



# ANNUAL REPORT AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

For Period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017

## **Annual Report on PI data for WBAS 2016/17**

### **Introduction**

This report reflects the region's second full year's performance as a collaborative service.

It is fair to say that some areas of performance in which we were doing well last year have seen a dip in performance this year. The report highlights those areas where we need to focus attention and improve along with those where we have demonstrated improvement and provides analysis to demonstrate the reasons and challenges.

There is still a great deal of work to be developed and progressed within the service as a whole, including the ongoing development of adoption support services.

This report demonstrates the Western Bay Adoption Service (WBAS) performance activity against the key national PI measures. It provides data for the region as a whole, along with comparative data across the three partner agencies, comparative data against the national benchmarks and averages along with comparative data across the regions.

### **Section 1 – Progress update**

During the past year the primary focus has been on developing the Adoption Support service while at the same time aiming to maintain performance in the recruitment of adopters and the placement of children.

Areas of development within Adoption Support include:

- Co-creation/engagement with stakeholders, Adopters, Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) and statutory partners in the development and design and delivery of support services.
- A robust training programme for staff

- Continual improvements in the IT system to deliver on day to day operational work and to assist in data capture and measuring performance
- The introduction of the transfer protocol across functions

In addition to working locally within the service, Western Bay Adoption Service (WBAS) has been an active participant in some of the national developments:

- A Wales wide adoption allowance policy which aims to ensure equity for applicants across Wales.
- The national Family Finding Model providing a baseline of practice applied to all children's cases.
- An Inter-country Adoption policy, enabling a clear structure and uniformity in Wales.
- Co- working between WBAS and other regional services to enable the sharing of ideas and materials to improve practice.
  - development of an assessment framework for adoption support- South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS)
  - development of an inter-regional transfer process with for adoption support cases- Valley, Vale and Cardiff (VVC)
  - assisting VVC and SEWAS to create their own caseload weighting systems

The assessment of Adopters has remained a key focus in the last year and the service achieved a little above the intended target. There has been an increased focus on:

- Equipping adopters to understand the need for and role of their support network which dovetails with the developments of the Social Services and Well Being Act
- Service user consultation and engagement.
- Introduction of a family support meeting as part of the assessment
- Involvement of adoption support workers and adopters in the pre and post approval training and support events resulting in positive feedback from adoption panel and applicants
- Development of a continuous improvement agenda, to ensure adopters are equipped for the task of adopting
- Reducing overall the time taken to approve adopters

The number of children being placed this year has reduced from 93 last year to 71 this year. Whilst this is recognised as being an area to improve, some achievements have been encouraging in that we have placed more complex children including sibling groups, two sibling groups of three, some children with complex health and development issues and those who have been harder to identify adopters for where the measure indicates these children have taken a considerable time to place.

**The key achievements:-**

- We continue to place more children within the region than with Inter-Agencies (IAs) and this has been despite some challenges encountered whereby some children having complex needs, sibling groups and a sustained picture of adopters wishing to have the more straightforward and younger children. We placed 39 children within WB and 32 outside.
- The length of time taken from 'becoming looked after' (LAC) to placement for adoption has reduced from 19.5 months with the average time now being 15.3 months. This however has not met the national bench mark of 13 months and further work is needed within the Local Authorities (LAs) to address this.
- The average time it takes for children who wait longer than six months from Should Be Placed Decision (SBPD) to placement for adoption has increased but only very slightly from 9.25 to 10 months. However there have been considerable successes with a number of children placed in very short timescales. The lowest being 104 days (3.5 months). This is attributed to the close working between Recruitment and Assessment (R&A) and Family Finding (FF) teams to identify early the needs of children and adopters so that where suitable the link can be progressed without delay.
- There has been greater collaboration between FF and Adoption Support (AS) to put together packages of support for more complex children or where placements need additional support.
- Enquiry rates are consistent despite a focus on harder to place and more complex children as part of the recruitment message which has been devised jointly by the managers of R&A and Twin Tracking & Family Finding (TT&FF). This focusses on prioritizing adopters who are interested in taking older children, those in sibling groups and those with complex needs. Whilst this has seen some success the reality is that many adopters are still presenting themselves as wanting younger children which is in line with national research.
- The average time taken to approve adopters from the inquiry stage to Agency Decision Making (ADM) decision has decreased compared to last year from 10.1 months to 9.7 months.
- There has been, as a result of a number of WBAS and LA strategies a small increase in the number of children presented to panel where

there is evidence of Life Story Materials (LSM). This is particularly noticeable in Q4 where the jump in performance goes from 1 in the previous quarter to 11 in Q4.

- Performance in the number of Birth parents referred and offered a service has been sustained.
- There continues to be evidence that there are more direct interventions from the adoption support service than previously thus reducing the need for higher cost commissioned services.
- Successful placement of a number of sibling groups.
- The Children's Guide has been launched and appears to have been received positively in the three LA's. It has also been placed on the WB website so adopters can access directly if they choose.
- There has been a review and revised guidance for the Child Adoption Report – Annex B (CAR B) to improve quality of information. This has been backed up by training offered by WBAS and mentoring by the TT seniors for workers / managers who have requested additional support.
- Development and implementation of the Transition/Moving on proposal to assist in improving the preparation of children for adoption and in the provision of life journey material. This was showcased in a workshop at the recent National Adoption Service (NAS) Conference in March.

### **Challenges:-**

A number of challenges have been identified for the coming year and these include –

- To further increase the number of placements within the region. The service plans to do this through a number of initiatives such as a local profiling event, a year of targeted recruitment specialising on identified children and developing further the website and recruitment and information materials on offer
- Where possible to further reduce the time from LAC, SBPD and Placement Order (PO) to placement for adoption. This will be through a joint focus by WBAS and the LA's, currently a number of strategies are in place from the TT&FF function to ensure that the service does not impact adversely on this measure



Western Bay

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- The number of Adoption Orders Granted (AOG) has dipped significantly from 94 the previous year to 69 this year. Whilst there are currently 36 adoption applications before the court, it is recognised that a focus is now needed to address where if any the delays in the various stages of progressing an application
- Introduce in the TT&FF function local performance indicators and more robust monitoring of activity to ensure delays are kept to a minimum
- There needs to be a robust and whole region approach to the improvement of Life Story Materials (LSM) in relation to quality and timeliness. The current NAS measure is by 2<sup>nd</sup> review however, WBAS with the support of the senior management in the LAs has agreed that this measure should be the longest time and the best practice aim is on placement
- There is a desire to improve Birth Parent take up of the service on offer to them and this will be addressed through a revision to the facilities on Oracle, (the service IT system) as it is evident that the FF and AS have been under reporting significantly in this area. This will be addressed through guidance and training events in Q1 – 2017-18.
- There is need to improve the time taken to approve adopters. The assessment itself is not problematic but areas outside of the service control need to be accommodated so that measures are taken by the service to avoid incurring unnecessary delays
- Inclusion of the adoption support network in the pre-approval training will be re-introduced in the coming year. It is envisaged at this point that additional training events will be run for family and friends, alongside the pre-approval training. This will further equip adopters and their support network to meet the needs of more complex children and harder to place children
- Expanding adoption support is a key focus for the coming year. Utilising the fostering training as part of the post adoption support provision is planned
- Partnership working with neighbouring regions to develop services to meet the needs of children and particularly birth parents
- Greater use of IT system by all functions in WBAS this is a particular challenge in TT&FF and will be the main focus for the coming year. Improvements across all three functions will equip management to accurately collate and report on performance and underperformance.

