



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu
Cenedlaethol

National
Adoption
Service

Achieving More Together /
Cyflawni Mwy Gyda'n Gilydd

Mid-Year Progress Report 2023/24

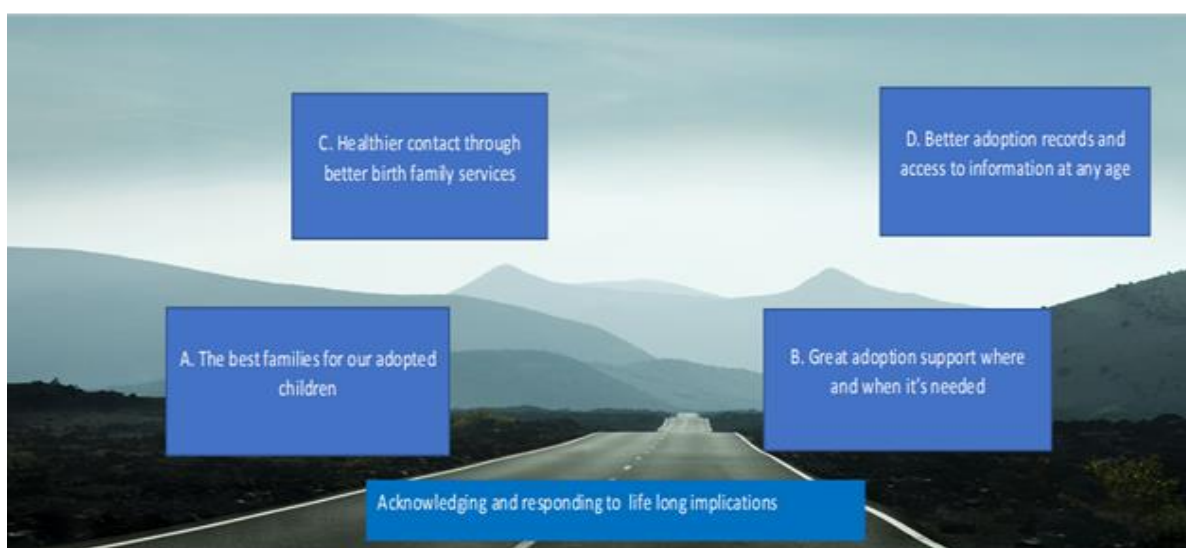


Introduction

The National Adoption Service for Wales (NAS) is the Wales-wide collaborative for the provision and development of adoption services.

Through its national/regional/local structure for Local Authority adoption services and its partnership with Voluntary Adoption Agencies, Health, Education and others, NAS has been delivering and improving services since 2014.

This year we are continuing to implement our strategic plan ***'Adoptcymru 2025 and beyond.....'***.



Key features of this plan are implementing best practice approaches in

- ✚ marketing and recruitment of adopters as well as placing children,
- ✚ adoption support, contact and work with birth parents,
- ✚ improving areas of service that respond to the lifelong implications of adoption, in particular services to support adopted adults to access their personal information, as well as supporting them and/or birth relatives to contact each other if they wish to do so.

Significant successes and improvements have been achieved by NAS and its services across Wales in the last few years; for children, for adopters and for others affected by adoption. This has happened as we modernise services, despite the ever-challenging environment. In this current year alone, the public sector finances and cost of living pressures, alongside the emotional / wellbeing challenges for adopted children and their families, exacerbated by the ongoing impact of the Covid pandemic, are all present and impacting on the context for families and the context within which we deliver services.

The use of adoption is falling in Wales, as it is in England, which is in part due to the Welsh Government policy direction to rightly influence service provision to ensure

that more children in Wales can remain within their families and communities rather than become 'looked after'.

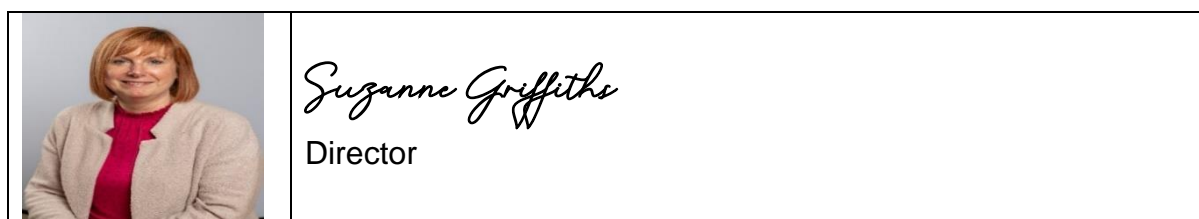
However, alongside this, services report that the children who cannot safely remain within their birth families or communities, because all alternatives have been exhausted, come to adoption services with needs that are increasingly more complex. Reported delays in the judicial process can also impact on the complexities of placing children with adoptive families and can sometimes lead to plans for adoption being reconsidered and changed.

We know that effective adoption services and improving adoption support services pre and post-order will ensure that the public investment made in relation to safeguarding Wales's most vulnerable children will continue to lead to better outcomes for them and services. NAS services continue to work with all relevant agencies to ensure that where a child's plan is for adoption that they can access permanence through this in as timely a way as possible.

This makes our commitment to being

- ✚ more flexible, proactive, and responsive
- ✚ more supportive when children and families need help
- ✚ better at recognising / supporting the continuing importance of birth families in adopted children's lives and
- ✚ better at providing information, support and services in adulthood as needed

.....more important than ever.



Abbreviations used in this report

MWW	Mid and West Wales Adoption Service
NWAS	North Wales Adoption Service
SEWAS	Southeast Wales Adoption Service
VVC	Vale Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Service
WBAS	Western Bay Adoption Service
Barnardo's	Barnardo's
St David's	St David's Children Society
AUK	Adoption UK
LAs	Local Authorities

Things to Celebrate So Far This Year

Adoption UK's [Connected](#) service provides group-based support and an information and advice service for adopted children and young people across Wales. So far this year, 355 children and young people have registered to attend Connected, with 50 group sessions held already.

The Connected service's Adoption Youth Council took part in some interviews with a journalist from BBC Wales on the back of their podcast episode, 'Truth Be Told'. The interviews were published online in June and focussed on identity.

One young person attended the British Podcast Awards in London on Sept 28th with Cowshed Media where the NAS Truth be Told podcast received the Silver Award (pictured below with the 2023 'King of the Jungle' Sam Thompson!).



Earlier this year, NAS launched a new tool for businesses to support adoption-friendly policies for their employees going through an adoption journey. The '[Adoption in your Business](#)' toolkit was officially launched at the National Eisteddfod and it has already received endorsements from businesses such as Admiral, Principality, the Welsh Government and Menter a Busnes.



'AdoptCymru2025and beyond....' - our Strategic Plan and priorities

The 'Adopt Cymru 2025 and beyond....' strategic plan is a three-year plan that we have been working towards since the start of 2022/23. It was developed following extensive engagement with children, young people and families, professionals, and service leaders, including via the annual 'Big Adoption Conversation'.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY A: THE BEST FAMILIES FOR OUR ADOPTED CHILDREN

Aim: To continue to improve the recruitment, preparation, and training for adopters to ensure every child is placed in a timely way with adopters who can, with early support, provide them with the best opportunities for family life.

Objectives:

- Continue to improve the quality of the marketing, recruitment, training and preparation of adopters.
- Better meet the needs of children and young people with complex needs, and ensure they are matched with the right families.
- ‘Normalise’ the concept of adoption so that adopters are comfortable with the idea that adopted children may well need additional support throughout their lives
- Work more extensively and intensively with colleagues in education and health services to secure more effective support for families.

What has been achieved in the first six months of 2023/24?

