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## **The PINK guide to adoption For lesbians and gay men**

**Nicola Hill, 2009, BAAF; ISBN 9781905664689**

Recent changes in the law of England, Wales and Scotland have afforded legal rights to gay and lesbian couples and singles who wish to adopt either as couples or as single parents. It is also now illegal for adoption agencies to discriminate against potential adopters on the grounds of sexuality. There's been a subsequent and welcome rise in the number of applications from gays and lesbians (couples and singles).

Allowing gay and lesbian prospective parents a clearer access to the adoption process widens the pool of prospective adopters; this can only be in the interests of the children who wait for placement. 'The PINK guide to adoption' has been developed under the aegis of BAAF as compendium for gays and lesbians considering adoption. Nicola Hill's competent editing has produced a useful brief 'manual' of the adoption process in England with the twist that it's written to address questions from and materials particularly relevant for gay and lesbian adopters.

However, the book's relevance is wider than simply its obvious PINK target. It's a 'must read' for social workers, agency managers, Adoption Panel members and the judiciary. However much the law may have changed, prejudices run deep, and it's vital that those professionals looking at adoption applications from gays and lesbians should have open minds regarding these applications – and with regard to the children they may potentially be matched with. The PINK Guide does just this. It offers, without wallowing in sentiment, very frank and raw comments by gays and lesbians who have progressed through the adoption process. Hearing those voices speak, hearing how it feels to feel prejudiced against, how it feels to succeed in the process and how it feels to become a competent parent shows quite clearly the capacity of gays and lesbians to make the adoption journey toward a child that is necessary in ALL adopters.

The PINK Guide is a slim volume divided into two clear parts. The first part covers the 'adoption process', the second the experiences of gay and lesbian adopters. Included also are end materials which expand the scope of the guide – a useful section detailing references given in the guide, a list of useful organisations and websites and a sensitive section on 'further reading'.

In Part One the focus is on the adoption process and the gay or lesbian adopter. There's an introductory chapter which looks at the law concerning gays and lesbians and adoption. A further chapter is devoted to solid research which debunks the myths that surround gays and lesbians – for example that they won't make good parents or the children won't do well

at school. Subsequent chapters work through questions for the applicants on the journey to adoption. One chapter deals with the reality of adoption – looked after children, children who may be adopted and adopting from abroad. Another deals with readiness to adopt, and encompasses finding an agency, and self preparation before the assessment. Finally there are chapters which look at the stages of the application process from preparation and assessment, panel and the match to the second stages of introductions and moving in. All the chapters are written from the perspective of answering the questions of prospective gay and lesbian adopters, with useful links, references and ‘been there, done that’ quotes from adopters who have been through the process.

Part Two consists of a series of vignettes from gay and lesbian adopters, with their hopes, aspirations and stories of their journey to adoption, and the pitfalls they encountered. And the joy of parenthood, and joy in realising that they are indeed able to meet the needs of the children matched... These parents’ comments give the PINK Guide such strength and credence.

Included at the very end of the vignettes is a brief story by a young woman adopted by a lesbian mother, and her most positive view on how she was parented. Editor Nicola Hill concludes that the children of the adopters in the PINK GUIDE will most likely write their own book of their experienced in the future, adding to what’s known about the how gay and lesbian adoption ‘works’ for the children of these adopters.

Overall, the PINK Guide offers prospective gay and lesbian adopters concrete workable suggestions on how to adopt, and the feelings that are part of the process...agencies should know that gay and lesbian adopters are angry that they have to shop around to find an agency to work with them. It’s this dual offering to both adopters and to adoption professionals that make the PINK Guide invaluable. Agencies and professionals will ignore it at their peril. Prospective gay and lesbian adopters should add it to their bookshelves.

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