



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu
Cenedlaethol

National
Adoption
Service

Achieving More Together /
Cyflawni Mwy Gyda'n Gilydd

Mid-Year Review

2022/23



Mabwysiadu
Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru
Adoption
Mid & West Wales



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadau
Gogledd Cymru
North Wales
Adoption
Service



South East Wales Adoption Service
Achieving More Together
Gwasanaeth Mabwysiadu De-ddwyrain Cymru
Cyflawni Mwy Gyda'n Gilydd



Vale, Valleys
and Cardiff
Adoption | **Mabwysiadu**
yn y Fro, y Cymoedd
a Chaerdydd



Western Bay
ADOPTION SERVICE
GWASANAETH MABWYSIADU
Bae'r Gorllewin



Teulu gyda'n gilydd
Together we're family



AFA CYMRU
association for fostering and adoption
cymdeithas ar gyfer maethu a mabwysiadu



**Credwch
mewn plant
Believe in
children**
Barnardo's
Cymru



Gwasanaeth | **St David's**
Mabwysiadu | **Adoption**
Dewi Sant | **Service**

Introduction

The National Adoption Service (NAS) is the Wales wide collaborative for the provision of adoption services; its role is to improve adoption services for the benefit of all those affected by adoption in Wales.

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 has seen the commencement of the new strategic plan 'Adoptcymru 2025 and beyond.....'. This is an ambitious plan where the aim is to fully embed and extend the excellent progress made in improving Welsh adoption services.

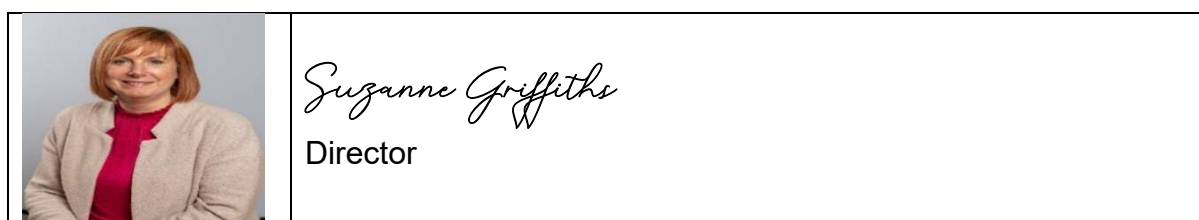


Key features of the plan are fully implementing best practices approaches in marketing and the recruitment of adopters, placing children, contact and adoption support including work with Birth Parents. Alongside this, NAS will begin to focus on areas of service that respond to the lifelong implications of adoption mainly services to support adopted adults access their personal information and support them and/or birth relatives to make contact with each other where they want to. NAS knows these services require change and improvement.

NAS is rightly proud of the significant progress that has been made in improving and modernising adoption services across Wales. The new plan will take a number of years to fulfil, certainly beyond 2025 but NAS intends that by then there will progress on which to build in the following period.

With the input of services and stakeholders from across Wales, the report records progress against the new priorities in the first half of 2022/23 as well as NAS' overall performance I that period.

I hope the report will be informative for those who use our services and professionals as well as the Welsh Government and Ministers.



AdoptCymru2025....and beyond Strategic Plan

To take the service forward from the start of the 2022/23 business year, the 'Adopt Cymru 2025 and beyond.....' plan was developed between November 2021 and January 2022. It draws on the extensive engagement with children, young people and families, professionals, and service leaders that has occurred since 2019. This was complemented by a professional's survey and workshops in November and December 2021, as well as advice from adopters and adopted children and young people in the NAS 'Big Adoption Conversation' in January 2022.

It truly is the product of effective co-production which characterises the way that NAS works.

Context

Significant success and improvement have been delivered in adoption across Wales in the last few years. This is despite the challenging environment which has faced children, young people, families, and professionals during the Covid-19 pandemic period and the challenges linked to public finances and cost of living that are following fast on its heels.

However, NAS is far from complacent; it recognises that ongoing challenges remain in areas such as:

- Fluctuating demand as a result of changes in policy and mainstream services as well as growing awareness of the lifelong implications of being adopted.
- Changes in the profile of children and young people needing adoption, and in the expectations that adopted children and young people have about what they need to grow up happy, healthy, and successful, as well as in professional understanding of this and how to support it.
- Workforce and capacity challenges including those in local authority social work and the ability to harness mainstream resources.
- Post-Covid recovery from the economic, emotional and wellbeing challenges that children, young people and families have faced.
- Public and professional views about adoption and its role in the public welfare system.

'Adoption', and the NAS, is at a point where profound change in how adoption is viewed and used is required. Modern adoption needs to:

- be more flexible, proactive, and responsive to individual needs
- more supportive to children and families when they need help.
- better recognise and support the continuing importance of birth families in adopted children's lives and
- better provide information, support and services in adulthood as needed.

NAS aims to

- promote a more positive perception of adoption in our society and amongst professional networks.

Adoption offers a positive family experience to the vast majority of adoptees; it is a hugely positive option for those children who cannot live within their own birth families and communities.

However, Welsh adoption services are seeing a long-term reduction in children referred, placed and adopted; this mirrors a similar trend in England. This is occurring in a context where better services designed to support birth families to stay together and / or to support kinship and wider family arrangements for the care of children such as Special Guardianship Orders are being developed across Wales, within an explicit Welsh Government policy direction aimed at reducing the number of children 'looked after' in Wales.

These new services are working very well for many children and families enabling more to remain within their birth families and communities, so it is unsurprising that there is a reduction in referrals to adoption services. Numbers since 2020/21 have also been affected by the Covid pandemic; they are beginning to stabilise but there is a legacy from changed working practices that may take some further time to fully work through. Services report that the children with an adoption plan being referred are tending to have more complex needs.

