

National
Adoption
Service

October 2016

www.adoptcymru.com

National Adoption Week 2016

National Adoption Week 2016 takes place from the 17th to 23rd October and the theme is embodied by the hashtag **#SupportAdoption**.

As in previous years, the need to find families for some of our most vulnerable children remains at the heart of this year's event. The campaign will also embrace all aspects of adoption.

The aim is to demystify and clarify the adoption process, reflect the challenges of adoptive parenting and to share individual stories. The week will showcase and signpost best practice and invite anyone whose life or heart is touched by it to **#SupportAdoption**.

While the number of children needing adoptive families does fluctuate, most agencies continue to welcome adopters for specific groups of children,



particularly those aged over 3 or 4 years of age; brothers and sisters waiting to be adopted together; children with disabilities and additional needs. You can watch some stories on our **#SeeTheWholeChild** webpages (adoptcymru.com/adoption-see-the-whole-child).

The easiest way to get involved with National Adoption Week 2016 is through social media where we hope you'll use the hashtag to show that you **#SupportAdoption**. Please encourage your colleagues, family and friends to get involved.

<http://www.adoptcymru.com/national-adoption-week-2016>

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Adoption in Wales in Numbers Year to 31 March 2016:

- **320** adopters approved (+9%)
- Time taken to approve adopters reduced by 9.4% to 8.6 months
- 97% of enquiries receive a response within 5 working days



Education & Adoption

Adoption UK have produced a guide to working with adopted children and their families, which is now available to download, free of charge.

The Wales schools' guide 'Getting It Right For Every Child' is written by two adoptive parents, Ann Bell and Penny Jeffreys, and includes contributions from other adopters, adopted children, teachers and those responsible for looked-after and adopted children in local authorities.

Commissioned from Adoption UK by the Welsh Government, the booklet is available in both English and Welsh language and can be downloaded at www.adoptionuk.org/sites/default/files/ADk-Wales-Getting-It-Right.pdf

The booklet provides schools and parents with a toolkit to understand the educational needs of adopted children. It includes information on providing support for adopted children in Wales; understanding children and stress; using PLACE (playful, liking,

accepting, curious, empathy) to help children relax and it also has a table on decoding and responding to behaviours.

A follow up booklet for parents is also being developed by Adoption UK. If you're interested in contributing to the development of the booklet get in touch with Ann Bell from Adoption UK.

www.adoptionuk.org



Adoption Support - What's on...

There are adoption support groups happening all over Wales. Our website has been developed to include a page on adoption support where there is information about events in your area as well as advice about where you can get support.

Over the coming months we will be developing this further to have more information available to all those affected by adoption including birth families and adopted adults.

www.adoptcymru.com/adoption-support

Second annual report shows

“good progress but much still to do”

The message from our Annual Report 2015-16, 'Achieving More Together' is clear: we have achieved a great deal in our first 18 months and, importantly, we know how we can improve adoption services in Wales still further.

Published in July, the report into our operations and priorities – the second to highlight the work of NAS since it was established in November 2014 - shows how we did in measuring up to some tough standards.

Focusing on our six key priorities - recruitment, placement delays, adoption support, listening to service users, overall improvement, and how well the service is run - the review lets us take stock of where we are and where we are headed.

NAS Governance Board Chair, Cllr Mel Nott OBE, welcomed the report, commenting: “The National Adoption

Service has achieved a great deal in its first 19 months. The five regional collaboratives are up and running; the approval process for potential adopters is being streamlined; matching children with adoptive families has been improved; and we have absorbed the Wales Adoption Register into the service.

“The work undertaken by NAS to recruit, approve and prepare potential adopters has seen unprecedented numbers coming forward to give some of Wales' most vulnerable children a safe, permanent family home.”

The report shows that the number of adopters has again increased - up to 320 during the year - and how recruitment strategies now focus on finding adopters who are suitable for the children who are waiting longest to find a family.

