



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu
Cenedlaethol

National
Adoption
Service

Winter newsletter 2018





I am delighted to share this edition of the National Adoption Service in Wales Newsletter and hope you will find the content both interesting and informative.

We are proud of our achievements since our launch in 2014 in helping to improve the lives of children, young people and adopters across Wales. We recognise however that there is still much to be done.

The last year has seen a huge focus on placing children quickly in suitable homes and on making sure that they and their adopters have the right level and type of post-placement support.

We know adoption support is crucial to ensuring the success of placements both in the early days and throughout the child/young person's growing years. We realise and appreciate how getting this right very much relies on the hard work of adopters, adopted children and young people as well as the professional staff involved in their placements.

In 2018, we've continued improving our services and launched exciting new initiatives such as the Life Journey Work Framework and the Adopting Together scheme led by St. David's Children Society, as well as sourcing a new Adoption Register for Wales.



Looking ahead to 2019:

Already 2019 is shaping up to be an exciting year ahead with many activities planned across Wales. It is our aim to continue to focus on the needs of children and young people by consolidating what we have already achieved and thinking carefully about the kind of adoption service we want to be. By continuing to involve children, young people and adopters in our planning we hope to build on success so far.

We'll be pushing for positive changes within the law governing adoption in Wales to streamline processes, make the assessments of adopters more adopter-led and timely as well improving professional skills to ensure the best possible service to all those affected by adoption. We will also be launching out post -approval training for adopters.

Just as we did this year, we plan to continue to listen to adopters and adopted children and young people and run the adoption activity days to assist with family finding for those children still waiting for placements.

The gap between the number of adopters being recruited and the number of children needing adoptive placements is widening which means that the regions will need to continue to work hard to develop their marketing and recruitment plans so that there is active and sustained recruitment.

In the meantime, we hope you all have a wonderful festive period and a happy and peaceful 2019!

Suzanne Griffiths
Director – National Adoption Service



A look at adoption in Wales

Our service offering continues to improve, and in the last year the National Adoption Service in Wales has delivered the following:

300+

CHILDREN PLACED IN THEIR
NEW ADOPTIVE HOMES

**AROUND 300
CHILDREN**

HAD THEIR ADOPTION ORDERS
GRANTED, WHICH MEANS THAT THE
ADOPTIVE PARENT(S) BECOME THE
CHILD'S LEGAL PARENT(S) FOR LIFE



OVER 500 CHILDREN

SUPPORTED

BY OUR SERVICES ABOUT ADOPTION

3370

LETTERS 

EXCHANGED BETWEEN
BIRTH RELATIVES, ADOPTIVE
PARENTS AND CHILDREN

320 BIRTH

PARENTS SUPPORTED

200+ REQUESTS FOR ACCESS
TO BIRTH RECORDS AND MORE
THAN 150 REQUESTS FOR HELP IN
CONTACTING BIRTH FAMILIES



ANOTHER 350 CHILDREN
READY TO BE

MATCHED

OR PLACED WITH THEIR
ADOPTIVE PARENTS



National Adoption Week

National Adoption Week 2018 was our best yet with TV, radio and print coverage. Plus, lots of noise online for #SupportAdoption via social media.

To kick start the week, we worked with St David's Children Society and partners to launch Adopting Together [find out more on the project, page 6].

The Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies gave his support for the week on social media, in the Senedd and by paying a visit to Tony and Mike, prospective adoptive parents on Adopting Together.

Thank you to everyone who got involved and helped raise awareness of adoption in Wales.



Here are the best bits from the week

IN THE NEWS



ON SOCIAL





Adopting Together

What is Adopting Together?

Adopting Together led by St David's Children Society is a new initiative to help place children who have been waiting the longest for a permanent family.

The first of its kind in the UK, Adopting Together has been developed in response to an urgent need identified by the National Adoption Service (NAS) to develop and deliver a more targeted approach to finding families for children across Wales waiting a long time for their forever home.

10 of 11 children featured at first Adopting Together profiling and recruitment event in June were linked with prospective adoptive parents.