Abbreviations used in this report

MWW	Mid and West Wales Adoption Service
NWAS	North Wales Adoption Service
SEWAS	South East 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
LA's	Local Authorities

Strategic priorities

Modern adoption for Wales will need a sustained focus on the key strategic priorities in the NAS plan. They build on the good work by NAS and its partners over many years and they will help NAS to deliver sustainable services, able to help children, young people, and the families around them to deal with the life-long implications of their adoption. NAS believes that achieving these priorities will help services to better support the life journey of adopted people across our country.

Strategic priority A:

The best families for our adopted children

This priority area is fundamental to good adoption services. Much has been done to improve and update practice in recent years which NAS will build to develop modern adoption practice across Wales. NAS' aspirations are to:

- Continue to improve marketing, recruitment, and preparation of adopters so that they are able to meet the needs of the children who will have plans for adoption in the future.
- Continue to improve the quality of recruitment, assessment, matching and preparation training for adopters so that every child with a plan for adoption is placed in a timely way with adoptive parents who can meet their lifelong needs.
- Engage with more adopters to help with the above by contributing to the practice guidance, training and support to future adopters.
- Better meet the needs of children and young people with complex needs, and ensure they are matched with families who can meet their lifelong needs.
- 'Normalise' the concept of adoption with support, so that adopters are comfortable with the idea that adopted children may well need additional support throughout their lives, and that services are geared up to respond as needed.
- 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 the plan?

- The 2021/22 marketing and media activity has been evaluated to inform the 2022/23 Recruitment and Marketing Strategy and activity.
- A benchmarking exercise, an Omnibus survey was carried out to better understand attitudes towards adoption in Wales. The detail behind the highlights below is informing the current Recruitment and Marketing Strategy.
 - 83% of people in Wales agree with adoption.
 - 18% of people in Wales are actively considering adoption – mainly women aged 16-34.
 - 30% understand that children who are adopted have experienced trauma.
- A second podcast series, focusing on understanding the needs of older children, sibling groups and those with complex needs has produced and launched. Initial evaluation is very positive, and it continues to be a successful tool in awareness raising.
- Initial consultation to contribute to a future review of the use of the Adopting Together Service.
- Each region and VAA have been implementing elements of the Good Practice Guide, including approaches to support the movement of children into their adoptive home such as the 'Understanding the Child' days (UTC) and the development of 'Trauma Nurture Timeline's' (TNT):
 - WBAS: A small UTC team has been created from existing resources; a TNT/Circle of Understanding is undertaken for all, while more complex

children (aged 3+, sibling groups and children with identified additional needs) will have the full UTC Day. Psychology provision is in place to support this. Advice sessions have been provided to more than 25 childcare social workers from LA's plus 3 workshops for foster carers reaching 45+ people. A therapeutic parenting course for 7 new adoptive families has been held.

- MWAS: UTC days are in place for most children and TNT's are being completed for all children. The Region is now supported by a psychology service. Six lead foster carers for adoption are in place across the region to support foster carers and adopters.
 - SEWAS: All children who are on an adoption pathway receive an individualised response according to need, more complex children have the full UTC Day with resources being sought to expand this work. All children referred for twin tracking have a named worker. The region's psychology service supports this work.
 - VVC: two new support workers have been recruited to support this and other new work. 50+ 1:1 sessions provided to staff in the region and LA's.
 - Barnardo's: workshops about the UTC days offered to adopters in latter stage of assessment and/or already approved.
 - St David's: support this work with their carers and provide enhanced version for children being placed through the Adopting Together Service.
 - NWAS: currently considering how to utilise staff to commence these initiatives.
- All regions and VAA's have signed up to AUK's 'Passport'¹ scheme with 60 families becoming members. Take up is being promoted alongside raising awareness of the 'First 1000 days in adoption'² support service.
 - The Wales Early Permanence (WEP)³ framework development has been completed with training rolled out and a project worker post created.
 - The annual Adoption Barometer⁴ indicates continued satisfaction with recruitment practice in Wales from newly approved adopters.

Strategic Priority B:

Great adoption support – when and where it's needed

NAS has been successful in building improved adoption support services across Wales guided by the NAS Adoption Support Framework, the 2019 Plan and importantly, the additional £2.3m investment made by the Welsh Government. NAS intends to continue to build practice and services in this area through the following aspirations:

- Continue to build a trusted and reliable range of support services across Wales which have sufficient capacity and quality to meet the future needs of all the

¹ AUK Passport is the complete package of support for Prospective Adopters.

² The First 1000 Days project offers a helping hand and a listening ear from a thriving community of fellow adopters.

³ A concurrency model of placing children with their prospective adopter as a fostering arrangement to prevent placement moves. The Wales 'Foster to Adopt' regulations do not allow for this hence developing a scheme that can provide it

⁴ [Download.ashx \(adoptionuk.org\)](#)

adopter and adoptee population. This including achieving long term sustainable funding for some existing services and any new ones.

- Drive forward a wider shift in perception and more nuanced view about the support needs of children and young people who have been adopted. This means embedding an understanding that there are likely to be ongoing needs as a result of early childhood experiences / trauma as well as the importance of responding early when issues arise and keeping in longer term touch with adoptive families where they want this.
- Developing a service that recognises the ongoing importance of relationships with birth families with individualised, supported plans that can be flexible over time as needed.
- Ensuring that NAS adoption support services are not substituting for other universal and family support services which should be available to all families, while ensuring these services have an appropriate level of adoption awareness to effectively meet the needs of adoptive families.

What has been achieved in the first six months of the plan?

