



GWASANAETH MABWYSIADU
Bae'r Gorllewin
Western Bay
ADOPTION SERVICE



Quality of Service

Review

April - September 23/24





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ADOPTION SERVICE



Quality of Service Review

1 April - 30 September 2023



National
Adoption
Service



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1. Introduction

The requirement to provide six monthly reviews of the Adoption Service is set out in Regulation 39 of The Local Authority Adoption Services (Wales) Regulations 2019. The aim of this report is to bring into one document a presentation and analysis of the activity of each of the local authority adoption agencies, operating as a regional service. In addition, Section 15 (c) of The Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015 sets out the responsibilities of regional collaborative to report to the Director of Operations for the National Adoption Service on a quarterly and annual basis.

The report and information within it will be used for:

- The Review of Service (Regulation 39 report).
- Given the broad content of this report it will be used for informing senior managers, cabinets, scrutiny committees and corporate parenting Boards.
- Quarterly and annual reports to NAS.

This report is in respect of the period 1st April 2023 to 30th September 2023. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information presented is an accurate record of the activity and quality of the Adoption Service and consider targets for the forthcoming year.

2. Current Position

The service has continued to develop its practise in relation to contact and birth parent support facilitating a further workshop for Adoption services in England in London in September. Performance in relation to family finding activity and placements continues to be much lower than historically which is likely due to the Local Authorities Born in to care projects and in the development of preventative/edge of care support services. Enquires and adopter approvals is in line with the national position although a huge presence in the community over the summer months has seen a increased interest being made.



Adoption support continues to see a consistent number of referrals in the number of families needing to access support services and an increase in the complexity of older young people. The additional staff employed as a result of using the income generated from external placements has been hugely beneficial in being able to expand the support available to birth families and adoptive families in the area of contact and the check-ins continue to be hugely beneficial.

Areas and priorities agreed at the end of Q4 for future development for the rest of this year were identified below and the progress on these will be considered under the relevant sections throughout this report:

- One of the future hopes for our service is that we would be able to access respite for our adoptive families.
- Re-modelling of the service to align with the available budget, a forward look at the service over the next 1, 3 and 5 years.
- Further embedding of the GPG's.
- To increase the number of approved adopters to 40 next year. To ensure a continued marketing focus in each of the LA areas.
- Further Implement the BUSS model of sensory processing and start the 10 week sensory course.
- Partnership with Foster Wales at local and regional level.
- High visibility at local and national events.
- To continue to roll out the Understanding the Child Day as part of the transition service, increasing the confidence of the family finding team to grow capacity in the service.





- Review all Letterbox post 18. We will contact all adopters when their child reaches 17 to ask adopters and young person if they would like to continue letterbox post 18, this can continue until age 25.
- Invite all adopters with active letterbox to a workshop to look at contact issues post 18. This will be an opportunity to check in with adopters to see if there are any Life journey issues which need to be addressed.
- Workshop/advice to birth parents when their child reaches 18. There has been an increase in birth parents making contact with the letterbox team to request contact with their child who has reached 18.

3. Staffing



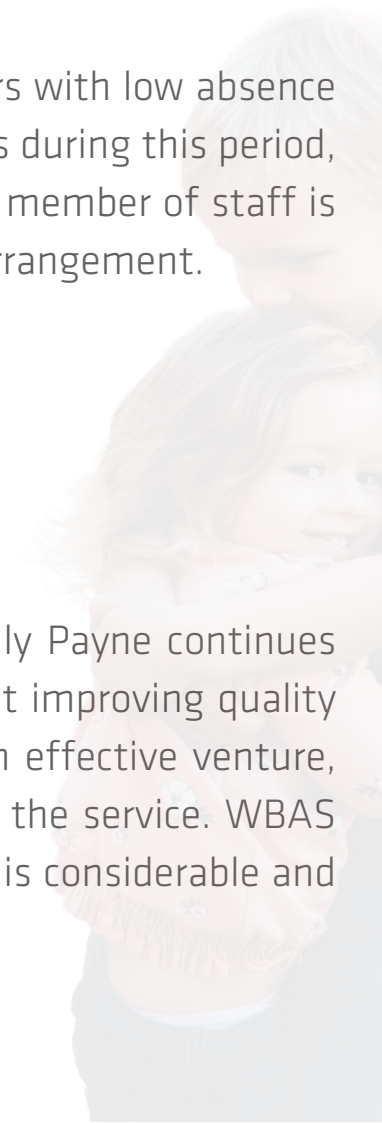
Staffing has remained fairly stable throughout the last two quarters with low absence rates, only two member of staff has remained on long term sickness during this period, a third person has recently returned to work. One business support member of staff is on maternity leave. This post is being backfilled with a temporary arrangement.

4. Adoption Panel



Membership

The support of both Medical Advisors Dr Peter Barnes and Dr Emily Payne continues with both joining the service in regular interface meetings aimed at improving quality and timeliness of documentation used for panel. This has been an effective venture, utilising the expertise of the Medical Advisors to shape practice in the service. WBAS recognises that the support and service both provide to the service is considerable and the service is fortunate in the flexibility that the MA's provide.





Panel Training and Development

All Panel members have had an appraisal and the themes from these appraisals will be shared at one of the quarterly Business meetings held with panel members. Panel members have been offered training on safeguarding.

Adoption Panel Activity

Panel continues to have a central list of members and several new panel members have been recruited to further increase the diversity of panel members. Panel has continued on a virtual basis and discussions are ongoing about a potential move to a hybrid arrangement in the forthcoming months. Work will now start on recruiting Councillors to panel to ensure that panel has representation that can change and shape the future of adoption.

Number of Panels held

	Period 1st April -30th September 2023
Number of Planned Panels held	20
Number of Panels cancelled due to lack of quoracy	0
Number of Panels cancelled for other reasons*	6 panels were cancelled due to not having cases to discuss





5. Children

Performance in relation to Twin-tracking/matching and Placement

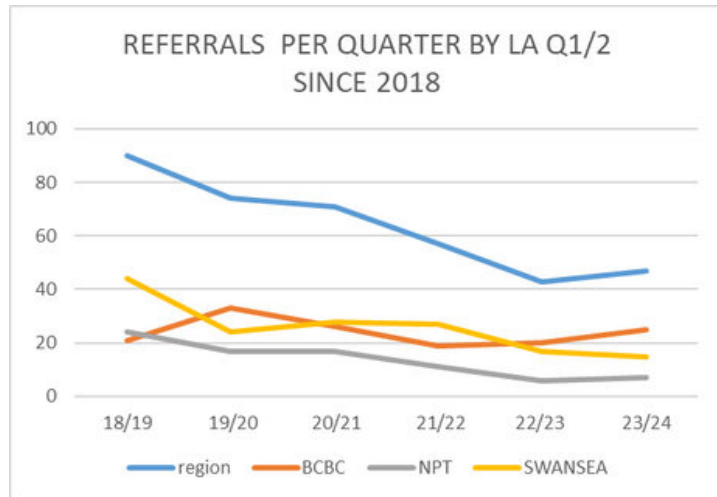
Referrals and Placement Orders

Overall trend for twin-tracking referrals and POG comparing Q1 over the three previous years.

