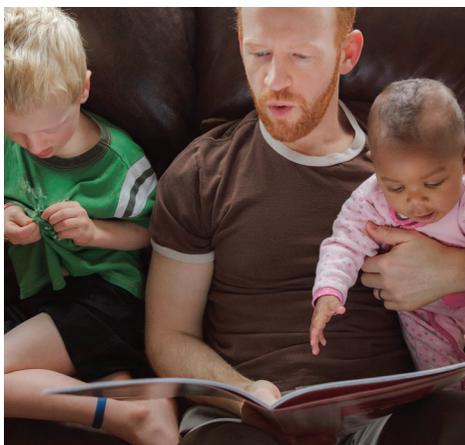




One
Adoption

ADOPTING WITH ONE ADOPTION

FOR YOUR ADOPTION JOURNEY



Introduction and welcome

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 5 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.

Sarah Johal
Head of One Adoption West Yorkshire



Contents

- Welcome 2
- What is adoption? 4
- Why adopt with One Adoption West Yorkshire? 4
- A single adopter's story – I would definitely do it all again! 4
- About the children 5
- Who can adopt 6
- Skills we look for in prospective adopters 7
- The process – an overview 8
- Things to think about 10
- Stephen and Sarah's story: Adopting siblings – it is truly fantastic! 11
- Glossary 11
- Start my adoption journey! – contact details 12

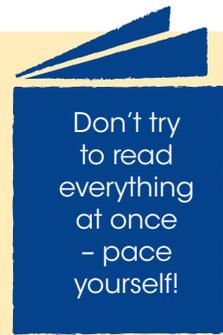
Words in italics are explained in the glossary on page 11



What is Adoption?

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

Once you have completed the adoption process, you would then take full legal responsibility for the well-being 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.



One
Adoption
Agency
WEST YORKSHIRE

Why adopt with One Adoption West Yorkshire?

We are the largest adoption agency in the north, 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.

OUTSTANDING

A single adopter

I would definitely do it all again!

"It was a massive decision to adopt. You need to have a good, reliable support network around you. I've had amazing support from my family and friends - and people who I barely knew before still constantly surprise me with their help and generosity. My social worker has been brilliant. She has expertly guided me through the entire process.

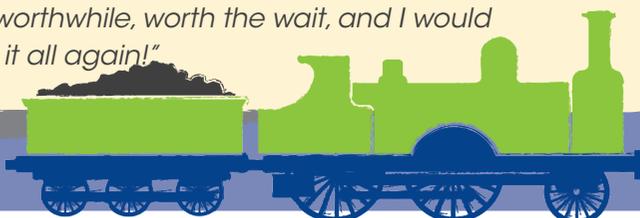
It can seem a little daunting going on the preparation courses on your own. Having said that, I met some lovely people, and one couple have become really good friends.

It's great to be able to talk through any worries or problems with them as they know and appreciate exactly what I'm going through.

The post-adoption support network is also good, as you have the opportunity to chat to other adoptive parents, and the social workers are there to offer advice and support should you need it.

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!"





A low income isn't a barrier to adoption



Disabled people can adopt



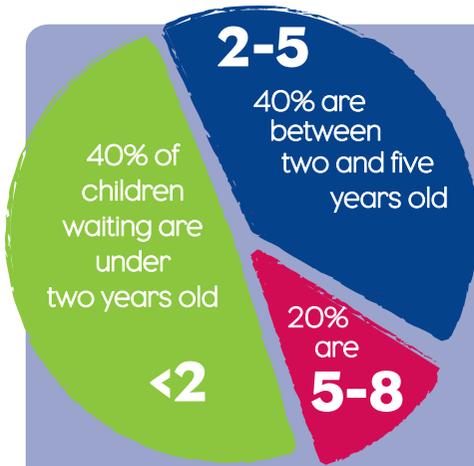
There is no upper age limit to adopt



Unemployed people can adopt



Military personnel can adopt



There are slightly more boys than girls in need of adoption.



115

In One Adoption West Yorkshire we have around **115** children with a *plan for adoption* under our care at any one time.

About the children

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

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 have a range of needs, personalities, abilities and vulnerabilities, and some have significant disabilities.

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

Most of the children will be placed with a family on their own, but we also have a number of sibling groups of two, three or four 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 were 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. Sometimes, there may be the future potential to adopt a younger sibling of your adopted child.

We are especially looking for families who are able to help keep brothers and sisters together as sibling groups often wait longer to find their adoptive family.