The table below provides a RAG ¹ rated summary of the achievements so far this year:

<p>Recruitment strategy/ marketing campaign</p>	<p>The NAS national recruitment strategy for this year is in place, along with a structured marketing campaign to increase overall numbers of enquiries. This is based on a range of ‘insights’ work with the public and professionals.</p> <p>A relaunch of the successful ‘Choose Family’ campaign is focussing on sibling groups and children with complex needs.</p> <p>Service recruitment goals have been agreed for 2023-24.</p>
<p>Adoption Register for Wales – monitoring of placement activity</p>	<p>The Adoption Register for Wales continues to provide an effective means of linking prospective adopters with children. There is good engagement between the ARW team and the Regional Adoption Managers.</p> <p>One Adoption Activity Day has taken place so far this year with 28 children profiled and 25 present on the day, many of the children were part of a sibling group and/or had additional complex needs. There were 5 successful links from the day, the highest number to date.</p> <p>Two further profiling events are planned for later in the year.</p>

¹ RAG – Red (not progressing), Amber (subject to ongoing / more planned work), Green (Key elements achieved / Completed)

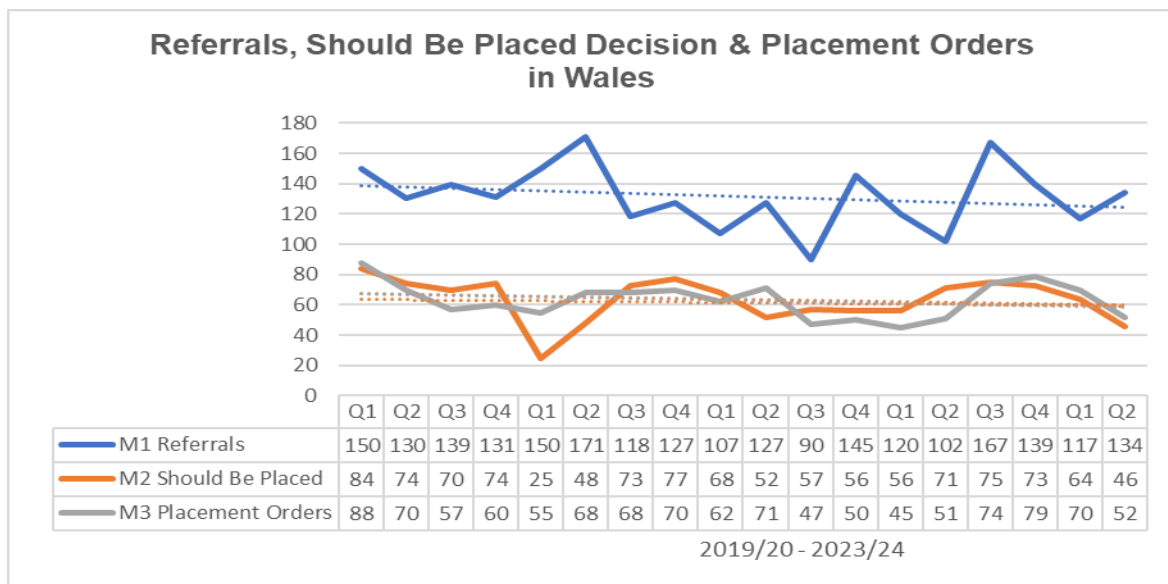
Adoption UK Passport scheme and 1000 days	There continues to be ongoing promotion of the AUK Passport scheme. The 'first 1000 days' project continues with regular audits to ensure take-up in regions and VAAs.
Welsh Early Permanence (WEP)	<p>All regions are now signed up to WEP and the approval of adopters is gradually increasing. As at the end of September 2023, 2 arrangements had been made and 2 adopters had been approved as WEP carers.</p> <p>The NAS good practice partner, AFKA Cymru, has delivered 6 webinars to prospective WEP adopters, with 18 households in attendance. In addition, 5 webinars for practitioners and 6 training sessions for panel members have been held.</p>
Trauma Nurture Timelines/Understanding the Child days	All regions are undertaking Understanding the Child Days, and the Trauma Nurture Timeline process is being implemented.
Adopting Together Service (ATS)	<p>A review of the ATS has taken place; a revised service offer now provides increased support, over a longer period, to families who have children placed through the service.</p> <p>A range of assets specifically targeting LGBTQ+ adopter engagement and recruitment has also been developed plus a new arrangement with 'Home for Good' commenced.</p>
Analysis of children waiting longest	<p>Concern about timeframes for placements with VAA's led us to analyse information on 35 children across Wales who had been waiting the longest to be placed. This found the reasons for the delays were as follows (the number indicates the number of children this relates to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Medical condition or complex needs – 10 ▪ Part of a sibling group – 8 ▪ Challenge from birth family – 8 ▪ Foster carers deciding to adopt – 5 ▪ Staff capacity/workload – 4 <p>Smaller numbers were due to delays in assessment or proceedings, complex family background, delays in or an initial match falling through, Covid, looking to place with sibling adopters, BAME placement required, and being an older child.</p>

	Further work will be undertaken in the second part of the year to identify improvement actions to address this.
Ethnicity/BLM work	A small research study undertaken by a Cardiff University Social Work student has highlighted differences in the timeframes for children and adopters from racially minoritized backgrounds to be placed / receive a placement. A plan will be developed to address relevant issues in the report in the second half of the year.
Scoping regarding placement success	A scoping exercise, to better understand and identify success indicators in placing children with complex needs, has commenced.

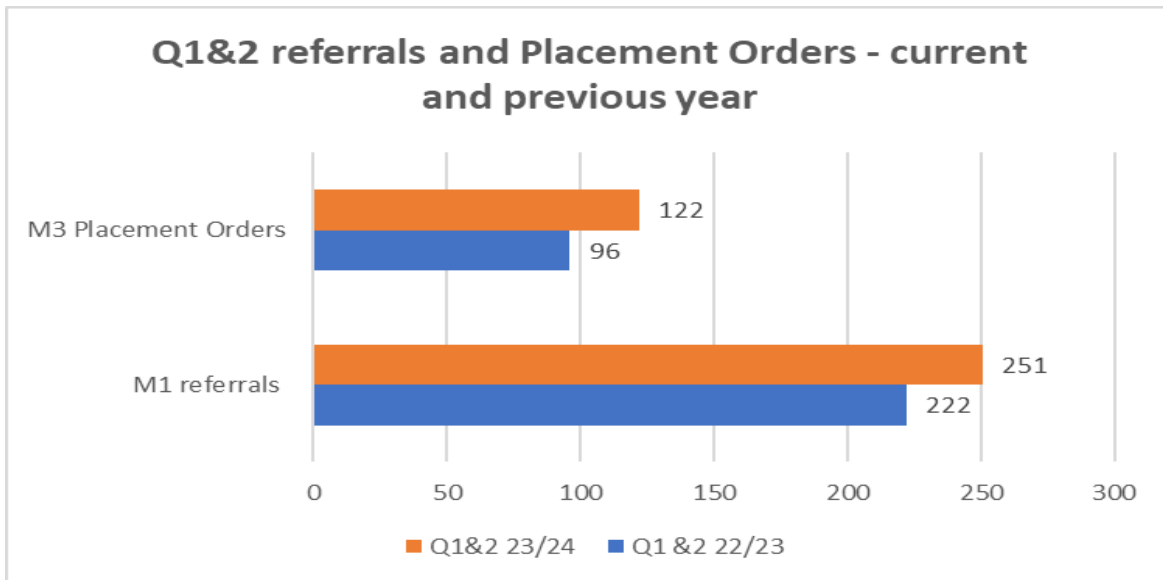
Performance in the first six months of 2023/24

Children

There continues to be fewer children in the system compared to pre-pandemic years. Child referrals, 'should be placed' decisions and numbers of placement orders are falling overall although the trend lines for the latter two are relatively flat. There is no consistent relationship between the level of referrals and subsequent decision making but the levels of 'should be placed decisions' and placement orders are more closely aligned.

