



One
Adoption
Agency
WEST YORKSHIRE

A guide to adopting with

One Adoption West Yorkshire



Welcome to One Adoption West Yorkshire

Thank you for choosing to find out about adopting with One Adoption West Yorkshire.

We want every child to have a family to grow up in and we need more adoptive parents to play a vital role in fulfilling this vision.

Adoption is an exciting and challenging experience for everyone involved. No matter what your reasons are for thinking about adopting a child, we are with you every step of the way and are here to help you. One Adoption West Yorkshire is a regional adoption agency made up of the five local authorities in West Yorkshire: Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield. It is the largest adoption agency in the north and our vision is to be an outstanding adoption service, listening to the views of adoptive families, being responsive to the needs of children within a culture of continuous improvement combined with strong leadership.

We aim to achieve positive outcomes for children without delay, recruit adopters for children and provide excellent adoption support service for all those affected by adoption.

We are seeking adoptive parents from all walks of life to reflect the range of children from different family backgrounds. Regardless of where they come from all children have one thing in common- they are all looking for a secure home with patience, understanding and loving kindness from someone they can trust.

We need ordinary people who can do something remarkable for a child.

Michelle Rawlings,
Head of One Adoption West Yorkshire



Contents

Welcome

Contents

What is adoption?

Why adopt with One Adoption West Yorkshire

Who can adopt?

The process – an overview

The process – a step by step guide

About the children

The process for the child

Things to think about

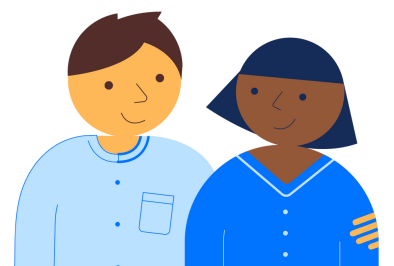
What support will I get?

What our adopters think

Glossary

Contact us

Words in *italics* are explained in the Glossary



What is adoption?

Adoption is the legal process that finds a family for children who are unable to be looked after by their birth family.

Once you have completed the adoption process, you would then take full legal responsibility for the wellbeing and development of the child. The child would become part of your family, taking your name and living their lives with you as if they were born to you.

Why adopt with One Adoption West Yorkshire?

We are one of the largest adoption agencies in the country which means that we have a large staff team who are highly skilled, experienced, and professional, who draw on the latest research and best practice theory.

We have highly experienced teams, who have developed the service with help from our network of adoptive parents. We run training sessions for prospective adoptive parents and have a comprehensive programme of help and support after adoption – from stay-and-play sessions to more in-depth workshops and help from other professionals and organisations across the region.

Our adoption support service receives excellent feedback from a variety of organisations both national and local, but most importantly our children and families including birth families tell us that our services and support make a positive difference in their lives.



Who can adopt?

All sorts of people can adopt.

We welcome applications from people of all religions, races, genders and sexuality.

You may be single, in a relationship, married, divorced, employed or unemployed.

We assess every application on an individual basis. There are, however, a few criteria that need to apply to you.

21

You need to be at least 21 years old, but there is no upper age limit.



You need to be a UK resident or have your permanent home in the British Isles.



You need to have space in your home.



You need to live in the West Yorkshire area or within a reasonable travelling distance.

You can adopt if...

You are LGBTQ+

You already have a child

You are unemployed

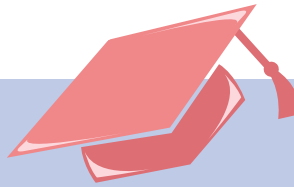
You are single

You rent your home

Don't rule yourself out!

Do I need any special qualifications to adopt?

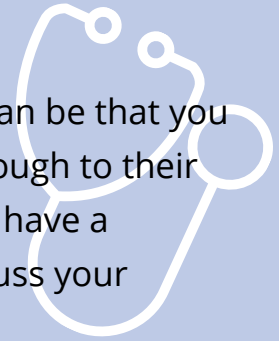
No. You should enjoy being with children, and have a stable lifestyle but you don't need any special qualifications. You will need the same skills you would to parent a *birth child*, as well as some extra skills to help you meet the additional needs of your adopted child. We offer you advice, training and continued support to help you build up the knowledge and skills you need.



Will I have to have a medical examination?