The majority of our children are white British, however we are especially keen to find families for children from black, mixed heritage or Eastern European backgrounds as they tend to wait longer.

We need adoptive parents who can help children identify with their cultural background. However, this does not mean adoptive parents should necessarily be of the same ethnic background as the child they adopt.



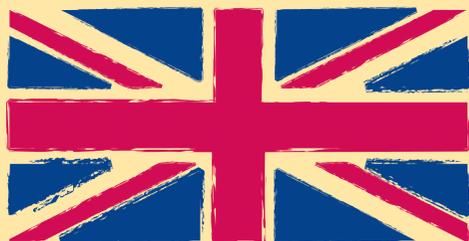


Who can adopt?

All sorts of people can adopt. We welcome applications from people of all religions, ethnicities, cultures, 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:



You need to be at least 21 years old.



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



You need to have room for an adopted child to grow. You can live in rented or council accommodation.



If you've had fertility or IVF treatments we will ask you to wait a period of time after it finishes before you start the adoption process.



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



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 early 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.

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.

For further information visit:
www.youcanadopt.co.uk

Skills we look for in prospective adopters

We are not looking for perfect parents who have not experienced any difficulties in life. In fact, we realise that people who have faced problems and worked through them are often stronger.

Accept and respect a child's history.

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

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.

Take overall responsibility for the child but also ask for support if needed.

Maintain a sense of humour

We need adopters who can...

Deal with change and think in a flexible way.

Manage and resolve conflict.

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

Have a network of friends and or family who you can confide in and who can give practical day to day support when times get tough.

Have managed to resolve and learn to live with your own issues and difficulties from your early life.

Be sensitive to the child's identity needs and any specific needs about culture, religion and ethnicity.



The process

START

The process for adoptive parents:

For a detailed description of what each step involves for adoptive parents, see the 'step by step' download on our website.

Initial idea and contact

- first thoughts, excitement and doubts

The information event

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

Stage one

- registration and checks (including criminal records, health and address checks and references)

Let's go for it!

- deciding to apply

First home visit

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

Stage one

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

Stage two

- the **full assessment** which is in great detail, completed with the help of your social worker

Stage three

- the **adoption matching panel** where everyone agrees you are the right people for the child (including the child's social work team)

The process can seem very long and slow - so don't put your life on hold whilst waiting.