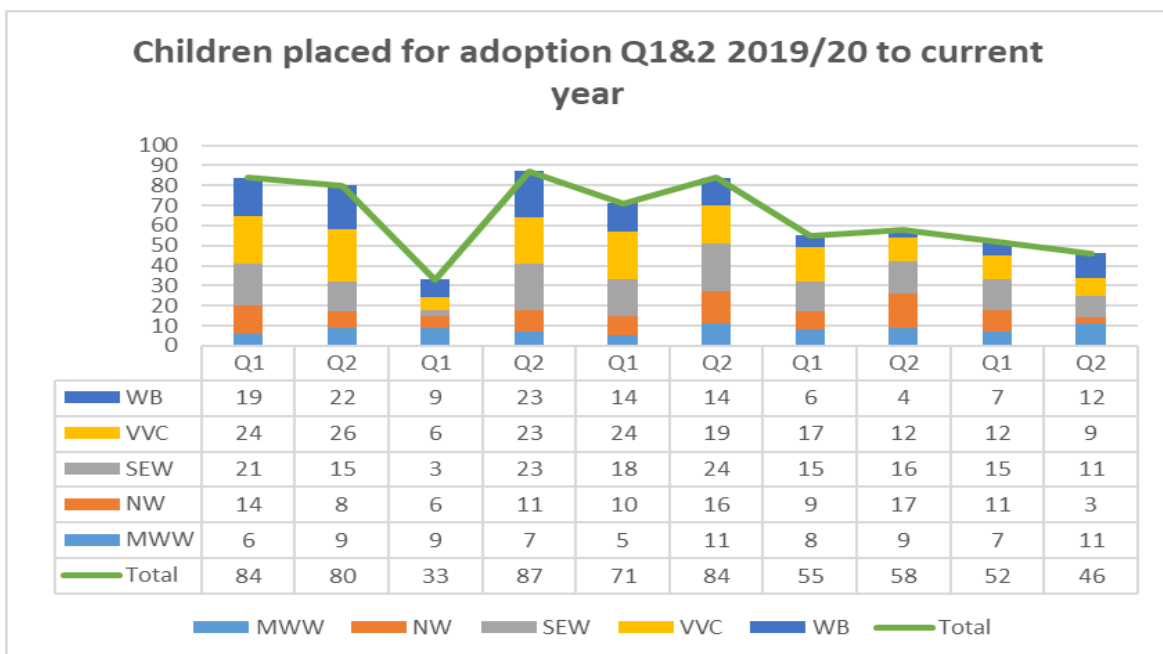


However, child referrals to adoption services have increased so far this year and are currently 11% higher compared to the same time last year. Likewise, placement orders at 122, are 21% higher compared to 96 in the same period last year.

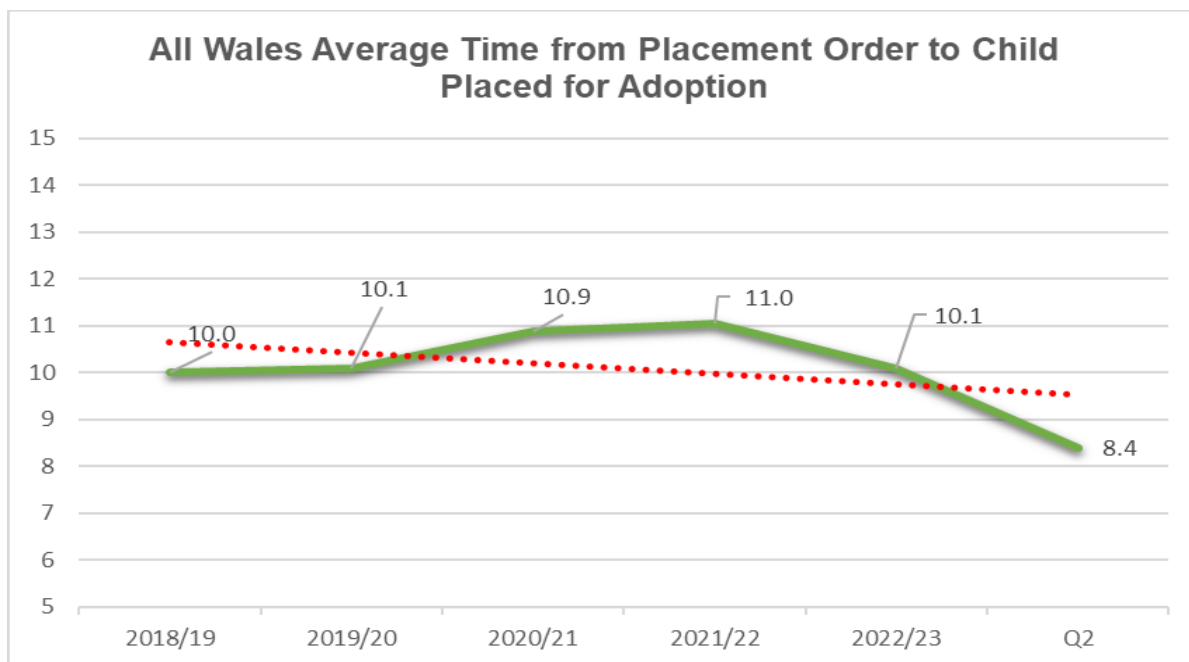


If both remain at a similar level for the remainder of this year, then the projection indicates that both will remain at a similar level to last year.

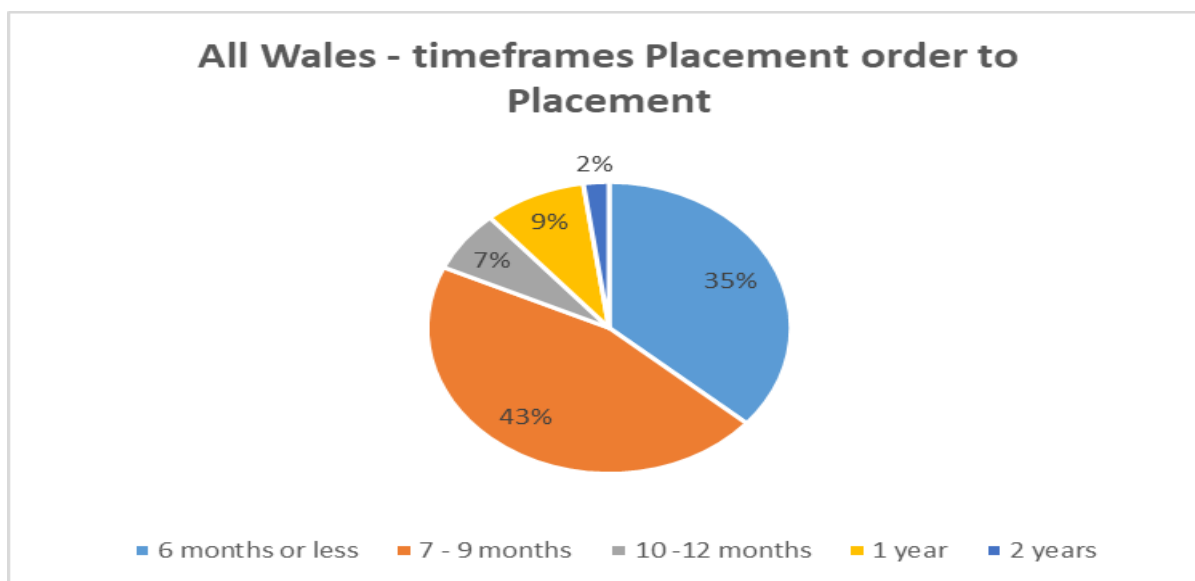
The overall lower number of children continues to impact on the numbers being matched and placed, although the position is variable across the regions. Fewer children were placed during Q2 (42) than in Q1 and overall fewer than at the same stage in previous years other than 20/21 (pandemic). The numbers of children placed in MWW and WB increased with the remaining regions placing fewer children.



The average time it took for a child to be placed after the Placement Order was granted was 8.4 months at the end of Q2; this is an improvement on the annual figure for 2022/23 (10.1 months) and brings timeframes for children back below pre-pandemic levels.