We need to be as sure as we can be that you are able to care for a child through to their adulthood, so we ask that you have a medical examination and discuss your health and wellbeing with us.

This does not mean that you can't adopt if you have health issues, it just means we will need to assess your long-term wellbeing.



How much does it cost to adopt?

There is no fee to adopt a child in the UK.

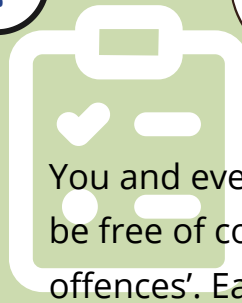
There may be some fees payable to your GP associated with obtaining your medical report, and a one-off fee to the courts, although this is usually covered by us.



Can I adopt if I have a criminal record?

You and everyone in your household must be free of convictions for 'specified offences'. Each case is looked at individually so in this short introduction we can't list what these offences are. If you have convictions or cautions for any offences please tell us and we will advise you as to whether they will prevent your application going ahead.

Background checks will make us aware of any convictions that you may have, so it is best to tell us straight away.



The adoption process

- an overview

1



Initial idea and contact - first thoughts and conversations, research.

2



The information event - to learn more and ask questions of the experienced adoption staff and current adoptive parents

3



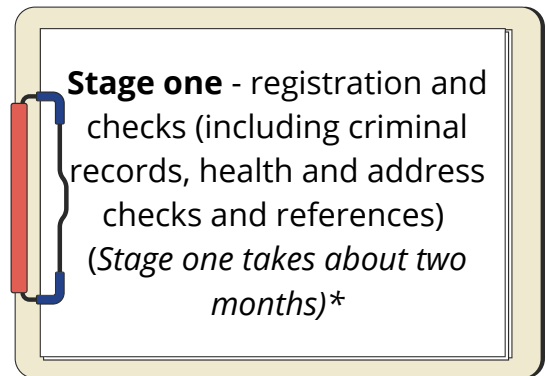
First home visit
with adoption social workers to find out more if it's feasible for you at this time

4



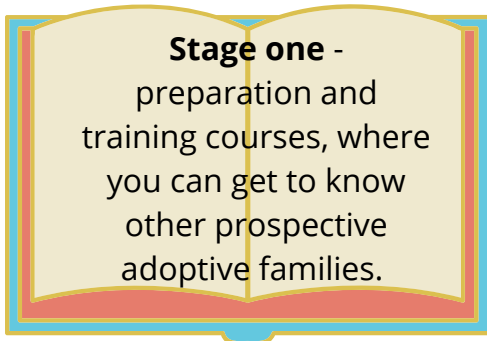
Let's go for it!
Deciding to apply

5



Stage one - registration and checks (including criminal records, health and address checks and references)
(*Stage one takes about two months*)*

6



Stage one - preparation and training courses, where you can get to know other prospective adoptive families.

7

Stage two - the *full assessment* which is in great detail, completed with the help of your social worker. (*Stage two takes about four months*)*

8

Stage two - the *prospective adopter report (PAR)* is written by your social worker, based on your full assessment. This is what the adoption panel will use to assess you.

9

Stage two - The *adoption panel* and approval to adopt. You will be invited to come to the panel, to answer questions, with the help of your social worker. The *agency decision maker (ADM)* has the ultimate authority and responsibility to approve you, normally in line with the panel's recommendation



10

Stage three - matching you with the child or children that are right for you, according to what you've decided along with your social worker.



**The exact time the assessment process takes varies depending on individual circumstances.*

The adoption process – each step of the way



Your initial interest in adoption might be very definite, or you might just be curious at this stage. This can be quite an emotional time for some people. It is a good idea to do lots of research. There are lots of books and websites which can help you understand more about the process and parenting an adopted child. Reading blogs by experienced adopters and others involved in adoption can also be a great source of information.

The information session

Our adoption information sessions are held regularly and offer the opportunity to hear from adoption team managers, adoption social workers and experienced adoptive parents who will provide you with lots of information and talk through the process. We also show a film of people connected to adoption talking about their experiences.

These sessions give you an opportunity to start considering the rewards and challenges of adoption and ask questions or raise any concerns about your situation. After the information event, you will be given instructions about how to request an initial home visit.



First home visit

At this first home visit, you will be given more information about adoption, your specific circumstances will be discussed in more detail, and a decision will be made with you about whether it is

right to proceed. This is a really good opportunity for you to ask questions and consider the potential impact of adoption on you, your family and any children you might adopt, both now and in the future.