The time it takes to recruit and approve potential adopters also dropped by almost a month on average - down to 8.6 months.

We also report that, on average, children were placed a whole month earlier than a year before, but that half of children still had to wait six months or more for a family to be identified. These averages mask differences across the country, and have guided our push to be more focused on consistency.

The report has helped shape our 2016-17 priorities - improving adoption support, developing a database to keep in touch with adopters and potential adopters, and to further develop the Wales Adoption Register.

www.adoptcymru.com/news/potential-adopters-urged-to-seethewholechild

Listening to adopters and children who use adoption services - the story so far

At the start of the year we agreed that the National Adoption Service central team would work with the regional services and the Voluntary Adoption Agencies to start talking with adopters, adopted children and young people while developing a longer term engagement strategy. We have held events, attended meetings and involved adopters in pieces of development work; in total more than 250 adopters and over 300 children and young people have been involved.

We:

- held four family fun day events across Wales
- attended meetings with adopters and young people
- involved adopters in pieces of development work
- visited some well-established support groups to meet with adopters and young people

We have also engaged adopters in:

- our work on revising the enquiry to assessment process

- developing a model of adoption support
- The Review of Wales Adoption Register.

The family days were excellent fun for the children, and an opportunity for their parents to talk to us about what matters to them. Being part of local events meant that local issues were heard first hand by the regional collaboratives and Voluntary Adoption Agencies.

We've listened and reflected on what we've heard and we will use this as we develop the work of the National Adoption Service - particularly around adoption support.

We also know that adoption affects many people. We need to engage with birth families, adopted adults and relatives in the future.

For more details on the events and how the issues people raised are shaping the direction of the National Adoption service please see our annual report.

We are planning to continue these events. Keep an eye on our website for more details.

Recruitment Campaign Potential adopters urged to #SeeTheWholeChild

In July we launched a campaign to find adopters for children with delayed development, health problems and from large sibling groups.

Suzanne Griffiths, director of operations for the National Adoption Service (NAS), said: "For the first time I can remember, we have more adopters waiting to be matched than children available with appropriate adoption plans.

"In an ideal world there would be no children waiting when we have adopters available, but sometimes the circumstances of the children and available adopters do not match.

"Most often that is due to adopters not being able or willing to take on the specific needs of the children currently on the national adoption register.

"Children who are part of a large sibling group of three or more that we are trying to place together are most likely to wait much longer to find suitable adopters.

"Other children for whom it is often harder to find suitable adopters have faced neglect or abuse during their early life or before birth that leads professionals to think they may have significant health and social care needs, including physical and developmental difficulties.

"That is why we are launching the Wales-wide search for more potential adopters willing to take on these specific children. See The Whole Child (#SeeTheWholeChild) is an honest and open campaign to encourage people considering adoption to come to the process with an open mind.



"We need people with space in their lives for a child, love to give and patience - basically the qualities of any good parent. If they can see beyond the issues, beyond the challenges and see the whole child, they can give children who are waiting to be adopted - and themselves - a new start and a chance at a stable family life."

Adopters' Stories

Adoptive families from across Wales have given voice to the campaign by telling their adoption stories. Adopters, Helen and Gareth have two children with developmental delay and dyslexia.

Helen says: "Our son's delay is a challenge without a doubt, but it is part of what makes him who he is. I wouldn't change him for the world."

"The way I look at it is that I would have loved him and done all I could to help him with these problems if I had given birth to him, and it is no different for me just because he's adopted. Perhaps the shock of having a child with special needs is taken away when you adopt because you have professionals helping you understand

what challenges you might face before you agree to the placement.

"It's important to be honest with yourself and with the adoption service during the matching process about what you would and would not be willing to take on."

Adoptive mum of three, Eileen knew she wanted a large family but was unable to have birth children herself.

"When we decided to look in to adoption, there was a huge sense of relief. The process of being approved and matched with Martin initially took around 18 months, but that was nearly 18 years ago and the process is much quicker now. His sister Jenny came very soon after and Ellie-Rose arrived four years later when their biological mother was once again pregnant.

