



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu
Cenedlaethol

National
Adoption
Service

Annual Report

2021/22

An
easy read
summary for
all ages



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



Achieving More Together



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 of people from various organisations in Wales who:

- Make sure we meet our priorities (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.



Local Authorities are responsible for a range of vital services for people and businesses, such as housing, social services, roads, and waste, in specific areas e.g. Bridgend or Caerphilly. Another name for them is local or county councils.

They are made up of a group of people who have the authority to achieve goals. We call these goals policies and they are usually to improve the life of local people. So they are a bit like a small government.

Regions cover larger areas, providing support and guidance to help all the different local authorities and other agencies, such as health and education work together.

The National Adoption Service is divided into 5 **regions**. Each region provides all the adoption agency services needed, such as finding adopters, finding homes for children.

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.



Another amazing year for the NAS and adopted families!

In 2021-22 we've been busy, but successful and that's despite Covid still being here and sometimes creating delays. We've continued to:

- Find adopters
- Place children with their new families
- Reduce the number of children waiting for placement
- Provide support for our new and long-standing families.

In fact, people tell us that our adoption services are doing very well compared to other places.

We are top of the league!

So once again thank you to all the **SUPERHEROES** out there who were hard-working, committed, kind and helpful. We truly appreciate you!



Priority #1

Placing more children



- Finding more people who want to adopt (adopters)
- Finding the best adoptive parents for each individual child and young person

How did we do?

Firstly, we reached our target to increase the number of adopters approved!

The numbers below help us see where we are doing well and where we can improve:

288

matches of children to
adopters were made
(higher than last year)

279

children were placed with families

That's **6%**
more than 2020/21

Adopter approvals
went up by

6%

80

of those matches
were found by the
Adoption Register

Enquiries to adopt
went down a little by 7%
(covid related) but our
numbers are still much
higher than when we
started in 2014

5

children were matched with
adopters in **one day** at the
Adoption Activity Day
in October 2021

There has been
an increase in
adopters waiting

Adopter assessments
decreased by

23%

We are looking
into this

What did we do?

1

Very exciting news!

In 2021 our podcast 'Truth Be Told,' (where we heard from adoptive parents about how wonderful adopting is), won a **GOLD AWARD** because of the great message it shared encouraging people to think about adopting. As you can imagine we feel very proud of this, and a big thank you to Cowshed who helped us make it happen. Here it is:



2



Choose Family Campaign

The Choose Family Campaign was a special project to encourage people to consider adopting older children, boys and brothers and sister group so they can find a family sooner.

We put the campaign on social media, online news, TV, trains, buses – anywhere we could! The video we made got over **1 million views**. We almost felt famous!



over 1 million views

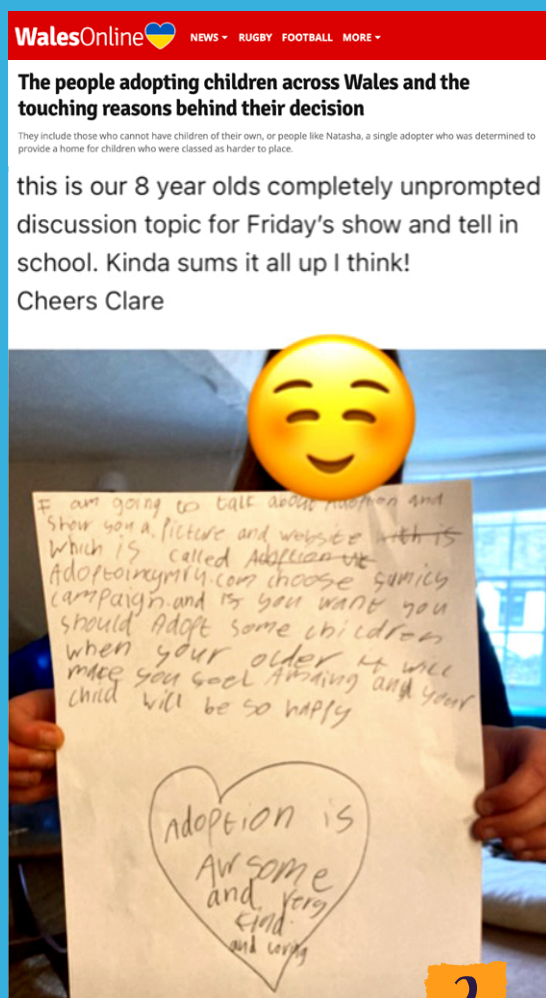




Passport Scheme

In April 2022, with Adoption UK we launched a Passport Scheme which is basically lots of learning resources and support for adopters.