PAR

Stage two

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

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

94%

of people who go to the adoption panel are approved to adopt

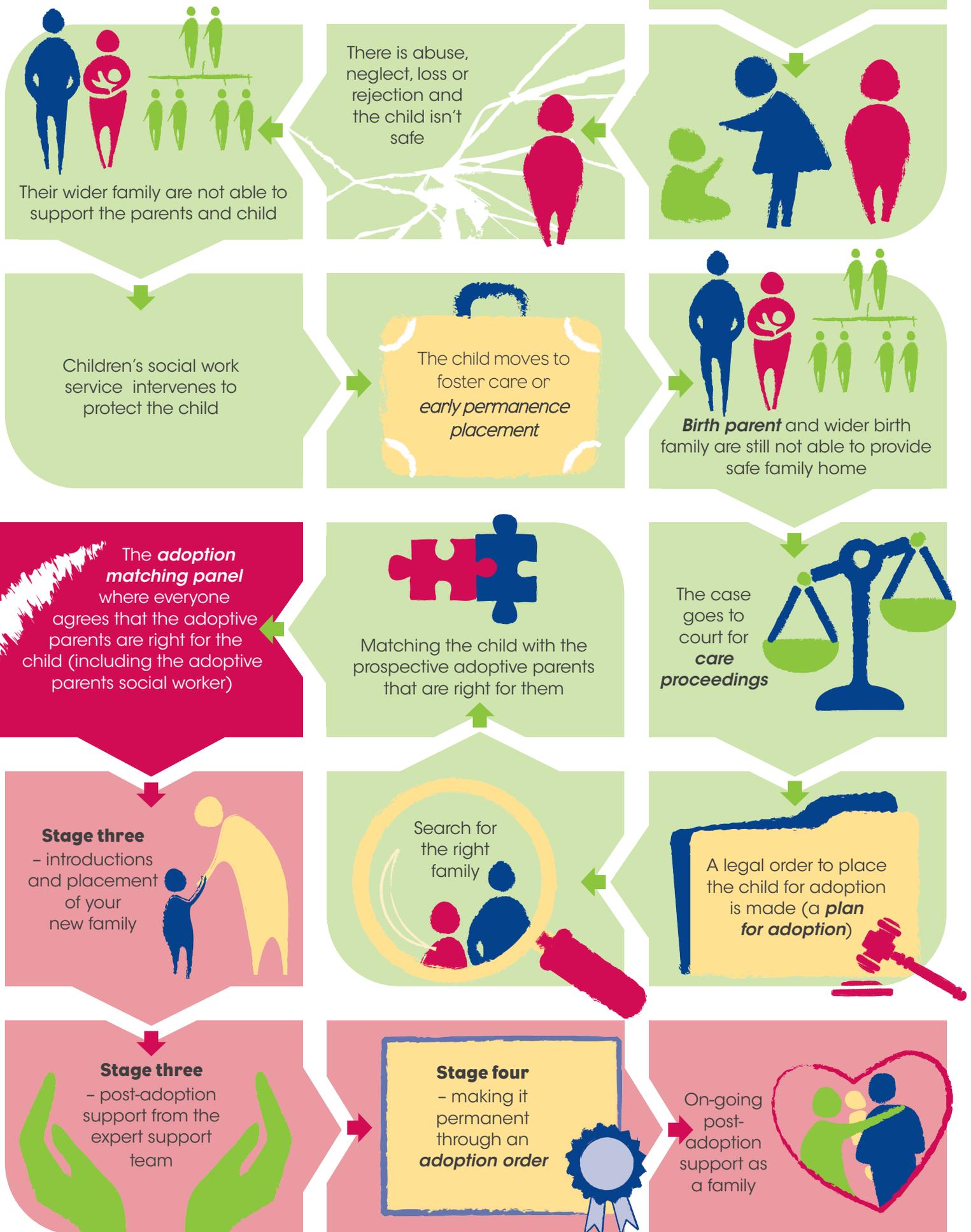
Stage two

- 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** has the ultimate authority and responsibility to approve you, normally in line with the panel's recommendation

- an overview

START

The process for the children:



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.

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.

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.

Your outlook

You should be clear in your own mind that adoption is now your first choice method of becoming a parent.

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.

Things to think about

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 history and to help them manage their feelings and behaviour as a result of this.

What age of children 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 of children 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.

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.

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.

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.



Adopting siblings



It is truly fantastic!

"Adopting a child is such an exciting and nerve racking experience in equal measure, but adopting siblings is a really rewarding thing to do because the children have such a special connection - they are forever linked by their shared life story.

We have 3 fantastic, amazing adopted children - siblings, aged 7, 6 and 4. All of them are completely individual. Our eldest son is sensitive, caring, and by nature a shy child - apart from when he's playing sport! Our middle child, our daughter, is very loving. She looks up to her big brother and looks after her little brother. Our youngest son is brim-full of character and life, always with a grin on his face. He's going to break hearts when he's older!

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 3 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

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 – the local authority senior manager who has the legal responsibility to decide and sign off matches.

Birth child/children – a child or children that have been born into your family, by yourself or your partner.

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

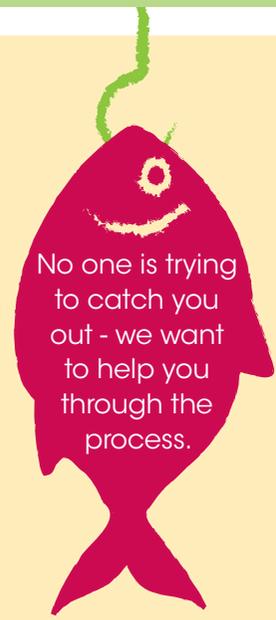
Care proceedings – normally results in a care order being granted which means that the child is put under the care of a local authority.

Early permanence placement (EPP) – a route to adoption which involves fostering a child prior to legally adopting them.

Full assessment – a series of visits and discussions during stage 2 of the process, once your statutory checks are complete.

Plan for adoption – a child who is known to 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.



No one is trying to catch you out - we want to help you through the process.



Most people have the qualities needed to be a great parent so don't rule yourself out! Everyone is considered on their own merits.

Thank you for thinking about adopting a child – 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, fill in the form for a home visit.

Call us: **0113 378 3535**

Email us: **adoptiondutydesk@oneadoptionwy.leeds.gov.uk**

www.oneadoption.co.uk



One
Adoption

One Adoption West Yorkshire
Kernel House Killingbeck Drive, Leeds
LS14 6UF