- The Wales 'Adoption Support Commitment' was launched in June, outlining the support that all adoptive families in Wales can expect to be able to access at each stage of their adoption journey. The Commitment is the first document of its kind in the UK and aims to ensure adoptive families in Wales feel confident that information and support is available when needed, from professionals with specialist knowledge of adoption and children's care needs.
- 100% of children placed for adoption have a new transition plan in place.
- A system for periodic voluntary 'check-ins', for families who are not in receipt of ongoing support after the adoption order has been granted, has been put in place or being developed in all regions.
- Continued work by the network of Life Journey Work (LJW) coordinators to develop and promote the NAS LJW framework and resources. All regions monitor LJW in their regions, embedding and promoting this element of work or challenging where it is not happening. SEWAS developed 3 podcast episodes on life journey work.
- Many regions and VAA's have returned to face-to-face support sessions and have started to hold family fun days again.
 - VVC are trailing 'family hubs' across the region to engage with a broader group of children and adoptive parents.
 - WBAS accessed other funding to run a 'summer of fun' for adoptive families.
 - St David's held two summers events where families enjoyed trying out many activities and were entertained by Mr Magic while also celebrating the services 80th anniversary.
- A teaching session developed and piloted for social work qualification courses plus ongoing discussions with Social Care Wales to develop a mechanism for making this available to all courses.
- AUK continues to provide a range of services including NVR training where demand has increased linked to the ongoing implications of the pandemic on the mental health of families.
- A bid for further investment made to the Welsh Government.

- Ongoing positive impacts from the services funded through the current £2.3m investment by the Welsh Government.
 - **LLWYBRAU:PATHWAY'S (formerly known as TESSA):**
 - A service to 200 families, including 69 new families
 - 100% of families referred, accepted, and matched with a parent partner
 - 84% of families show a positive movement on the outcome scale.
 - **Connect service**
 - 276 children and young people registered to attend Connected including 60 new children and young people
 - Website and Youth Council launched on 04.04.22.
 - An 'Adoption Charter' produced
 - A residential weekend held which included skill development to participate in formal strategic meetings to represent their views.
 - **Adoption Practice – Afa Cymru and regions**
 - Implementation of Welsh Early Permanence Programme including information / training provided for the Judiciary, development and delivery webinars for local authority Team Managers and Child Care Practitioners, online resources for birth parents and others produced and workshops for Adoption and Fostering Panel Advisors.
 - Initial scoping of the workplan to improve adopter assessment through a modern skills-based style of assessment.
 - Regional resources to support their work in supporting children's transition to placement, contact, work with birth parents and adoption support.
 - NWAS staff offer advice and consultation on the good practice guides to childcare staff
 - VVC adoption panel training on the adoption support assessment and review good practice guide
 - WBAS on-line session for schools attended by 50 staff
 - **Life Journey work**
 - 38 training events took place
 - 71% of adopters provided with life journey material for their children at point of matching panel
 - 68% of adopters provided with life journey material for their children by the child's second adoption review.
 - **Adopter Post Approval Training / Development (MWW & NWAS only)**
 - 100% of newly approved in Mid & West Wales were provided with post approval training
 - North Wales have recruited and trained 28 Buddy's
 - North Wales provided 7 parenting webinars covering arrange of topics to meet adoptive family needs.

- **Improving the range of targeted / specialist therapeutic support available through health, social care, and education (MWW, NWAS, SEWAS & WBAS)**
 - Mid & West Wales funds a service for all referrals made and therapeutic support for 70 children
 - North Wales funded assessment for support for 13 children.
 - South East Wales provided additional training to 27 childcare social workers on trauma nurture timelines / understanding the child days and to 15 adoption panel members on trauma informed practice and understanding the child days.
 - Western Bay provided DDP2 training for 25% of new staff

- **Consistent delivery of high-quality adoption services (MWW only)**
 - Continued training provided for schools on topics such as ACES & resilience, understanding attachment, development trauma & neuroscience, Practical skills for relation & repair and Protect, relate, regulate & reflect.
 - 2 schools in Mid & West Wales completed the self-evaluation for the Attachment Aware Schools Award.

Strategic Priority C:

Healthier contact through better birth family services

As part of a modern adoption service for Wales, NAS will focus on further improving adopted children's contact with their birth families where it is safe and appropriate to do so. This will include birth parents, siblings, and other relevant birth relatives and, in certain circumstances, other previous carers such as foster carers. The NAS plan has the following aspirations in this area:

- Ensuring that all adopted children are able to access post-adoption contact with their birth family in the most appropriate and safe form for them and which recognises that this may change over their childhood.
- Developing a realistic approach to birth contact which recognises the ability that children now have to access information and people through social media.
- Building a strong active offer of direct contact with birth families, particularly siblings, wherever appropriate to help promote a positive relationship with adopted children through their lives.
- Developing well-resourced birth family and contact support services across Wales, able to deliver the offer and promote positive relationships with adopted children, for relevant members of children's birth families.

What has been achieved in the first six months of the plan?

- A Wales wide contact 'audit' has been completed looking at how much of the various types of contact are happening as well as professional attitudes towards

it. Full analysis in underway: early indicators are that there is much variation in the types of contact being supported and particularly in how some of it is viewed.

- All regions and VAA's are considering how to increase numbers of birth parent and adopter meetings with some already doing this e.g. 32 meetings took place between birth parents and adopters took place across Wales.
- 100% of adopters are involved in agreeing contact plans for new placements.
- 100% of birth parents referred, were offered support in line with new guidance.
- Within each region and VAA:
 - MWAS: Arrangements are in place with the Reflect services to support birth mothers both pre and post adoption. The region has supported 10 additional birth parents and other birth relatives, receiving very positive feedback.
 - SEWAS: The contact worker funded by Welsh Government investment is overseeing the implementation of the Good Practice Guide including a 'fast track' arrangement for all new sibling contact referrals. The birth parent worker also funded by the investment is working with the Family Finding team to promote meetings with adoptive parents. This includes introducing virtual meetings between adopters and birth parents if direct contact is not possible as well as proactive support to contact and support groups.
 - VVC: a new Social Care Officer post has been created to support post adoption contact arrangements. A risk assessment tool has been developed to assist childcare social workers in promoting meetings between birth parents and adoptive parents. Family finding staff undertake birth parent counselling and support to birth parent post adoption is offered via the letterbox service and the Birth Parent Adviser funded by the investment. The latter is supporting 64 birth parents. Links are established with two Reflect services, but the two other authorities no longer have contracts for this service.
 - WBAS: Development of a small contact and a small birth parent team using existing grant funding and regional resources. The 'model' of contact support provided has been recognised as a good practice example and featured on various conference. A staff development day focused on contact resulting in various service initiatives including a workshop on contact for adopters waiting for a match. The service is currently supporting 62 birth parents and has plans to establish birth parent support groups and 'drop in' opportunities. Birth Parent and Adopter meetings are being promoted and other options considered if face to face not possible. Links with Reflect are being developed.
 - NWAS: A birth parents support group is being planned to operate across two LA's in the second half of the year. There are ongoing links with the Reflect services that operate.
 - Barnardo's: developing specific prompts within their recruitment processes to provide information and enquire about attitudes to different types of contact. All adopters to be expected to commit to a form of contact with birth relatives etc.
 - St David's: Initial enquiries and adopter preparation courses now include specific focus on direct contact in order to change culture.