It will help them feel more confident in becoming parents, dealing with problems, which of course helps all the children and young people who are adopted.



Adoption Register for Wales (ARW)

This is an important service that helps match children and families who can't be matched by their local authority. We work together with the Adopting Together service and all the Welsh regions.

Together we create events to find families for children and young people waiting for adoption.

In 2021-22 there was:

- An increase in the number of children and families matched
- We held **4 online events** which led to more people asking about adopting and we matched 5 children and others may happen
- We held an **Adoption Activity Day** in Cardiff where 13 children came in person.



Adopting Together

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

- **4** children were placed, and **23** families approved!
- We held **6** special recruitment campaigns

Priority #2

Making adopting better for everyone

- The NAS Adoption Support Commitment tells families what support they can ask for and expect to receive in Wales when they adopt
- Spending money wisely
- Continue to use feedback from adopters and families to improve our services

What is the 'NAS Adoption Support Commitment?'

This is the new name for our plans to create better adoption support in Wales.

We want all adopters to feel supported at every step of their journey from their first phone call to us including years later – even after a child is placed with them.

We want them to be able to ask for help and ask any questions any time they need to.

We use this umbrella image to show how we want to include everything:

- The support everyone has (green)
- Individual support that some families may need that is right for them (orange)
- Special support that might be needed. For example – if a child has a disability (red)



The NAS Adoption Support Commitment refers to the following:

- A **One Team** approach – all the professional working together for the families
- An **Adoption Community** – where families can support each other and get help from professionals
- **Specialist services** – families can get this help quickly if needed
- **Good communication** and information – giving families good information and asking them what they need.

Supporting schools and colleges

We looked at some **research** and found out that many children who are adopted need some kind of extra help at school. We discovered that:

- Not all teachers and schools know about adoption and what it is like for children and young people
- In different parts of Wales, and in different schools and departments, there wasn't the same and equal level of support for children and young people. It needs to be equal for all.
- Support wasn't always well organised
- That the difficulties children and their families were having in education were similar



Complex needs are when a child has a long-term illness or disability that creates a number of different needs and so they need a lot of extra support.

For example, they may have a learning disability or physical problems, such as needing a wheelchair or they might be deaf (can't hear).

Trauma is something that happens once or more than once to children or adults that is very upsetting and can create difficult feelings inside, make you feel unsafe, and maybe even affect your learning, your behaviour, or your body.

Trauma Informed Practice is when professionals learn about the effects of trauma on children and young people. It means they can understand you better and give you the right support.



Research is when you investigate or look at what is really happening in a situation by asking questions to find out the truth



So, what have we done to help schools?

- Adoption UK has worked with **250** schools in Wales
- **28** learning events were held for teachers to help them support adopted students better
- NAS is talking to professionals who work in the Welsh government to support them to make improvements to services.

8 ways we spent money wisely:

1. 261 families receive the TESSA service including 132 new families this year.
2. 233 children and young people are involved in the CONNECTED service, including 95 new children and young people.
3. 450 families have been given extra therapeutic help from the regions they live in.
4. 200 children and families received Life Journey materials and more than 200 professionals received updated training on this.
5. The Adopting Together service found families for 6 children with very **complex needs** and 6 special campaigns were run to help us find adopters who might like to adopt children with extra needs.
6. Adoption training was given to over 900 professionals.
7. **AFA Cymru** has created some online training for professionals and parents which will be ready in Autumn 2022.

AFA is the Association for Fostering and Adoption. They provide training, learning, and advice for adoption professionals and the public because they want to encourage adoption to be done in the best way for children and families.