Let's go for it!

If both you and the adoption social workers are happy to proceed you can then submit a Registration of Interest (ROI) form. You will be given instructions on how to do this following the first home visit. Providing your circumstances remain unchanged, you can submit the ROI form up to twelve months after your information meeting. The important thing is to do so when the timing is right for you.



However, if your circumstances do change before submitting the ROI form, please get back in touch with us so that we can discuss the changes with you and arrange a further visit if needed. If the decision from either side is not to proceed, you will be sent a letter confirming this, explaining why, and outlining other options available to you.

Stage one

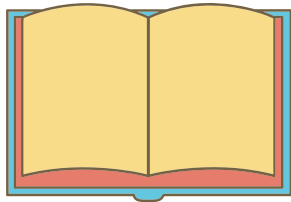
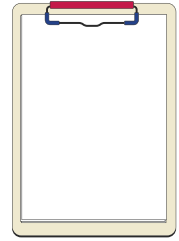
Registration and checks

Stage one of the process begins when we have received your Registration of Interest (ROI) form.

By completing and signing the ROI form you are consenting for us to contact references and undertake statutory checks.

These checks will include a Disclosure and Barring Service check (checking for criminal records and convictions), health and address checks. You will be expected to continue with your learning and access further information and training.

We aim to complete stage one within a couple of months.



Preparation and training

Once we start on the statutory checks, you can start your preparation training.

Most of the training takes place face-to-face in groups*. At

One Adoption we organise specially designed preparation training programmes regularly, and you will be required to attend one of these during the process, usually in stage one. The preparation training groups take place over three days and it is essential that you attend the full programme, and if you apply in a partnership, you will both need to attend the full course together.

We will let you know at the end of stage one if you may be suitable to adopt and whether you can proceed to a full assessment in stage two. You will need to let us know whether you wish to proceed to stage two within six months of this decision. You can take a break of up to six months between stage one and two if you so wish.

**where restrictions allow. Otherwise training will be held online.*

Stage Two

Full assessment

During the second stage of the assessment process, you will work in partnership with your social worker. They will share more information, knowledge, and experience with you, and discuss adoption and its life-long impact on everyone involved in more detail. You will also be given more information about the children who need to be adopted.

The assessment time helps you to consider carefully and honestly what you want from adoption and what you can offer a child. Many of our children have had difficult life experiences and come from complex backgrounds. You will have time to think carefully about their needs and how you can meet them.

While helping you to learn about adoption, we will begin to assess your suitability and prepare a profile of you. We will ask you lots of detailed questions about your family background, your childhood and adult experiences, relationships, and your present circumstances. If you are part of a couple, your social worker will want to see you both together and individually.

The assessment process is demanding, it can feel intrusive and will take around four months to complete. There are very good reasons why everything is explored in depth with you in this way. Adoption is for life, and we must be sure you are right for it. Just as importantly, you must be as certain as you can be that adoption is right for you and that you can make the lifetime commitment required.

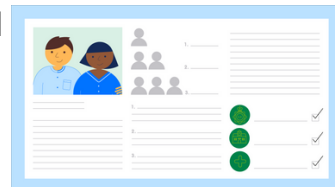
The Prospective Adopters Report (PAR)

As the assessment reaches its final stages your adoption social worker will start to put together a report about you called a *prospective adopters report (PAR)*.

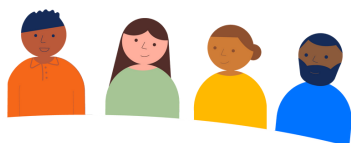
This report details your potential as an adoptive parent along with the results of your medical, police and authority checks and personal references. This will be shared with the *adoption panel*.

It is important that your report clearly describes the sort of children you feel you could adopt.

We will ask you to check your report and you will have the opportunity to make written comments on it. These comments form part of the completed document.



The adoption panel and approval to adopt



The adoption panel is made up of an independent chair, social workers, other professionals and independent people, including an adoptive parent and sometimes someone who has been adopted.

A minimum of six members are required to be present for the panel to be large enough to make a decision. Panel members read your prospective adopters report and consider if you should be approved to adopt. You will be invited to come to the panel meeting, and they will make their recommendation on your suitability to adopt.