"There is plenty of noise and nappies with three children, that's for sure and the adjustment when they all arrive at or around the same time can be daunting. It's not all been plain sailing but on the whole we all rub along.

"Most importantly, I have kept them together and, while sibling bonds can be strained at times in any family, they will always have each other. That is a special thing."

Enquiry into Adoption

The National Assembly for Wales Children, Young People and Education Committee published its "Follow-up Inquiry into Adoption Services in Wales" in March 2016 which will be a further driver for the direction of Welsh Government policy.

The National Adoption Service welcomed the publication of the

report as it reflects our ongoing priorities. We recognise the challenges in delivery of improved adoption services mentioned in the report and the references to health / CAMHS services, education services and life story work should support the changes we wish to make. We acknowledge that there is more to do for everyone to receive consistently better adoption services and we are working

with the local government and voluntary partners on achieving high standard of services across Wales. We are considering the recommendations carefully with our partners and Welsh Government. The full report is available on the National Assembly Website at

<http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=500000020>

Sustainable Social Services Third Sector Grant

The Strategic Voluntary Adoption Partnership (SVAP) worked together to apply to the Welsh Government "Sustainable Social Services Third Sector Grant" fund for 2016-19. This led to two successful bids across four of the Voluntary Adoption Agencies. A 'road map' to achieve closer collaboration in the future is emerging. This includes:

- the development of a joint Adoption UK and After Adoption delivery organisation in Wales from April 2016
- Joint working in respect of training and adoption support services

Adoption UK and After Adoption have been awarded a grant of £ 564,477 over three years to deliver a joint project to help adoptive families in Wales.

The project 'Getting it Right for Every Child' will focus on providing support, information and counselling to adoptive families. It will also provide peer-to-peer preventative and early intervention approaches and will maximise the adopter's voice.

The grant will be used to offer peer support, buddy services and courses for adoptive parents across Wales, such as 'Parenting Our Children' and 'Non-Violent Resistance'. It also enables Adoption UK to offer membership, free of charge, to every new adopter in Wales for their first year.

St David's and AFA Cymru have been awarded £741,650 over three years. St David's will be working to deliver a project on child centred recruitment that aims to find families for children

waiting including siblings, older children and children with complex needs. They will also be focussing on supporting their adopters with tailored packages of support and training including life story work and DDP.

AFA Cymru will focus on securing permanence for children by providing specialist advice to Welsh Government, professionals, Special Guardians, foster carers and adoptive parents. They will also continue to provide training and conferences that can be commissioned and as well as specialist interest groups that support the work of professionals working to achieve permanence for children.

News from across Wales



North Wales

We held a family fun day in conjunction with the National Adoption Service as a way of consulting with families in North Wales who have adopted. It was a great success with approximately 70 families attending from North

Wales. We had a bouncy castle, face painting, a climbing wall and indoor football, arts and crafts and lots of space to play indoor football!

Staff from the National Adoption Service were present on the day to hear the views of adopters and their adoption journey.

www.northwalesadoption.gov.uk



Western Bay

The three LAs Bridgend, NPT and Swansea have been working together as the Western Bay Regional Adoption Service co-located in Port Talbot since early February 2015. The regional service became operational in April 2015. During the first year, whilst adjusting to the inevitable challenges of coming together as three teams into a functional model, we focussed on the placement of children and the assessment of adopters, achieving well in both areas. Adoption support is, we feel intrinsic across all aspects of the

functional model and in this second year, much effort has been placed on exploring how and when support can be provided to those affected by adoption proactively. A robust and targeted training programme is in operation, which covers areas of theory, direct work, practice developments and specialist training. In May 2016 as part of this training, we hosted Theraplay training run by the Theraplay Institute. This event saw 12 of the Western Bay staff, across all three functions embark on Theraplay training, along with colleagues across the region and NAS partner agencies. We were delighted

therefore to be joined by education and family support colleagues from within the region which will help us in developing further our universal and targeted support offered. In addition we were also joined by colleagues from NAS partner agencies, following this up with a practice workshop with one of our neighbouring regional services where we have started to explore and share good practice examples of adoption work and in particular how we are incorporating Theraplay within other learning activities in assessment work with adopters and all aspects of our adoption support work.