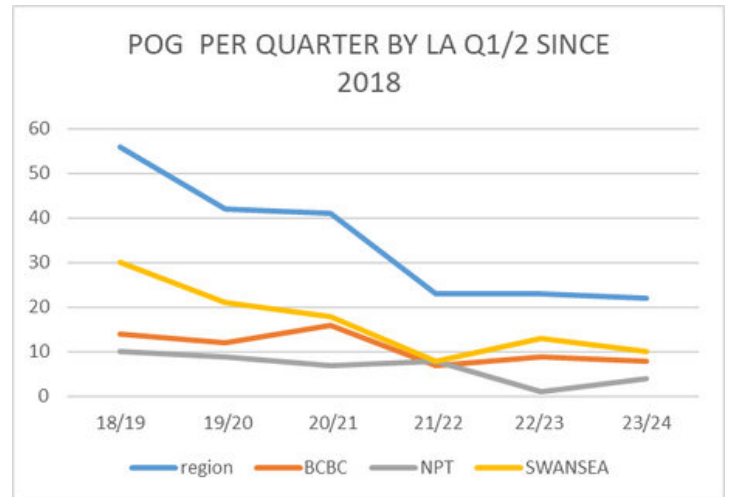
	Q1 - Q2 2018/19	Q1 - Q2 2019/20	Q1 - Q2 2020/21 LOCKDOWN	Q1 - Q2 2021/22	Q1 - Q2 2022/23	Q1 - Q2 2023/24
Number of Referrals	90 BCBC 21 NPT 24 SWN 44	74 BCBC 33 NPT 17 SC 24	71 BCBC 26 NPT 17 SC 28	57 BCBC 19 NPT 11 SWN 27	43 BCBC 20 NPT 6 SWN 17	47 BCBC 25 NPT 7 SWN 15
Number of POG	56 BCBC 14 NPT 10 SWN 30	42 BCBC 12 NPT 9 SWN 21	41 BCBC 16 NPT 7 SWN 18	23 BCBC 7 NPT 8 SWN 8	23 BCBC 9 NPT 1 SWN 13	22 BCBC 8 NPT 4 SWN 10



Referral Trend



POG Trend



The reduction in referrals and POG has had a follow on effect in relation to the number of children placed for adoption during this period. The children being referred are increasingly presenting with more complex health, genetic and developmental issues.

	Q1 - Q2 2019/20	Q1 - Q2 2020/21 LOCKDOWN	Q1 - Q2 2021/22	Q1 - Q2 2022/23	Q1 - Q2 2023/24
Number of children matched	33	34	34	11 BCBC 5 NPT 1 SWN 5	22 BCBC 8 NPT 6 SWN 8
No of children placed	44	32	28	11 BCBC 5 NPT 1 SWN 5	19 BCBC 6 NPT 5 SWN 8

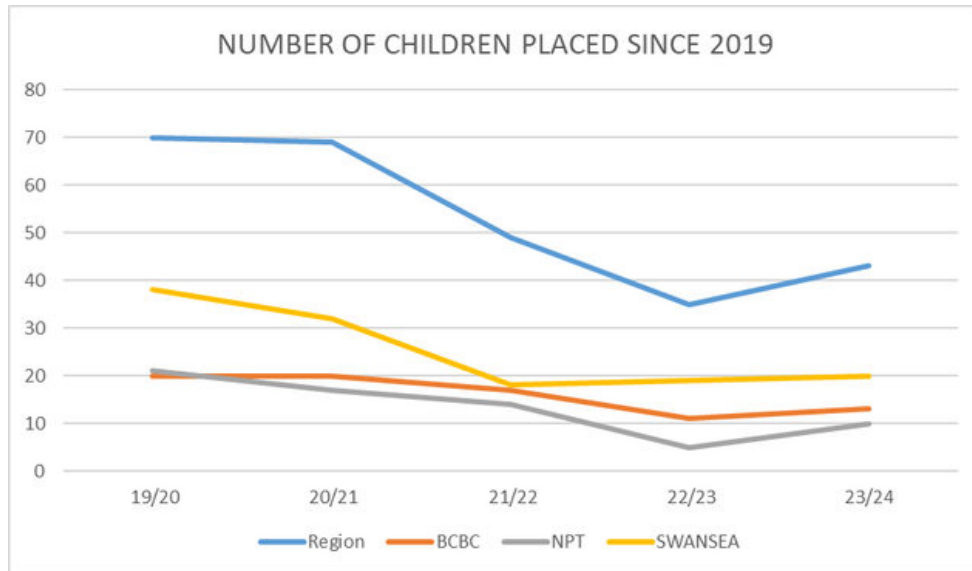


	Q1 - Q2 2019/20	Q1 - Q2 2020/21 LOCKDOWN	Q1 - Q2 2021/22	Q1 - Q2 2022/23	Q1 - Q2 2023/24
Of these children number of children placed with WBAS adopters	20	26	18	6	18
Of these children number of children placed with Non regional adopters	24	6	10 (this was anticipated as 4 of these placements were agreed during 20/21 but placement not achieved until this year)	5 (1 child placed OOC with sibling adopters and 1 sibling group of 2)	1 (marketshare placement with Barnardos in Wales)
Number of AOG	24	25	30	24	17





Children Placed Trend



NB the figure for 2023/24 is predicted and may change

Average Length of Time from Placement Order to Placed for Adoption - Q1/Q2 comparison with 2022-23.

	MWW	NW	SE	VVC	WB	TOTAL	Q1/Q2 WB
Placement Order to Placed for Adoption average	11.6	16.7	10.6	7.9	9.6	11.3	7.0
Placement Order to Placed for Adoption shortest	5.3	7.5	4.1	0.6	3.5	0.6	4.75



	MWW	NW	SE	VVC	WB	TOTAL	Q1/Q2 WB
Placement Order to Placed for Adoption longest	24.8	32.3	40.7	31.1	24.6	40.7	11

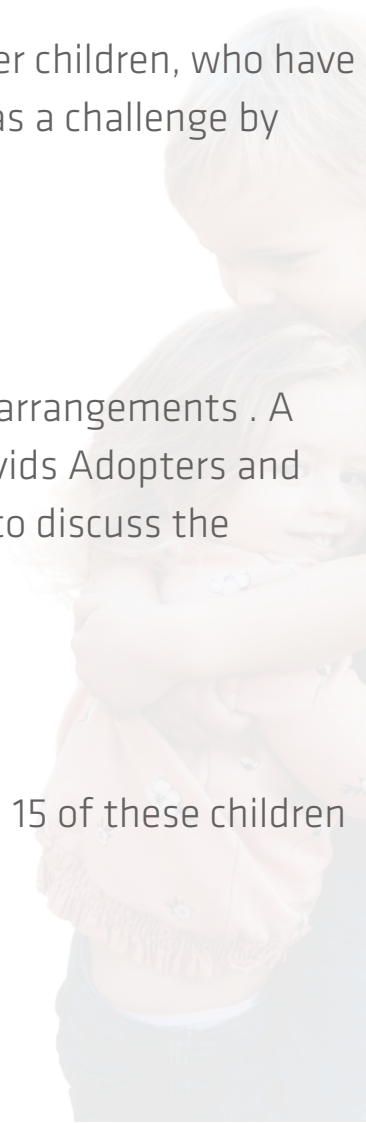
The children placed this year to date have predominately been younger children, who have been placed with WBAS adopters, only in one of these cases there was a challenge by birth parents at matching.