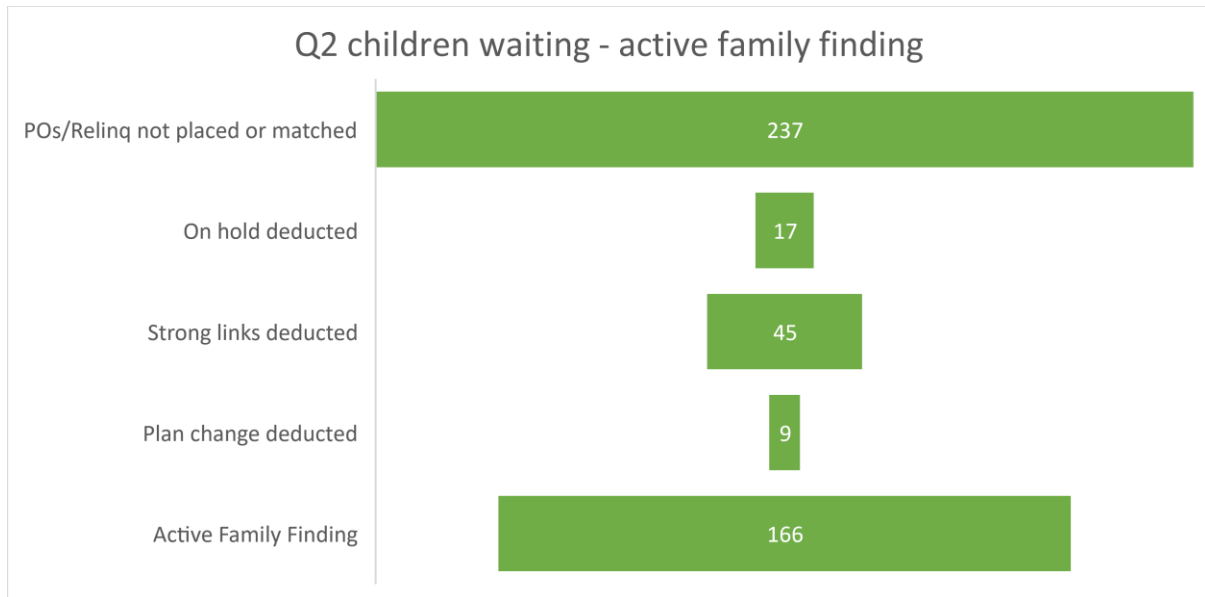
35% of placements made were within the benchmark of 6 months and 78% within 9 months. We are aware that some of the new practices, which better support the transition of children into their new homes, are taking slightly longer albeit with better outcomes.



At mid-year, 237 of the children that services were working with that were waiting to be placed i.e. children who were subject to a placement order or relinquished but not yet matched or placed. Of these:

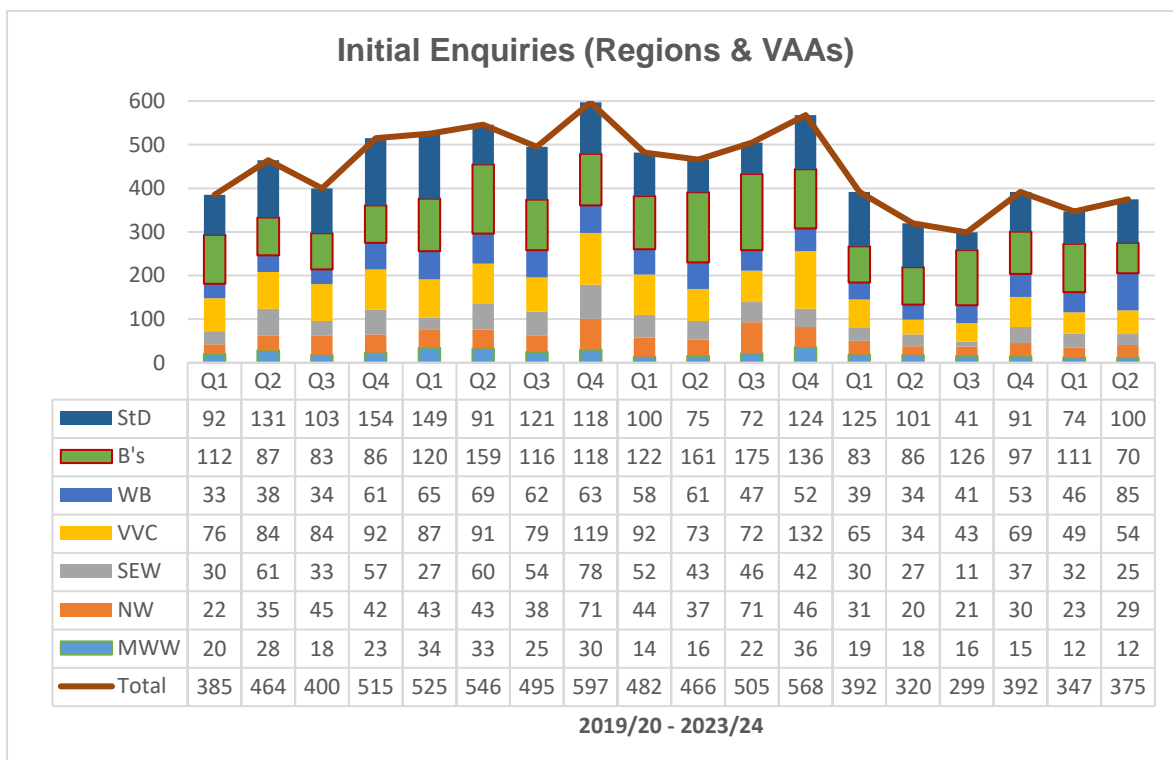
- 19% (n45) already had a strong link identified which was waiting to be progressed,
- 7% (n17) had been put 'on hold' due to legal challenges or additional assessments being undertaken,
- 4% (n9) had a proposed change to their plan for adoption awaiting consideration.

This leaves us with a figure of 166 children 'actively family finding' as at the mid-year point. This is higher than over the last year.



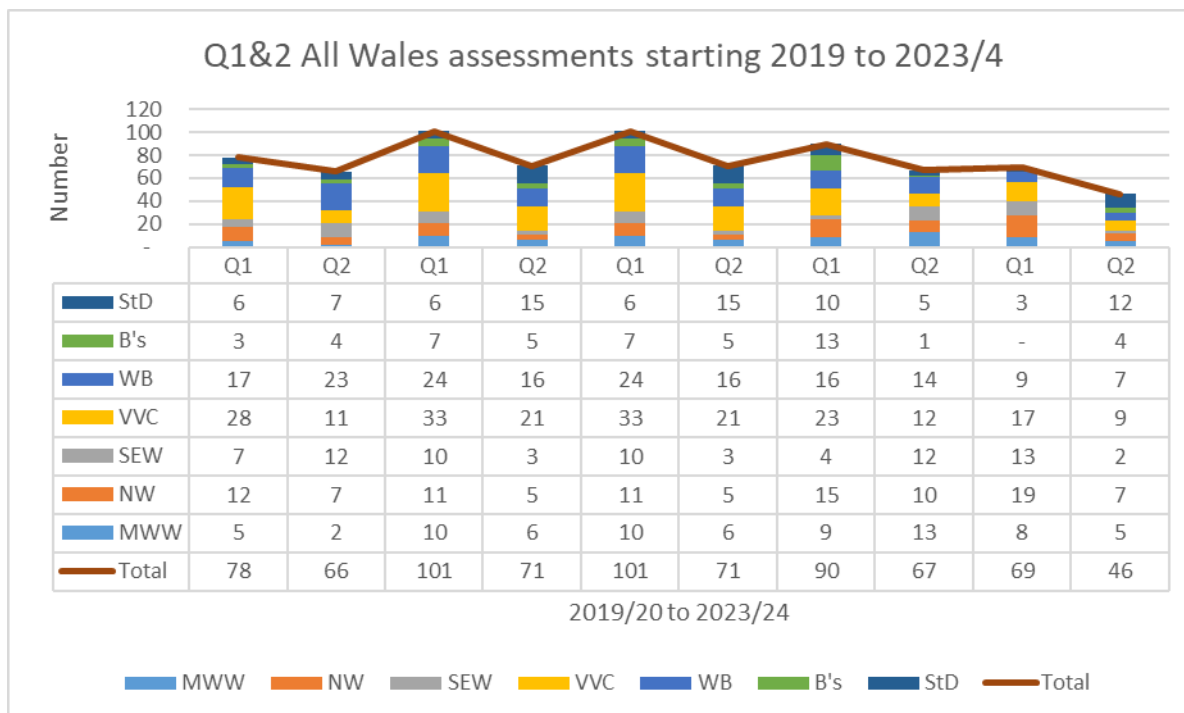
Adopters

The number of initial enquiries to adopt has fallen since 2021/22 and the higher levels received during the Covid-19 pandemic; it has been relatively static, between 300-400 enquiries per quarter over the eighteen months. So far this year, there is an average of 120 enquiries each month. Of the 722 enquiries, 18% were initially routed through the national website.



