

One Adoption West Yorkshire



One
Adoption
Agency
WEST YORKSHIRE

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2023 - 2024



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1. INTRODUCTION

It is a requirement of the National Minimum Standards for Adoption Services, that an adoption service produces a statement of purpose, including its aims and objectives and a description of the service and facilities that it provides. It can be used by children and young people and families as a guide to what they should expect a service to provide and to do.

This document is the statement of purpose for One Adoption West Yorkshire. One Adoption West Yorkshire came into being on the 1st of April 2017. It is a shared adoption service across the region working on behalf of Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield councils. The Head of Service reports to a Management Board, made up of senior officers from each local authority with representation drawn from adopters and the Voluntary Adoption Alliance (VAA). The Chair of the Management Board is Julie Jenkins (Head of Safeguarding, Calderdale Council). The service is overseen by a Joint Committee, made up of elected members from the five local authorities chaired by Councillor Fiona Venner (Executive Member for Children Families and Adult Social Care, Leeds City Council).

The regional agency is operated under the terms of a partnership agreement, which confirms the legal and governance arrangements; the budget; staffing and funding contributions for the five local authorities and Bradford Children's Trust.

The Statement of Purpose has been produced in accordance with:

- Adoption National Minimum Standards 2011.
- Care Planning Regulations 2010.
- Adoption Agency Regulations 2005 (amended 2011).
- Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations.
- 2013. Local Authority Regulations 2005.
- Adoption Agencies & Independent Review of Determinations (Amendment) Regulations 2011.
- Adoption Agencies (Panel & Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012.
- Care Planning, placement and Case and fostering services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013.
- Adoption and Children Act 2002.
- Care Standards Act 2000.

Adoption Agencies are inspected against these standards by Ofsted.



2. PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

The requirements of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the Children and Families Act 2014 underpin the principles and values of our service:

- Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family which can meet their needs during childhood and beyond and where possible this should be within their own family.
- The child's welfare, safety and needs will be at the centre of the adoption process.
- The child's wishes, and feelings will be taken into account at all stages.
- Delays in adoption can have a severe impact on the health and development of children and should be avoided wherever possible.
- The child's ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, language and sexuality will be fully recognised, positively valued and promoted when decisions are made.
- The particular needs of disabled children will be fully recognised and taken into account when decisions are made.
- The role of adoptive parents in offering a permanent family to a child who cannot live with their first family/ birth relatives will be valued and respected.
- Adoption has lifelong implications for all involved and requires lifelong commitment from many organisations, professionals and individuals who will work together to deliver services.
- Birth/first parents and families are entitled to services that recognise the lifelong implications of adoption. They will be treated fairly, openly and offered a support service.

Equal Opportunities

The adoption service abides by equal opportunities legislation and the policies of Leeds City Council. The service works positively and respectfully with all service users and partner agencies regardless of race, colour, religion, language, culture, disability, gender, sexual orientation or age.

Every attempt will be made to secure an adoptive family which meets a child's emotional and developmental needs taking into account their ethnicity, religion, language, culture, gender and disability whilst being mindful of the need to avoid undue delay.



3. AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

The agency is committed to fulfilling the requirements of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the Children and Families Act 2014 by:

Aims of the agency

1. Children move in with their adoptive family without unnecessary delay.
2. Families get help and support at every stage of the adoption journey.
3. Children have good quality care, a good understanding of their identity, a sense of belonging and stability within their adoptive family.
4. Children, adoptive and birth parents and adopted adults feel they have a voice and influence.

Objectives of the agency

1. To meet the needs of children we will recruit and assess a diverse range of adopters.
2. Work with local authorities and partners to improve the early identification of children needing adoption, improve the use of early permanence and to promote children remaining within or close to West Yorkshire.
3. To improve timeliness, accessibility and flexibility of adoption support provision across the region.
4. To implement a multidisciplinary model of adoption support to help parents support their children and build strong relationships.
5. To collaborate with local authorities to improve the help and support for adopted teenagers and young adults who are moving towards independence.
6. To achieve the Cultural Cohesion Quality Mark.
7. To work collaboratively with partners to improve the flexibility, variety and quality of contact arrangements,

One Adoption West Yorkshire provides an adoption service to:

- Children in need of an adoptive family; Birth / First Families.
- Prospective and approved adopters.
- Children and adoptive parents in need of support services.
- Adopted adults.



4. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTRE AND OFFICE BASES

Head of service			
Michelle Rawlings			
Service delivery managers			
Rhian Beynon Recruitment & Assessment Bradford & Calderdale	Nicola Channon Steele (ML) Valerie Edwards (Temp) Family Finding Kirklees and Wakefield	Julie Chew Adoption Support Leeds	
Team managers			Multidisciplinary Team
Recruitment and Assessment	Family Finding	Adoption Support	
Lianne Kingswood Claire Lomas Sonia Dyer Heather Pipe Samantha Thomas	Jenna Dickinson - Leeds Valerie Edwards (Seconded) Katie Dunkerley (Temp) - Calderdale & Kirklees Carl Nash - Wakefield Katie Robinson & Jo Lalor - Bradford	Tony Bryce - Kirklees and Calderdale Katie Evans - Bradford Steph Jones - Leeds Eve Robinson - Leeds Amy Wood - Wakefield	Katy Graves - Team Manager Robynne Boyd - Clinical Lead Julie Pocklington - Education Lead

Business Support Manager	Practice Improvement & Development Manager	Communications and marketing lead
Aretha Hanson	Richard Stevenson	Emma Glanville

The head office is based at:

**Kernel House
Killingbeck Drive
Leeds
LS14 6UF**

Other office bases:

Bradford	Halifax	Huddersfield	Wakefield
Britannia House Broadway Bradford BD1 1EE	Customer First 19 Horton Street Halifax HX1 1QE	Civic Centre 3 High Street Huddersfield HD1 2LN	Queen's House Queen's Row Market Street Wakefield WF1 1DF



5. THE WORK OF THE ADOPTION SERVICE



The service undertakes the following tasks:

Recruitment of prospective adoptive families.

Assessment and preparation of adoptive families, including visits to the home, a home study, taking up references and statutory checks, and running preparation training.

Support for families waiting for a child to be placed with them.

Advice, guidance and support to adoptive families during the matching process and after placement. This includes workshops, training and support groups.

Those wishing to adopt from abroad are referred to another agency that provides a service under contract for One Adoption.

Non agency adoption work for Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield.

Family finding for children who need a permanent home through adoption.

The family finding team becomes involved with every child where adoption may be the plan during the decision-making process and takes the lead in family finding at the earliest point possible.

Children's social workers and adoption social workers undertake the task of planning for permanence and preparing children for adoption. The responsibility for matching and supporting adoptive families is a shared task until the adoption order.

The adoption letterbox service and access to adoption records service is provided and enables links to be maintained between adoptive and first family/ birth relatives.

Support and signposting to counselling services for adopted adults wishing to find out about their first family/ birth relatives and an intermediary service are provided. Most of this work is provided through a contract with independent agencies operating in the region.

Information about all aspects of the adoption service can be accessed via the One Adoption West Yorkshire adoption advice line: 0113 3783535, email: adoptionadvice@oneadoptionwy.leeds.gov.uk and via the website: oneadoption.co.uk. The One Adoption social media channels; Facebook www.facebook.com/oneadoption and Twitter @OneAdoption_WY provide additional channels to share information with prospective adopters and wider audiences.

All prospective adopter enquiries are followed through by an adoption advisor. An interpreter is available through a three- way phone if required. Help is also available through social workers in the service who speak Asian languages. Currently there are social workers who speak Urdu and Punjabi. Approved interpreters will be used if required.

6. QUALIFICATIONS, EXPERIENCE & NUMBERS OF STAFF

Michelle Rawlings, Head of Service, has overall responsibility for One Adoption West Yorkshire. Qualifications: Degree in Applied Social Sciences and Diploma in Social Work 2003, Post Qualifying Award in Social Work & CMI Level 5 Certificate in Leadership & Management. Michelle has worked in adoption since 2007 and has been a manager since 2012.