- The continuing development of policies and procedures is a key priority for the coming year
- Addressing the significant backlog of non-agency assessments through a number of strategies

## **Section 2 - Performance**

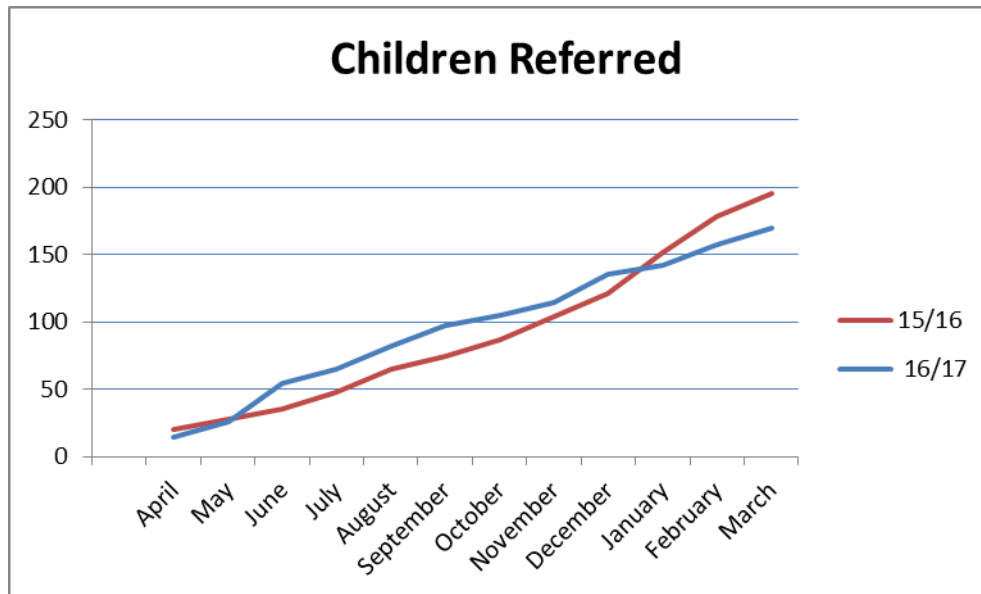
The purpose of this section is to highlight some of the key performance areas for WBAS for the year 2016/17. The report is based on data that has been supplied to the NAS on a quarterly basis throughout the year and provides some comparison data with national performance and performance across regions.

### **1. Children Referred 2016/17 - 170**

During the first six months of the year the number of referrals for children had initially risen with 97 children having being referred in the first two quarters compared to 74 in the same period the previous year. However, the overall picture demonstrates that there has been a drop in referrals, with Swansea seeing a significant decrease over the year, Neath Port Talbot (NPT) remaining fairly stable and Bridgend (BCBC) showing an increase.

The current data represents an overall decrease of 13% when comparing with 2015/16 where there were 195 children referred and 170 this year. However, when comparing with the number of referrals that were withdrawn last year (57) to this year (11) it is evident that there has been a refinement in the cases being referred from the local authorities as more are being converted through the SPB process and into POs.

Children Referred TOTAL	BCBC	NPT	SWAN	
2016/17	72	43	55	<b>170</b>
2015/16	58	45	92	<b>195</b>
2014/15	68	56	79	<b>203</b>



The figures for other regions in Wales are Mid and West Wales Adoption Service (MWW) 81, North Wales Adoption Service (NWAS) 58, South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS) 204, Valley, Vale and Cardiff (VVC) 278.

## **2. Should Be Placed Decision (SBPD)**

The number of children that progressed to have a 'should be placed decision' in Western Bay totalled 112 compared to other regions across Wales, WBAS had the second highest number of SBPD with VVC having the highest at 117, MWW 49, NWAS 4, SEWAS 86.

## **3. Placement Orders Granted = 112**

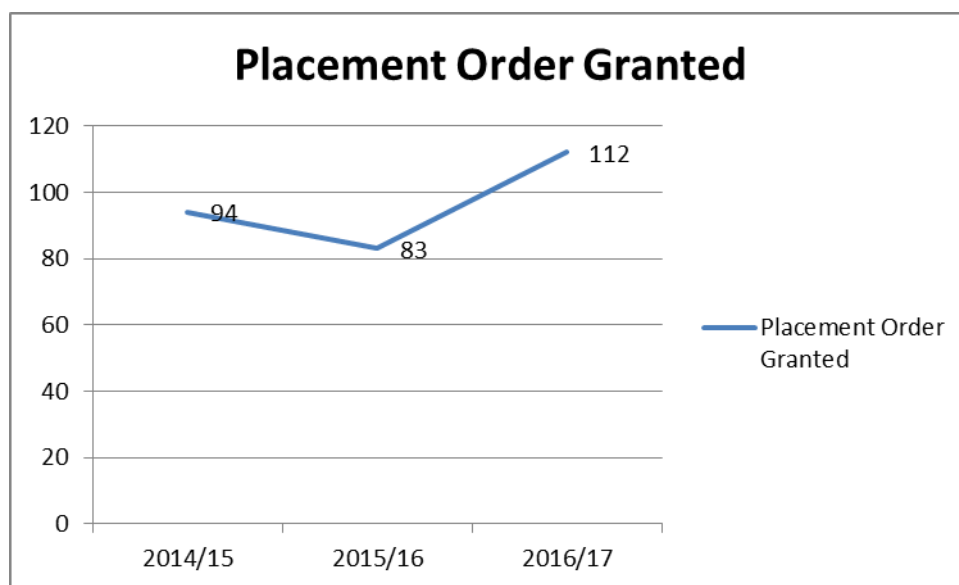
### **WBAS regional data**

There has been an increase in POs this year with 112 being granted compared to 83 last year showing a 35% increase. This reflects the spike in referrals at end of Q4, 2015/16 with 32 of our POs developing from these referrals namely from Swansea. Overall, the more appropriate referrals that have been received have led to a higher conversion rate of children culminating in placement orders. This has reversed the trend we were seeing last year where we saw a decrease in POs made, which at the time was also the national trend.



Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
2016/17	30	31	24	27	112
2015/16	22	18	17	26	83

POG	BCBC	NPT	SWAN	TOTAL
2016/17	36	23	53	112
2015/16	31	26	26	83
2014/15	25	36	33	94



In comparison to the other regions across Wales, WBAS had the highest number of placement orders granted at 112, MWW 31, NWAS 43, SEWAS 76, VVC 96. This increase will impact on workload in the coming year.

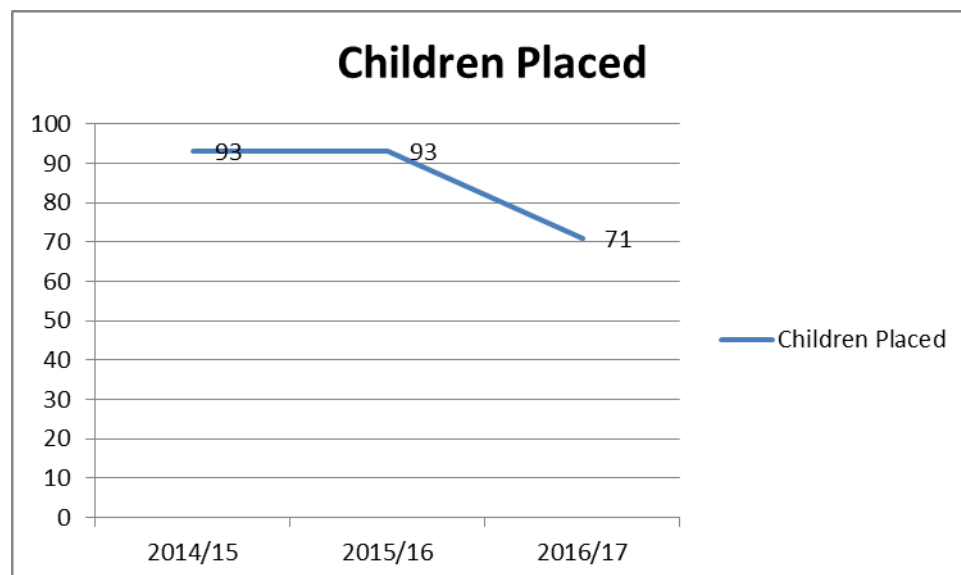
#### **4. Children Placed = 71**

Statistics have evidenced that in the year there has been a 21% reduction in the number of children being placed for adoption by WBAS. Those being placed are a combination of children that represent harder to place and more straight forward children. An action plan has been devised to interrogate why there is a reduction in children being placed so that remedial and proactive