Strategic Priority D:

Better adoption records and access to information at any age

As part of the shift to a more modern adoption service in Wales all relevant services / departments will need to better recognise the importance of personal information and records to adopted people of all ages. This will require improvements in some storage and access arrangements as well as in understanding and attitude. The NAS plan has the following aspirations:

- Building an ‘access to birth records service’ across Wales, with sufficient capacity to meet likely demand and which links specialists in each region / VAA, is a centre of excellence and continual improvement and has as part of the offer a peer support service provided by trained adopted people.
- Change public and professional views on the importance of birth records.
- Raise the status, importance and quality of children’s records and access arrangements to historical records so that adopted adults are able to access the information they need at a time and place which works for them with support from skilled and sensitive professionals where that is needed.
- 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 the plan?

- NAS has considered the report of the ‘Joint Human Rights Committee into the adoption of the children of unmarried mothers 1949 to 1976⁵’ and engaged with the Welsh Government as it considers whether and how to respond to the issues that these historical practices have created for those affected and for current services in responding to the legacy.
- St David’s and AUK, supported by NAS, have begun to scope a proposal for a better adoption records and access to information service.
- NAS has created a formal sub group, which reports to the Governance Board, to support the above and other development work in this area. This group is based on an existing Wales wide practitioner forum which has been in existence for some time.

Strategic priority E:

Maintaining the infrastructure necessary to deliver and maintain sound governance for both NAS and Foster Wales

⁵ [The violation of Family Life: Adoption of Children of Unmarried Women 1949–1976 \(parliament.uk\)](https://www.parliament.uk)

Previous NAS reports have documented the work undertaken by the Director and central team to support the development of an improvement collaborative for local authority fostering. This developed into Foster Wales [Fostering in Wales | Foster Wales \(gov.wales\)](#) which was formally launched in July 2021.

The role of NAS and the range of functions delivered nationally have developed significantly since its inception, in any event. Adding Foster Wales, whilst facilitating benefits and economies of scale for both, has further extended the national functions which the central team delivers, and which are enabled by the Host local authority Cardiff. To continue the successful delivery of both NAS and Foster Wales, further investment in infrastructure and oversight, through improved governance, has been necessary which has required additional staff and created additional costs some of which are currently funded up to the end of March 2023 only. The NAS plan intends to

- Achieve a fully funded and sustainable team for NAS and Foster Wales by meeting the shortfall in staffing and operational costs including the costs of the re-negotiated hosting agreement.

What has been achieved in the first six months of the plan?

- An expanded central team structure has been put 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 been gaining sign up to the new Joint Committee and the agreement that will underpin it in readiness for that provide a mechanism for all 22 authorities to oversee both services.
- Initial work has been undertaken on a revised hosting arrangement with Cardiff Council including agreeing a revised schedule of costs.
- Discussions have taken place with the Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), and where appropriate resource bids have been made, to secure the necessary funding.

A sustainable long-term service

'How' NAS implements the new plan is as important as 'what' it aims to achieve. There are key operating principles that NAS has put in place over the last eight years, which are priorities to continue. These are:

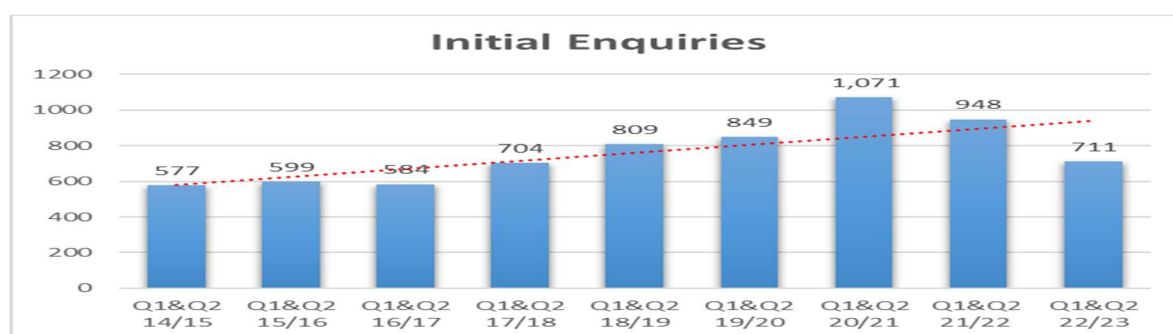
- Engagement, participation and co-production with the people who use services and the staff that deliver them.
- Effective partnership working between the statutory and 3rd sector combined with strategic commissioning to support sustainability as well as cross sector sharing of effective approaches.
- Capacity building through action learning approaches that draws on our own practice initiatives while being informed by research, learning from others and through co-production in addition to seeking additional resources where that has been possible.
- Influencing and leading the public, professional and government in relation to adoption matters.

NAS aims to continue to co-produce services that reflect the voice and influence of service users in design and delivery. Implementing the strategic priorities will require a combination of improvements in resource allocation, investment in the workforce and their practice and cultures, alongside identifying new funding, careful management and leadership across NAS and its partners.