The agency has three Service Delivery Managers: **Rhian Beynon**, manages the Recruitment and Assessment Service and panels, and links in with Bradford and Calderdale local authorities. Qualifications: Ba (Hons) Applied social studies & Diploma in social work 1999, Post Qualifying award in social work 2006. Rhian is an experienced social worker who has worked in adoption services since 2005 and has been a manager in adoption services since 2014.

Julie Chew manages the Adoption Support service and links in with Leeds local authority. Qualifications: CQSW in Social Work 1992 & NVQ Level 4 in management 2012. Julie has worked in a variety of settings in relation to children and families social work and has been a manager since 1999 and specifically an adoption manager since 2007.

Nicola Steele manages the Family Finding service and links with Kirklees and Wakefield local authorities. Qualifications: BSc (Hons) Social Work 2007. Nicola has worked in a variety of settings in relation to children and families social work and has worked in adoption since 2013 and has been an adoption manager since 2017.

The agency has 69.9 full time equivalent qualified social workers across the three service areas, 12 (9.4 FTE) of whom are Advanced Practitioners. There are 10 Adoption Advisors who support the recruitment and family finding service and nine Adoption Support Workers who support four adoption support teams. The agency has a Business Support Manager and 21.7 full time equivalent business support staff.

All social workers have a social work qualification, are registered with Social Work England and have relevant experience in children and families services. They have an enhanced DBS check.



7. THE SERVICE TO PROSPECTIVE ADOPTERS

Enquiries and first contact

Enquirers can access information on adopting with One Adoption West Yorkshire via the website www.oneadoption.co.uk or make contact through the dedicated advice line. At first contact, enquirers are given information verbally about the adoption process and invited to an information session.

Applications for adoptions from overseas

Inter-country adoption is a specialist area of work, as each country has its own rules and regulations regarding adoption. One Adoption West Yorkshire has a contract with another agency to provide this work. Applicants pay a fee for their assessment service, including the home study and then further fees for safeguarding checks etc.

Information events

Enquirers are invited to attend an information event. Information events are mostly delivered virtually where the enquirer(s) can take part from the comfort of their own home. Information events provide an opportunity for enquirers to hear from adopters and experienced adoption social workers with opportunities to ask questions. Should enquirers wish to progress their interest following the information event, they request a home visit, the details of which are provided in an email following the event. Information events are held a minimum of every three weeks. Details of these events and how to book are available on the One Adoption [website](#).

Initial home visit

The home visit request can be submitted at any point during the twelve-month period following the information event being attended. The home visit is undertaken by an adoption social worker and adoption advisor who will provide more information about adoption. The personal circumstances of enquirers will be discussed in detail to help them consider if adoption is the right choice for them. The social worker will also start discussions about practical considerations. A detailed summary of the home visit will be completed and passed to an adoption manager before the registration of interest form is provided. The adoption manager will decide within five days of receipt of the completed registration of interest form about whether it should be accepted.

At this stage, the enquirer becomes known as a prospective adopter(s). A letter will be sent to the prospective adopter(s) confirming that their application is proceeding or detailing the reasons why their registration of interest cannot be accepted.



Stage 1 – Pre-assessment process

Stage One begins on the day that One Adoption West Yorkshire accepts the registration of interest from the prospective adopter(s) and should normally take two months to complete.

The stage one process will include the following:

- All the statutory references/checks will be completed, including the DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check.
- The prospective adopter(s) will complete an adoption medical as soon as possible. This will be considered by the adoption agency medical advisor, who will provide advice about any medical issues.
- The prospective adopter(s) will be expected to attend training/preparation sessions. This will give prospective adopter(s) more detailed information and will allow them to meet experienced adopters who can help answer questions that they have.
- An adoption advisor will be provided to support prospective adopters on completing the stage one process and an agreement will be drawn up with prospective adopters detailing expectations.

Preparation

Prospective adopters will be invited to attend preparation sessions in Stage One. The process will be delayed if applicants are unable to attend initial preparation, and a clear indication of their availability will be ascertained.

Preparation groups for first time adopters usually run approximately 12 times per year based on need. Experienced adopter training is provided at regular intervals, as is foster carer adoption preparation group training. Additional training sessions are provided to adopters considering Early Permanence, and those considering adopting brothers and sisters.