measures can be developed and implemented in Q1 2017/18 the plan includes revising the information recently shared with TT&FF staff on the need to impress timeliness. Management and to some extent seniors will embark on a process of monitoring cases by case. This will include diarising key dates and expected activities that ensure every effort is made to ensure children are placed in a timely manner.

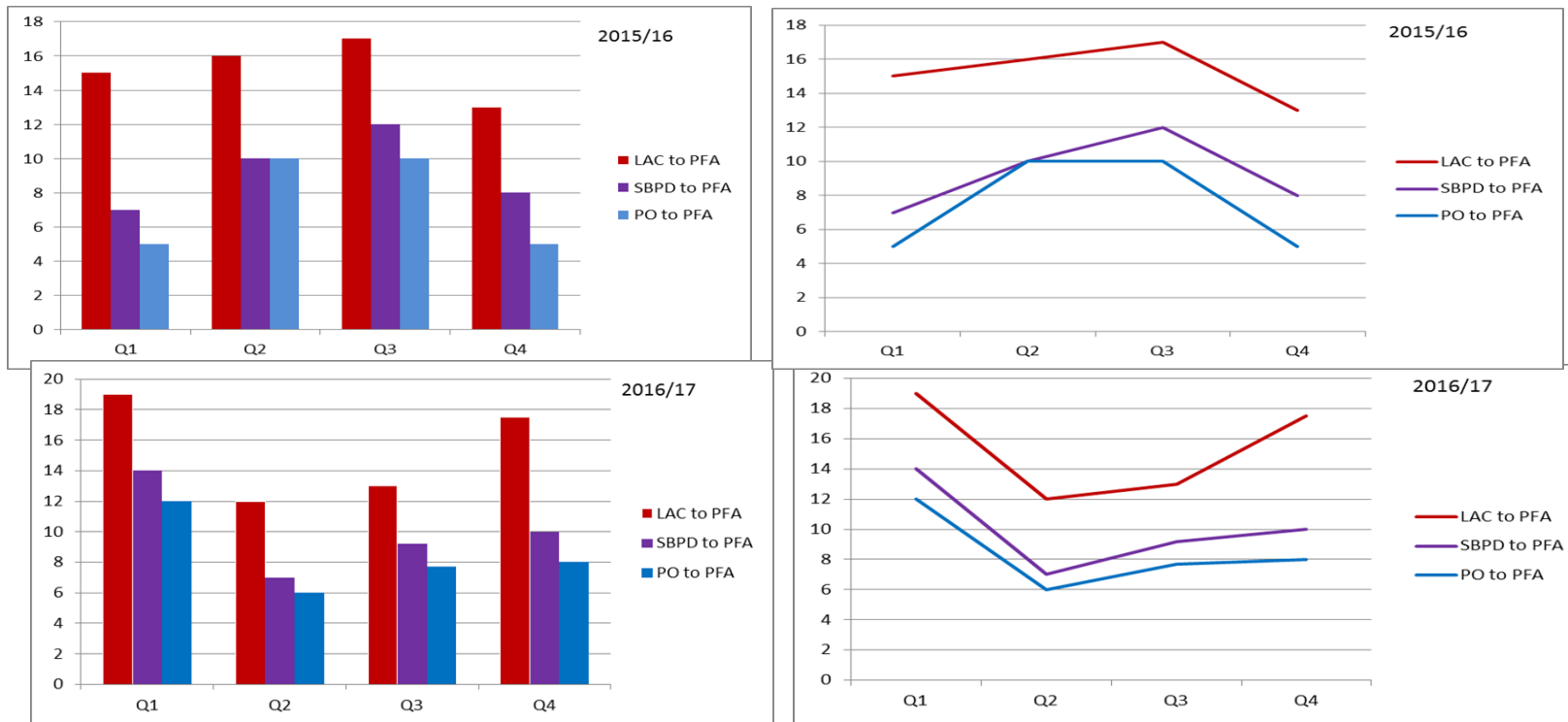
Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
2016/17	13	17	23	18	71
2015/16	20	25	21	27	93

Children Placed	BCBC	NPT	SWAN	TOTAL
2016/17	24	17	30	71
2015/16	24	40	29	93
2014/15	28	28	37	93



Performance in other regions across Wales is as follows, MWW 23, NWS 44, SEWAS 84, VVC 81.

## 5. Average Time (in months) Taken for Children to be Placed.



### Average Time in Months (days)

	15/16					16/17				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year Total
<b>LAC to PFA</b>	15 (455)	16 (484)	17 (507)	13 (482)	<b>19.5</b> <b>(482)</b>	19 (590)	12 (374)	13 (396)	17.5 (572)	<b>15.3</b> <b>(351)</b>
<b>SBPD to PFA</b>	7 (232)	10 (309)	12 (372)	8 (291)	<b>9.25</b> <b>(302)</b>	14 (417)	7 (222)	9.2 (281)	10 (312)	<b>10</b> <b>(283)</b>
<b>PO to PFA</b>	5 (154)	10 (294)	10 (308)	5 (157)	<b>7.5</b> <b>(228)</b>	12.4 (373)	6 (17)	7.7 (235)	8 (240)	<b>8.4</b> <b>(255)</b>

#### LAC to Placed For Adoption (PFA) – 15.3 months.

2016/17 has shown a decrease in the average time taken from LAC to PFA, this now being 15.3 months compared to 19.5 months the previous year. The national bench mark is 13 months or less and while within WBAS the average time for the year did not meet the bench mark, Q1 and Q4 showed there were outliers where a small number of children in each quarter took much longer to place therefore impacting on the average length of time for the year. For example in Q4 there were 5 children who increased the average time, these were two separate sibling groups of 2 and 3 children. The sibling group of 2 taking 817 days (27 months) each from becoming LAC to being placed and a sibling group of 3 who took 678 days (22 months) each from becoming LAC to being placed. Although this has impacted on our figures it is still a good news story that these children have now been placed.

Compared to other regions Western Bay are the second lowest with SEWAS 14 months, NWAS 18 months, MWW 17.8, VVC 17.3 months with the national average being 15.4 months.

#### SBPD to PFA – 10 months.

2016/17 has shown a slight increase in average time taken from SBPD to PFA, this now being 10 months as opposed to 9.25 in the previous year. This measure has been interrogated and it is clear that whilst there is a slight drop in performance, there are more complex children being placed which has necessitated increased social work activity. For example, this may include additional staff resources and extended time scales when children are placed

outside of WB. Of the children placed, 7 in particular have adversely impacted on performance due to their complex needs.

In exploring the performance over the year, while the average has increased there have been a number of children who were placed in much shorter time frames the lowest being 3.5 months, 104 days.

