



## **Preparing for your adoption leave and beyond.** **By Becky Goddard-Hill**

Adopting a child is going to cost you extra money. Fact.

Children need things, they want things and you want them to have to have lots of opportunities, to swim, play, go on holidays, etc Some costs are occasional such as a bed and furniture for their room and some will be on going such as clothes, food and activities. You may want to reduce your hours at work or even stop work completely.

Whatever your situation or decisions about work children are expensive and it can be a shock! What is also clear is that you do not want or need concerns about money affecting your adoption leave or beyond. So you have to get money wise now! Here are my top tips!

### **Article I. Preparing the way**

As soon as you start thinking about adoption you need to start thinking about money and start making changes. This will be far easier to do now rather than when you suddenly have a new child in the family and life is busy enough.

#### ○ **Savvy Shopping**

In a lot of cases you won't know the age of the child you are adopting or what they will bring with them so pre-buying isn't probably an option HOWEVER be savvy about your shopping.

1. Now is a good time to get into the habit of doing an ONLINE shop. Shopping with a new child in tow can be tricky and shopping online can be a speedy, cost effective process where you won't be so tempted to stray from your shopping list
2. Food waste is a huge issue in the UK. It is estimated that UK families throw away £4-500 pounds worth of food each year! Be smart and plan your meals so this is avoided (it's also good GREEN role modelling which is important for children to see.
3. Losing the little luxuries that you have probably slipped undetected into your life can also free up substantial amounts of money. A magazine, a take out coffee each day, sandwiches from the deli each lunchtime can come to about £23 per week. Do you really want to spend an unbelievable £1200 a year on these things!!!! Drop them now and stash the cash for when your child comes. It will be so helpful. Packed lunch a flask and a browse online gossip sites will definitely fill the gaps

#### ○ **Credit cards**

Do try and pay off any **credit or stores cards** that you can rather than buying anything new. (You want to free up cash not be paying off interest. No child is going to care that you have the latest clothes, it's time with you they will want so if you can get these paid off now it will help tremendously later. I put my credit card in a cup of water in the freezer and have to wait for it to defrost before I consider a purchase!

#### ○ **Tackle your big bills**

Do tackle your big bills before the placement begins.

1. Cars – if your car is inappropriate for a family (e.g. 2 seater sports) get it sold and get something cost effective and sensible that you can more easily afford; you don't need anything huge. My 2 kids, me and hubby plus camping equip manage easily in my Punto)

2. Mortgage – perhaps you could consider taking a six-month payment break at the start of your leave. Call your provider and tell them your situation and ask their advice. Taking an interest only option for a year or so many also help with all those initial costs (and free up more time off work if that's what you want)
3. Utilities and insurance – it always makes sense to check you are getting the very best of deals. Do go online and do compare costs as you could save a fortune ([www.compare.com](http://www.compare.com) & [www.uswitch.com](http://www.uswitch.com) are just a couple of options.

○ **Benefits**

It is useful to sort out your benefits as soon as you can. Child benefit (£16.50 per week for oldest child, £11.05 per week for each other child) is not means tested. Other benefits you may be entitled too such as statutory adoption pay, child tax credit working tax credit nursery vouchers etc. all vary depending on your financial/ working circumstances. You are best to go [www.directgov.co.uk](http://www.directgov.co.uk) to find out all about what you are due. The phone lines are very helpful even if you are talking hypothetically and these can really help you plan and prepare. You may well be entitled to more than you think so do make those calls.

Check with your social worker when matched or linked with a child as extra allowances may be available for some children placed for adoption.

- **Change your entertaining habits.** There are loads of ways you can save money socialising which can save cash and help prepare the way for a new family addition
- Perhaps you want to get in the habit of having friends round for dinner rather than eating out? This will save you a fortune in baby-sitting costs and in food costs. It will be much easier too when you have a new child at home who you may not want to leave for a while
  - Consider renting a movie or checking out your I-player with a bag of hot chips, a big blanket and some cuddles will be just as lovely as a meal out and the cinema and much more appropriate when you have a new child in tow.
  - Rather than shopping at weekends it is good to get in the habit of long family walks or bike rides - excellent for your health, money saving and a lovely thing to introduce your child too when they arrive

**Beyond.....**

- Whether you adopt a baby or a teenager the principles are the same. See what your community offers rather than paying privately for family activities. Check out leisure centres, local walks, free activities at your local community centres, free concerts in your city, etc. Gym membership may well need to be a thing of the past but swimming as a family is much nicer than the treadmill!
- You would do well to become involved in parenting communities whether this is walking to school groups, Girl guides, parent and toddler groups, Sunday school, I etc. This way you will be able to share car rides, clothes, toys, childcare, advice etc. You need friends in the same boat. It can make a big difference financially and it can save your SANITY!
- It is really useful to remember your three R's. Reduce Reuse and recycle. Being green is important role modelling to your new child and will save the Earth as well as your pocket. Reduce your waste and your expenditure, reuse items wherever possible and recycle where you can. [www.Ebay.co.uk](http://www.Ebay.co.uk) can make you money as well as avoid landfill and you may snag many a bargain on [www.uk.freecycle.org](http://www.uk.freecycle.org) for absolutely nothing!

I wish all the very best with your adoption x

My book **How to Afford Time Off with your Baby** by Becky Goddard-Hill is packed with baby budgeting tips that cover pre-pregnancy to starting school (0-5's) and is available now from [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk). I also blog about baby budgeting at [www.babybudgeting.co.uk](http://www.babybudgeting.co.uk)