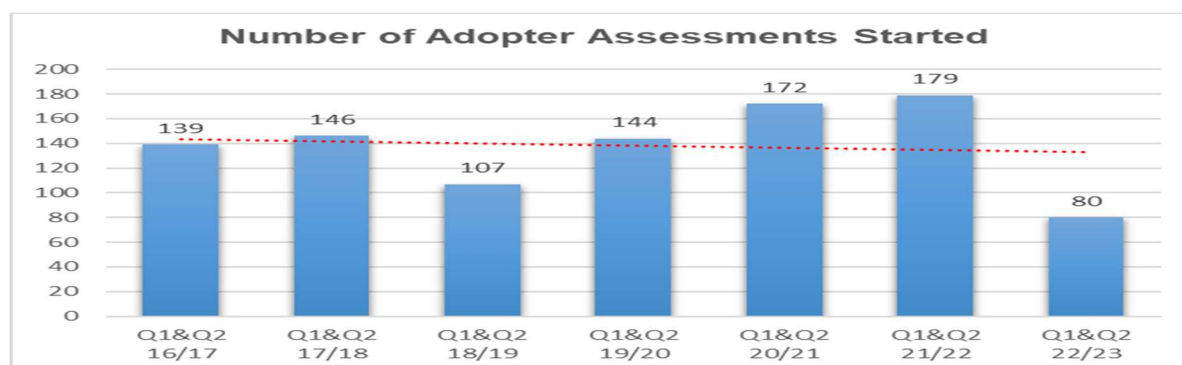
Performance of the service in the first half of 2022-23

Recruitment of adopters

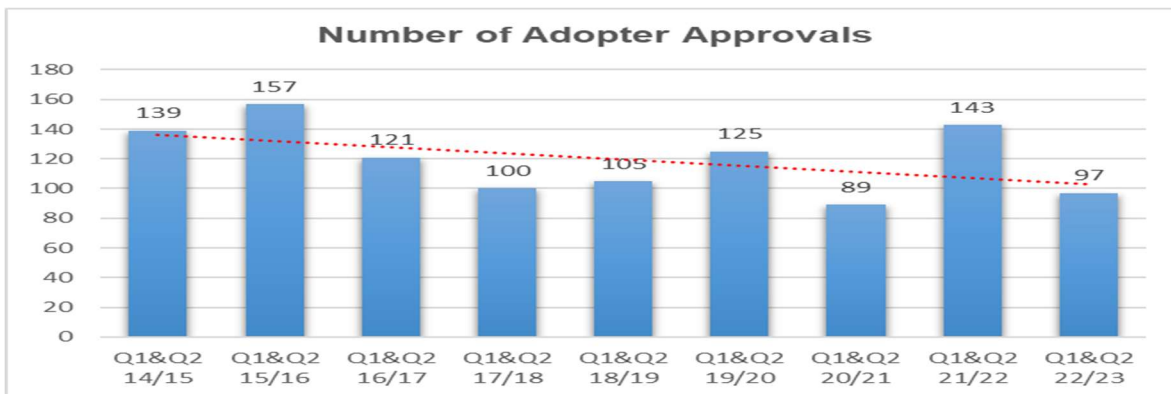
At mid-year adopter initial enquiries have reduced from the high level of interest experienced during the pandemic; the level of enquiries received by the mid-year point was similar to that in the years prior to 2020/21 albeit 25% lower than the same period last year.



At 80, the number of assessments commenced in the first half of the year was just over 50% lower than the same period last year. The projected number of assessments likely to start this is year, based on numbers so far this year, is currently 160. This will signify a 32% decrease compared to last year if levels do not increase over the rest of the year.



There were 97 approvals in the first half of the year; the projection for the year is a 24% reduction compared to last year, if levels do not increase.



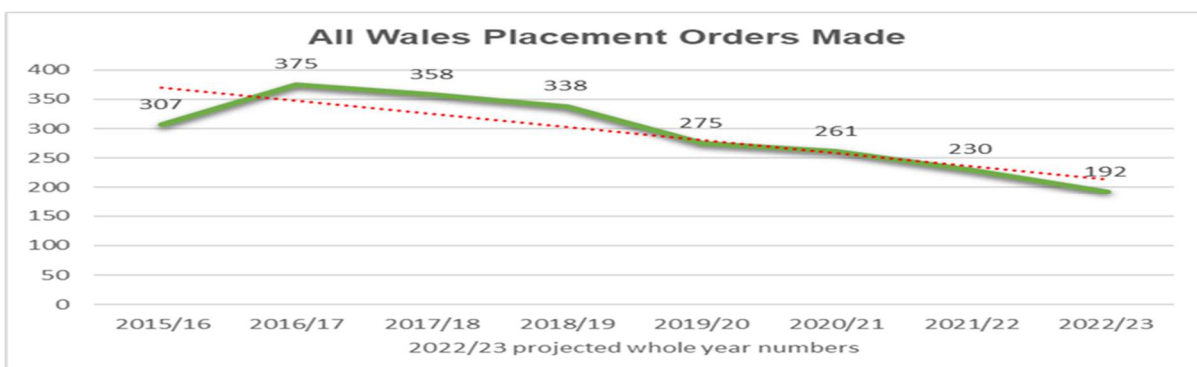
Timeframes from application to adopter approval have decreased to 10.9 months. 31% of approvals were within 6 months which is recognised as the benchmark for a straightforward application with no delay.

Regions and agencies report that ongoing positive engagement and recruitment activity has been resulting in fewer enquiries and assessments commencing due, in part, to the impact of cost-of-living crisis and additionally, in two areas, due to staff capacity where services have been impacted by the shortage of social workers in covering planned absences e.g., maternity leave.

The levels of adopter approvals coupled with fewer adopter assessments being commenced has implications for placing children in future years. There are currently over 200 adopters waiting; 73% of these being approved in the last 12 months. This level of adopters waiting will minimise the impact of fewer approvals in the short term but levels of assessments being commenced needs to increase in the second half of the year and beyond to meet anticipated future demand for placements.