Moving forward, as with the other areas of FF, the measures in place to ensure delays are reduced will impact positively on this measure.

Compared to other regions WBAS are higher than the national average and the third lowest compared to other regions, MWW 9.1 months, NWS 11.8 months, SEWAS 9.7 months , VVC 10.8 months with the national average being 9.6 months.

#### **PO to PFA – 8.4 months.**

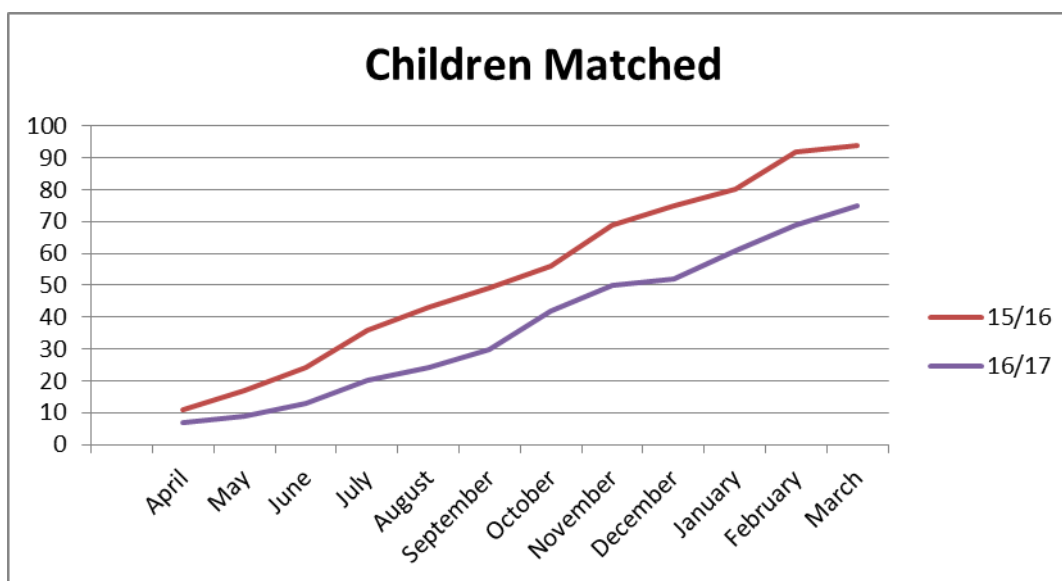
As detailed in the table above there has been a dip in performance compared to the previous year with the average increasing from 7.5 months to 8.4 months. Of the 71 children placed, 42 were placed in 6 months or less with the shortest time being 3.5 months.

Compared to other regions WBAS are just over the national average and the second lowest compared to other regions, MWW 4.5 months, NWS 10.5 months, SEWAS 9.7 months , VVC 9 months with the national average being 8 months.

#### **6. Children Matched = 75**

Compared to the previous year there has been a significant drop in the number of children matched but this is in line with the activity level of placing children which stands at 71. The introduction of monthly monitoring and local Performance Indicators (PI) timescales at key stages will assist in improving this measure and will be available to be measured and monitored via the Head of Service (HOS) reporting. However, this is a fluid picture and needs to be considered in the context of the number and types of children needing placements and the availability of adopters both within region and wider who can meet the needs of children waiting.

Matched	BCBC	NPT	SWAN	TOTAL
2016/17	26	17	32	75
2015/16	25	39	30	94
2014/15	28	27	36	91



Performance in other regions is, MWW 22, NWAS 34, SEWAS 76, VVC 85.

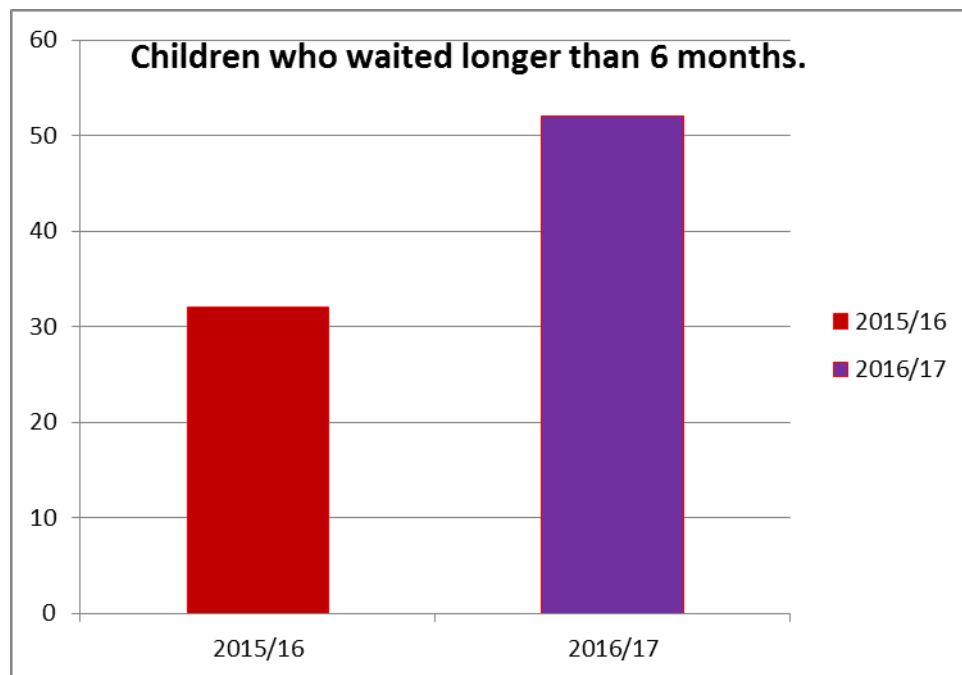
**7. Number of children matched who have waited longer than 6 months to progress from SBPD to agency decision to approved match.**

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
2016/17	7 (54%)	12 (71%)	12 (55%)	21 (91%)	52 (67%)
2015/16	12 (50%)	8 (32%)	8 (31%)	4 (21%)	32 (34%)

Performance in this area is significantly lower than last year with 20 more children waiting longer than six months compared to last year's performance. As can be seen by the table above Q4 has seen an increase, however there has been good news stories with the following harder to place children being matched during this quarter. Sibling group of 2 with significant needs, sibling

group of 3, one child with significant needs, sibling group of 2 (age 4 & 3) and a sibling group of 2 (age 6). Overall there has been an increase in time children wait with 67% of children this year waiting longer than 6 months to be matched compared with 34% last year.

WBAS is not performing as well as some of the other regions and has not met the national benchmark of 40%. MWW 8 (49%), NWAS 16 (48%), SEWAS 63 (80%), VVC 44 (55%).



A number of factors have played a part in this drop in performance this includes:

- An increase in complex and harder to place children
- Adopters to meet the needs of those children are not readily available both within the region and wider afield resulting in delays

Whilst strategies in WBAS have been very successful, for example, identifying potential adopter's earlier and working with adoption support to explore what packages of support are needed to enable a placement to proceed, more systematic work is needed on harder to place children.

