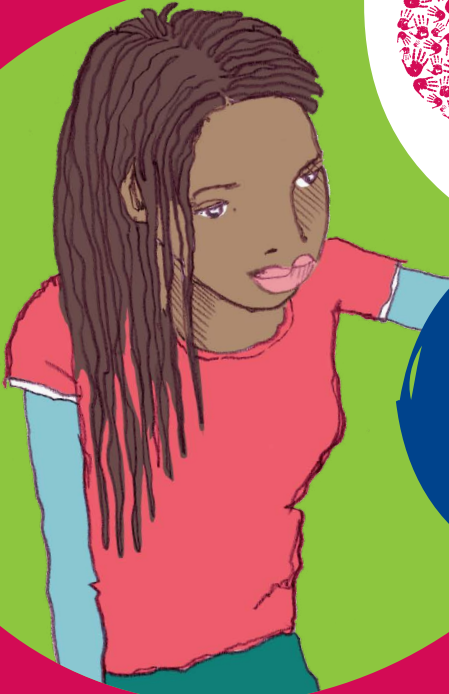




One
Adoption
Agency
WEST YORKSHIRE



A GUIDE TO ADOPTION SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN WEST YORKSHIRE

This guide is for young people
who have been adopted

This guide will:

- answer some questions you might have about being adopted
- tell you what support is available
- give you advice that you might find helpful

Lots of young people and their families need help from time to time – The One Adoption West Yorkshire adoption support team are here for you.

**One Adoption West Yorkshire
adoption support team**

Phone us on: **0113 378 3535**

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



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HOW YOUNG PEOPLE SAY IT FEELS TO BE ADOPTED

Here are some of the things adopted young people tell us.

Find the bubble that matches how you're feeling and **go to the page shown** for help and advice.

I want to know why I was adopted and find out more about my life before I came to live with my family
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I find it hard to concentrate at school / college
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I feel like I don't fit in and some days everything feels hard to do
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What if a birth relative wants to contact me now I'm over 18?
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WAYS WE CAN HELP YOU

Lots of adopted people, at some point in their lives, want to find out more about why they were adopted. Most people find it best to wait until they are 18 to see the information in their adoption file. However if you are under 18 and would like to see your information then sometimes we can work with you and your mum or dad to see if this is possible. Your adoption file will include documents put together at the time of your adoption. Sometimes the information in your file is sensitive and can be quite difficult to read. We will talk to you and your adoptive mum or dad about this to help you prepare. ■

I want to know why I was adopted and find out more about my life before I came to live with my family

I find it hard to concentrate at school / college

School can be tough at times for adopted young people. Maybe you find it hard to concentrate or get along with people in your class. We can help you, your family and your school to understand why this can be, and to think of ways to make your school day easier. ■

I want to meet other adopted young people

It can be good to spend time around other young people who are adopted. We run groups for adopted young people, contact us to find out about groups near you. We don't always talk about adoption but it's somewhere you can just be with others who might understand what life is like for you. ■

It can be lonely feeling like something's missing in your life or that you don't fit in. You might feel like you don't look the same or feel the same as other people. Living with a disability might also be making things feel harder for you. If you ever feel like this and you just want someone to talk to then we are here to listen to you. ■

I feel like I don't fit in and some days everything feels hard to do

Sometimes I get really angry and I don't know why

Adopted young people tell us they often feel churned up inside. This might be related to being adopted or it might be just about being a teenager and growing up. It can be good to talk about how you feel with someone you can trust. Talk to us and we will listen and try to help. We can access counselling or therapeutic support for you through the Adoption Support Fund. ■

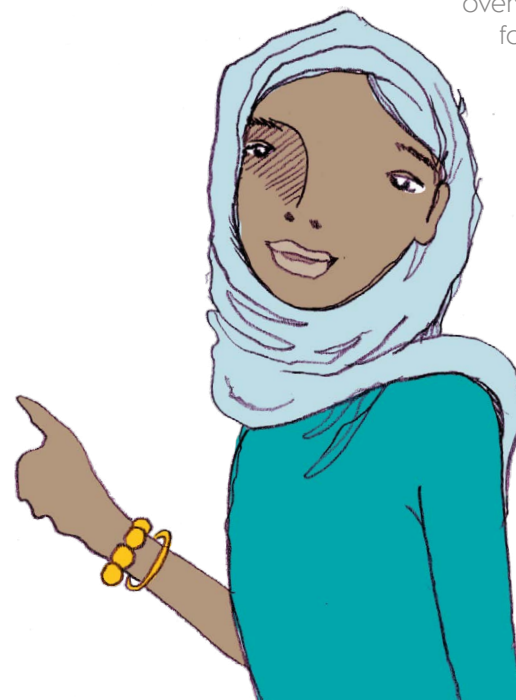
How do I accept my adoption and get on with my life?