Marketshare Project

1 child has been placed with Barnardos adopters via the Marketshare arrangements . A positive initial visit has been undertaken for another child with St Davids Adopters and the match is booked into panel. Regular quarterly meetings are held to discuss the projects progress.

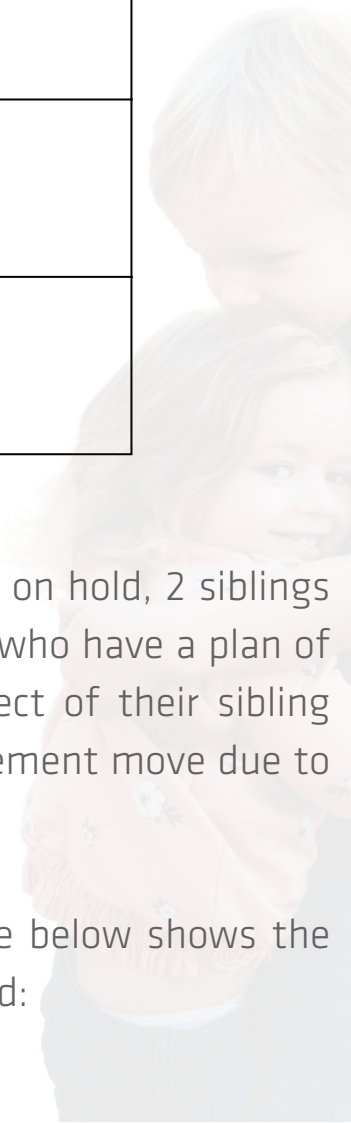
Children Waiting

At the end of quarter 2 39 children were in the family finding process. 15 of these children did not have a strong link or match identified.





	Total Cases open	Number actively in Family Finding
October 2019	70	25
October 2020	56	23
October 2021	33	11
September 2022	38	7
September 2023	39	12



There are currently 7 children subject to a PO whose family finding is on hold, 2 siblings groups of 2 who have experienced a placement disruption, 2 children who have a plan of adoption where further assessments are being undertaken in respect of their sibling attachment and a single child who has just experienced a foster placement move due to child protection concerns arising.

For the 15 children waiting without a strong link or match, the table below shows the longest time, shortest time and average time since the PO was granted:



Child waiting longest time in Weeks since POG	62 weeks (sibling group of 2)	<p>Comments:</p> <p>The care plan was for the siblings to be placed together, following the FH the children experienced placement breakdowns due to their behaviours, family finding was put on hold for several months whilst a further sibling attachment assessment was undertaken. This has now recommended that the children should be placed separately.</p> <p>There is a further BEM sibling group of three for whom family finding has been ongoing for 40 weeks, and a further 2 sibling groups of 2 these children (42 weeks and 6 weeks) all have identified additional needs with one sibling in each group currently being considered under the ASD pathway.</p>
Child waiting shortest time in weeks since POG	1 week	
Average time children have waited for link since POG	31 weeks	The average is impacted upon by the number of complex sibling groups that we are family finding for.



Number of Adoption Order's granted

The number of adoption orders granted has is in line with number of children placed and is dealt with in a timely manner.

Disruptions & Breakdowns of Placement

Within Western Bay in the reporting period there has been one placement disruption post formal placement of a sibling group of two children. The independent review report was commissioned and the report is available and had been shared with professionals involved with the case, adoption panel members and will be shared with regional staff in October.

Understanding the Child Day Process

Title	Description	Frequency
Review Referral Planning meeting	Member of UtC team attends RRPM to start to gather information about the child and to spot potential gaps in information, understanding, direct work being completed	11
Understanding the Child Day consultations	FF brings every case to consultation to discuss our understanding of the child and to plan what needs to take place as next steps	20





Title	Description	Frequency
Trauma Nurture time line/Circle of Understanding meeting	Map out trauma/nurture timeline with CSW, SSW, FFSW	7
Understanding the Child Day	Prospective adopters attend along with those that know the child and birth family, including foster parent, school, CSW, SSW, FFSW, ASW	6

The UtC team have been involved with 26 sibling groups, 50 individual children.

Evaluation of UtC Days

All participants of UtC days have completed evaluation forms (60 responses)

Question	Response (Likert 10 point scale 1-least, 10 most)
How useful has the UtC Day been?	100% participants scored 10
Confidence increase in Understanding the child following the day	100% either increased in confidence (or remained at 10 pre and post)





Prospective adopters

"Excellent, was really helpful getting to know more about X"

"Given me the tools, the knowledge to move forward"

"Great to meet everyone in a positive environment to get to know the child and make plans to move forward"

"Today has been beneficial in bringing all the information together. We have learned more about the children, things that we were unaware of and feel more confident that we can meet the children's needs"

"Really informative day that has helped us to understand the child's lived experiences and how they may continue to impact in the future"

"I enjoyed the opportunity to ask more questions that were specific to the child"

"Thorough, open and honest, human, caring" I understood a lot of the experiences the children had had, but not the full extent"

Foster parents

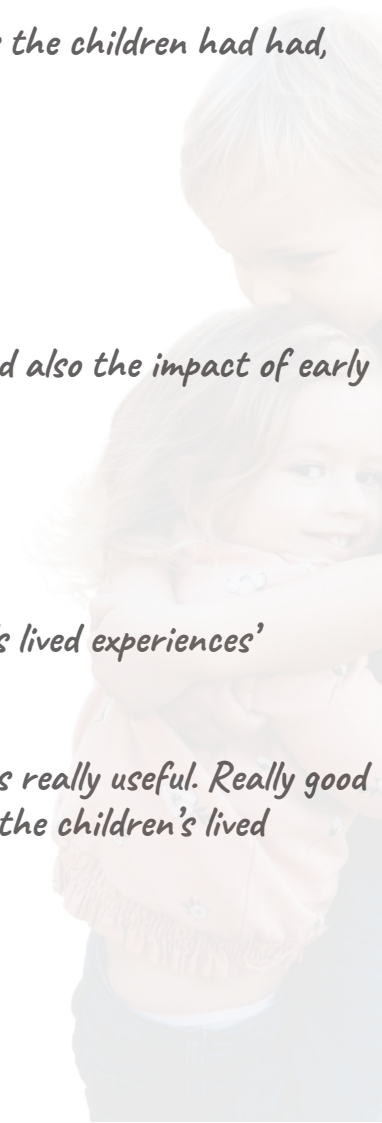
"The more I know the better I can care, I found the day really informative"