## **8. Adoption Orders Granted (AOG) = 69**

Whilst there is no one single significant reason, it is evident that there are multiple reasons and some these are then cumulative. They include;

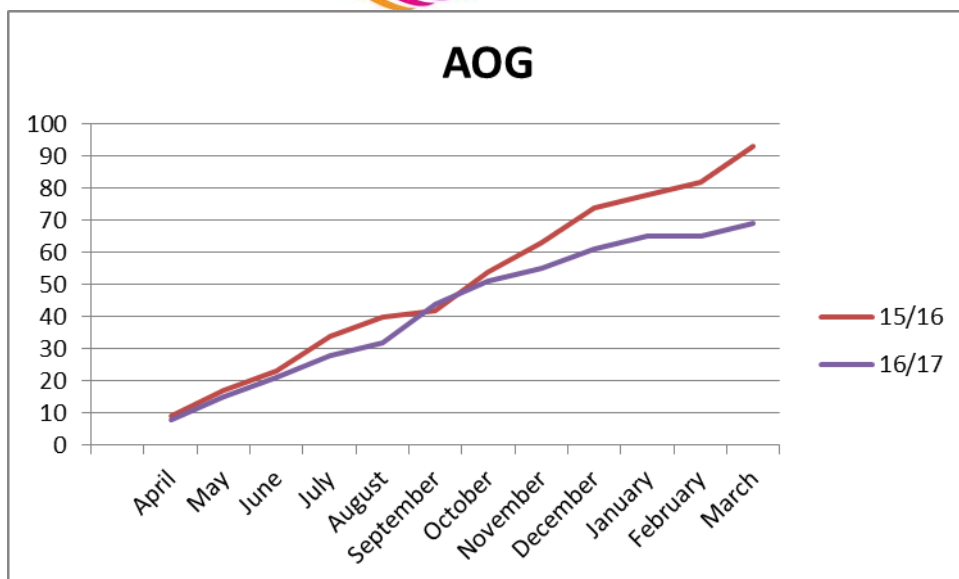
- Timeliness in the provision of the annex A
- Completion by the worker(s) of the necessary documents needed for the application
- Identified or emerging adoption support needs reducing the number of applications being lodged
- Court delays

Activities to address some of the delays include:

- Introduction by the TT&FF manager of local performance indicators for staff at key stages
- The introduction of placement stability meetings where there are children placed and where there are emerging issues, needs or potential for delay
- Development of action plans and potentially a need for adoption support packages to put in place

<b>AOG's</b>	<b>BCBC</b>	<b>NPT</b>	<b>SWAN</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>2016/17</b>	12	27	28	<b>69</b>
<b>2015/16</b>	24	36	34	<b>94</b>
<b>2014/15</b>	21	34	40	<b>95</b>





There are currently 36 applications submitted to court and are at various stages of the process.

In comparison to the other regions across Wales, WBAS is the second highest achieving with MWW 24, NWAS 58, SEWAS 81, VVC 59.

### **9. Children Waiting = 102**

The number of children waiting is rising, within WBAS of the 102 children waiting 80 (78%) of those had a SBPD decision and a PO but have not yet been matched, 3 (3%) Children had SBPD, PO and matched.

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	End of year
<b>2016/17</b>	97	100	100	102	102
<b>2015/16</b>	105	111	74	92	92
<b>2014/15</b>	101	94	100	92	92

The data for other regions is below.

MWW - Of the 33 children waiting 22 (66%) of those had a SBPD decision and a PO but have not yet been matched, 1 (4.5%) Child had SBPD, PO and matched.

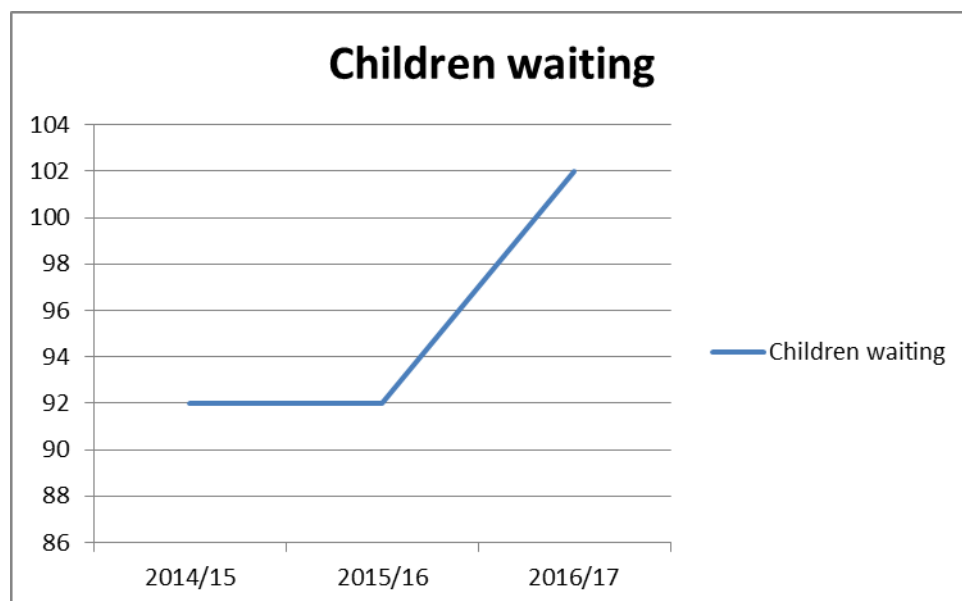
NWAS - Of the 44 children waiting 39 (88%) of those had a SBPD decision and a PO but have not yet been matched, 4 (10%) Children had SBPD, PO and matched.

SEWAS - Of the 61 children waiting 47 (77%) of those had a SBPD decision and a PO but have not yet been matched, 3 (6%) Children had SBPD, PO and matched.

VVC - Of the 103 children waiting 95 (92%) of those had a SBPD decision and a PO but have not yet been matched, 0 (0%) Children had SBPD, PO and matched.

By adding the local PIs to key stages where delays can occur it is anticipated that this is likely to improve performance in the coming year. This will need to be a whole service and regional effort. Steps are already taking shape to include monthly monitoring of key stages which will alert much sooner where there could be an avoidable potential for delay so remedial action can be taken.

Children waiting	TOTAL
2016/17	102
2015/16	92
2014/15	92



## 10. Number of Inter-Agency Placements = 32

Of the 71 children placed with approved adopters in the period less than half of the children were placed in IA placements, this is lower than the previous year but we are still placing more children within the region than outside. This has again had a positive impact on the overall budget set aside for placements in WBAS.

A consistent number of children are being placed within the region despite more children being classed as harder to place. This is as a result of:

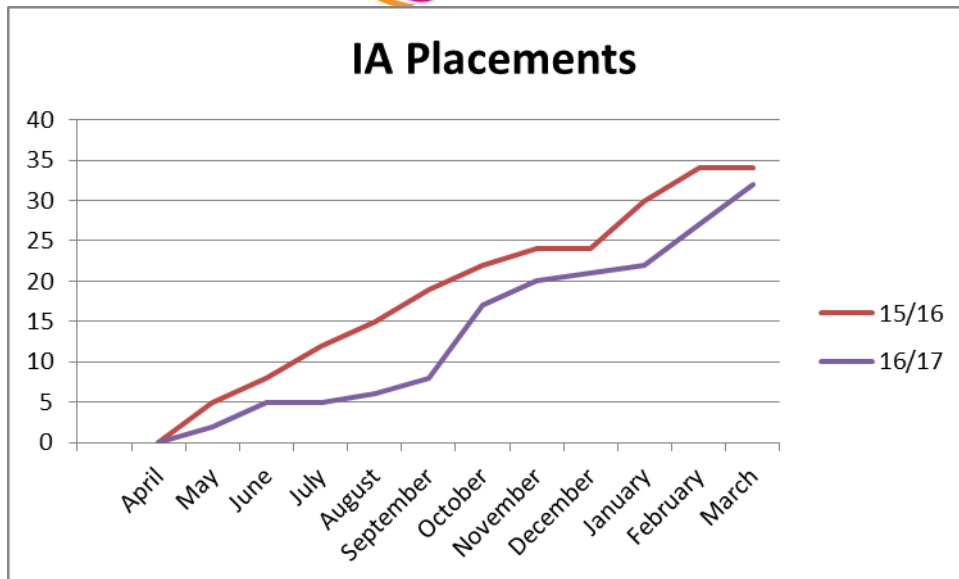
- linking meetings within the service enabling proactive links to be identified and progressed within the region, some of these have been achieved in a very short timescales
- Use of Link Maker and networking nationally a good strategy for identifying potential links outside of the region.