www.westernbayadoption.org

South East Wales

We have been busy planning a family fun day to be held in conjunction with NAS. It's on 29th October near Newport- contact us if you are interested in attending. The event will be a great opportunity to meet other adoptive families and for your children to try some of the activities we have planned. Staff from the National Adoption Service will also be there to hear directly from you

about your adoption journey and to give you a say in what you think the National Adoption Service needs to focus on.

We have also been trying out a new referral process for our post adoption support services. This means that families who need post adoption support can contact SEWAS directly (01495 355766) rather than contacting mainstream childcare social work. SEWAS are able to give

advice and information and, if needed, undertake an assessment of post adoption support needs. We would welcome your views and experiences about this at the fun day on 29th October."

www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/resident/health-wellbeing-social-care/fostering-adoption/adoption-looked-after-children/south-east-wales-adoption-service/

St David's Children Society

St David's Adopter's Group meets on a quarterly basis in Cardiff. The group has been running for the last 16 years, the sessions occurring on a Saturday morning with a crèche with DBS checked workers. The group is facilitated by two social workers from the Society with other colleagues also in attendance.

The atmosphere of the group is relaxed and welcoming. Prospective adopters are able to access the group when they are half way through their adoption assessment. It is thereby useful that they are able to come

into contact with people who are at different stages in the adoption process.

This gives rise to the opportunity for adopters to 'network' and to share common experiences. Apart from the annual Christmas party the group always has a low key training input, for example, over the past year topics have included talking with children about adoption, a presentation from Adoption U.K. and most recently a presentation from an adoption support worker on the direct work she undertakes with children prior to and in the aftermath of an adoptive placement.

The session ends with the sharing of a communal lunch which is enjoyed by all. The group also provides an opportunity for birth children with adoptive siblings to meet up. The group therefore has a number of positive outcomes and we always get excellent feedback from those who attend.

Our next group will coincide with the annual Christmas party celebration on 3rd December 2016. Santa is presently preparing with his elves for the big event!

www.adoptionwales.org

Of 110 approved adopters on the Wales Adoption Register, 90% wanted just one child and 34% wanted a child aged under two years.



Mid and West Wales

Mid & West Wales Adoption Service held several summer 'Fun day' events throughout August 2016 with a combined 40 plus adoptive families taking part. The activities in Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire and Powys were supported by adoption staff, 'Llandysul Paddlers' instructors and in Pembrokeshire by 'Team around the Family' staff. A big thank you to all those who helped and organisers, Angharad Jones, Claire Mantripp & Stuart Iles for all their hard work. The feedback has been amazing! Those in attendance at the

Fun day in Pembrokeshire after the initial camp fire cooking, Kite making, basket weaving were keen to continue using the activities packs to create more fun over the holidays to gain a 'John Muir Award.' All enjoyed Kayaking, and fun in the water at Llandysul Paddlers event, picnic, art and craft activities in Cilgerran and beautiful gardens with play and picnics in Powys. These were great opportunities for adoptive families to meet up while the children were entertained. We saw many older and new friendship groups forming and continuing between the varying ages of the children who took part.

For the upcoming 'Adoption Week' 17th to 23rd Oct AM&WW are organising a 'Road show' which is being set up for adopters and professionals to increase knowledge and skills around adoption support needs.

On another note we wish to inform you that Karl Sephton, Adoption Team manager in Powys left Adoption Mid & West Wales in July 2016, after many years of dedicated service Karl will be missed.