"It is imperative that these days are done to understand the child's behaviour and also the impact of early experiences later on in life"

Supervising Social worker

"This is an excellent presentation. It gives a clear understanding of the children's lived experiences' shared information with great insight and reflection"

"I think that bringing all the people together who are involved with the children is really useful. Really good to hear from the foster carers about how the children are doing and good to put the children's lived experiences in to current presentation and future needs"





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Child care setting/school

"Solidifies the importance of why these sessions should be done"

FF SW

"I was quite confident (in understanding the child's needs) but always impacts on you harder when the story is shared verbally"

CSW/Practice leads

"We had a greater understanding following the nurture/trauma timeline session so we were prepared for today"

"There are many unknowns but I feel we are able to understand them better to ensure plans are all developed with the child's needs at the forefront of our minds"

"I think this day would also be helpful after the child is placed with other professionals"

"My knowledge of the children was helped by the trauma/ nurture time line and lots of work with my team and WBAS. I do feel more confident and will look at symptoms of survival rather than behaviour"

"Today has been invaluable. I am able to take what I have gained today and apply it in understanding families"

"Amazing day. I think every child should have an UTC Day!"

MAPSS Assessor/ Lead Behaviour Analyst

"Thanks for the invite-really informative day. Looking forward to being part of future days with children from WBAS working with MAPSS"





UtC Day Evaluation

One set of prospective adopters decided, following the UtC day, that they were not the right couple for the child. This was viewed as positive by the UtC team as it was clear that the couple were thinking carefully about the child's needs rather than following the process without reflection. The other prospective adopters have decided to proceed.

The days have continued to be very positively received by all participants. The UtC team spend a great deal of time preparing for the day by researching and writing birth parents' stories as well as the children's stories both at home and in care. Participants are also carefully prepped about what to expect during the day and care is taken during the day to ensure the emotional safety of the participants. The days are more successful when people attend from school, fostering and social services. If one sector is missing we feel that the experience is less powerful.

Members of the UtC team have carried out observational assessments of some children within their home environment in order to obtain more clarity around their needs, observations have been prioritised when there is conflicting information about the child, or children from various sources. The psychologist and play therapist have also carried out therapeutic consultations for families that have found having children placed a challenge. These consultations have been positively received by families and supporting social workers. Our families may then progress to the less than 12 months placed therapeutic parenting course which builds on the themes introduced on the UtC day. The families are encouraged, as part of the TP course, to look back at the UtC day report and Emotional Health plan to help in the parenting of their child, or children. It is stressed that the UtC report and Emotional Health Plans are working documents that should be reviewed throughout the adoption journey.

Families living within our region are also offered a place on LEAPlets, our BUSS sensori motor play group which revisits motor development experiences that a lot of our children have missed out on early movement experiences. The group also support the relationship building within the families.



Considerations for UtC Day team going forward

The UtC team are due to work on supporting the introductory theory part of the day with visuals such as video clips of intersubjectivity. It is felt that this will help participants gain a better understanding of what is spoken about during the day.

The UtC team will continue to disseminate good practice within WBAS. It is evident that Family Finders involved in UtC consultations, TNTLs /CoU and UtC days have extended and developed their own knowledge and skill base which they apply to all of their cases. As their confidence continues to increase, members of the FF team who are not currently part of the UtC team, will be able to facilitate meetings thereby extending and developing the UtC team.

The psychologist within the team is also liaising with Adoption Support social workers to carry out TNTLs/CoUs and UtC days for families who already have children placed. This is a key area for growth and development going forward.

The UtC team will continue to link in with all functions within the service in order to ensure that WBAS build on consistent themes throughout adopters' journeys.

6. Adopters

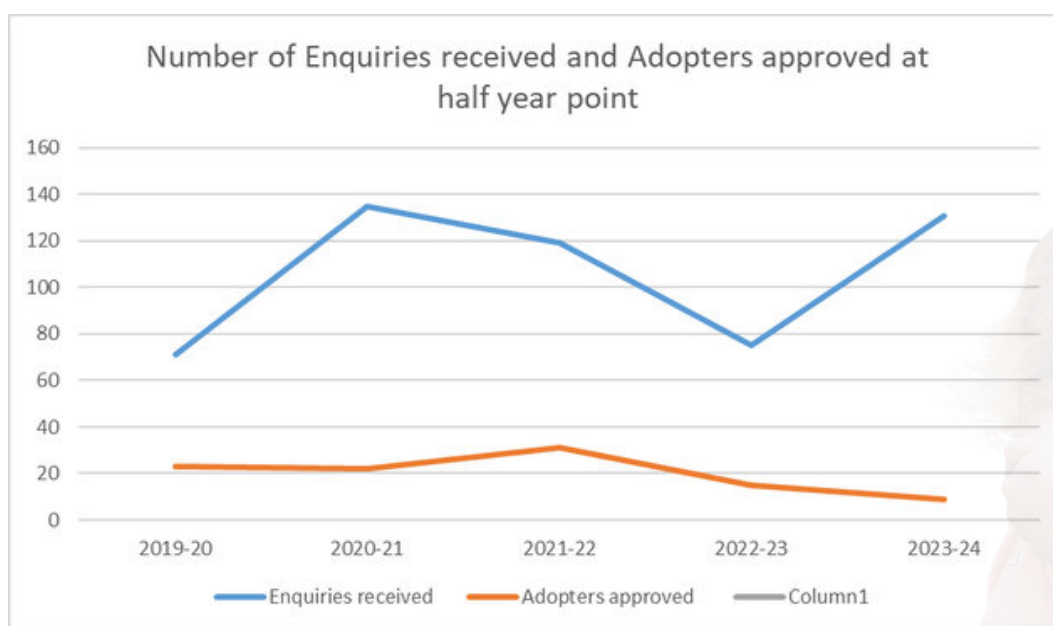
Enquiries and Adopter Approval

Enquiries are higher than the last two years but conversion of these enquiries to approval remain low, this is discussed below, and the hope is that some of these adopters return in the near future when they have addressed some of the areas of worry.