The full minutes from the adoption panel meeting, your prospective adopters report and any associated paperwork will then be sent to the *agency decision maker (ADM)* for One Adoption, a senior manager, and they will formally decide whether to approve you to adopt, based on the above paperwork and the recommendation from the adoption panel.

Stage three

Matching you with a child/ children

Once you have received confirmation from the ADM that you have been approved to adopt, now is the time your adoption social worker will visit you to draw up a post-approval plan. This will outline how we will go about finding the child or children who are a good match for you and your family and whose needs you can meet.



As a first step we will look at whether there are children waiting for adoption locally who you might be the right family for.

If no local children are identified as potential matches, we will look with you at children across a wider area via Linkmaker. You may also be invited to attend activity days where you could meet with some children who are waiting for adoption, or profiling events, where you will be able to find out from family finding social workers about the children they are searching for families for.

When a possible match is identified the social worker will share a detailed report about this child or children with you. If, after reading this report and thinking about it carefully, you feel you could meet the child or children's needs and wish to proceed, you will be introduced to the child's social workers, foster carers, nursery or school staff, and health professional who will all share with you more detailed information about the child or children. If you see a profile on Linkmaker or at an event of a child you feel you could care for, you may also ask if you could be considered for that child.

The adoption matching panel

If you and the social workers decide it is a good match and agree to go ahead, a report will be written and the match will be presented to the adoption matching panel. The panel will make a recommendation and then the agency decision maker (ADM) will formally decide whether the match can go ahead.

Introductions and placement

Once the match has been approved, you, your social worker, the child's social worker, your child's foster carers and their social worker will all meet to plan how the child will be introduced to you and eventually move into your home. At this meeting a very detailed introduction plan will be agreed to set out how best to introduce the child to you and vice versa. Introductions last anything from two to four weeks depending on the age and needs of the children.



To begin with, these introductions will usually take place in the child's current foster home or maybe outside during an informal 'bump into meeting'. Then the introduction meetings will gradually move to your home, and finally moving in day arrives! Your new child or children will move in to live with you as full and equal members of your family.

Post-placement support

This is the start of your life together - but definitely isn't the end of our involvement. The early days and weeks of placement are life-changing and can be very exciting. However, they can also be exhausting and anxiety-provoking.



We are very committed to providing adoptive parents with high-quality support. You and your child or children will receive regular visits from us to talk through how everything is going and make sure that you are receiving good support, and you can always call us for help and advice.

We have specialist adoption support social workers. They run activities such as soft play and support groups and, if necessary, can provide additional one-to-one support. The team also works with other professionals and organisations in One Adoption to get you whatever help you need.

Our offer of support is ongoing, and you can come back to us at any point in the future if you require assistance.

Making it permanent

Following a period of post-placement support and when everyone is satisfied that your child or children have settled successfully into your family, a discussion will be had at a childcare review meeting about when to apply for an adoption order.

With the assistance of your adoption social worker, you will then need to complete an adoption application form and submit it to the court, who will then request an adoption report from the agency. A hearing date will be set and once the adoption order is granted, all rights and responsibilities originally held by the child's birth parents will transfer to you and you will legally become the child or children's legal parents. Your child can now take your surname.



Two thirds of children are aged two or older, some babies do need adopting but adopting a newborn is rare.

There are slightly more boys than girls in need of adoption. Boys often wait longer too.



50%

Around half of children will be placed with a family on their own, and half are sibling groups of two, three or four children or more.

Adopting siblings has lots of benefits for both yourselves and the children.

The number of children we are looking for families for varies but is usually between **90** and **120**

About the children



It is not unusual for the children who we plan to place on their own to have older brothers or sisters who are already adopted or fostered or who we're looking to place separately. We will need to discuss contact arrangements in these situations, so that, where possible, siblings can keep in touch with each other.

The majority of children are white British (80%), but we are also looking for families for children from black African, black Caribbean, Asian and mixed ethnicity backgrounds. We need adoptive parents who can help the children identify with their cultural background. However, this does not mean adoptive parents should necessarily be of the same ethnic background.

Why do children need adopting?

Children with a *plan for adoption* will have been separated from their birth parents when they were born or during their early childhood. Most of them will have experienced significant harm as a result of neglect, parental drug and alcohol abuse or domestic violence. As a result, they will have a range of needs, personalities, abilities and vulnerabilities, and some of these will be significant.