We know that some teenagers think about their adoption a lot and sometimes it stops them enjoying life. If thinking about your adoption is getting in the way, contact us and we will try to help you make sense of it. ■

If you are under 18 we will need to let your family know that we are supporting you, but we can still offer support just for you. Sometimes it might be your family that have asked for support and we would always want to involve you to hear what you

have to say. If you are over 18 you can ask for support with or without your family's involvement. You might want to tell us things that you would rather your mum or dad not know. We will respect your privacy, but if what you've told us makes us worry about you or someone else we may need to tell somebody. ■

Will you tell my family if I come to you for help?



A D O P T E E N S

Why young people access Adopteens

...to find more people who were adopted so I wouldn't feel alone or isolated

...because I want to be able to talk to other adopted people about how they deal with similar problems to what I've faced. It can also teach me how I could deal with other problems if they arise

...to feel better about being adopted

Adopteens is a project that was designed by adopted teenagers who wanted to meet and connect with other adoptees. It offers a space place both online and offline as members can access the website, interact via an online chat forum, and meet face to face at activity days.

There is also the Adopteens youth council for those members who want to get more involved. At these meetings members talk about being adopted and share views and experiences to improve other people's understanding of adoption.

The project runs across Yorkshire and Humber and is for any young person aged between 11 and 18.

ADOPTTEENS
FORMERLY KNOWN AS AT-ID

There are activity days throughout the year and including a different activity in the north, south, east and west of the region.

The online chat forum is a safe platform for teenagers to start to get to know each other, and seek support, reassurance and advice from each other or the project workers if needed. It is a specially designed site and access is strictly for adopted teenagers. Project workers will make contact with your mum or dad if you want to join the forum, to ensure that the registration is genuine. The site is regularly monitored to make sure it is a safe, fun place for everyone.

To find out how to join, visit the Adopteens website at www.adopteens.org.uk

C O N T A C T W I T H Y O U R B I R T H F A M I L Y

It's normal to think about your birth family and to wonder where they are and what they're doing. It's also okay to tell your mum or dad that you are thinking about your birth family. If you don't know what to say then we can help you to think about it, or talk to your mum or dad with you. ■

I want to tell my family that I'm thinking about my birth family. I wonder where they are now and if they are ok...

We used to get letters from my birth mum but they've stopped and I don't know why

Often adoptive families, birth families and foster carers keep in touch, either by meeting up or by exchanging letters. Whatever the arrangements, or if contact has stopped without warning, you can talk to us about it. We can think about the best way to help you and your family. ■

Once you are 18 you can make your own decision to look for your birth family. You can find more information about this on page 12. In special circumstances we can support young people to meet with their birth family before they are 18. However this can be a very emotional and sometimes challenging experience. Before helping you in this way we would work with you and your mum or dad to think about things carefully and decide whether or not to go ahead. ■

I've been thinking about looking for my birth family

What if a birth relative wants to contact me?

Birth relatives can only contact you once you are over 18. Even then, because your adoptive name is confidential, they have to go through an agency like us. Birth relatives should never contact you directly. ■

USING FACEBOOK AND OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

I'm thinking about contacting my birth family on Facebook

We don't advise using the internet to contact birth relatives. However we know that some adopted people have started to use Facebook and other social networking sites to find members of their birth family. Sometimes you may be contacted by a member of your birth family on social media.

Using social media to make contact can be risky and does not always lead to the best results. If your birth family contact you on social media or you choose to use social media to find people you might not have met before, take care. You should talk to us, your mum or dad, or someone else you trust first so you can plan the best way of doing it that works for you and your birth family.

A birth relative has tried to contact me on social media and I don't know what to do

Your privacy is precious – stay in control of who can see your private information and photographs. When you contact someone on Facebook they have access to all your profile information. If your contact with them doesn't go well, or if it's getting too much, it can be very hard to give yourself a bit of space to think. Instead, contact with your birth family can be managed through us, or another agency like us. We can keep all your details private until your contact is going well enough – then you can choose to let your birth relatives know more of your personal information if you want to.

