

An
easy read
summary for all
ages.



NATIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE

Achieving More Together

Annual Report 2020/21

Easy
read is a way of
making information
easier to understand
for people.



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu
Cenedlaethol

National
Adoption
Service

Achieving More Together /
Cyflawni Mwy Gyda'n Gilydd

HELLO



WHAT IS THE NATIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE?

We are an organisation that brings together the local adoption services from across Wales. We are passionate about making the service the best it can be for adoptive families.

Adoptive families include the children and young people who are adopted and the adopters – people who want to become parents of those children and young people.

There is a small national team who lead the work of :

22

Welsh local authorities who care for children who are 'looked after' a legal term for children in care

5

Regional Adoption Services that support the local authorities in finding permanent homes for children

4

Voluntary Adoption Agencies

Our Governance Board also helps make sure everything is run properly.

They are a group people from various organisations in Wales who:

- Make sure we meet our priorities
(Our priorities are the most important things we want to do).
- Fulfil our responsibilities and commitments to children and adopters.

Groups of **adoption professionals** also help us to improve the lives of children living with their adoptive families.

What
are Authorities?

Wales is divided into local and regional authorities. They are responsible for providing local services according to what that particular area needs.



Adoption professionals are people who help find, assess and match adopters to children in need of a new family as well as provide adoption support. They know lots about adopting. They have lots of different skills and qualifications to do this work. They may be office workers, social workers, health workers or any other role that is needed.

WHAT EFFECT DID THE PANDEMIC HAVE ON OUR SERVICE?

Like many, we had to adapt quickly, and a lot of our work went online. We still had the same priorities that we wanted to achieve, but we needed to do it in a Covid-safe way for everyone.

But because we know how important adoption is for children and young people, we worked hard together to keep going!

We are glad to say we were able to:

- Place children in their new homes.
- We still advertised and recruited new people interested in adopting.
- We supported our staff to carry on doing what they do in different ways.

Recruiting means just getting new people.



So an enormous thank to all our Superheroes!

- Our Adopters and Foster Carers who did everything in their power to make things happen for the children they look after: doing home-schooling, working from home and many other things all at once.
- Our Adopter Champions for all their support
- All our staff for their hard work and courage in doing things differently
- All the children and young people that coped with these extra challenges!

Everyone was **AMAZING!**



PRIORITY #1

PLACING MORE CHILDREN

Finding more people who want to adopt (adopters)

Continue using our 'Adopting Together' service

How did we do?

280

matches of children to
adopters were made
(similar to last year)

Enquiries went up by

23%

our biggest
increase yet!

Despite covid
restrictions, it still took

**below 11
months**

to place children

59

of those matches
were found by
the

**Adoption
Register**

(we'll explain what this is soon)

261

children were placed with
families
(just 15% less than 2019/20)

Adopter assessments
went up by

20%

also our biggest increase yet!

The number of adopters
who were approved was

231

(a small decrease
from 2019/20)

But it still took

**less
than 7
months**

to get approved

The number of children
waiting for placement
(a home)
has been reducing for

**three
years
now**

By the end of March 2021

160

children were waiting for
placement
(less than March 2020)



Adopting Together

This is a service that helps find and support families for children who have been waiting the longest.

In the autumn we ran a TV and social media campaign for 3 weeks to recruit more adopters.

This led to **26** enquiries and **5** children were placed.

Yay!

Adoption Register for Wales (ARW)

We are an important service that helps match children and families who can't be matched by their local authority. We also help the Adopting Together service.

Because of the pandemic our family-finding went **5** online and we got such good feedback we have **more** online events planned!

With restrictions lifted, we now have **2 face-to-face** Adoption Activity Days planned again – 1 in North Wales and 1 in South Wales.

The numbers of matches remained similar during the pandemic and we are proud of how we adapted and continued to find homes for children.

How did we find more Adopters?

- Our '**Be the Parent You Can Be**' campaign aired on TV last summer. Then our Adopter Champions let us share their adoption stories on our website.
- National Adoption Week 2020 **#LetsTalkAdoption** went online and was used to launch our Podcast "Truth Be Told".
- We are so **proud** of our **6-part Podcast** which is still doing really well in the 'Podcast Charts.' It's 7 Adopter parents talking about the bumpy bits and all the wonderful things about the adoption process.
- We made a **Resource Pack** for people thinking of adopting and put it on our website.



A policy is a set of guidelines and plans to help decisions and achieve goals.

What other sort of things did we do to get the results we did?

- Our clever staff in Vale Valleys and Cardiff came up with a new way to do adopter assessments that were part online and part in-person. It was so good they shared it with every other Welsh region.
- We lobbied the Welsh Government to relax some of the rules for adopters so we could continue in the pandemic and made new guidance for all staff.
- Working with our health colleagues we found a way to continue to do adopters medical checks.

Lobbying is when individuals, groups or charities try to persuade a government to change its policies in some way.



PRIORITY #2

MAKING ADOPTING BETTER FOR EVERYONE

Using the Adoption Support Framework

Spending money wisely

What is the Adoption Support Framework?