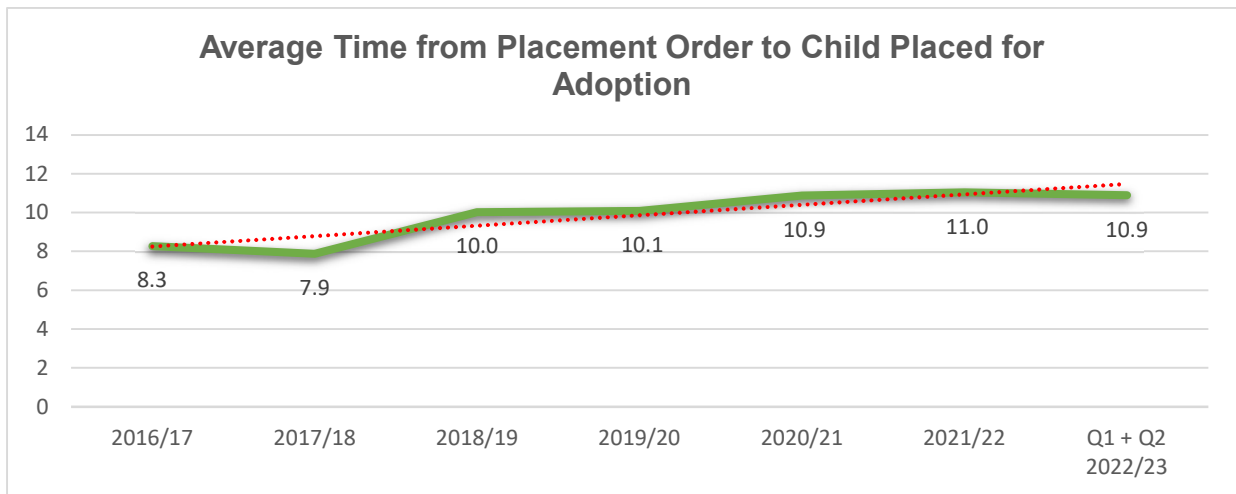
Placing children

For reasons outlined earlier in the report there have been fewer children being considered for adoption in recent years, with a consequent gradual reduction in level of Placement Orders being granted, although the position is variable across the regions.

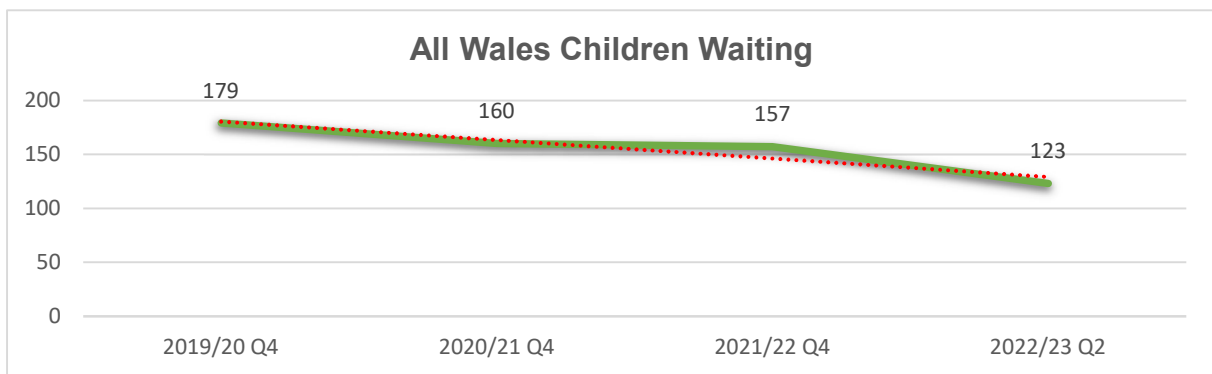


Quarter 2 saw increases in referrals, 'Should be Placed' decisions and 'Placement Orders' granted in some regions although the current projection, based on the first half of the year, is that Placement Orders are likely to reduce by a further 17% this year. The trend line for this reduction is linked to and mirrors is the current reduction of care order applications being made to the courts.

Timeframes for children being placed remain higher, particularly those with more complex needs, at an average of 10.8 months children. 29% of the children placed so far this year were placed within the 6-month benchmark.



The number of children waiting continues to reduce, standing at 123 at the end of the quarter; 60% of these children had been waiting less than 6 months.





NAS continues to manage the Adoption Register for Wales (ARW) on behalf of the Welsh Government. The ARW Team continue to work closely with practitioners across the regions and VAA's to support matching children with adopters, particularly those who are not promptly matched through regional arrangements. They do this by ensuring children and adopters are referred to the Register in a timely manner, that the Register data base is kept up to date and used effectively as well as co-ordinating Wales wide family finding activity.

During the first half of the year, 84 children and 85 adoptive families were added to the Register. 19 matches made by using the Register, a decrease from the same period last year but in line with fewer children being referred for adoption and waiting.

ARW held its 6th Adoption Activity Day supported by the Coram BAAF service on the 21st of May 2022 in mid Wales. 18 children were profiled at the event and 15 attended on the day. 32 expressions of interest were made for 15 children, with 4 successful links.

Due to the success of online profiling events held during Covid, the Register has continued to offer a programme of virtual matching events. The first event for this year took place in July, taking a slightly different format to suit the numbers of children available. A pre-recorded event was held, where over 50 adopters registered to attend a pre-recorded session through which they could access the children's profiles, via a secure link available for 3 days, at times convenient to them. This resulted in 9 expressions of interest for 4 children although unfortunately, none has resulted in a link so far. Positive feedback was received by adopters and professionals to this style of event. One adopter wrote

"I appreciate the opportunity to be able to attend such an event. The videos bring the children to life and hearing all the information from the social worker and foster carer is really valuable".

Adopting Together Service



Adopting Together is a specialist service for children who wait the longest provided by St David's Children Society and Barnardo's Cymru for Welsh children. In keeping with the decline in the numbers of children generally available with adoption as the plan, Adopting Together has experienced a significant reduction in the number of children referred this year. The service works closely with the Adoption Register Wales to identify suitable children.