	Q1/Q2 2019/20	Q1/2 2020/21 Lockdown	Q1/2 2021/22	Q1/2 2022/23	Q1/Q2 2023/24
Number of Enquiries	71	135	119	75	131
Number of adopters approved	23	22	31	15	9 Location of adopters BCBC 2 NPT 1 SWN 5 Tenby 1



The increase in children coming through in this period has of course led to a significant reduction in the adopters waiting without a link. There are currently 11 adopters in the Family Finding Stage



Information in respect of the Adoption Assessment process

In Q1 April to June 2023:

- We received 46 enquiries
 - 18 attended our introduction event
 - This led to 9 initial visits
 - We received 9 ROI's (Registration of Interests)
 - All of the assessments proceeded
 - 4 adopters were approved in this quarter from previous quarters
 - Enquiries are up slightly from this Q1 last year
-
- We have undertaken 9 initial visits in comparison to 18 last year – however 5 of these did not progress, therefore 4 applications down from the previous year. We have seen a decline in the number of applications proceeding, however we feel the applications we now receive are more likely to progress, more robust and have considered all aspects of the good practice guides. Therefore adopters are entering into this process with a realistic picture of what adoption entails alongside the long term challenges of adoption.
-
- Introduction to adoption training has saved social work hours due to initial visits only progressing with potential applications that have been well considered and meet regulations
-
- Some attendees at our introduction to adoption events are not ready to proceed due to;



- being at the early stages of considering adoption
- still undergoing infertility investigations/ treatment/ IVF
- change in jobs/ career
- birth child too young
- moving home
- recent loss/ bereavement

The training introduces prospective adopters to the team, the concept of adoption and the ethos of the service. We have seen attendees return several months following the training. The training also instils early messages around the good practice guides – contact with birth family, life journey work alongside the lifelong challenges of adoption.

WEP

We have 2 prospective WEP carers currently in stage 1 of assessment:

- 1 set of applicants are in stage 1 (checks and references stage)
- 1 set of applicants are in stage 2 due to attend panel in September, they will then need to attend fostering panel within 8 weeks of approval

We have two sets of approved adopters wishing to consider WEP:

- 1 applicant is being assessed by the support of fostering due to attend panel in August/ September (due to updated checks)
- The other set of adopters have been recently matched and withdrawn from considering WEP

We discuss WEP at every introduction to adoption event and preparation training

We hold a separate WEP intro session should applicants wish to consider WEP

I meet monthly with the Swansea fostering manager to discuss allocations, fostering prep training and panel dates.





In Q2 July 2023 to September 2023

We received 82 enquiries (Bridgend 10 NPT 14 Swansea 23)

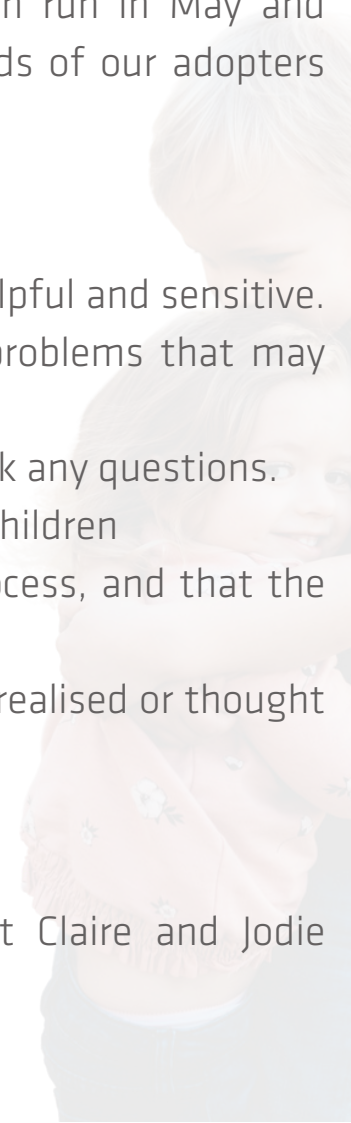
- 23 attended our introduction event
- This led to 11 initial visits
- We received 5 ROI's (Registration of Interests) – some we are still awaiting
- All of the assessments are likely to proceed
- 5 adopters were approved in this quarter from previous quarters

Family and Friends Training

Two face to face Family and friends training workshops have been run in May and September. A total of 31 siblings, aunts, cousins, parents and friends of our adopters have attended.

Feedback includes:

- Very professional and friendly sessions provided by J & C. Very helpful and sensitive. Reassured us regarding adoption process and possible issues/problems that may arise.
- The presenters were very friendly and professional. Felt able to ask any questions.
- It covered both birth parents, adoptive parents and above all the children
- It was nice to have our eyes opened to what happens in the process, and that the safety of everyone is important
- I used to think adopting was a simple straight procedure, I never realised or thought about the trauma that the child/family may go through
- Fantastic, really explained a lot that I didn't understand before
- Superb presentations, incredible breadth of knowledge
- Very useful and informative day – it triggered questions but Claire and Jodie answered all.





- A very useful day and a sound preparation for my role as an adoptive grandparent.
- Course very interesting (bit intense now and again!). So pleased I was able to attend

Non Agency – Step Parent/ Non Relative Applications

	2021/22 Q1/Q2	2022/23 Q1/Q2	2023/24 Q1/Q2
Number of Referrals	25 BCBC 2 NPT 8 SWN 11	27 BCBC 11 NPT 9 SWN 7	15 BCBC 3 NPT 7 SWN 5

The table above shows a decrease in the number of referrals received. These referrals are dealt with immediately and passed through a triage type system which has been effective in considering early on whether they are appropriate referrals. There are no non agency cases awaiting allocation.

7. Advertising and Marketing

Firmly rooted in Spring our marketing engagement and community work intensified as we entered April. Firstly though we supported the launch of the adopted young person's take-over episode of the Truth Be Told: Adoption Stories podcast. Young people shared their experiences visually and in audio on how adoption has shaped their identity - the podcast generally receiving rave reviews, 1000's of listens and views, and most recently, picking up silver at the prestigious British Podcasting Awards Parenting Category.



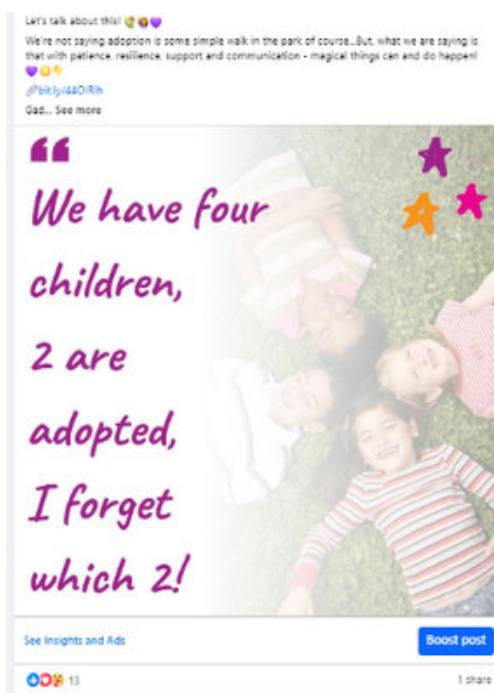
WBAS are proud to have played our part in the development of the product.



In-house social media has also been a big focus alongside our physical engagement work with mini-campaigns such as #AdoptionHeartWarmers #TouchBaseTuesday receiving excellent engagement and motivation and creating points of difference in our service - driving visitors to our information events and website. Engagement levels on our social media continue to be the highest in our sector in Wales.



Back to our family community and our Adoption Celebration Hearing Days where we held events for families who missed out on a court hearing due to covid were a massive success. We struggled to deal with the size of the response from families at times, but seeing the tears, emotion and what this meant to parents made all the hard work with it.