There is a one-day training course available for friends or relatives who are supporting the adopter/s and wish to have more in depth information regarding adoption, called Connected by Adoption.

Adopters are encouraged to access the One Adoption website where they can find further information about adoption and access the extensive support offer, including webinars and support groups.

Once a family begins stage two of the assessment, they are given access to the Adoption UK Passport learning program and attend a development session led by birth parents to hear their experience.



Stage 2 – The assessment process

The stage two assessment process cannot begin until stage one has successfully been completed (apart from second time and foster carer adoptions, see next page).

Stage two begins when prospective adopters notify the agency of their wish to continue with the process. The prospective adopter(s) have six months from the completion of stage one to provide this notification. From the date of receipt of this notification, the stage two process is a four-month long period during which a home study assessment is undertaken. This leads to a panel recommendation and an Agency Decision about suitability to adopt.

The prospective adopter(s) will be allocated an adoption social worker to complete their assessment. A stage two plan will be drawn up between the social worker and the prospective adopter(s) agreeing arrangements for the assessment process and a provisional panel date. The assessment will involve a series of home visits utilising a variety of assessment tools and will include additional checks not carried out in stage one, such as school, nursery, ex-partner, employers, and personal referees will also be visited.

On the basis of the information in the assessment the adoption social worker will write a Prospective Adopters' Report (PAR). This is a very detailed report providing information about the prospective adopter(s) and their background. The report will reach a conclusion about the prospective adopter's(s) suitability to adopt, and the applicants will have up to five working days to comment on their completed assessment before it is presented to the adoption panel. If the agency reaches a decision during the stage two process that they cannot recommend approval and /or if the agency decision maker decides not to agree the approval, the prospective adopter(s) will be able to request a review by the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). The IRM is an independent body that can scrutinize the decisions of adoption agencies.

Adoption by existing foster carers

Foster carers should notify the service of their wish to be considered as adopters for a child or children in their care. If the child/ children's plan is for adoption, the foster carers are given information and advice about adoption, the process and are informed of their legal rights. Foster carers complete a written request for a home visit which is carried out by the child/ children's social worker and a OAWY social worker. Following this visit a meeting is held between workers from the adoption and fostering teams, the child's social worker, and their team manager to consider whether to progress to an assessment.

A fast-track process will be provided for approved foster carers who are being assessed as adoptive parents. Stage one and two of the adoption process will take place concurrently to avoid delay.



Second time or subsequent adopters

Families who have already been assessed as adopters can apply to adopt again if there has been a year since their child's adoption order being made and a two-year age gap between their child and a potential new child. In this case, they would express an interest in adopting again and be offered a home visit to discuss their circumstances. If it is appropriate to proceed, they would then complete the registration of interest form and start the process. Depending on the circumstances of the family, stage one and two of the process may run sequentially or concurrently; training will be provided.

If their interest is in respect of a subsequent sibling or half sibling of a child they have already adopted, the timescales and age gap would not necessarily apply. This assessment would be given high priority and the home visit would involve the child's social worker too. In these cases, stage one and two would most likely run concurrently.

Adoption panel

The main purpose of the Adoption Panel is to consider and make recommendations to the adoption agency on the following:

- People to be approved as adoptive parents.
- Whether an assessment to approve adopters should continue following a brief report to panel.
- The match between children and adopters.
- The placement of children for adoption where their first family/ birth relatives desire adoption to be the plan.

One Adoption West Yorkshire schedules 80 adoption panels per year. The panels have an Independent Chair with significant experience of relevant work.

Membership of the panels meets the statutory regulations and takes its members from a central list.

Members include those who have personal experience of adoption and others with relevant skills and experience and aims to reflect the diversity of the population of the district.

All applicants are invited to attend the Adoption Panel. The panel makes recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker who will make their decision following careful consideration of the recommendations and all the information presented at panel. The decision maker must make their decision within seven working days of receiving the recommendation of the panel. They may make a decision different to that recommended by the panel.

One Adoption West Yorkshire has an Agency Decision Maker to consider the approval of prospective adopters; decision making for children to be placed for adoption is considered by the Agency Decision Maker in the child's home local authority.