These are the services we have put in place to support adopted children, young people, their parents and anyone else involved in adoption to help make it as good as we can.

We give families the skills and help they need all the way through their adoption journey and make sure families have the right information to stop problems happening.

*This was **even more important** during the pandemic because life was very different and we had to change how we worked. The right support for our families was essential at this difficult time.*

Part of this is making sure all the professionals involved in adoption are trained to support families in the right way.



We did these 8 things to help

- 1** We updated our website with Covid 19 information for the public and adoption professionals.
- 2** We contacted families and offered online support, advice and activities.
- 3** **TESSA** and **Connected** moved online (more on them later).
- 4** We made new training for approved adopters available on our website.
- 5** As children returned to school, we offered extra support and one of staff from Carmarthenshire made a lovely book in Welsh and English, called "Sammy the Sloth Returns to School."
- 6** We continued to train staff about Adoption Support and Life Journey work.
- 7** We made 4 'Good Practice' guides about 4 important areas of adoption. This is part of improving what we do and modernising our service.
- 8** We launched them at 2 national conferences and over 20 regional events to train and talk about adoption – pretty good in a pandemic!



A conference is just an event where there are lots of talks for people to listen and learn from.



More About and MORE SUCCESS:

1

TESSA Programme

This stands for Therapeutic Education Support Service for Adoptive Families (now you understand why we shorten it to TESSA). They help parents and children with extra specialist support: things like parenting courses.

More than

185

families have been helped by TESSA
from November 2019 to March 2021



2

Other things we provided

230

children received

Life Journey

materials at matching

That's 82%

Over

100

families were helped
by new ways
of contact

But many

1000s

of families were helped by our
letterbox contact
arrangements already in place

We helped

over 200

adopted families with extra support, including

over 30

'Understanding Your Child Days'

We helped

200

birth parents from
the new investment by
the Welsh government, but we also
helped
many more

Connected helps young people have a voice!



3 CONNECTED

This project helps children and young people involved in adoption all over Wales.

It makes sure that what young people have to say is heard by the people making decisions to do with adoption.

This year:

- **150** children and young people were supported in regular meetings.
- **10** 18-25 year olds were involved in a YOUTH COUNCIL especially for adopted children and young people that can influence the NAS and other services.

Connected will grow even more in 2021/22 with the launch of:

- **2** age-related Youth Councils.
- A young-adopted adult ambassador scheme – these are older adopted young people who volunteer their time to talk about their experiences and influence services.
- An online advice and information service for adopted children and young people.



4 We asked a university to check how we were doing

They asked lots of people (412) involved in adoption how they felt. It showed that we are improving, and people feel **more positive** about their experience.

(Hurrah!)

It also helps us understand the needs of our adoptive families and plan for the future.

We want to get better and better!



National Adoption Service report on Adoption Support in Wales

Connected helps young people feel less alone and helps with difficult emotions.



PRIORITY #3

THINKING AHEAD

We will improve things by listening to what adopted young people and families have to say.

We want to make sure all the professionals have the right understanding and skills about adoption and are working together.

Listening to what adopted young people and families have to say

Other ways we listened:

- We did a Review of some more complicated adoption situations that happened with family cases that went to court more than once.
- We did a review of 46 children.
- We discovered some problems with the systems in place (which is why a review is good to do). So, we will be making a Good Practice Guide and raised the issue with the Welsh government.
- We also learn from adoption situations that don't go as well as they should and services review some situations. When this happens it leads to changes and better guidelines are in place.
- We are not perfect (yet!) so it is important that we always learn from our work. Improving our service is our main goal because we care about all the children, young people and families involved in adoption. We want to create the best adoption experience we can, where children and families feel supported and safe.

A Review is when we (or another service) look over certain situations to see what we could have done better.



Working Together

To ensure we were all working together we set up some extra things during the pandemic:

- We set up new joint meeting between the regions and the Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) and ensured VAAs had the money to continue.
- The National Adoption Service (NAS) kept all the board members up to date via email, which helps them help us.
- We made a NAS 'Framework for the Continuation of Services' to support everyone and allow for different Covid 19 rules from government.

A Framework is a bit like a skeleton in our body. It supports and give a strong foundation for everything the body does.

Our Framework supports and gives guidance to all the services involved with adoption.

- We gave online training for staff to support and teach them about working in the pandemic.

Black Lives Matter

- We made a promise to tackle racism.
- The NAS signed up to the "Zero Racism Wales."
- We gave training on Unconscious Bias.

Unconscious Bias is prejudice people can have that is not obvious. So, they may not appear racist, but they still have some beliefs and prejudice about people of colour. It can cause them to act in certain ways, judge or be afraid of people that are different from themselves.



Zero Racism Wales

The National Adoption Service was created in 2014 to improve services for all those affected by adoption in Wales.

It brought together lots of different services, such as regional and local authorities, voluntary adoption agencies as well as health and education services.

Working together:

- They identify, care for and support children with an adoption plan.
- They recruit, assess and support adopters.
- They support and offer counselling to birth parents.

Some services remain with local authorities and some services provide help directly because different local areas or regions may have different needs.



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@nationaladoptionservice

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