The challenge is:

- Availability across Wales continues to be one aspect impacting on the numbers of children being placed. A more proactive approach to those adopters outside of the region is needed to improve performance in the coming year and some of the strategies and local monthly monitoring will assist in improving early access to limited adopters nationally.

The regional/local picture is outlined in the table and graph below.

IAs	BCBC	NPT	SWAN	TOTAL
2016/17	11	6	15	<b>32(45%)</b>
2015/16	8	20	7	<b>35(38%)</b>
2014/15	24	20	15	<b>59 (63%)</b>



## 11. Number of WBAS Placements = 39

We continue to place more children within the region than externally, however compared to performance last year there have been less children placed within the region overall.

The arrangements/processes in place that contribute to achieving these are:

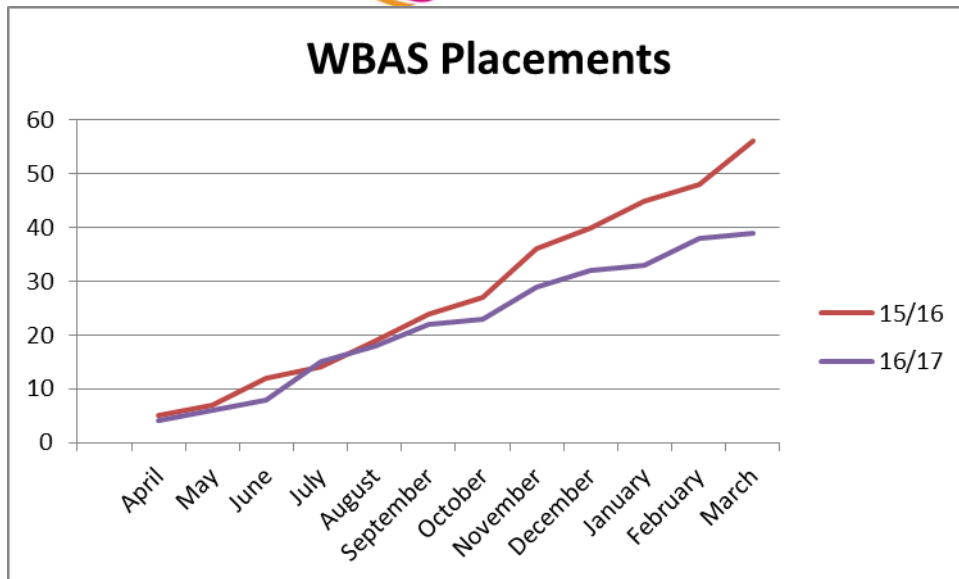
- Continued close liaison between FF and R&A through the monthly linking meetings remains a strong and effective activity in WBAS to identify children and adopters locally
- Links made locally have the potential to be achieved in a very timely manner given that early information is available and access to adoption support is within the service
- Further work within FF is planned to increase use of this forum to link and progress links in a timely manner
- Adapting marketing and recruitment activity to prioritise adopter enquiries who can meet the needs of children waiting
- Development of robust assessment, marketing and information materials
- Training and use of adoption support has resulted in a number of adopters taking more complex children
- Use of the Welsh Register and Link Maker to assist adopters to see in detail a range of children, usually with complex needs who are waiting for placements

Further work in the coming year between FF and the three LA's is planned to help social workers be more receptive to the currently approved adopters. In addition, there will be a regional exchange event and if successful will be expanded to provide a (restricted) online version and a repeat exchange event which will help adopters to see the range and needs of the children currently waiting for placements.

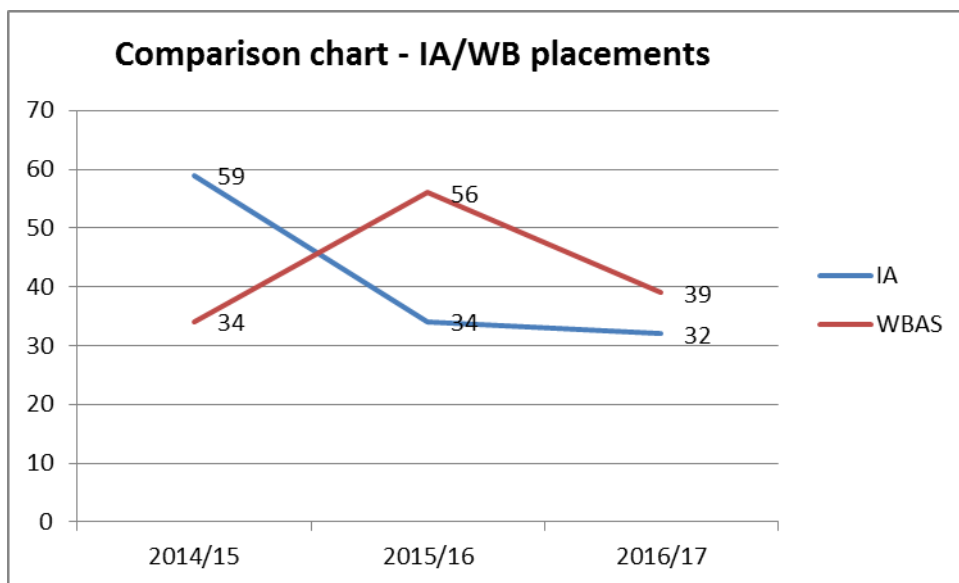
There also needs to be further interrogation within the FF function to ensure there are no procedural delays and that practice becomes more robust to ensure children where possible and appropriate are placed locally or are placed in a timely way if outside of the region.

The regional/local picture is outlined in the table and graph below.

<b>WBAS</b>	<b>BCBC</b>	<b>NPT</b>	<b>SWAN</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>2016/17</b>	13	11	15	<b>39 (55%)</b>
<b>2015/16</b>	14	18	22	<b>56 (62%)</b>
<b>2014/15</b>	7	9	18	<b>34 (36.5%)</b>



The comparison chart below continues to demonstrate that the reversal in the trend for IA placements and WBAS placements over a three year period though recognising this this gap has narrowed.