At the mid-year point, there were three children in the process of being placed with families approved by St. David's while Barnardo's have placed 1 child. Both agencies continue to actively recruit adopters to meet the needs of children waiting. Since June 2018, 26 children have been placed with 18 adoptive families through the

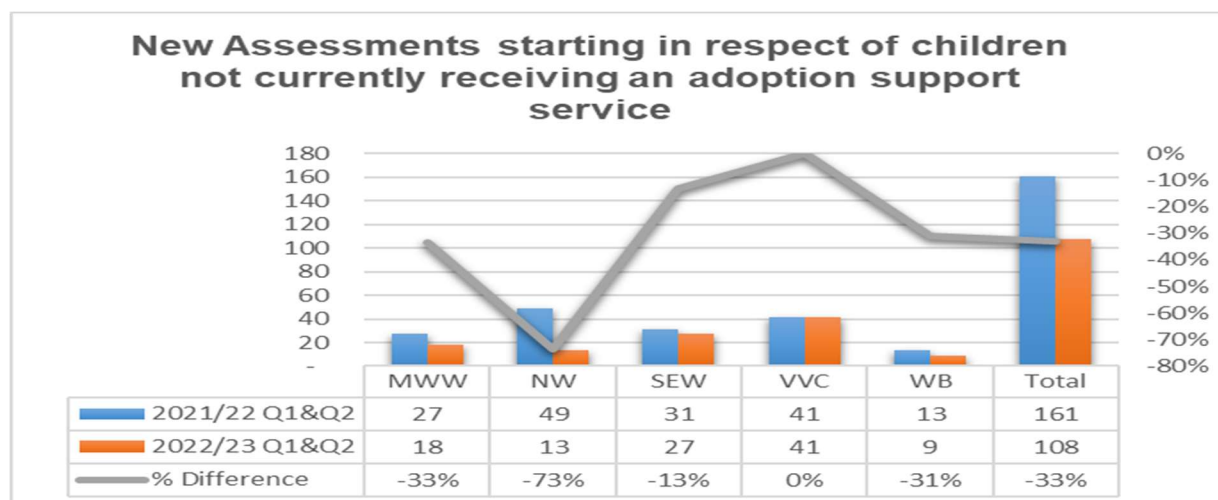
Adopting Together Service which has resulted in £31.2 million in savings across all services as well as significantly improving lifelong outcomes for the children involved and their future generations.

Adoption Support

New Assessments started in respect of children that are currently not receiving an adoption support service

Formal requests for an adoption support assessment reduced by 33% during the first half of the year. Additionally, the pattern of services is changing with some of new services such as PATHWAY and Connected being available according to need and without a formal assessment. Information about the impact of these services is in the earlier part of the report. New practices such as ‘check ins’ are also enabling a more proactive approach to early support.

The reduction indicated by the data is not in line with the reported experience of regions; it also does not reflect the unmet demand in those regions that have waiting lists for these assessments. Many of these requests are for longer term support so there is an ongoing impact for service. Services continue to report high demand and complex situations.

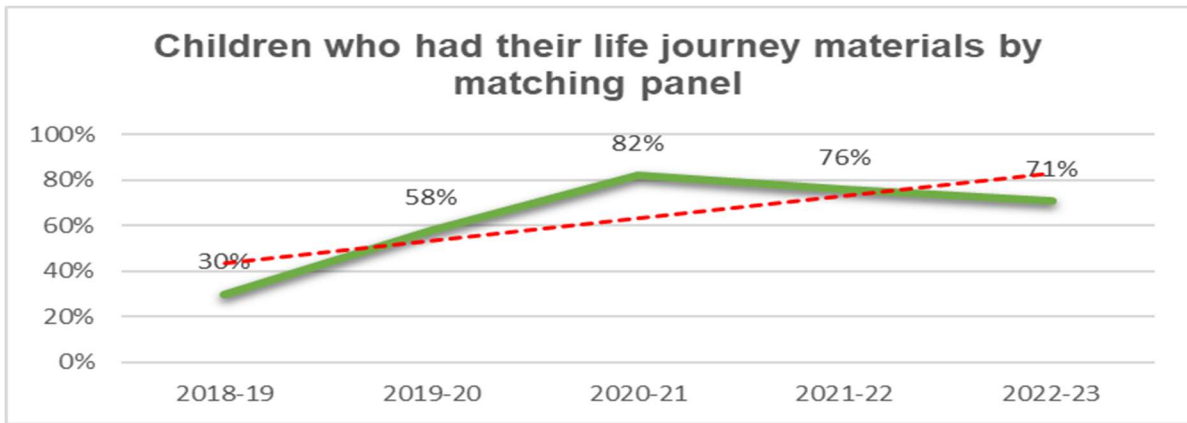


Regions report that 100% of children placed have a new style adoption support plan and that 100% of adopters have agreed the adoption support plans for the children they are matched with.