When we place children for adoption we tell the prospective adoptive parents everything we know about the children at the time, including their experiences and family histories. However, there is a lot of information that we won't know, and for many of our children we are uncertain about their expected development.

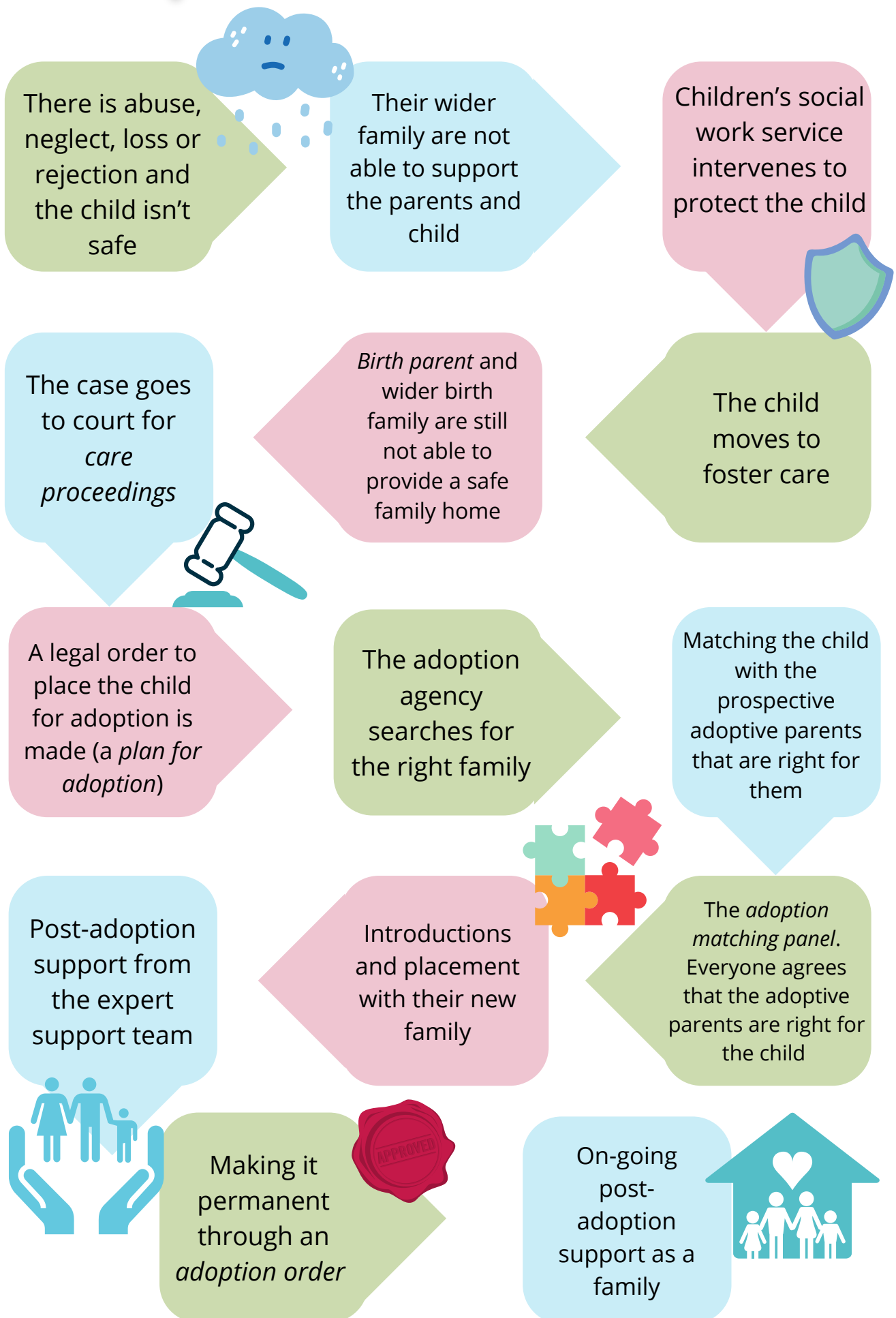
Most children will live with foster carers while social workers and the courts make plans for their future.

What are Early Permanence Placements?