Adopting Together aims to break down barriers which might prevent people from adopting priority children. The project offers specialised assessment and training, together with a tailored programme of ongoing therapeutic and clinical support for the adopter and child.

It is delivered collectively by Voluntary Adoption Agencies (St. David's, Barnardo's, AFA Cymru, After Adoption and Adoption UK) with further support from therapeutic partners, NAS through its regions, 22 Local Authorities, and Cardiff University.

A Knowledge Transfer Partnership, which has been set up to enable these organisations to embed best practice, has been funded by the Welsh Government through Innovate UK.



What makes Adopting Together different?

The model is unique in that it brings together four key components:

1. Child-specific recruitment

Aimed at the wider public as well as those who have expressed an interest in adoption. This will feature profiles and films of children currently waiting for a permanent family.

2. A 'Team for the Child' meeting

Facilitated by a clinical psychologist to provide thoughtful discussion which brings together all known information about a child, including the daily lived experience of foster carers with psychological insights on how best to strengthen the parent/child bond. This develops an understanding of the support that will be needed through the adoption journey.

3. Structured transition sessions and an Adopting Together buddy

A play-based approach (grounded in Theraplay, Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy and narrative work) before, during and after the child's move from foster carer to adopter to support the transition process. Alongside this, an experienced and trained adopter will act as a peer buddy.

4. Follow-up psychological consultation support

Once the child has moved in with their adoptive parents, three meetings will take place with the parents to discuss and normalise issues, whilst identifying strengths to continue to develop parenting strategies for the future.

For more information on Adopting Together, visit adoptionwales.org/en/page/adopting-together



Congratulations! Adopting Together wins at Highly Commended for Social and Community Benefit at the Go Wales Award. It has also won a national Institute for Collaborative Working award.



Tony and Mike, 39 are one of the couples from the first profiling event. Here's what Mike had to say about their experience:

“We’ve had a fantastic experience with St David’s, and being part of the Adopting Together project. Being parents has always been a dream of ours, and we are so excited for this to finally come true.”

“While we are absolutely thrilled to become parents, adopting a child can be a daunting process, so the support we have received has been invaluable. Adopting Together has given us an opportunity to hear about our future little boy from those who know him best, and we’ve received tailored advice and support based on his needs.”

“It’s great to know support will also continue post adoption, so we can ensure we give him the best life possible.”

“I turn 40 this year and can’t wait to wake up to a card saying, ‘Happy Birthday Daddy’.”



Listening to you

Thank you for telling us what you think through 'Adopter Voice'.

We started this scheme so we had an ongoing way of keeping in touch with what matters to adopters. Your feedback is being reported to Adoption teams/services and their management boards across Wales as well as to the National Adoption Service Advisory Group and Governance Board.

We will continue to do other things like hold groups and events as well as involving you in improving the services. This update is to let you know what is happening about the things raised through Adopter Voice in 2017/18.



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Achieving More Together / Cyflawni Mwy Gyda'n Gilydd

Listening to you



Phil Hodgson



Suzanne Griffiths



Cllr Geraint Hopkins

What you said

RECRUITMENT is generally quick and easy but in a small number of cases the following was noted:

- Poor communication particularly about timescales
- Changes of social workers
- Documents not being properly prepared

PREPARATION TRAINING is generally OK and effective as well as being a good opportunity to meet other adopters. Some suggestions were made namely:

- Improve the content of preparation training

MATCHING AND PLACEMENT was reported to be well managed although the following were highlighted:

- It sometimes feels a bit 'transactional' with the emotional side neglected
- Sometimes the detailed planning doesn't go well

POST-ADOPTION TRAINING AND SUPPORT was thought to be poor in particular:

- Support falling away
- Poor post-placement courses held at inconvenient times
- Inconsistent financial support
- Quality, availability and evaluation of therapy



What we're doing

We encourage adoption teams to use the best practice model of agreeing a contract with adopters at the start of an assessment so everyone is clear about timeframes etc.

We've been lobbying the Welsh Government to introduce a two stage process for recruitment and assessment. This is due out for consultation and, if agreed, will clarify expectations and timeframes.

We've reported back to adoption teams the impact that poorly prepared documentation can have and asked them to look at this.