8. More support was given to developing "**Trauma Informed Practice.**"

A focus on the voice and influence of adopters and adopted children and young people

TESSA Programme

TESSA stands for Therapeutic Education Support Service for Adopted Families (which is why we shorten it to TESSA!). They help children and families with extra specialist support – things like parenting classes.

We did more research to find out if TESSA was helping. Parents told us they were very happy!

They felt more confident and understood their child's needs better. They were also able to talk to other parents, which also gave them extra support.



CONNECT

CONNECTED groups are one part of the **CONNECT** service. There are different age groups for over 230 adopted children and young people in Wales.

- 7–10 year-olds
- 11–17 year-olds
- 18–30 year-olds (smaller group)

The groups meet every month for support and to make sure the voices of young people are heard so that they can tell what services they need.

Parents said,

"My daughter often joins the sessions feeling a bit grumpy, but within a few minutes the staff have her laughing and chatting away!"

"The service...has allowed my girls to be themselves and they have been supported to be themselves. It has made a huge difference to them."





Youth Councils

Adopted Youth Councils (CONNECT voices) held a special event at Techniquest in April: launching the new website and youth councils. More than 90 people attended.

Young people told families and adoption staff about the work of the youth councils and celebrated the launch of their brand-new website.

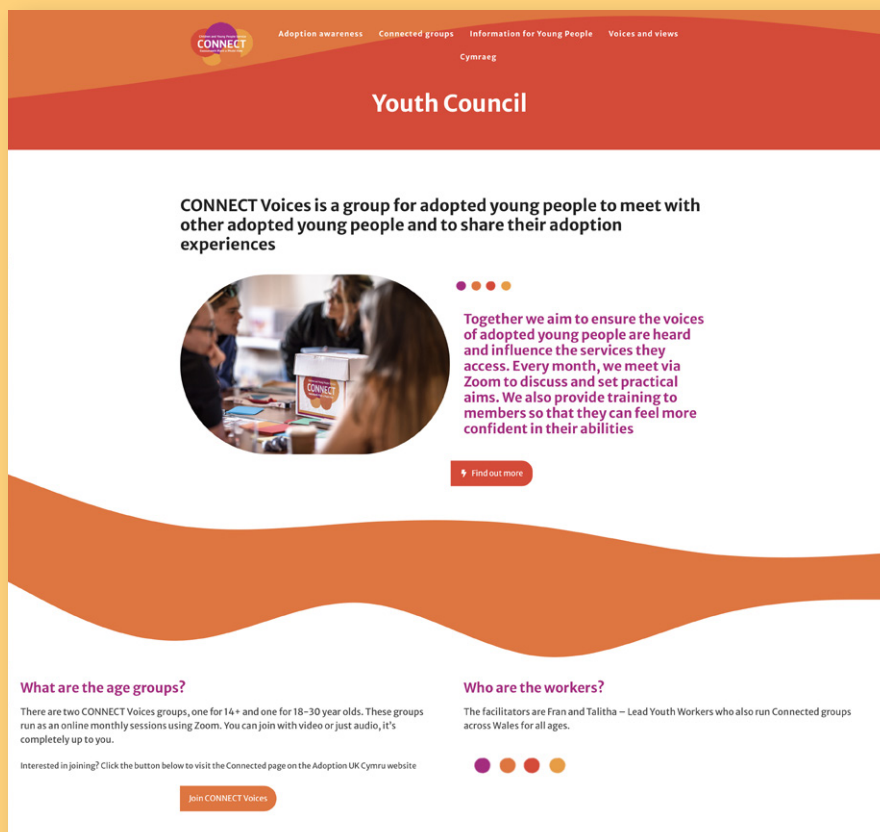
- Youth council members attended a Hustings event with candidates in the 2021 Senedd Elections, where they were able to ask questions of people from each party.
- In January 2022 youth council members interviewed the Director of NAS, Suzanne Griffiths.
- And produced the first two newsletters.