**12. Number of Adopter Approvals = 56**

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
2016/17	15	10	9	22	56
2015/16	18	16	15	4	53
2014/15	6	12	19	8	45

Performance has continued to increase year on year. Regular monitoring has been in place to

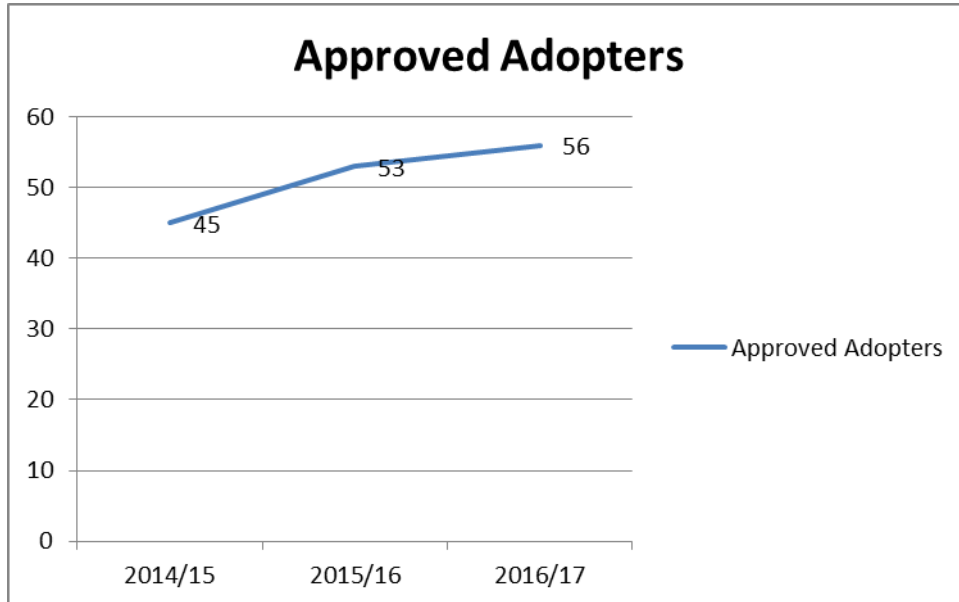
- Utilise lean and agile strategies
- Make good use of team meetings and focus events to ensure every effort has been used to increase the number of adopters, improve the range adopters will consider and equip adopters with greater awareness around the need for adoption support networks
- Monitor the number of placements generated
- Take remedial action to ensure targets are met

In the previous year 53 adopters were approved generating 65 placements. In this year 56 adopters were approved generating 63 placements, just 8 short of the number of children placed compared with 27 placements short on the previous year.

As can be seen from the data there was a downward trend in Q2 & Q3 however in Q4 exceptionally impressive achievements were made taking the number of approved adopters from 9 the previous quarter to 22.

Whilst every effort is made to increase the number of adopters, the range of placements they wish to be considered for and the timeliness, this activity is also heavily reliant on a robust, timely and proactive family finding process.

Year	Total
2016/17	<b>56</b>
2015/16	<b>53</b>
2014/15	<b>45</b>



WBAS is the second highest achieving region in this respect with MWW 22, NWAS 33, SEWAS 59 and VVC 47.

### **13. Average Time to Approve Adopters = 9.7 Months**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>	<b>AVERAGE</b>
<b>2016/17</b>	9.7 Months (294 days)	10.7 Months (324 days)	9.5 Months (286 days)	9 Months (270 days)	9.7 Months (293 days)
<b>2015/16</b>	10.2 Months (294 days)	10.6 Months (320 days)	10.8 Months (326 days)	8.8 Months (264 Days)	10.1 Months (313 days)
<b>2014/15</b>	10.2 Months (232 days)	8.6 Months (305 days)	12.3 Months (255 days)	8.8 Months (310 days)	9.8 Months (275 days)



Despite pressures within the service, the increase in approvals has been seen as a real success. In addition, the team have reduced the time taken to approve adopters from 10.1 months to 9.7 months overall, the lowest whole year figure since WBAS co-located. Encouragingly, in Q4, timescales were just 9 months despite the numbers being assessed being more than double the previous month. Looking at how WBAS has performed compared to other regions it is the second highest performing region with MWW 11.5 months (346.5 days), NWAS 8.5 months (255 days), SEWAS 13.1 months (393 days), VVC 12 months (362 days). With the national average being 10.8 months (326 days) it is encouraging to note that WB were below the national average time taken to approve. Western Bay's performance however, did not meet the required benchmark of 8 months.

WBAS continues to measure both the date of enquiry and the date the assessment commences which has, as hypothesised last year, led to activity to reduce internal delays. We are confident now that delays are down to worker absence or external factors outside of WBAS control. However, this will continue to be monitored on a monthly and quarterly basis.

#### **14. Numbers of Initial Adopter Enquires - 175**

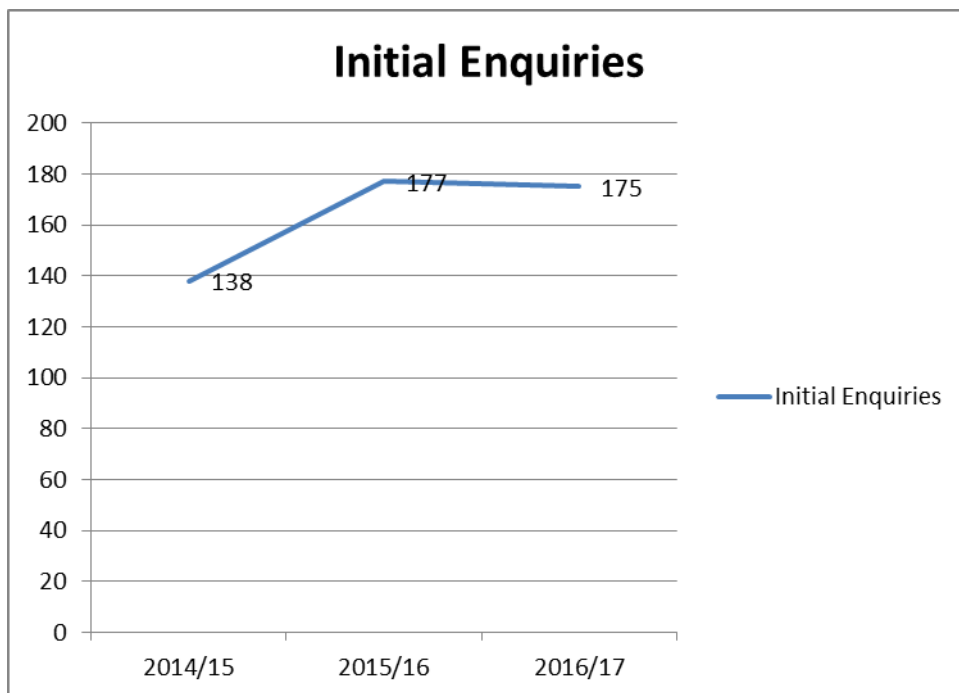
Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
2016/17	45	46	37	47	175
2015/16	41	59	34	42	177
2014/15	44	35	26	33	138

There has not been a significant increase in the number of enquiries in 2016/17 despite NAS running an extensive campaign which WBAS were actively involved in. It is fair to say that despite this campaign and our own efforts, which included improving the website (which most adopters cite as their main search mechanism next to word of mouth), holding events locally and actively participating in national adoption week, the number of enquiries were fairly consistent, dropping slightly by just 2.

It also noteworthy to point out that WBAS maintained its recruitment of adopters throughout the year where it is apparent other agencies were indicating to enquirers that they were not in a position to undertake assessments. WBAS have maintained quality screening and have actively used the 'script' for NAS which prioritises enquiries for harder to place children, sibling groups, and older

children. Even with these efforts we are aware that nationally as well as locally those wishing to adopt still wish to be considered for younger and less complex children. From our close working relationship within the service it is evident to see that there remains a need to approve adopters for young children alongside those deemed to be the harder to place.

Year	Total
2016/17	175
2015/16	177
2014/15	138



Comparing WBAS performance to other regions it had the highest number of enquiries, with MWW 82, NWS 168, SEWAS 159 and VVC 150.