Where we know a child is likely to have a plan for adoption, we might consider an Early Permanence Placement (EPP) for them. This is a route to adoption which involves fostering a baby or child prior to legally adopting them.

Early Permanence Placements (EPP) allow children to be placed with carers who are approved as both foster carers (for that child) and adopters, while the court considers plans for the child. It helps to prevent changes in placements for children at a sensitive time in their development and growth. These types of placements are particularly suitable for newborn or very young babies but can be considered for older children too. The prospective adopter provides the short-term fostering placement and will then go on to adopt the child if the court agrees the plan for the child to be adopted. However, there is uncertainty associated with EPP and the carers must be prepared to return the child to their birth family if the court decides that is the best plan for the child's future.

The process for the children



What makes a good adoptive parent?

We're not looking for perfect parents. We're looking for parents who can...

Talk comfortably with the child about adoption when they are little and continue to share information with them throughout their childhood in an open and honest way.

Commit to providing a child with a safe, stable, secure and loving permanent family into adulthood.

Be responsible and advocate for the child but also know when to ask for support if needed.

Accept and respect a child's history and be willing to share their story with them throughout their life.

Be able to be flexible and understand that parenting an adopted child may be different from parenting a birth child.

Have a good support network who you can talk to openly and who can give practical day-to-day support when times get tough.

Be sensitive to the child's identity needs and encourage them to actively explore specific needs about culture, religion and ethnicity.

Understand how it feels for a child to grow up in an adoptive family and how this may affect their behaviour.

Maintain a sense of humour.



Becoming an adoptive parent is exciting, fulfilling and extremely rewarding. However, it's a big step and you should be sure that adoption is right for you and your partner (if you are adopting as a couple).

Positive qualities

Patience, tolerance and an open attitude are essential qualities for adoptive parents. You should be prepared to change and adapt your expectations, hopes and aspirations when needed.

Meeting an adopted child's needs

We want adoptive parents who can meet the needs of children whose needs have not been met during their early lives. Your adopted child will need your help to make sense of their difficult past and to help them manage their feelings and behaviour as a result of this. You will need to be committed to explaining adoption to your child and may need to help them keep in touch with significant people from their past, either by letter or in person.

Your own life experiences

As a prospective adopter it's important that you can understand and manage your own emotional needs so that you can help your child do the same. It will be helpful for you to think about your own life experiences, recognise how they influence you and how they might influence your parenting.

Your lifestyle

It's essential that you're settled in a stable home and are either in a secure relationship, or are secure in your single status, so you can offer the calm and safe environment your child will need.

Becoming an adoptive parent will mean that your lifestyle will change significantly. It's important to have some experience of working with or caring for children – this could be your own *birth children*, children in your extended family, friends' or partner's children or from working with children, in a paid or voluntary capacity. You also need to consider the impact that caring for a child will have on you and your wider family.

If you already have children, make sure that you talk together as a family about what adoption might mean, at all stages of the process, including any fears or worries you or they might have.



Things to think about

Your outlook

You should be clear in your own mind that adoption is now your first-choice route to become a parent. If you have undergone fertility treatment, it is important that you have definitely finished your treatment and have given yourself time to reflect and now feel ready to start the adoption process.

What age child should I adopt?

There are many factors to consider in answering this question, and you may not be able to answer it right now. You will talk in detail with your social worker about what age is best for you. We would expect the adopted child to be the youngest in a family with a minimum of two years age gap between them and other children.

Preparation

Do lots of research! There are lots of resources out there – books, blogs, websites, podcasts – from people with lots of experience of adoption from all viewpoints (adopter, adoptee, birth family, professional). Immerse yourself in as much information as you can about adoption, this will really help with your learning as you go through the assessment process and help you be as ready as possible.

You might like to think about writing your own thoughts, feelings and questions down in a journal – that way you won't forget to ask when you see your social worker.

Lifelong support

Whatever your level of parenting experience, we can help you use your life experiences and build the skills to provide a safe, loving home for a child whatever challenges are thrown at you. Our adoption support offer starts at the very beginning of the adoption process and continues throughout childhood from early years to teenage and beyond.

Local support groups

The support groups will enable you to meet up with other adoptive families in your local area.

Membership to support networks

As a One Adoption adopter you would be entitled to a year's free membership to Adoption UK. If you identify as being a member of the LGBTQ+ community you would also be able to benefit from the leading LGBTQ+ adoption support network with free membership to New Family Social.