Life Journey work

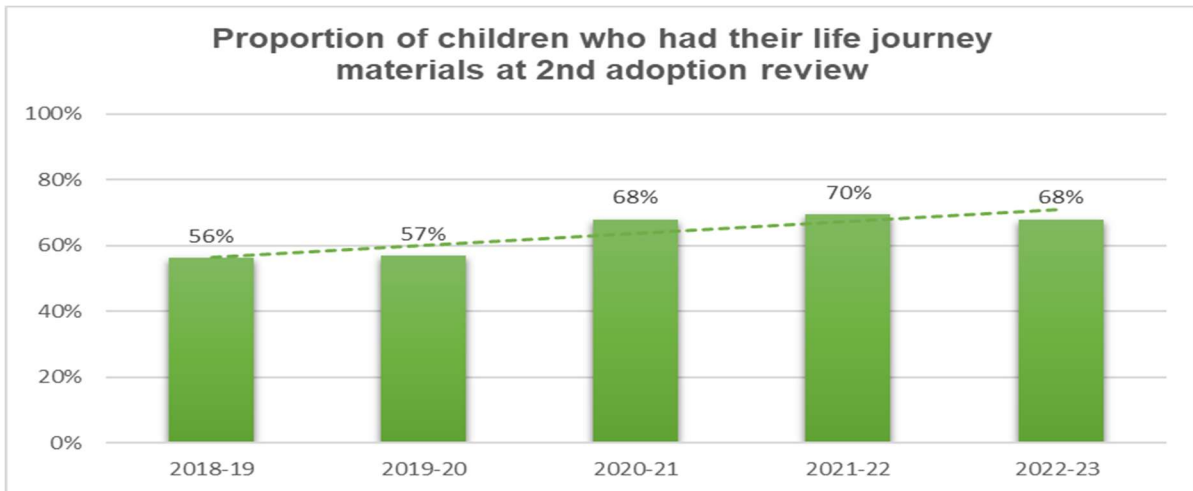
At matching

71% of all children placed so far this year had the agreed Life Journey materials in place at matching. This is a slight drop from 76% at the same point of the year in 2021/22. Three of the agencies achieved 100%; the overall average is affected by low performance in one region.

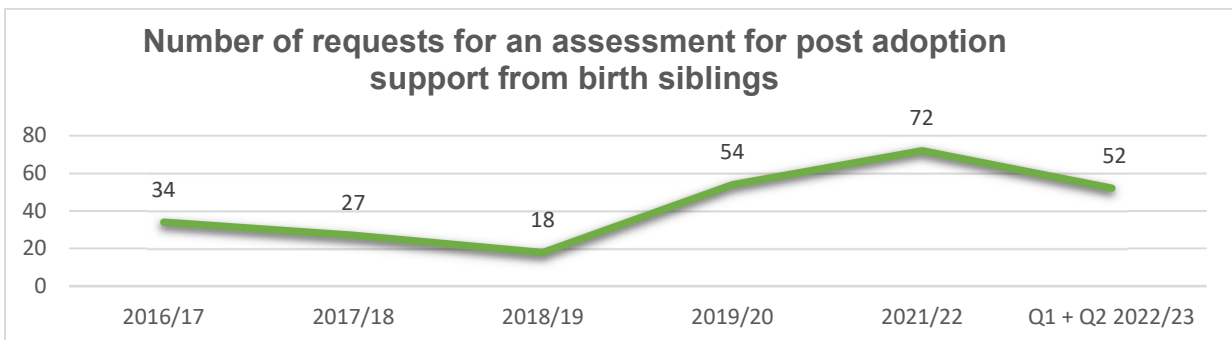


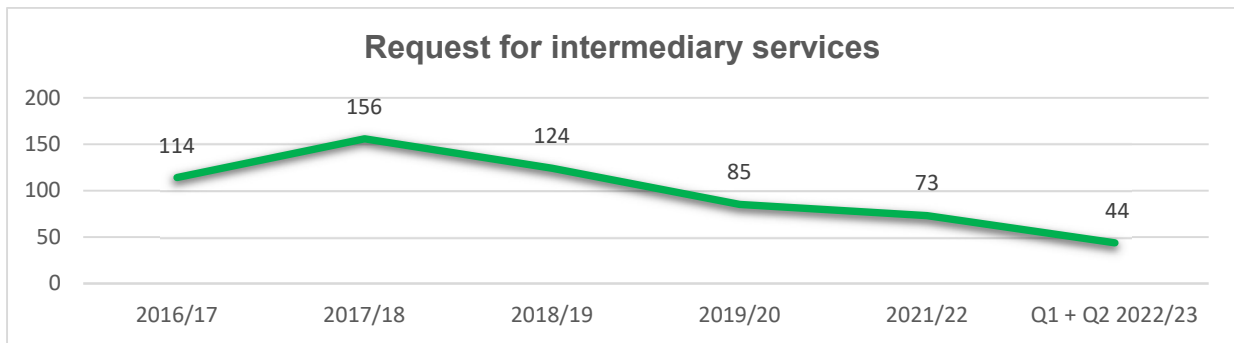
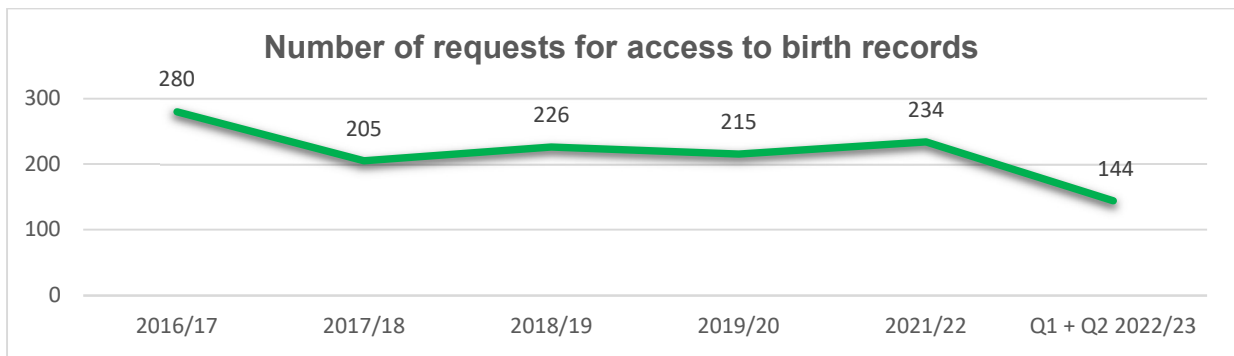
Life Journey at 2nd Adoption Review

Overall, in the first half of this year, 68% of all children placed who had a second adoption review had the agreed Life Journey materials in place as required. This is a slight drop from 70% in 2021/22. Three Regions achieve 86%+ but the overall performance is affected by the low performance in one region.



Adoption support is also provided for others affected by adoption such as birth siblings and other relatives as well as to support people to access their birth records. Some agencies are experiencing an increase in some of these requests.





The above show increases on the same period in previous years and a projected full year increase this year of 44%, 23% and 21% respectively.

There has been a reduction in the number of requests for an assessment for post adoption support from other adults (relatives/ former guardians) affected by the adoption of a particular child.



Gwasanaeth
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