We wish him all the best in his new adventures!

www.adoptionmwwales.org.uk

Children waiting to be adopted (end of year) fell by 15% to 54 children, of which 38 had little or no chance of a match with available adopters – 19 were part of sibling group and 16 had more complex needs or were older

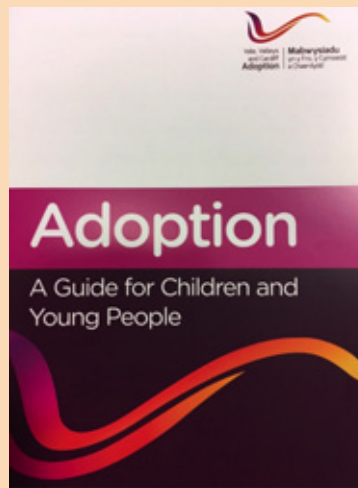
Time spent in care prior to placement for adoption reduced to 15.2 months (from 16.6 months)

Breakdown of adoption placements in Wales remains low at 3-4%

Vale Valleys and Cardiff

Vale, Valleys and Cardiff held their summer fun day in early July. This year we decided to brave the outdoors and held our event almost outside! Guess what? It rained, and the small gazebo was not waterproof but the large marquee was! The theme was farm animals, and in timely tradition Liz Dickinson dressed up; this year she was a sheep! The marquee was filled with badge making, glitter tattoos, lots of pieces of cotton wool, ball-pool balls and our Children's Guide.

We chose the Summer Fun Day to officially launch our Children's Guides. Vale, Valleys and Cardiff have produced two guides, for social workers to provide to children of different ages. The guides explain to children that birth families sometimes have problems looking after children and explain what adoption is in an age appropriate way. The guide for older children includes information about how we search for adopters, staying in touch with important people and going to court to meet the Judge.



For one little girl who attended, the guide could not have come at a more perfect time. She had been having lots of questions about her adoption and she was able to read the guide and also meet other children who are adopted.

<http://www.adopt4vc.org/>

I liked going to the family fun
day because I met other children
like me. I even met somebody from
my ~~school~~ school who's adopted
like me. I was very ~~at~~ surprised.



from



Barnardo's

Summer activities: We hosted a very successful Adoption event at an adventure play and activity area near Caerphilly, there was plenty of activities for all ages and due to the lovely weather on the day, we were all able to have an outdoor picnic together.

Future recruitment: We are currently planning a recruitment drive in targeting areas for Adopters who would be hoping to complete their family by adopting an older sibling group or those seeking to adopt children and young people from a BME background. More news to follow on social media and local to our target areas.

We are currently introducing a dedicated clinical/dedicated therapeutic service to improve the support we provide to Adopters and carers. We are now working with a clinical psychologist who is rolling out training workshops to provide our carers with a deeper insight about attachment issues and how to approach and support children and young people who present with behaviours linked to poor or limited attachment experiences. The clinical psychologist will also offer a 1:1 support and advice service to carers.

As many will have noticed, Barnardo's is celebrating a 150th Birthday. It is a time to reflect on the work of the past, present and make plans for the future.

Barnardo's has roots firmly embedded in continuing to support the needs, rights and welfare of children and young people. We feel this a positive time to continue that work and recruit more Adopters who are able to meet the needs of the children who are waiting to take their place within a loving family.

For further information please call **029 2049 3387** and ask to speak to our Duty worker.

<http://www.barnardos.org.uk/fosteringandadoption/adoption/adoption-in-wales.htm>



Adoption UK

Adoption UK has been given some funding by WG to research and produce a companion booklet to the 'Getting it Right for Every Child – a schools guide'. That booklet has been very popular and is being well used. The next booklet will be the parents guide and will contain information that it is useful for parents to have about the school system and how to navigate it.

As part of the creation of the booklet AUK will be holding focus groups in North, Mid and south Wales and we will also create an online survey to share with any adopters so that we can get a good response from across Wales.