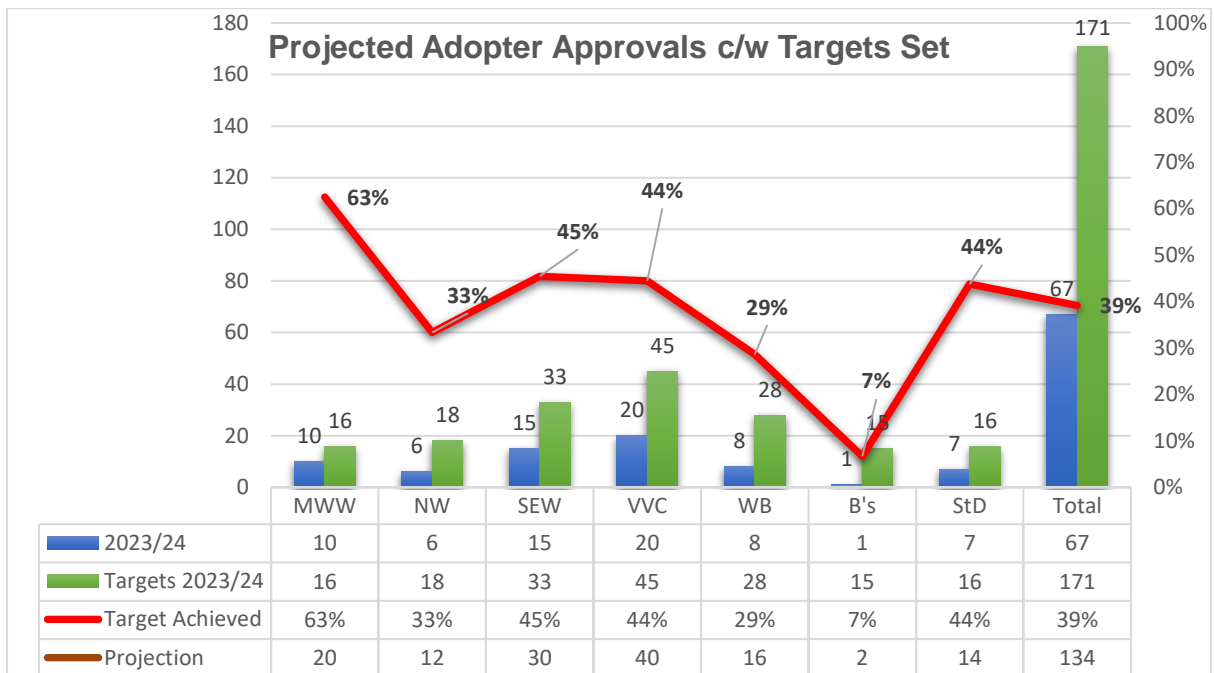
Assuming the number of initial enquiries made for the remainder of the year reflects Q1 and Q2, there could be a small projected full year increase of 3% compared to 2022/23.

There has been a reduction in adopter assessments commencing, with a total of 115 commenced in the first half of the year. All regions and agencies report a reduction in the assessments started. As indicated below, there is a pattern of lower numbers in Q2 although the figure for Q2 this year is lower than usual. Further work is planned to analyse the data relating to adopter enquiries, assessments, and approvals so that any improvement actions can be identified.

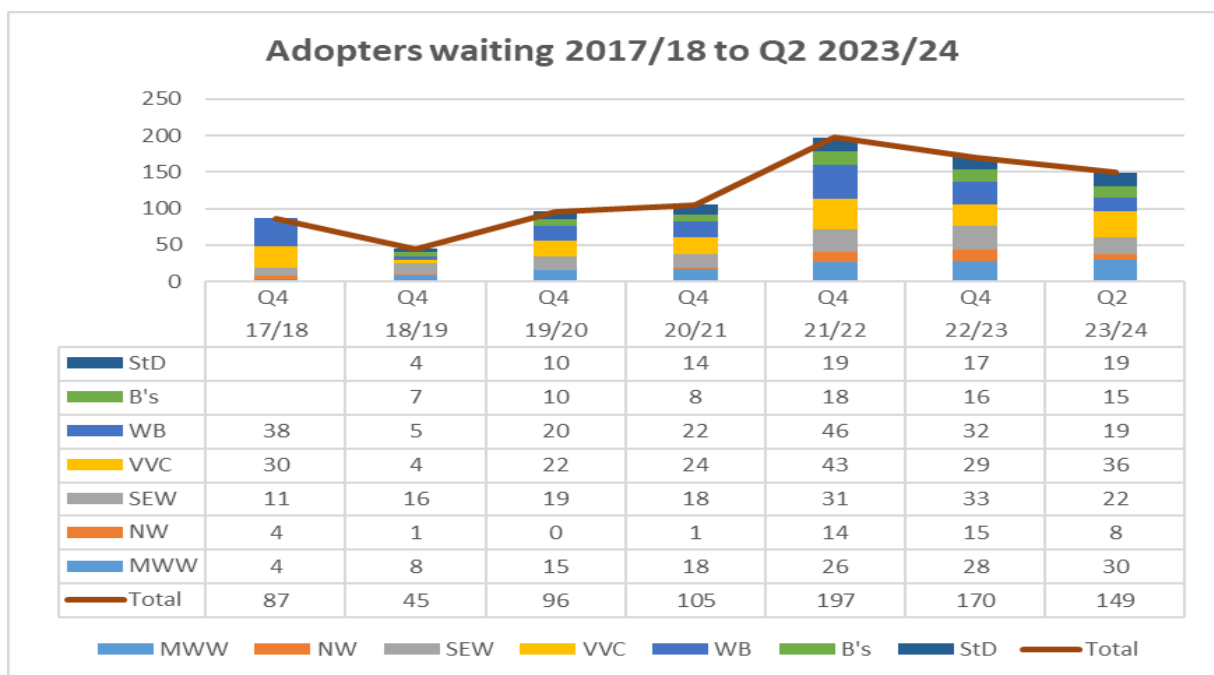


Adopter approvals have continued to reduce in the first half of this year with 67 approvals in total. The average timeframe for assessment to approval (Stage 2) is currently 4.5 months; this is good performance reflecting the point from when a prospective adopter formally agrees to proceed once all the initial vetting checks are satisfactory.

Recruitment goals have been agreed based on projected need. Overall, recruitment to date has achieved 39% of the projected need. As indicated below the progress of individual regions/services against their goals varies.



The number of adopters waiting at the mid-year point was 149, which is a reduction compared to the previous two years.



The **Regions and VAAs** have reported positive achievements for children in the first half of this year.

In **Mid and West Wales** Understanding the Child Day events are being held for all children placed and a Trauma Nurture Timeline is now being provided. MWW are also ensuring that all children waiting are profiled through the Adoption Register for Wales events.

North Wales are receiving positive outcomes from introductions and transitions for children and prospective adopters due to the support offered by transition therapeutic support workers. Placements for those children waiting the longest, children with complex health needs and sibling groups are now being actively sought both within and outside of the region.

In **Southeast Wales** 'chemistry' and 'connections' meetings have proved beneficial for some cases. There has also been a reduction in the average time children are waiting.

There has been an increase in referral rates and a high level of matching activity in the **Vale, Valleys and Cardiff**. Many children are being matched quickly following placement orders and within the region.

Western Bay have reported a good choice of matching options for children due to the number of waiting adopters within the region.

Barnardo's are continuing to build their post placement support packages and new training for adopters. Adopters who have been waiting for some time are now being matched with children.

St David's are reporting positive activity in relation to children being placed for adoption and the number of children visible on the Adoption Register for Wales is increasing.

In relation to adopters:

Mid and West Wales are reporting proactivity in relation to enquiries.

In **North Wales** virtual 'drop in' Question-and-Answer sessions are being held for people interested in becoming adopters. Positive feedback was also received from adopters and their children who attended an Annual Fun Day in September.

Southeast Wales has reported their first WEP approval and there has been good attendance at preparation training.

