

Please accept my apology for this honesty in advance. In October 2021, I began to raise my voice about the issues surrounding the adoption crisis. Now, three years later, after countless conversations, meetings, events, and emails, not once has anyone disagreed with my perspective or the collective views of PATCH. No one has ever asked if I’ve considered an alternative viewpoint or a different lens. Aside from my local authority, which has shown an oppressive and biased disregard for the challenges faced by adopters, no one has attempted to challenge my views.

Why is that? Because the issues are visible, acknowledged, and sadly recognized. The government, the agencies that support it, local authorities, and regional adoption agencies are all aware of these problems. Change cannot occur until there is greater recognition, and until someone within these systems chooses to step up and take responsibility.

Today, I am angry. The aftermath of National Adoption Week has only fuelled my frustration. It is deeply wrong to promote something so fundamentally flawed. We have been failed and shamed, and it is scandalous to recruit new adopters when there are such failings. Of course I know that LA’s have little alternatives as there are so many children coming into care, but surely if adoption is an important part of your role, you must also care about the lives of adoptees and adopters, and actively work towards change.

Bringing prospective adopters into this complex landscape isn’t right. The potential eventuality of them being in crisis, and placed in front of social workers who inadequately judge their situations without truly understanding the challenges involved. I have endured eleven years of parenting challenges that go far beyond the typical experience. I have faced referral after referral, meeting after meeting, just to access the right support. I have been criticized for not being "good enough" and have dealt with blame and shame.

I refuse to accept the recruitment of individuals who are destined to fail. I will not stand by while the lived experiences of children facing adversity and trauma are ignored and minimized.

As an adoptee, an adopter, and a social worker, I know firsthand that this situation is profoundly wrong. Watching it continue while recruiting new adopters is absurd. If we could recruit while simultaneously building a framework for change, I would wholeheartedly support that. I believe in the power of adoption; I believe it is rooted in love. Despite my experiences and the challenges faced by my children, that love is real and central to my life.

Throughout the PATCH initiative, I've encountered a substantial number of families seeking recognition for the inadequate practices surrounding support during adoption crisis. Here are some key issues we raise concerns about:

1. Lack of Timely Interventions: The involvement of social workers often escalates crises. When we ask for support, we face condemnation instead, leading to a loss of focus on the child.

2. Inaccurate and Misleading Reporting: Reports frequently contain inaccuracies and misleading statements. Despite providing extensive evidence to correct these misstatements, our voices are ignored. Organizations like SWE and LGO dismiss our families' perspectives, reducing our experiences to mere opinions and revealing a systemic disregard for balanced reporting.

3. Misaligned Qualifications: Social work qualifications do not encompass psychology, neuroscience, or psychotherapy. By placing social workers in leading roles, the government effectively puts families at risk.

4. Disregard for Victim Status: Parents endure significant abuse from their children, yet their experiences and those of the children are often overlooked. Different lenses are applied to the situation, dismissing our realities.

5. Biased Assessments: Previous positive findings from assessments or from family members are often disregarded. Social workers focus disproportionately on negatives without proper evidence or context, raising concerns about bias and neglecting earlier insights.

6. Neglect of Family History: Authorities reportedly ignore crucial aspects of family backgrounds, including documented trauma affecting the children. This oversight leads to mischaracterizing normal childhood behaviors as parental deficiencies, overlooking well-documented trauma symptoms.

7. Overlooking Children’s Needs: Assessments often fail to prioritize the children's needs and perspectives, essential for safeguarding. The trauma experienced by the children is frequently overlooked.

8. Lack of Collaborative Working: Despite requests for collaborative, multi-agency assessments, authorities do not facilitate joint efforts, which are vital for thorough and unbiased evaluations. Meetings need to be held to consider the issues, which reflect provision of services.

9. Minimization of Family Wellbeing: Mental health challenges and children's trauma are often framed as deficiencies rather than areas for support, worsening the situation instead of providing relief.

I am striving to raise the profile of PATCH to ensure our voices are heard. We want and need:

* Fair thresholds for assessments to ensure equity.
* Social work statements and reports to be checked for accuracy and context, by someone independent.
* Consideration of adopters' views as integral to the process, rather than dismissing them.
* Trauma-trained professionals involved in care planning, focusing on the child and the family as a whole.
* Empathy and compassion to be afforded to us as adopters and to our children.

We aim to be part of the change that ensures better support for families in adoption crises. Failing these families costs the child—creating barriers where there should be support, hindering progress, and exacerbating trauma.

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