We simulated the court environment with a video from the judges being played in council chambers etc and had full support from services heads and councillors etc - making this an extra special occasion. Full media documentation of the events again meant that we had unprecedented levels of engagements on our channels and excellent rates of visitors of to our website. Events like this are key in creating a perception of value in the service and creating invaluable word of mouth marketing. We meanwhile continued being out and about in the community by attending our commercial partners Bridgend Ravens RFC last game of the season against Swansea RFC.



We also took up an opportunity to utilise some new sponsor space on the team jerseys which be seen in the pictures Anecdotally, and as part of a wider marketing mix, the partnership is proving fruitful as enquiries from the county are consistently higher than the previous periods when didn't do this activity. We finished off April at the Swansea Pride Festival – generating enquiries and having great conversations with younger potential adopters with one eye on the future

As we moved into May we were presented with a new framed jersey celebrating our additional commercial partnership with Pen y Bont FC Academies. The jersey is now placed alongside our framed jersey from the Ravens in Tregelles Court. Spreading our presence over our local authority areas we had a great time with local families in the sun at the Margam Park International Kite Festival. June we supported NAS at the Cardiff Pride, this is one of 3 Prides for the service - marking it as a key event in our calendar and a big commitment from us to serve our LGBTQ+ communities across South Wales.

We also continued to create in-house engaging online content during this period such as our First Father's Day Blog. We also updated our branding with a fresh new look which can be seen encapsulated on our well received new information pack.



Summer brought it with the arrival of our long awaited WBAS Summer Party for adopters. Again we had great feedback on this event – with adopters particularly satisfied with how self-contained and safe everything felt with plenty of varied activities on offer. It was such a success that we are returning to the venue for our Christmas Party!

Meanwhile our third and final Pride of the year was the inaugural NPT Pride at Aberavon Seafront!



The height of summer brought our key regional outreach event of the year in the shape of the Wales National Air Show in Swansea Bay. Investment in a newly branded gazebo, merchandise, and clothing paid off with an unprecedented level of engagement and enquiries from the two days! Behind the scenes this brand refresh has expanded and developed. New outdoor advertising in the form of long term roundabout signs and mobile bridge banners has increased our public exposure alongside our event engagement work. Part of a wider integrated marketing mix the website has also been updated in English and Welsh as the centre piece of the mix.



All of these elements and touch points work together in funnelling a constant stream of enquiries and attendees at our information sessions. It's difficult to single out one activity or advert as most effective as each process plays its part in the wider mix. This is modern marketing and our investment in this has paid dividends on the 'front door' this summer in terms of the number enquiries being received.





Continuing the busy summer of outreach work we also attended the Bridgend Country Show – ensuring we spread and maintained our presence across all LA regions.

The start of August we began to build our raft for the Mumbles Raft Race with a lot of help from NPT Building and Lighting Services who are based at Tregelles. The event itself went well, we avoided sinking, getting plastered in eggs and flour and came a respectable 10th out of 16 despite a few snapped oars! We also raised a few hundred pounds for the RNLI in the process. Strengthening the community engagement in NPT we also had a stand and activities for local families at the inaugural NPT Fun Day for National Play Day. We also produced informative and engaging in house blog content for the day featuring a WBAS Play Therapist.

Another high profile partnership in the form of the Castles in the Sky Wales Air Ambulance Art Trail was launched on a ‘teaser’ basis during the month too. The full art trail which features an installation of high impact, eye-catching artist designed castles placed in famous Swansea landmarks has actually been delayed until next summer due to external issues – but to build for this we did a ‘mini trail’ with the organisers, with our castle being placed in the high foot fall area of the Parc Tawe Retail Park in Swansea City Centre.



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Continuing the busy summer of outreach work we also attended the Bridgend Country Show – ensuring we spread and maintained our presence across all LA regions.

The start of August we began to build our raft for the Mumbles Raft Race with a lot of help from NPT Building and Lighting Services who are based at Tregelles. The event itself went well, we avoided sinking, getting plastered in eggs and flour and came a respectable 10th out of 16 despite a few snapped oars! We also raised a few hundred pounds for the RNLI in the process. Strengthening the community engagement in NPT we also had a stand and activities for local families at the inaugural NPT Fun Day for National Play Day. We also produced informative and engaging in house blog content for the day featuring a WBAS Play Therapist.

Another high profile partnership in the form of the Castles in the Sky Wales Air Ambulance Art Trail was launched on a ‘teaser’ basis during the month too. The full art trail which features an installation of high impact, eye-catching artist designed castles placed in famous Swansea landmarks has actually been delayed until next summer due to external issues – but to build for this we did a ‘mini trail’ with the organisers, with our castle being placed in the high foot fall area of the Parc Tawe Retail Park in Swansea City Centre.



.We then finished off July with our WBAS Sports Day for families at the Dunraven Brewery Field. This formed part of our commercial package with the Ravens and Pen y Bont FC. It was again great to our families enjoying a range of activities in a safe and inclusive environment. We had semi-professional players and coaches on hand to work with the children and had support from Laura Kinsey BCBC Head of Family Services, the BCBC County Mayor Cllr William Kendall and Cabinet Member for Children and Family’s Services Cllr Sian Harris.



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During September the events and outreach continued at the Margam Food Festival, the first home game of the season for the Ravens and Teulu's game attempt at the Swansea Bay 10k Mascot Race!



Looking ahead to the next period, outreach work will slightly decrease with the winter season but we will aim to launch new additional engaging online campaigns, support national adoption week and refine our website offering.



#TEAMWBAS





8. Adoption Support Performance and Development work

PATHways

There are currently 33 AUK PATHways cases open to WBAS.

Between April and September 2023 there were 15 new referrals made to Pathways and there is one further case currently in the assessment process. Of the new referrals, 6 were referred to Pathways following Virtual Hub Consultations, 5 were referred through the duty system, 2 were known to and referred by social workers in the adoption support team, 1 referral was identified during an adopter check-in and 1 was referred by Barnardo's (assessing agency for the adopters).

Of the 15 new referrals, none were re-referrals to Pathways and, during the period April – September, no cases were closed by PATH without the family having accessed support. All referred adopters accessed the consultation with the psychologist, however engagement with Parents Support Partners and the Pathways Reflective Group is more variable. It has been identified that those who take up all three aspects of Pathways (psychological consultation, parents support partner and reflective group) appear to achieve the most benefit and adopters being referred to Pathways are encouraged to access all three areas.

Many parents are attracted to Pathways by the prospect of having a consultation with a psychologist, however attending the Reflective Group and meeting with the Parent Support Partners provides the opportunity for adopters to consolidate and extend the learning and insight they develop during the Psychological Consultation.

As previously reported, feedback from adopters who access the PATHways programme remains positive. Many adoptive parents report that the Pathways programme has helped them to understand their child's difficulties in relation to their early development



It continues to be a common theme that adoptive parents are concerned that their child may also have a Neurodevelopmental disorder and they are often seeking diagnosis via the school, GP or CAMHS with limited success and subsequent frustration. Frequently parents report frustration that other agencies (such as health or education) do not fully appreciate the impact of developmental trauma as their children do not have a recognised diagnosis of their difficulties and having the Pathways Psychological report has helped them to discuss their child's needs with the schools or health.