The website

This website was created by young people for young people. We hope you like the bright colours! It is very honest and clear, with some videos made by young people. We are so proud of what they have achieved. Check it out here:

www.connectcymru.com

We are so excited to start a new, improved phase of hearing the voices of adopted children and young people loudly and clearly!





Life Journey Work

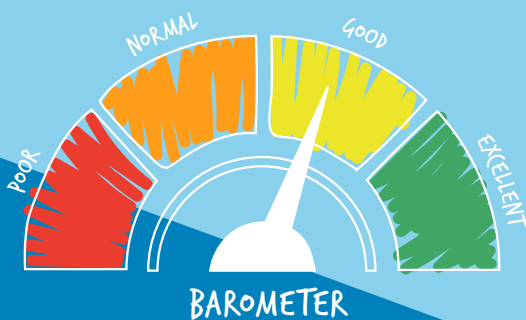
Life Journey work is a way to help children who do not live with their birth families to gain an understanding of their life journey and identity.

Adoption services in Wales are keen to make sure it is done well and the NAS Life Journey Work Co-ordinators deliver the training.

More than 150 staff, including children social workers, came to our Life Journey workshops this year.

We asked **AUK Barometer** to create a report to see if adopters and their families were happy with adoption services.

- The majority (most) people were feeling very positive about adoption
- Welsh adopters seem to be doing better than England, Scotland and Northern Ireland
- Adoption support has improved
- There are a couple of areas still to do some work on.



The **Big Adoption Conversation** takes place every year, run by us at the NAS.

99 adoptive parents, grandparents, young people (including some from our youth councils), and professionals were there. It was a very positive event. This is what we learned:

- The work we are doing is working and families are happier and feel supported
- How important it is to hear the voices of everyone affected by adoption
- We need to keep services up to date with what is needed if/as things change
- Adopted children may need some kind of support for a long time or all of their life

All this helps us plan our services better!

Here is what one of the young people, Anna, said,

"The support around the Connected and Youth Council groups given by the youth workers is the reason I keep coming back- if I didn't feel supported, I wouldn't have bothered. They understand and make it safe – it makes us able to speak about our pasts. It's really difficult when you feel like you haven't got a voice but with this group, I feel like I have got a voice. I can use my experiences to help the next generation. I hope to see a lot of change in the future, the aim is to use my voice and my experiences to help the younger ones"

Priority #3

Thinking Ahead



- Influence Welsh government and local authorities to create excellent adoption services
- Continue to build a One Team/One Service approach
- Continue to raise adoption awareness with professionals and the public

Research

We look at and are involved in different research projects and different groups that tell us more about:

- The effects of adoption on children, young people and families
- What services are offered
- What is working and what is not working
- What improvements need to be made
- What actions we or others can take

This helps us influence and provide information to governments and local authorities.

Raising Awareness

We work hard nationally and locally to raise awareness among professionals and the public.

We take part in different groups and meetings to keep up to date and keep others up to date and aware of what is happening for adoptive families.

We are doing so well that other parts of the UK have been asking us what we are doing! Are we becoming famous??

One Service approach – working together

- NAS works alongside Local Authorities, government departments, voluntary adoption agencies, health and education services and many others. We attend regular meetings together to make plans and discuss any problems.
- Our aim is to create a fair, regular service for everyone and to do that we need to all work together.
- This year we raised extra funding (money) to help with this.

Building new relationships

We met with some new organisations that may be able to be part of improving our adoption services. We are still thinking about this and will let you know!

Black Lives Matter

We have continued to provide '**Unconscious Bias**' training to professionals across Wales.

A student at Cardiff University School of Social Care is doing some research to see how services are working with children and adopters from a range of backgrounds.



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.



Positive Feedback



"A big thank you for the hard work your team has put in for my family. A very positive experience right from the start."

From an adopter

"I wanted to express my gratitude to N for the help he has given me in the last few weeks... I am grateful for his help, promptness and professionalism."

From an adult who was adopted as a child



"This was an extremely positive first review. Thank you to everyone involved."

From someone thinking about becoming an adopter



The National Adoption Service (NAS)

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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**Achieving More Together /
Cyflawni Mwy Gyda'n Gilydd**



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