Pre-approval training in the **Vale, Valleys and Cardiff** now includes an 'in-person day' which has been well received by participants. The region has seen a small but sustained increase in the number of enquiries received.

In **Western Bay** enquires and approvals remain slow, however the applications being received are more likely to progress, are more robust and have considered all aspects of the good practice guides.

Barnardo's continue to receive new enquiries and a new Marketing Officer has been recruited to improve service awareness and a strategy to implement increased community engagement.

St David's are reporting that their Recruitment Strategy review has resulted in increased numbers of prospective adopters interested in adopting siblings.

Across both child and adopter related activity, **several challenges** are also reported

- ☒ The reduction in enquiries and an insufficient supply of adopters to meet the needs of some children, particularly those with complex needs or family situations.
- ☒ Court delays usually due to parental applications.
- ☒ Pressures on capacity both due to pressures in children’s social work teams and in regions impacting on recruitment and adoption support.
- ☒ Delays in a small number of children progressing onto their new homes.
- ☒ A small number of adoption breakdowns.

Plans for the next six months

Further work planned for the rest of the year in relation to this priority includes:

- New NAS Website – currently being commissioned, with development likely to start early in 2024 and into 2024-25.
- Adopter assessment – a competency framework to accompany adopter assessments is in development, with a view to this being rolled out in 2024-25.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY B: GREAT ADOPTION SUPPORT – WHEN AND WHERE IT IS NEEDED

Aim: Alongside the provision of universal and family support services, we aim to continue the development of adoption support services across Wales, shifting perception about the support needs of children and young people with a long-term focus on the impact of early childhood experiences and early trauma.

Objectives:

- To continue to build a trusted and reliable range of support services across Wales with sufficient capacity to meet the future needs adopters and adoptees
- To support the needs of children and young people who have been adopted
- To project a more nuanced view of the long-term need for adoption support
- To ensure that NAS adoption support services are not a substitute for other universal and family support services.

What has been achieved in the first six months of 2023/24?

The table below provides a RAG rated summary of the achievements so far this year:

Adoption Support Measures and new templates	New Adoption Support measures and templates are now embedded into the NAS Performance and progress on these will be reported at year-end.
Life Journey Work (LJW)	Life Journey work continues to progress well, templates have been updated and new measures are being

	embedded into practice. All regions are sharing the LJW Good Practice Guide through events and training sessions.
Adoption Barometer	Results of the fifth Barometer survey were presented to the NAS Governance Board in June 2023. As well as making recommendations about timescales for approval of adopters this year's report recommended free, accessible, high-quality support for adoptees of all ages, whenever they need it.
Modern adoption training modules	To continue to promote an 'adoption aware' workforce, three adoption and permanence modules have been developed and rolled out across all regions and VAAs.
CASCADE conference series	NAS collaborated with CASCADE in May and June to support them to develop and provide the successful Adoption Conference Series.
PATHWAYS grant funding	<p>The Adoption UK PATHWAYS programme continues to deliver a good support service for adopters to assist them with parenting challenges. Additional funding has been secured via Welsh Government to continue the full programme for the next two years.</p> <p>206 families have received a service. 20 peer support partners are in place and 49 new families have been referred to the service. All families are reporting positive outcomes. The service was recognised as a Highly Commended Finalist at the Social Care Accolades in April.</p>
Connected service	<p>At the current time there are 355 children and young people registered with the service with approximately 35% of these attending in person sessions this year. The remainder, through personal choice, are linked in via regular communications (letters/newsletters) etc. In the first two quarters 50 group sessions have taken place with 96%² of parents stating that their child had benefitted from attending.</p> <p>The Adoption Youth Council have so far taken part in focus groups with Cowshed Media in relation to the NAS adopter recruitment campaign and one young person attended the British Podcast Awards in London on Oct 5th with Cowshed Media where the 'Truth be Told' podcast series received the Silver Award.</p>
Scoping of referral pathways	Ongoing discussions taking place with regional partners to explore links currently in existence with health and education services with a view to strengthening/replicating these as we go forward.

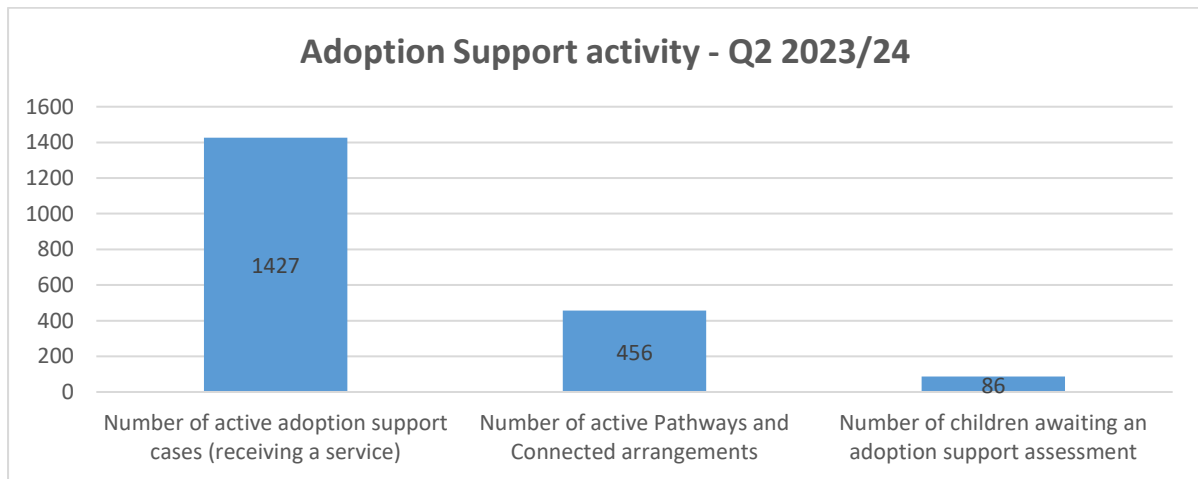
² 96% from completed evaluation forms

Voluntary check-ins

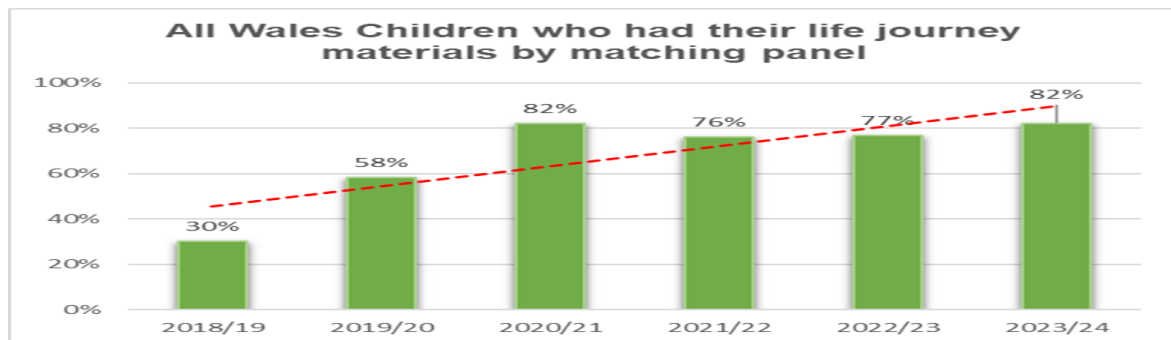
'Check-ins'³ are being implemented across all regions and VAA's to provide an opportunity to reconnect with the service and receive / review advice and support to adoptive families.

Performance in the first six months of 2023/24

Several new measures have been introduced to improve understanding and monitoring of adoption support. At mid-year there were over 1400 active formal adoption support plans in place (following a statutory assessment) plus more than 450 families in receipt of the Pathways or Connected services that are accessed directly. This is a significant number of children being supported and which does not include all contact arrangements, or the support provided by the VAAs to their adoptive families. There were also 86 children waiting for a formal adoption support assessment.



