

Introduction

- **This wholly updated guide is for use by those in England, whose work with children and their families does or might involve adoption.**
- **It is intended to provide easy access to and reinforce understanding of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 as well as associated regulations, guidance and latest national minimum standards.**
- **Part I** of the book summarises the principles and concepts underpinning, as well as the main provisions of, the law.
- It is laid out in the following order that reflects the anticipated needs of practitioners, and includes where required, a brief reference to the relevant regulation:
 - principles & concepts
 - adoption service
 - placement framework
 - consequences of placement
 - adoption orders
 - disclosure of information
 - status of adopted children
 - the registers
 - adoptions with a foreign element
 - miscellaneous provisions
 - special guardianship
 - adverts and the Adoption and Children Act register

- **Part II** offers a comprehensive summary of relevant regulations and cross references to relevant aspects of statutory guidance.
- **Part III** provides a summary of the 2011 National Minimum Standards for adoption.
- A subject index enables rapid access to specific subjects.

This guide should be used only to supplement, not replace, reference to source material and competent legal advice.

Principles and concepts

- The ACA 2002 is founded upon the following overarching principles:
 - **Paramountcy of the child's welfare throughout his/ her life** – in all decisions by courts and adoption agencies, including whether to dispense with a parent's consent to adoption
 - **A 'welfare checklist'** comparable to its Children Act 1989 equivalent but reflecting adoption-related issues
 - **Avoidance of undue delay** in planning for permanence and adoption when children cannot be cared for by their birth family
 - **No order** – unless the court considers that making the order would be better for the child than not doing so
- The Act is also conceptually underpinned by its:
 - enhancement of permanence options through extension (when appropriate) of residence orders to 18 years and by introducing 'special guardianship';
 - introduction of the possibility of unmarried couples adopting jointly;
 - encouragement of people to adopt by obliging local authorities to ensure