational therapy.



## Summary

**W**e believe, despite a lower than expected response to the campaign in the number of people with disabilities coming forward to adopt, that AdoptAbility has raised the profile of the agency and that some of our most recent recruited families chose DFW Adoption because of the message that AdoptAbility gives; that we are an organisation which is open-minded in its consideration of those who might be suitable to adopt.

There have been a number of challenges for the agency in the period of this grant funding, not least of all, the drop in the number of children with a plan of adoption and an increase in the number of waiting prospective adopters.



Nevertheless, DFW Adoption is committed to AdoptAbility and will continue to encourage recruitment from the disabled community in an effort to ensure that there are sufficient families to meet the needs of every child who needs an adoptive family, including children with disabilities.