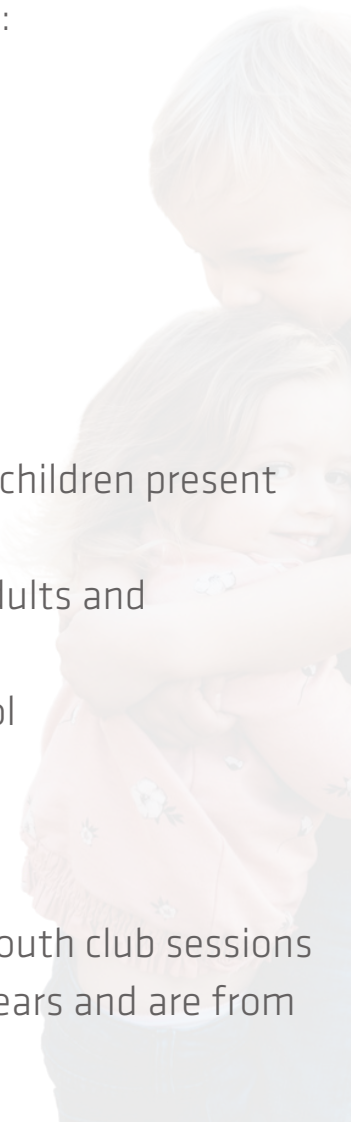
Schools work

Further schools training has been completed with a 3 schools attending the online workshop, 5 additional schools received onsite training, with 71 school staff attending the workshop and one whole school staff group. The workshop covers:

- What developmental trauma
- Brain development
- How it affects the brain and the body
- What school will see in school - over responsive stress (response/fight/flight/freeze/fawn)
- What to do when children flip into fight/flight/freeze/fawn
- Developmental mapping- helping them think about how and why children present younger than their chronological age
- Internal working model- how children's beliefs about the world, adults and themselves are shaped by their dev trauma
- Strategies on how to make the children's brain's feel safe in school

Children and Young Person's Work

During the period April 2023 – September 2023 we have delivered 19 youth club sessions with our Western Bay youth group. Our young people are aged 10-16 years and are from all across the Western Bay Region.





We have a youth club membership of 21 young people and on average around 10 young people regularly attend youth club each week. Our youth group keeps to the same structure each week which includes activities such as cooking, arts and crafts, playing pool, lego, and ball games outside. All of the activities provide the perfect opportunities for the young people to make new friends and build trusting relationships with the youth workers.

Discussions with our young people have been around relationships, school, identity, being adopted, transitions, anger, grief, death, home schooling, friendships, social workers, therapists, alcohol, drugs, family, keeping safe, LGBTQ+ issues, conflict, respect and personal space.

Through the summer months we had a visit from Circus Eruption which was great fun and we also benefitted from funding from the COAST grant and arranged various trips for our youth group. Firstly, we visited the Humanities Hub at Gower Heritage Centre, where our group learnt about the centre's history, learnt how to do screen printing and became very competitive during the duck race!

We then did a day of Bushcraft where our young people learnt all about survival skills; building shelters, making fires, wood carving and cooking waffles. Our last summer activity session was surfing. The conditions were perfect and again the group had lots of fun in the waves and were great at listening to instruction, trying something new and all particularly enjoyed an ice cream afterwards. These trips really highlighted how well our young people have bonded. We noticed how supportive they were to each as well as how much fun they have together and most importantly become friends.

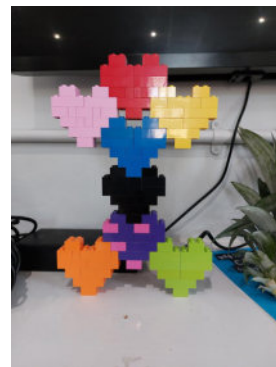
Parents comments

“Thanks Jo and so good to hear that you love having S there, she loves coming and sings all your praises! It's so nice for her to come somewhere and be accepted and she can be herself. Thank you all”



“This is the only thing that R loves coming to, he doesn't feel able to go to any other clubs”

Supporting Connected sessions run by AUK has also continued alongside these other activities.



Life-journey Framework update

The LJFT have sent a core offer of support to CSWs for 22 of the children who have had a POG granted between April 2023 and September 2023. One-to-one sessions are also offered to CSWs and Practice Support Workers across Western Bay. Members of the Family Finding Team tend to put CSWs in touch with us who request Life Journey Support.

Between April and September, at least 6 Childcare Social Workers were supported individually. Support has also extended in some cases to advising CSWs of the siblings of adopted children who have been 'left behind' and are living in care or with birth family members, giving advice on how to share information about their story and what's happened to their siblings. The LJFT continue to visit childcare team meetings across Western Bay to raise awareness of the support that can be offered regarding Life Journey Work around Adoption and also Reception Into Care. Resources have been shared with the team managers that can be disseminated to their team members.



The LJFT have introduced a new process in how we support adopters. When a referral for life journey support is received we invite these adoptive parents to workshops on how to share their child's life journey information with them. Between April & September we offered workshops covering two different age groups, 0-5 years and 6+ years. We invited 32 adoptive families to these workshops. 8 families attended. Some couldn't attend on the dates offered and have asked to be invited to the next round of workshops that we will be holding in the next quarter. Those that did attend, gave positive feedback to say they found it helpful. We then sent families a number of resources that we thought would be helpful to them in sharing adoption information with their children and we have contacted all the families since the workshops to ask if they want further support through a one-to-one consultation.

Birth Parent Support

Our birth parent support groups continue to grow in strength and numbers and are supported by a cohort of 2 social workers and 3 adoption support workers. Our groups run monthly across the three local authorities and have been well attended.

Swansea is our biggest group with a total of 15 birth Mums who have attended for group work and/or support with their letterbox. We set up an additional Swansea group held at The Include Hub once a month for new birth Mums who may need a gentle introduction to groups and for any Swansea birth Mums who need support with their letterbox.

The main group is held in the Wellbeing Centre, Swansea where Mums can access additional support through the centre; several of our birth Mums have attended the building resilience course which is run through the centre.

Our Bridgend group is held at a local church which is centrally located for ease of access to public transport and the majority of the birth Mums attend independently. The Bridgend group has 7 birth Mums with a further two who have been invited and will need support to attend. The birth Mums have developed a trusting and supportive relationship with each other which has been lovely to observe as the group develops.



We have monthly groups in Neath held at The Gathering Place; the venue is free of charge and parents can take advantage of the free items of clothing, sanitary products and tea and coffee available. We have a total of 8 birth mums who have been invited to attend group and this has been the hardest group to engage due to mental health difficulties. The team has been consistent in offering support each month and transporting some of the birth Mums and it is positive to see that some of our more difficult to reach birth Mums have now attended group.