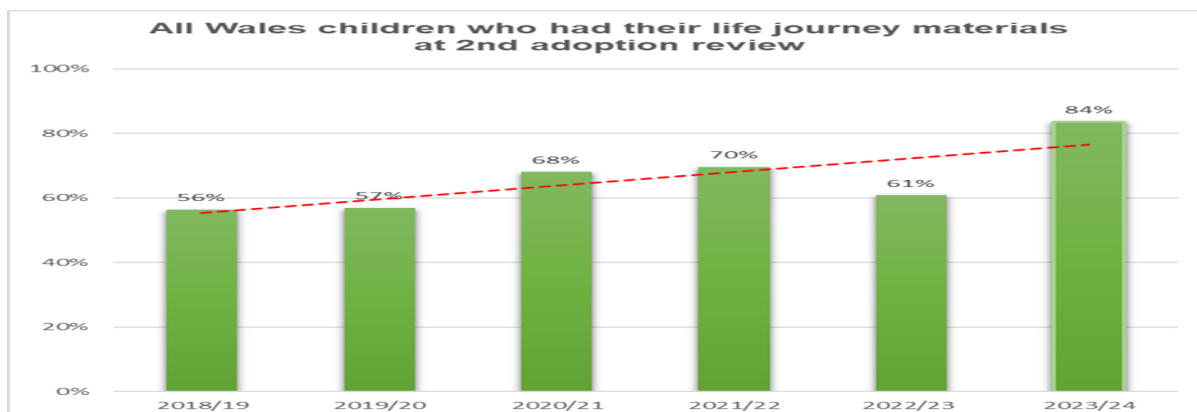
Performance in relation to life journey work remains good albeit seeing some impact from the pressures in mainstream services in Q2 where performance was lower overall.



³ A system for periodic voluntary engagement with families who are not in receipt of ongoing support after the Adoption Order is granted.

82% of all children placed so far this year had the agreed Life Journey materials in place at matching. This is an increase from 77% at year-end 2022/23. Two regions VVC and WB maintained 100%.

Overall, in the first half of this year, 85% of all children placed who had a second adoption review had the agreed Life Journey materials in place as required. This is an increase from 61% at year-end 2022/23. VVC maintained 100% with both MW and WB at over 80%.



The **Regions and VAAs** are reporting positive achievements in relation to adoption support and Life Journey work in the first half of this year.

Mid and West Wales are reporting that 'voluntary check-ins' are proving to be positive in relation to adoption support and Life Story work.

In **North Wales** training and various new tools have been made available to support colleagues, foster carers, and adopters to complete and build on Life Story work.

South East Wales continue to roll out training and drop-in sessions for adoption support and the quality of Life Story work is improving as a result of the tool being widely used.

Vale, Valleys and Cardiff are reporting continued development of quality life journey materials including guidance documents. Excellent examples of life journey books for different stages are being produced by Life Journey Workers. A range of other support and advice has also been provided by the Birth Parent Adviser (birth families) and Transitions Worker (children placed).

In **Western Bay** performance in completion of Life Journey work at the second adoption review continues to progress positively and Life Journey checklists are now being completed routinely. Through their 'virtual hub' families have been able to access advice and support regarding their child's behaviour including sensory issues, challenging behaviour, and eating and sleeping difficulties. Two Family & Friends training workshops have also been well-attended by a wide range of key people in adopters' networks.

Some **challenges** are also reported

- Increased levels and complexity of demand in support services
- Waiting lists for assessments

- ☒ Capacity to meet demand
- ☒ Lack of other support resources
- ☒ Maintaining good performance in life journey work given workforce pressures and demands of new quality measures

Plans for the next six months

Further work planned for the rest of the year in relation to this priority include:

- Rollout of 3 training modules for the social care workforce
- Completion of e-modules for the health and education workforce

STRATEGIC PRIORITY C: HEALTHIER CONTACT THROUGH BETTER BIRTH FAMILY SERVICES

Aim: To develop a realistic approach to contact across Wales that will ensure all adopted children are able to have contact with their birth families post adoption which flexes to meet their needs throughout their childhood.

As part of a modern adoption service for Wales, NAS is working to improve adopted children’s contact with their birth families (birth parents, siblings, and other relatives), by:

- Ensuring that all adopted children are able to access post-adoption contact with their birth family
- Building a strong active offer of direct contact with birth families, particularly siblings
- Developing a realistic approach to contact which recognises the ability that children now have to access information and people through social media
- Developing a well-resourced birth family support service across Wales.

What has been achieved in the first six months of 2023/24?

The table below provides a RAG rated summary of the achievements so far this year:

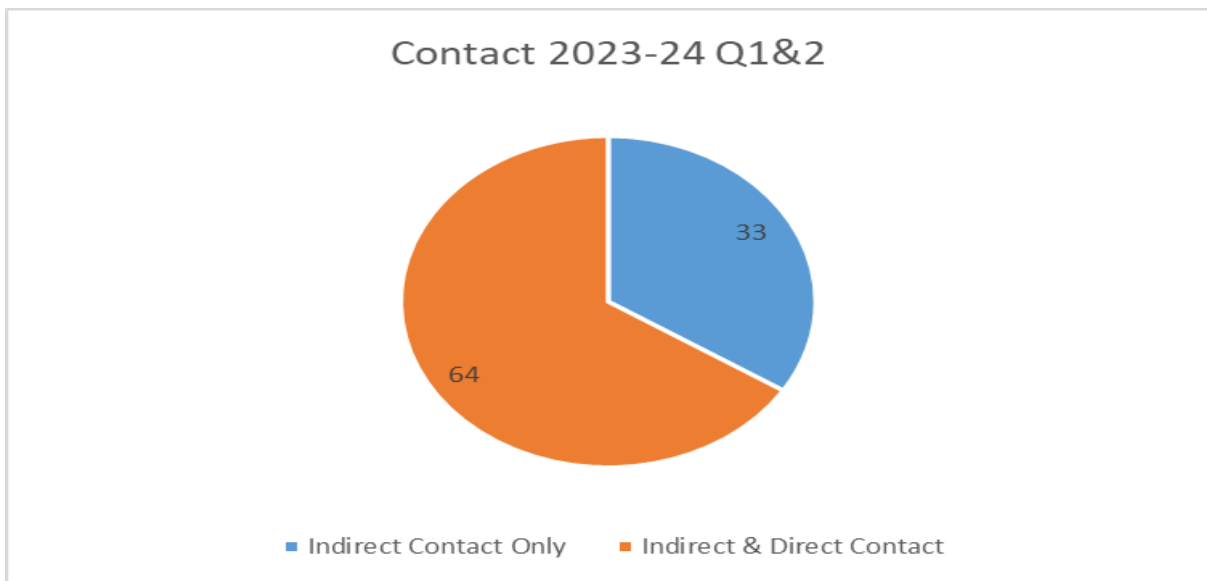
Implementing the findings of the ‘Contact Audit’	<p>Resources have been developed to support regional services in their work with LA staff to continue to develop practice in line with the Good Practice Guides. This includes an all-Wales contact assessment document which is being implemented across regions and training materials.</p> <p>Further training has been developed for childcare practitioners based on the ‘Together or Apart’ guidance relating to siblings and the implications for contact when they are separated. This training will be available during quarters 3 & 4.</p>
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New performance measures

Data on direct and indirect contact will now be collected as a result of new performance measures regarding contact as well as some quality measures for Life Journey Work.

Performance in the first six months of 2023/24

New adoption support measures for contact are also now being collected. Of the 98 children placed for adoption in the first half of the year, all but one had a contact arrangement in place as below. No children had an arrangement for direct contact only.



Plans for the next six months

Further work planned for the rest of the year in relation to this priority includes:

- Further consideration of digital contact
- Further modern adoption training modules for professionals across Wales
- Further engagement with partners such as Reflect

STRATEGIC PRIORITY D: BETTER ADOPTION RECORDS AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION AT ANY AGE

Aim: To develop an access to records service & materials that recognise the importance of keeping and sharing of quality information and ensures that children and adults have support when accessing their records and that information is provided for them in a timely way.

Objectives:

- Build an 'access to birth records service' across Wales

- Change the public and professional view of the importance of birth records
- Raise the status, importance and quality of children's records and their access to records
- Continue to support adoptive parents to share a child's life journey with them throughout their childhood in an appropriate way in line with the NAS Life Journey Framework.

What has been achieved in the first six months of 2023/24?