Adoption teams are aware of the impact that changes of staff has; they are committed to minimising this where they can.

We plan to review the pre-approval preparation training. This year we will take your comments into account and involve you in this.

We focused on transitions for children in our last staff conference promoting best practice.

We plan to share the good practice on transition highlighted by one of our regions and the Adopting Together scheme.

We've developed a framework to improve adoption support and are changing things bit by bit. Adoption services are providing more adoption support than they used to.

- All new adopters get a 1 year membership of Adoption UK free if they want it
- We've made more information and advice available, including support groups
- Some adoption team staff are now trained in therapeutic interventions
- Our website now has information about adoption support on it
- In most parts of Wales the regional adoption service is now the place to get help

Adoption UK have launched their *First 1,000 Days* project to support families through the early days of their adoption journey.

We've introduced an All Wales Policy for Financial Allowances. It has to comply with the law which allows for local discretion but things should start to become more standardised.

We've developed a post-approval training programme, with more detailed information and courses. We are planning to bring this into use this year.

We recognise there's lots more to do and we have an ongoing plan that includes trying to change the legal framework and securing more resources.

We'll continue to listen to what you tell us
Thank you for helping us to understand your views

029 2087 3927



News from adoption teams around Wales

This year, adoption services around Wales attended Pride events in South Wales. It was a fantastic opportunity to speak to our LGBT adopters and adopters of the future.

Keep your eyes peeled for us at more events in 2019.



Adoption UK Wales

adoptionuk.org

We have had a very busy year delivering training to hundreds of adoptive parents across Wales on topics including: Life Journey Work, Schools and Education, parenting children who display violent behaviour, Therapy Maze and our six session therapeutic parenting course called Parenting Our Children which ran in North Wales. In the last quarter of 2018 alone we trained 159 parents who between them support 216 children directly as well as many social workers, teachers and other professionals.

Our helpline has had 1,344 contacts over the year – top topics that people call about are: schools, behaviour, contact with birth family and siblings, how to start the adoption process and challenging behaviour.

We currently facilitate a total of ten support groups across Wales including ones for single adopters, Adoptive Dad's and Grandparents. Some groups meet in the evening and some during the day. January 2019 will see the start of two new

groups – one meeting weekly for parents with pre school children and one for adult adoptees.

Our First 1000 Days project has provided early support to new adoptive families across Wales with membership of Adoption UK provided free for the first year, free training, fact sheets and ongoing contact with other more experienced adopters.

Our Adopter Voice project has held adopter forums in each of the adoption regions finding out from adopters what their experience is of CAMHS, Life Journey work, Contact, Education and Adoption Support in general.

We have several exciting new projects lined up to start in 2019 with the aim of ensuring that every child who is adopted in Wales has a family with the right support around them to help them recover from their early experiences and go on to live a happy and healthy life.

We are proud to have supported NAS last year in writing the Life Journey Work Framework (LJW) and Good Practice Guide and in developing LJW toolkits for Foster Carers, Adopters and Social Works / Support Staff. These were well received by the Social Work professionals, Adopters and Carers that we met with across the Regions this year.

If you missed the training provided within your region, we are offering Life Journey Work workshops in both our North and South offices early in 2019.

We have recently been consulting on developing further toolkits for Children and Young People, Birth Families and Other Professionals.

Barnardo's Cymru Adoption and Fostering Service (BCAFS)

barnardos.org.uk/adoption

Firstly we would like to report some very good news, we have seen a growth in our enquiries for adoption this year and have diarised extra Preparation groups to accommodate the demand. We're also welcoming a new adoption social worker to our team.

As an active partner in Adopting Together, we are in the process of piloting the first child specific recruitment for a sibling group of two – our Barnardo's Cymru media officer is working with the team and the placing local authority to raise the profile of the children.

Our aim is to reach out and receive enquiries from prospective adoptive families who feel they could offer the children a forever home and family. We are also working with our media and marketing central team in

Barkingside to develop an animation that describes the project and profiles the children who are waiting longest on the Welsh Adoption Register.