Decisions are notified to a child's parent(s), guardian(s) and prospective adopter(s). Social workers will be informed of the agency decision within two working days.

The decision will be confirmed in writing within five working days.



8. BEYOND APPROVAL

Matching & support

Following panel, adopters will attend an additional training day to help them prepare for a child coming into their family. Topics covered include; introductions, moving children into new families, making good connections and contact. Adoption Social Workers ensure that adopters have access to local support networks and specialist national organisations such as Coram BAAF, Adoption UK and PAC UK. Adopters are provided with one-year free subscription to Adoption UK in stage two, including access to the Adoption UK passport.

The adopter(s) social worker will help to identify suitable matches with a child/ children and will provide support and guidance throughout the whole process. All prospective adopters are provided with access to Link Maker to explore possible matches.

Each child, for whom adoption is a likely plan will have an allocated worker from the family finding team. The family finder works closely with the child's social worker to consider matches for that child.

When a match is being considered adopters are given the Child Permanence Report and all appropriate written information about the child, their background and assessed needs. The report will include details of any proposal for maintaining connections, or exchange of information through the letterbox system, with the first family/ birth relatives that will operate once the child is placed.

Adopters meet with the child's social worker and other professionals relevant for that child; medical advisors; child's foster carers; teachers etc. to enable them to make an informed decision regarding their ability to meet the needs of the child. A life appreciation day will often be arranged depending on the child's age and circumstances to help build as full a picture as possible of the child's experiences.

Details of the level of parental responsibility that will be delegated to the prospective adopters will be outlined and any adoption support, including any financial arrangements will also be discussed. The proposals for the placement will then be set out in the adoption placement report, which will be seen by the prospective adopters before panel and their comments and observations will be included in the panel documentation.

Process for the matching of a child

The child's social worker, the prospective adopters and their social worker will attend the Adoption Panel. The process for panel is the same as for approval with recommendations being made to the Agency Decision Maker who will make the decision on whether the adopters are suitable for a particular child.

If a match is agreed a transitions planning meeting is arranged to plan for the move of the child. Good practice guidance called "Flying Start" is used to guide the meeting. This meeting will involve the foster carer for the child, the prospective adopters, and the relevant social workers. The meeting will establish that the adoptive family has all the information available about the child and will draw up a timetable and process for the transition and support.



There are some variations to this process if prospective adoptive parent/s are taking the Early Permanency route to adoption, are second time adopters or foster carers adopting the child they have been fostering. These differences will be carefully explained to prospective adoptive parents from the beginning of their adoption process with us starting with written accounts on the One Adoption West Yorkshire website under “routes to adoption”.

Annual reviews of prospective adopters

In the event that it is not possible to move to a match within 12 months from approval, the adoption social worker and their manager will conduct yearly reviews of the plans; checks and references may need to be updated.

Meeting first family/ birth relatives

Most adopters will meet the child’s first family/ birth relatives. They will be supported by their social workers in a suitable venue. The benefit of this meeting is that adoptive parents can talk to their child about their family/ birth relatives, to support their child’s identity and aid the exchange of information.

After placement

Visits will be made by both the child’s social worker and the family’s adoption social worker. These are based on both statutory requirements and the individual needs of the child and prospective adopter(s).

The child remains a ‘looked after’ child until an Adoption Order is made. The child has to be visited in the first week of placement, followed by weekly visits up to the child’s first statutory review at four weeks post placement, when the pattern of visiting will be discussed and agreed but will be not less than six weekly. The child’s review will determine when an application to adopt may be made and advice will be given by the worker for the prospective adopters. The Annex A report for court will be prepared by both the family’s and child’s social workers. Life story material will be provided for the child by the child’s social worker and given to the adopters for safe keeping for the child in the future. The child’s social worker is responsible for ensuring that a “later life letter” is completed before the Adoption Order is made, which will give an account of the circumstances of the adoption.

Supporting connections service

Support with links between adopted children and their first family/ birth relatives is provided by the agency. All arrangements will be reached having taken account of what is in the best interests of the child and will be specified in the Adoption Support Plan before a child is placed. Should needs change over time, original arrangements can be re-visited with the support of the agency. Connections between adoptive and first family/ birth relatives may include letterbox or face-to-face meetings between the child and members of his/her family, including parents, siblings, or extended family members.