The table below provides a RAG rated summary of the achievements so far this year:

Access to Birth Records	A new Birth Records and Intermediary Service subgroup has been established comprising of staff / managers across Wales. To date it has been considering issues in relation to the collection, storage and access to birth records with a view to applying consistency across all regions. It will also continue to assist with the development of the 'Access to Records Pilot' lead by the St David's and AUK.
Improving Adoption Services for Adults (IASA) project in England	NAS has linked with the IASA project, and is, amongst other things, currently working on updating the guidance relating to access to records.
Pre- and Post-Commencement Regulations training	Two pre-commencement training workshops have taken place so far this year as well as one post-commencement workshop. These have been well attended and well received by staff.
AUK/St Davids pilot	<p>A small pilot service has been developed by St David's and Adoption UK to provide a service for adopted adults affected by historical adoption practices. This will commence services for a small number of first (birth) parents and adopted people in the second half of the year.</p> <p>A small amount of grant funding is available for this year and next; a proposal was submitted to Welsh Government to scale it up but due to current financial pressures, funding cannot be provided at this time.</p>

Plans for the next six months

Further work planned for the rest of the year in relation to this priority includes:

- Scoping of issues relating to access to adoption records
- Updated guidance – IASA

- Development/updating of existing resources including standard forms for access to information.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY E – MAINTAINING THE INFRASTRUCTURE NECESSARY TO DELIVER NAS AND MAINTAIN SOUND GOVERNANCE ACROSS NAS AND FOSTER WALES

Aim: To continue the successful delivery of the National Adoption Service and Foster Wales.

What has been achieved in the first six months of 2023/24?

The role of NAS, and the range of functions delivered nationally in respect of adoption, have continued to develop. Foster Wales is now fully embedded into the overall joint structure which has required further investment in infrastructure and oversight, the costs of which are currently being met through additional Welsh Government grant funding. Additional grant funding has also been secured to implement the Adopt Cymru 2025 strategic plan.

Key achievements in the first six months of this year have included:

- An embedded central team structure is in place with some staff focusing specifically on adoption or fostering functions alongside the Director and some business support capacity supporting both.
- All local authorities across Wales have now signed up to the new NAS and Foster Wales Joint Committee agreement. Development work is ongoing, with a view to holding an inaugural meeting by the end of this financial year.
- The hosting arrangement with Cardiff Council is nearing completion and includes a revised schedule of costs.
- A financial review of NAS and Foster Wales was commissioned by the Welsh Local Government Association (see below).

Financial Review

Earlier this year, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) requested a review of the funding model for the national resources that support the National Adoption Service for Wales and Foster Wales. The review aimed to reach an understanding of the operating model and financing of the service and greater transparency for political leaders in local government. The outcome and a summary report will be presented to the NAS Governance Board in the second part of the year and will be included in the end of year Annual Report.

NAS Finances at Mid-Year point

The financial summary in the table below provides an analysis of expenditure in relation to the budget for the current financial year for the central elements of the National Adoption Service.

The table below outlines the 'core' funding received via the WLGA which is an allocation from the revenue support Grant.

INCOME STREAM	AMOUNT
WLGA Central Team Revenue (RSG allocation)	£538,200
FW Contribution to shared posts and hosting costs (WG grant)	£120,983
ARW Management Charge (WG grant)	£28,560
WG grant co-ordination and Life Journey Work	£9,909
Total Income	£697,652
NAS Contingency brought forward	£253,749
Total Projected Spend (end of year 2023/24)	£692,368
Balance (Contingency for the Current Year)	£254,033

The tables below outline the various grants that NAS manages, much is allocated to local government and third sector adoption services for service delivery, some is for national projects.

ADOPTION SUPPORT INVESTMENT £2,300,000 (currently secured to 31.3.25)	2023/24
NWAS	£378,656
SEWAS	£395,957
VVC	£537,241
WBAS	£328,687
MWW	£259,550
St Davids (Adopting Together Service)	£100,000
AFKA (Policy and Practice Development)	£85,000
AUK (Pathways and Connect services)	£205,000
Central Team	£9,909
	£2,300,000

ADOPT CYMRU AND BEYOND GRANT £638,639 (currently available to 31.3.25)	2023/24
Pathways Programme Adoption UK Cymru (picks up former Big Lottery funding)	£246,935
Advertising and PR Campaign	£174,000
Develop Capacity in Regions and VAAs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. AUK (Access to records pilot) = £37,677 2. St Davids (Access to records pilot) = £61,779 3. Other Projects = £50,544 	£150,000
Wales Early Permanence Scheme	£24,204

Wales Access to Records Service – scoping and set up 1. AUK = £18,250 2. St Davids = £18,250	£36,500
AFKA - Adoption Aware Workforce training module	£7,000
	£638,639

ADOPTION REGISTER FOR WALES, £219,000 (on behalf of Welsh Government)	2023/24
Service delivery costs (salaries, family finding & other costs)	£95,550
Management Charge	£28,000
Link Maker Licence	£96,450
	£219,000

Regional Management Boards

The five Regional Management Boards (RMBs) across Wales meet on a quarterly basis. All RMBs have oversight of the performance, finance, and governance arrangements in each region.

Specific areas of discussion in the first part of this year related to:

REGION	TOPICS
MWWAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adoption Medicals ▪ The reduction in the number of adopters waiting and a rise in children with placement orders in the region ▪ The complexity of adoption support cases and unmet need ▪ Recruitment of WEP adopters
NWAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transitions and Early Support and the development of a 'By Your Side' training programme ▪ Waiting lists for Therapeutic Life Journey work ▪ Waiting lists for Adoption Support Assessment of Needs ▪ Improvement planning
SEWAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adopters' Medicals ▪ Contact Assessments ▪ Name changes for Adopted Children ▪ Welsh Early Permanence
VVC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Audit of governance arrangements and a revised Collaborative Agreement ▪ Links to the third sector ▪ Early alert system with St Davids and Barnardo's. ▪ 'Home for Me Report'
WBAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Trends in relation to adopters waiting ▪ AUK Adoption Barometer report ▪ Contact Audit

Links with Welsh Government

NAS works closely with Welsh Government Ministers and Officers on a number of adoption focussed topics and projects. So far this year, these have included:

- The Director and Co-chairs, met with the Deputy Minister for Social Services in May. It was a positive meeting with the Deputy Minister expressing her gratitude at the good work being undertaken by all the adoption services that form NAS. The agenda included a discussion on the NAS Mid-Year Report 2022/23, service performance, new investment, and the proposed pilot of a service to meet the needs affected by historical adoption practices.
- The Director and Ann Bell from Adoption UK met with the Deputy Minister for Social Services to discuss, and provide advice, for a meeting with adopted people which arose from the Welsh Government apology for historical adoption practices.
- IASA – Improving Adoption Services for Adults - funded by DfE to improve adoption services for adults in England with a focus initially on policies and processes. NAS are linking with this project to inform Welsh policies and processes.
- Changes to the Adoption Support Regulations – the Head of Policy, Practice & Communication along with Sarah Coldrick, Legal Advisor from AFKA Cymru are continuing to work with officials to address issues relating to access to therapeutic services for adoptees as well as to support generally
- Consideration of the Sonnet Impact Report – A Home for Me – and what needs to be achieved as a result of some of the recommendations
- The Director has been involved in a number of meetings with the Welsh Government Consultant Anthony Douglas who is working on a National Practice Framework for Wales.
- NHS numbers for adopted children – the issue of some new numbers defaulting to original birth record numbers for cases in Wales is being addressed. A new process which will involve oversight from Digital Health and Care Wales (DHCW) is being developed.

Summary and Next Steps

In the second half of 2023/24, NAS will continue to progress with its strategic priorities and focus on modernisation in adoption and responding to the lifelong implications of adoption. Specific areas of focus will include:

- Scoping different approaches to contact
- Training and development for professionals across Wales
- Further development of services to support access to records and the pilot service for people affected by historical adoption practice pre-1976
- Development/updating of existing resources, guidance, and frameworks to support professionals

- Development of a new NAS Website
- National Adoption Week and the Annual NAS Conference
- Maximising our finances and tackling the issues linked to public finance pressures to minimise the impact this will have on services

Our end-year Annual Report for 2023/24 will be available later in the year.



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