<http://www.adoptionuk.org/nations/cymruwales>

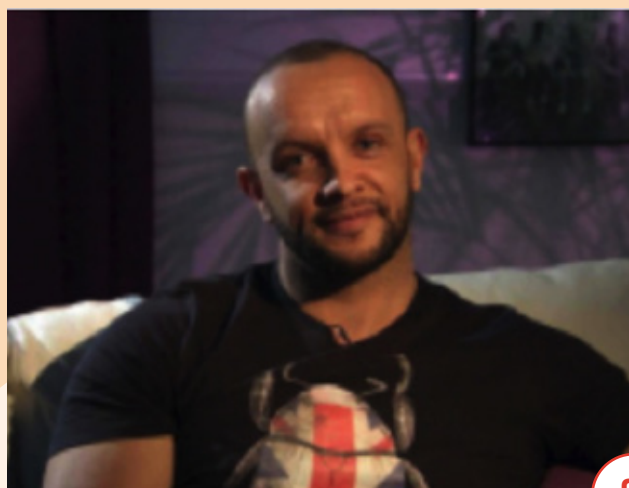
Reduced the number of children waiting more than six months from Court making the placement order to placement to 53% (-14%)

After Adoption

After Adoption's Brian Madder supported Jamie Baulch in searching for his birth father, raising the profile of After Adoption and its services. Emma Peacock, Marketing and Communications Manager, After Adoption, commented, "The search proves difficult, and the documentary successfully illustrates the frustrations and emotional ups and downs of tracing a loved one."

To read more about Jamie's journey, click here:

<http://www.afteradoption.org.uk/news/olympian-jamie-baulch-tries-find-his-birth-dad-after-emotional-search-find-his-mum>



AFA CymruNews

AFA Cymru celebrated our first anniversary in September. We continue to offer the services we provided as BAAF Cymru, including our comprehensive commissioned training and workshop programme, and in addition to this we are involved in a number of projects on a national basis.

We continue to support the National Adoption Service for Wales (NAS), authoring the practice guidance on Fostering to Adopt and running workshops with NAS across the regions to improve family finding. Our associate trainer Joan Hunt was commissioned by NAS to undertake a literature review of best practice in life

story work which has led to a plan of action for improving this vital area of adoption.

We are also involved with the work in creating the new National Fostering Framework for Wales leading on the kinship care workstream, and working on the Welsh Government reviews of special guardianship and IRM Cymru. We look forward to our second year as we consolidate our position as an organisation that spans the whole spectrum of care planning for children in Wales. To find out more about the conference workshops on offer from AFA Cymru, visit www.afacymru.org

Talk Adoption

Have you heard about TalkAdoption?

TalkAdoption is the national support service for adopted children and young people, provided by After Adoption. Our TalkAdoption service in Wales, covering South and West Wales, is aimed at adopted children and young people from 7-25 years old, as well as holding family days where the whole family is welcome.

Monthly groups offer a safe and supportive space for young adopted people to meet, have fun and have an opportunity to explore issues that are important to them. Activities are designed to build confidence, reduce

social isolation and help young people develop new skills. Recent activities have included a workshop where children and young people learnt about (and held!) hissing cockroaches, a prickly hedgehog and a tarantula to explore how they and others around them communicate emotions. There have also been music workshops and a climbing session where the group supported each other to try the Leap of Faith, which meant jumping 8 metres off a ledge!

The group is very much led by the children and young people who co-produce the service. TalkAdoption Wales workers support group members to attend and speak at

adoption events such as those run by National Adoption Service in Wales, Local Authority adoption teams and other adoption agencies. This provides an important opportunity for adopted people to have their voices heard by the wider community, by professionals involved in adoption, their peers and teachers at school.

We currently run groups in Cardiff and Swansea and if you would like to find out more visit <http://www.afteradoption.org.uk/our-services/support-young-adopted-people/talkadoption-wales>

Or contact Ruth Letten, TalkAdoption Youth Worker ruthletten@afteradoption.org.uk