9. SUPPORT SERVICES

One Adoption West Yorkshire has a comprehensive support service for all those affected by adoption. This service is provided in partnership with a number of voluntary agencies & other partners who provide an independent service.

The adopters' worker will ensure that adopters have access to local support networks and specialist organisations, e.g., Adoption UK, New Family Social and other services, and are on the agency's mailing list for any events organised through the adoption service.

The agency has a specialist support service which offers a range of adoption support services across the region. It also signposts to other services for those affected by adoption:

- Adoptive parents.
- Adopted children and young people.
- First family/ birth relatives.
- Adopted adults.

The OAWY multidisciplinary team, a partnership with Leeds Community Healthcare, provides support to OAWY social work teams and directly to children and families across the region. The team consists of psychologists, occupational therapists, therapeutic social workers, education and early years specialists and a speech and language therapist.

For adoptive families:

Following request, an adoption support worker will undertake an assessment with the family and agree a support plan based on the family's identified needs, including consideration of making an application to the Adoption Support Fund. A core offer of support is available to all families which includes:

- Adoption advice line and regular newsletter
- Support groups, including stay and play groups
- Peer Mentoring Service
- Training, workshops and webinars
- Therapeutic groups and therapeutically trained workers
- Links with mental health and educational services
- Assistance with maintaining links between adopters, young people and first family/ birth relatives
- In-person support groups with and without children



For adopted children & young people:

- Social groups and activities.
- Training and advice for schools to help teachers understand adopted children's needs.
- Working with children in their adoptive families around understanding their life stories.
- Signposting to other organisations.
- Information about accessing support from the age of 18 years.

For first family/ birth relatives:

- Access to a confidential and independent advice and counselling service via an independent agency.
- Support regarding maintaining connections.
- Enabling parents to record on their child's file whether or not they wish to have contact with their child from the age of 18.

For adopted adults:

- Discussion and advice in relation to maintaining connections with and from first family/ birth relatives.
- Support with accessing adoption records.
- Support with accessing the Adoption Support Fund (if under 21 years, or up to 25 years with an actively reviewed Education Health Care Plan (EHCP)).

Information about our adoption support services can be accessed via our Adoption Advice

Line: 0113 378 3535 , via the [website](#) or by email:

adoptionadvice@oneadoptionwy.leeds.gov.uk



10. MONITORING & EVALUATION OF THE ADOPTION SERVICE

Adoption staff receive regular supervision and annual appraisals of their performance. Training needs are identified and met through in-house training or through externally commissioned trainers.

A practice improvement framework is in place which ensures regular and accurate reporting of adoption information.

Adoption agencies are monitored by external inspections carried out by Ofsted.

There is regular adoption panel training to ensure that panel members keep up to date with current issues. Panel members also have annual appraisals.

Regular feedback is received from the adoption panels and twice-yearly meetings are held between the management team, panel chairs and Agency Decision Maker.

The Head of Service submits a half year and annual report to the Management Board and the Joint Committee. This can also be taken to individual local authority scrutiny boards, trusts or executives in any year, along with quarterly reports specific to individual local authority adoption performance.

A robust quality assurance framework is in place with regular auditing of files, plus evaluation feedback from adoptive parents and other service users. This is held centrally and is undertaken at key points in the adoption process.



11. CONCERNS & COMPLAINTS

All prospective adopters engaging with the agency, and all birth parents of a child for whom the agency is planning adoption are provided with written information about complaints procedures, including contact details for the complaints officer. All young people, for whom there is an adoption plan and who are of an appropriate age and understanding are likewise informed of the complaints procedures and informed of the role of the Children's Rights Service.

A copy of our complaints leaflet is available on our [website](#)

Complaints can be made directly to:

Freepost
PO Box 837
Customer relations
Leeds
LS1 9PZ

Tel: 0113 378 5111
Email: feedback.children@leeds.gov.uk

Details of the Registration Authority:

Ofsted National Business Unit
Piccadilly Gate Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Web: www.ofsted.gov.uk

