

Summary Eenvoudige adoptie: de behoeften van pleegkinderen en oorspronkelijke ouders

There is a lot going on in the youth protection field in The Netherlands at the moment. There is national and international discussion about the need for out-of-home placement of children and the period within which children (should) be able to return to their original parents. This of course has repercussions on the discussion about adoption in the context of foster care as the most far-reaching child protection measure. Through adoption the child is legally completely removed from its original family context. This increasingly seems to run counter to ideas about the role of original parents and preserving a bond between child and original parents. Simple adoption, a form of adoption in which the legal parenthood of the original parents is maintained, while at the same time legal parenthood for the adoptive parents is established, could be a solution.

In 2019 a study was conducted at the instigation of the Research and Documentation Centre of the Dutch ministry of justice (WODC) into the advantages and disadvantages of simple adoption were examined. In this study professionals, foster children and foster parents were asked what they thought of simple adoption as an option for long term foster children and a comparative legal study was conducted. It follows from this research that the introduction of (a form of) simple adoption is worth considering, because it meets some of the needs and wishes of some of the foster parents and foster children. However, the needs and interests of (current, former and adopted) foster children and original parents have not yet been mapped out. This is the reason the current research was conducted.

In this study, the current (legal) position of foster children and original parents has been outlined by means of a literature review. In addition, advantages and disadvantages of simple adoption for foster children and original parents that emerge from the previous WODC research are described. Empirical research based on questionnaires and interviews was then used to determine what current foster children, former foster children, adopted foster children and original parents think of simple adoption.

The results of this study indicate a variety of opinions about simple adoption and show that a 'one size fits all' approach is not a possibility. While some consider simple adoption as a possible solution, others see it as a very bad idea. Where some foster children feel at home in their foster family and therefore do not need to be adopted, others want to be adopted because it would give them a sense of belonging. This means, that no clear patterns were found in favor of or against simple adoption. This lack of pattern can be associated with the small sample size. A trend was visible in which participants indicated that they themselves did not necessarily want it, but that others should be free to choose it.

Although the small sample size of this study should be taken into account, we can conclude from this study that not everyone thinks the same about simple adoption and that not everyone has the same needs in this context. Future research, possibly participatory research, is needed to find out the perspective of foster children and especially original parents, and to evaluate if a tailored made option of simple adoption will be a good solution for the people involved.