## 15. Life Journey Material

Table 1.	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
No. of children presented to panel for matching	11	18	19	22	70
No. of children where evidence of LJM materials/direct work undertaken.	5	1	1	11	18

Table 2.	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
No. children who had a 2 <sup>nd</sup> adoption review in the quarter.	27	12	14	29	82
No. children placed for adoption in the quarter where life journey material has been provided to adopters by the time of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> adoption review.	11 (41%)	7 (58%)	1 (7%)	6 (21%)	25 (31%)

The national target for this performance measure is 75% of children who receive life journey material by the 2<sup>nd</sup> adoption review. Performance in the region did not meet this required target for the year, the average being 31%. While the first 6 months of the year was showing some improved performance it is still lower than the average for the previous year which was 55%. A variety of measures/actions have been undertaken across the region in partnership with the 3 local authorities to influence improvements to performance related to life story work. These include the following

- Within two Authorities life story work project groups have been established
- Standards for life journey work have been developed and shared with WBAS and the three LAs
- Training has/is being delivered to all practitioners who are involved in undertaking life journey work with children
- 'Champions' have been identified within each Local Authority to act as links with WBAS for Life journey work and Fostering

- Measures are being put in place to capture the number and quality of materials at matching panel and aim as good practice for these to be provided by time of placement
- The need to ensure life journey materials and evidence of preparing children age appropriately for adoption is being fed back to the LAs to ensure where materials are not available this is being addressed
- Development of an audit tool which is being considered within the Principal Officer group for use across the region.
- Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) in each LA have been advised they are to cover this matter in adoption reviews and to ensure it is being undertaken and captured as part of the process

<b>Comparative table.</b>	<b>MWW</b>	<b>NWAS</b>	<b>SEWAS</b>	<b>VVC</b>	<b>WBAS</b>
<b>No. children who had a 2<sup>nd</sup> adoption review in the year.</b>	19	32	58	79	82
<b>No. children placed for adoption in the in the year where life journey material has been provided to adopters by the time of the 2<sup>nd</sup> adoption review.</b>	15 (81.5%)	8 (38%)	25 (58%)	47 (62%)	25 (31%)

WBAS performs the lowest in terms of provision of life story material by the second review and it is envisaged that a multi-faceted approach will not only improve this measure but the experiences of the children and adopters for whom this is a tangible need.

## **Adoption Support**

### **16. Number of Birth Parents referred and who were offered a service.**

<b>2015/16</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Referred.</b>	38	17	51	35	141
<b>Offered a service.</b>	38	17	51	35	141

<b>2016/17</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>	<b>Total</b>
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<b>Referred.</b>	63	80	68	63	274
<b>Offered a service.</b>	63	80	67	56	266

<b>Comparative table</b>	<b>MWW</b>	<b>NWAS</b>	<b>SEWAS</b>	<b>VVC</b>	<b>WBAS</b>
<b>Referred.</b>	59	18	251	387	274
<b>Offered a service.</b>	59 (100%)	18 (100%)	251 (100%)	386 (99%)	266 (97%)

There were a number of birth parents whose whereabouts were not known at the time the service received the referral and this impacted on the figures shown. Our performance in relation to those birth parents who take up a service is very low with only 23 taking up a service in the year this being 8.6% and significantly below the national bench mark of 50%. It has become evident that in both the FF and AS functions there has potentially been some under reporting in this area, to address this the IT system has been revised to ensure that the first contact from a birth parent is recorded both pre and post order. This has recently been refined further to differentiate between the number of birth mothers and birth fathers who take up the service.

In the coming year a number of strategies are proposed to further improve performance in this area and these include:

- Providing training to staff on how to log birth parent take up of a service
- Improving the letter sent to birth parents to ensure the wording is more inviting
- Active engagement by the FF function to try and log their efforts to engage birth parents.

**17. Number and Percentage of children placed for adoption that has had an assessment for adoption support, the plan has been discussed by adopters.**

<b>2015/16</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>No. who have had an assessment.</b>	20	23	21	26	90
<b>Plan has been discussed.</b>	20 (100%)	23 (100%)	21 (100%)	26 (100%)	90

2016/17	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
<b>No. who have had an assessment.</b>	13	15	23	18	69
<b>Plan has been discussed.</b>	13 (100%)	15 (100%)	23 (100%)	18 (100%)	69 (100%)

For this measure, 100% of children placed have an adoption support plan in place at the time of matching panel, in preparation for the placement for adoption. In every case, the support plan is shared with adopters and they are consulted on the content

## 17. Adoption Support Referrals.

This is new PI data that has been added to the NAS PI framework from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Number of other birth parents who took up a service in quarter</b>	8	5	4	4
<b>Number of requests for an assessment for post adoption support from birth siblings in quarter</b>	3	4	0	1
<b>Number of requests for an assessment for post adoption support from other adults (relatives/former guardians) affected by the adoption of a particular child in quarter</b>	5	9	8	0

The figures above for three of the adoption support measures demonstrate that the service has improved its method of categorising the type of referral for post adoption support. However, it is believed that in AS function, there has been some under reporting in this area. For example, in working with birth parents around letterbox, we have recorded this as one referral against, usually the birth mother whereas we are aware that birth fathers or siblings for example are also contained in that work but not counted.

In the coming year the AS function will be working more closely with FF and neighbouring regional services to improve the amount of services and information for birth parents. This will include:

- providing training to staff on how to log birth parent take up of a service
- Improving the information for birth parents to ensure the wording is more inviting

- Working with colleagues in two neighbouring regions to explore the feasibility and viability of birth parent support groups.

In terms of the information we have captured to date it appears to be a consistent picture in terms of birth parents contacting the service for support and in all cases this was around dormant letterbox cases, where help was needed to come to terms with loss and to engage in letterbox. In the coming year the service needs to work towards developing this further as part of the adoption support team, offering a more proactive approach rather than reacting to self-referrals.

Where letterbox is set up within the FF function, their intention to be more proactive may improve the take up of services more generally by birth parents around adoption support. In addition, the new manner in which letterbox is now managed, namely an identified worker per case will enable the team to be more proactive. They will be able to follow up on dormant cases or inactive new cases where the FF has not been able to engage families, to try and re-instate letterbox between siblings, this will have the impact of encouraging more take up across a range of services for birth families.

<b>Comparative Chart</b>	<b>MWW</b>	<b>NWAS</b>	<b>SEWAS</b>	<b>VVC</b>	<b>WBAS</b>
<b>Number of other birth parents who took up a service in quarter</b>	12	7	67	39	21
<b>Number of requests for an assessment for post adoption support from birth siblings in quarter</b>	0	4	21	2	8
<b>Number of requests for an assessment for post adoption support from other adults (relatives/former guardians) affected by the adoption of a particular child in quarter</b>	13	2	3	2	22

## 18. Birth Records and Intermediary Services Referrals.

Again this is new PI data that has been added to the NAS PI framework from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Number of requests for access to birth records in quarter (BRC)</b>	12	5	17	11
<b>Number of requests for Intermediary Services (IS) in quarter</b>	2	6	5	5

There has been considerable work undertaken on reviewing how Birth Record Counselling (BRC) and Intermediary Services (IS) cases have been managed. Improved processing and monitoring of cases has enabled the manager of AS to fully gauge the quantity of work coming into the service. There has been a small drop in Q 4 of those applying for BRC from 17 to 11. However, over the year there have been a total of 45 requests for this service. This is considerably higher than last year and, now that these numbers are being recorded more robustly, it is possible to plan work and mobilise resources more effectively reducing the time people wait for a service.

In relation to IS this is a consistent picture throughout the year, with the same number of referrals in Q4 as in the previous quarter. There were a total of 18 referrals for IS over the year and as above, it is now possible to plan more robustly how we deploy services to meet demand.

	MWW	NWAS	SEWAS	VVC	WBAS
<b>Number of requests for access to birth records in quarter</b>	39	48	64	59	45
<b>Number of requests for Intermediary Services (IS) in quarter</b>	24	24	20	20	23

Date of report 8<sup>th</sup> May 2017  
Revised 18<sup>th</sup> May 2017