Since April our birth Mums have enjoyed participating in various activities; these include; making your own nail varnish, home-made face masks, soap making, candle making and creating their own bracelets. For the smaller groups we have included walks on the beach and a picnic. We ran a successful summer event at Gnoll Park where birth Mums were invited to attend from the 3 local authorities. They had a fantastic day making summer wreaths and enjoyed a communal lunch and feeding the ducks together after the event. A total of 13 birth Mum's attended and the feedback received was very positive and all enjoyed.

Our Swansea birth Mums also benefitted from grant funding from Swansea where they enjoyed paddle boarding in Port Eynon and a soap making workshop where they made beautiful soaps to take home. As the groups have developed we have observed that many of our birth Mums require additional support outside of groups; we have made referrals to Reflect and Rise and linked our birth Mums in with community support such as Food Banks, Woman's Aid and G.P's. This is testament to the support and understanding shown by the social workers and support workers at group and it is positive to see the birth Mums beginning to trust the team and ask for support..





BUSS model of sensory processing

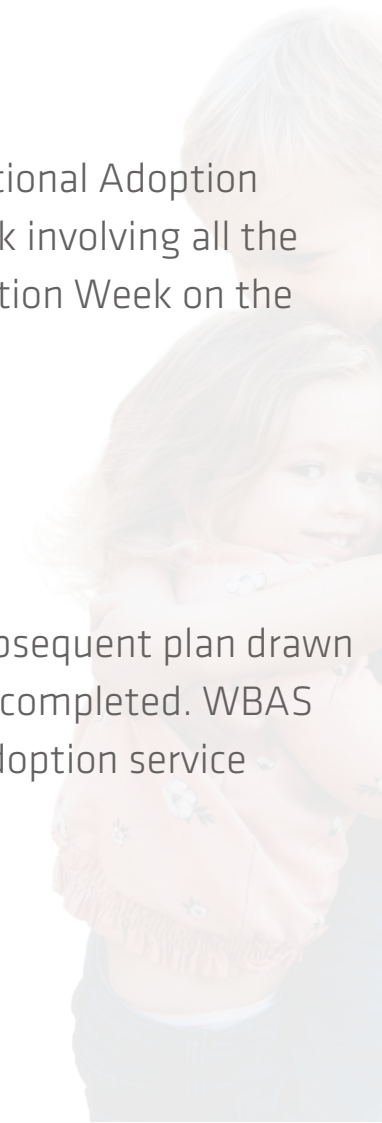
In April 2023 we launched our very first LEAPlets play group in Neath Afan Gymnastics centre. LEAPlets is a 10 week programme based on the Building Underdeveloped Sensorimotor System (Model developed by Sarah Lloyd, Specialist Occupational Therapist and Play therapist. The first group was a great success, it was amazing to see the progress the children made within a relatively short space of time. From September we are running two LEAPlets groups due to high demand, we have 10 families taking part. Thirteen members of staff across the service are also attending Level 2 BUSS training in September as we are working towards becoming qualified to carry out our own BUSS assessments and interventions for children with underdeveloped sensorimotor systems.

9. Policies and Procedures

The Service is pleased to report that the NAS have published the National Adoption Policies and Procedures which have been a collaborative piece of work involving all the regions and VAA's. These will be formally launched in National Adoption Week on the 18th October and will also be available for use on an APP.

10. CSSIW

The service was last inspected during 2018-19 and an appropriate subsequent plan drawn up which has been reviewed at the Management Board with actions completed. WBAS were the only region to be inspected. The future plan in respect of adoption service inspections isn't known currently.





11. Local Monitoring and Governance

The Management Board is fully compliant with the Directions Powers Regulations, the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) 201. The terms of reference in place.

Monitoring and governance of the service is the responsibility of the Management Board, which now meets on a quarterly basis. The Board members interrogate data provided on a quarterly and annual basis. Strategic decisions are shared with the board for approval whereas, in the main, operational decisions are overseen by the Regional Manager who is supervised by the 'Host' authority Head of Service. The service is measured on both the service plan and the national performance indicators through regular reports, presenting the achievements of the service compared to previous years and where data is available, with other regions across Wales. The formation of a Regional Joint committee has now happened and these meetings take place twice a year.

A six monthly report is available to Scrutiny Committees in all three local authorities. Periodically, reports are submitted and shared with Cabinet, Scrutiny Panels and Corporate Parenting Cabinets/Committees. Performance indicators are reported to the National Adoption Central team on a quarterly basis, this information is provided to the Advisory Group and the Governance Board of the National Adoption Service.

12. Consultations and engagement of those who use the Service

The use of survey's and qualitative data continues to be used to receive feedback from families and professionals that have experienced the service. We are in regular contact with our adopters through our closed Facebook page where they are able to also provide feedback about their experience of the service and the events that are run.



A working group attended by adopters from various stages of the adoption journey will be starting in October with a view that they can provide ideas and feedback in respect of service developments, proposed processes, marketing ideas and events.

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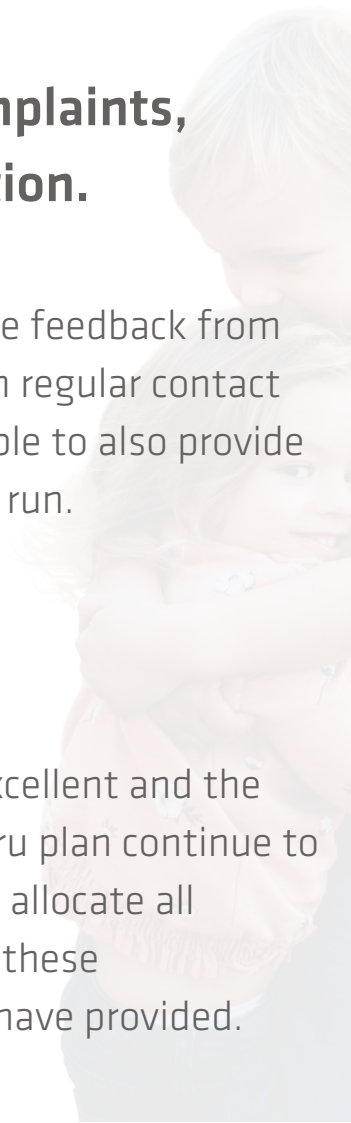
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13. Quality Assurance, Compliments, comments, complaints, safeguarding issues, whistleblowing and representation.

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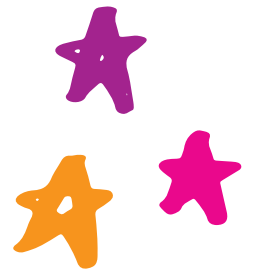
14. Overall assessment of the Service

The overall assessment of the service during this reporting period is excellent and the priorities identified within the good practice guide and the Adopt Cymru plan continue to be developed creatively within the service. The service has been able to allocate all adoption support assessments in a timely way with no waiting list for these assessments due to the additional capacity that the temporary posts have provided.





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Staff from the service have been asked to support workshops at Conferences in England to share our experiences of how the service are changing the culture in relation to contact, something that we are extremely proud of.



Nichola Rogers

Regional Adoption Manager
September 2023