Adopter's area on website

Once you are approved as an adopter you will be given access to a member's only area of this website which provides a host of useful information on all the support available to adopters in the West Yorkshire area.

Peer Mentoring

One Adoption works with Adoption UK to provide a Peer Mentoring scheme - which means experienced adopters are on hand to help other adoptive parents with a variety of issues. They can help if you are going through the assessment process as well as post-adoption, if you need help with a particular parenting issue

What support will I get?

Therapeutic support

Due to the impact of early trauma and separation, adopted children often need additional support at different times throughout their childhood. Following an assessment this support could be provided through the Adoption Support Fund.

Education support

Education is often a major issue for adopted children and young people. There are various forms of educational support, from priority access to schools to Pupil Premium funding to help schools give extra support to adopted children. West Yorkshire adopters can also access a free education helpline.

Multidisciplinary Team

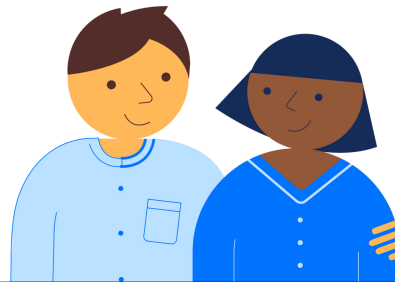
At One Adoption West Yorkshire the adoption support team is further strengthened by a team of specialists in a variety of disciplines including Education, Child Psychology, Play Therapy and Health who are able to provide specialist consultations and support as needed.

"We have had a very positive experience of adopting siblings and we always knew we wanted more than one child.

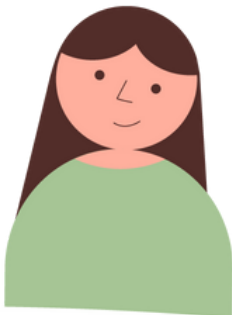
"We feel it will be so much easier for our children as they get older that they all have the same history binding them together. In years to come, having a very similar life story will hopefully make it easier for them to share their feelings.

"We feel very lucky to have adopted three children who we can help to flourish and fulfil their natural potential. If you have the capacity, then why not think about adopting siblings, it is truly fantastic!"

Stephen and Sarah, adopted siblings



"I didn't really know what to expect when I started the adoption process. It's been hard work, exhausting both mentally and physically, and I now have more grey hair – but I love being a mummy! I am now a world expert on Thomas the Tank Engine and have never spent so much time looking at buses and wheelie bins – but I wouldn't have it any other way. It's been so worthwhile, worth the wait, and I would definitely do it all again."



Jenny, single adopter

Glossary

Adoption matching panel – the group of people who recommend whether you and a particular child/ children are a good match.

Adoption order – the legal process in court that means that your adopted child/children are completely and legally yours.

Adoption panel – the group of people who recommend whether you are suitable to adopt a child/children.

Adoption social worker – a social worker who works for One Adoption West Yorkshire who specialises in adoption. You will have one allocated to you, to guide you through the process.

Agency Decision Maker (ADM) – The local authority senior manager who has the responsibility to decide and sign off approvals to adopt and matches between approved adopters and children.

Birth child/children – a child (or children) who has been born into your family, by yourself or your partner.

Birth parents – the parent(s) that a child is born to.

Care proceedings – normally results in a care order being granted which means that the child is put under the care of a local authority.

Early Permanence Placement (EPP) – also known as **Foster to Adopt** or **Concurrent Planning**. A route to adoption where a child is placed with carers who are approved as both foster carers (for that child) and adopters, while the court considers plans for the child.

Full assessment – a series of visits and discussions during stage two of the process, once your statutory checks are complete.

Plan for adoption – a child who is known to a One Adoption West Yorkshire decision maker, and for whom the decision is that they should be adopted. This is also known as a **Placement Order**.

Prospective adopters report (PAR) – the report that is written from all the detailed information from the full assessment. This is the report that will go to the adoption panel.

Thank you for thinking about adoption – it's a life changing and amazing thing to do for a child who is looking for a permanent, stable home.

**If you want to continue, please visit
www.oneadoption.co.uk/events to book a place on an
information event.**

Call us: 0113 378 3535

Email us: oneadoptionwy@leeds.gov.uk

Follow us:  @OneAdoption_WY

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