It's never too late to ask for help. Sometimes things seem to go well and then go wrong. We understand and can offer help and support at any point. ■

Here are 10 tips to help you enjoy using Facebook and other social networking sites safely:

1. Think about how much information you want everyone on Facebook to know. Only post information you're comfortable with other people seeing.
2. It's best not to include your address or date of birth and it can be safer to use a nickname rather than your full name.
3. Remember, once you've put a photo or information on Facebook it can be very hard to erase it completely from the internet – take some time to think carefully about what you're happy with everyone knowing about you.
4. Facebook has a number of privacy settings – ask your mum or dad, or someone you trust, to have a look at these with you so you stay in control of what other people see on your Facebook profile.
5. Avoid posting photos that give out clues as to where you live, go to school or work.
6. Be careful who you make friends with on Facebook. Check people out before adding them as a friend and letting them see all your information. If you're unsure ask your mum or dad or someone you trust to have a look with you.
7. Install the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) panic button on your Facebook profile. This allows you to easily report anyone giving you problems. Find out more at <https://apps.facebook.com/clickceop/>
8. Check with your mum or dad to make sure your computers are protected with protective software.
9. Be open and speak to your mum or dad about what you're doing online. If they are not sure how to use Facebook maybe you could show them.
10. If you ever feel unsafe online, tell someone you trust. ■

I'm worried my birth family might find me online



WHEN YOU'RE AN ADULT

Many people who have been adopted feel, at some time in their lives, that they would like to find out more about their birth family. Once you are 18 you are legally allowed to look for your birth family. However, it's best not to rush in to it and people often choose to take it one step at a time. A good first step is to look at the information in your adoption file. This way you can be clear of the reasons why you were adopted and you can check to see who is 'safe' and 'unsafe' before contacting them. We can help you access your file information and feel prepared for making contact with your birth family if you choose to. ■

When is the best time to contact my birth family?

I've decided I want to look for my birth family. What do I do?

As your birth relatives can't be given your adopted name, they can't approach you directly. However, once you are 18 years old, they can ask an agency like us to approach you on their behalf. ■

What if a birth relative wants to contact me?

Once you're 18, if you want to, you can leave a note on your adoption file to let your birth relatives know you would welcome contact from them – this is called **expressing a wish**. Or, you can ask us to provide an intermediary service on your behalf and help you find and meet with your relatives. The **Adoption Contact Register** is a national register which puts adopted adults and their birth relatives in touch with each other, if that's what they both wish. You can add your details to the Adoption Contact Register if:

- you are over 18;
- your birth was registered with the General Register Office; and
- you know your original birth name, your date of birth and the full name(s) of your birth mother.

It currently costs £15 to register. Contact us for more information or go to: www.gov.uk/adoption-records. ■

I really don't feel ready to hear from my birth family

Don't worry, you are legally entitled to block agencies from contacting you about your birth relatives. This is called **registering a veto**.

There are two kinds of veto:

An absolute veto – this says that you do not wish to be contacted by an agency on behalf of your birth relatives in any circumstances.

A qualified veto – this says that you are happy to be contacted by your birth relatives through an agency but only in certain circumstances, set by you. For example you could say that you only want to be contacted if there is important medical information for you. Or that you don't want to be contacted until you have finished university.

If you would like to register a veto please contact us. You can also register your veto, or 'wish for no contact', on the adoption contact register – we can help you do this too. ■

I'd really like to hear from my birth family



WHO YOU CAN CONTACT FOR MORE HELP AND ADVICE

Lots of young people and their families need help from time to time – the One Adoption West Yorkshire adoption support team can answer your questions and help you when you need it:

One Adoption West Yorkshire adoption support team

Phone us on: **0113 378 3535**

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

or you can contact these other useful services:

PAC UK

Phone **0113 2302100**

www.pac-uk.org

PAC UK offers therapy, advice, support and counselling for everyone affected by adoption.

Childline

Freephone: **0800 1111**

www.childline.co.uk

ChildLine counsellors all have experience of listening and talking to children and young people.

TALKadoption

Freephone: **0808 808 1234**

www.talkadoption.org.uk

TALKadoption support young adopted people under the age of 25.

If you want to get an independent advocate – someone to help you understand your rights and speak officially on your behalf – you can contact:

Rights 4 Me

www.rights4me.org

Write to: **Office of the Children's Rights Director, Ofsted, Aviation House, 125 Kingsway, London WC2B 6SE**

Rights 4 Me is the official website for the Office for the Children's Rights Director for England (OCD). If you live away from home then this is the place to find out about your rights and a way for you to be heard.

National Youth Advocacy Service

Freephone: **0300 330 3131**

www.nyas.net

Children's Legal Centre

Freephone: **08088 020 008**

www.childrenslegalcentre.com

This charity can give you free advice on law and government policy affecting children and young people.

Voice

Freephone: **0808 800 5792**

www.voiceyp.org

Voice is an independent national charity working to improve the lives of young people who are looked after or in need.