We have increased our training offer to adopters and prospective adoptive parents to build on the learning from preparation groups, with a focus on parenting approaches whilst also increasing their knowledge of different attachment styles, in order to develop their understanding of how to meet their child's need to feel safe and secure.

As an agency and on behalf of our approved adoptive parents, we'd like to express gratitude for ongoing funded membership of AdoptionUK.

Adoption Mid and West Wales

adoptionmwwales.org.uk

2018 has been an exciting year for adopters and staff. Here are just some of our highlights...

Our website has relaunched with an animation myth busting section on who can adopt. We have also set up a secure system for adopters to access a wide range of training courses and resources, including a film of interviews with birth parents.

We provided a wide range of Post Approval training including a six session PACE course on Therapeutic Parenting which has received great feedback.



Our roll out of the new Life Journey Framework has benefitted from the enthusiastic work of a project worker, who has been employed solely to support adopters and staff to implement this new approach to Life Story work.

We had a great “Surfing and Beach” fun day on a beach in Pembrokeshire and continue to have successful adoption support groups in each of our four counties. We are really grateful to all our adopters who have helped support these events and provided their own insights and ideas which will continue to help us update and improve the service we provide.

For more updates, follow us on Twitter @adoptmw_wales

North Wales Adoption

northwalesadoption.gov.uk

We've had a very busy year this year with training, developing and launching our new peer mentoring scheme, as well as increasing the number of adoption support groups across the regions.

In addition to new training programmes we introduced 'Assessing Emotional Capacity' to support staff in their assessments and for adopters.

We have also been fortunate to have a day's workshop for adopters on supporting their children in the Education environment from Braveheart, six session course on

Parenting Our Children from AUK, plus Sarah Naish on 'Healing children through therapeutic parenting'. All of which have had very positive evaluations from adopters – so thank you!

In September we had an excellent turnout of adopters and their families to our Annual Fun Day, thank you for your support and the positive feedback we had from the day.

Going in to 2019, our training officer is undertaking therapeutic courses in order to further support our adopters through training provision.

It's been another busy year with various events and training opportunities available not just for families, but for us as workers too.

But most importantly, we've been busy supporting many families and children through their journey of adoption.

As a service we are committed to understand the impact of early trauma and to think with families about the children's needs from a therapeutic perspective. Most of us have now completed the DDP level 1 training and Safe Base, applying our learnings to all aspects of the adoption journey to better support children and their families.

We continue to actively seek our families' views and have met with a number of parents to discuss improving our services.

Listening to adoptive parents' views, we have developed new training courses for prospective adopters who are at the assessment stage, 'Family and Friends Workshop' and 'Training for Second Time Adopters'. There is also now a one day training course for foster carers

who wish to adopt which will run twice a year.

We've also set up a new support group for parents with children over the age of 10 and continue our Coffee Mornings in various locations across Gwent.

It was lovely to meet some of our parents and children at our Fun Day event in the summer which despite the rain proved to be a great day out! We hope to hold a similar event in 2019.

We have six information events planned 2019 for those considering adoption. Come along and talk to our social workers about the children currently waiting as well as any worries and questions you may have. We look forward to meeting you on the following dates:

Jan 15th 6-8pm, March 9th 10am-12pm, May 13th 6-8pm, July 6th 10am-12pm, Sept 10th 6 – 8pm, Nov 2nd 10am-12pm. Booking is essential so please email us at adoption@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk or call 01495 355766 if interested.

St David's Children Society

adoptionwales.org

This year saw the retirement of our long standing CEO, Gerry Cooney. For those who have worked in the adoption sector Gerry's name has been synonymous with St. David's for many years. Gerry's mission has always been the children and their right to family life. Under his leadership 700 children have been placed with the Society. There can be no finer legacy to leave.

Wendy Keidan has been appointed as the new CEO of St David's. She has over 30 years' experience in the sector. Previously the Director of BAAF Cymru, she has been the Deputy Director of St David's since 2015 and has led on the service design for the innovative Adopting Together project.

We'd like to take this opportunity to welcome all adopters and their children who've had their Mid-Point Review to attend our quarterly Support Groups. The group meet on Saturdays and there

is a talk from an adopter on a relevant topic. We provide crèche facilities for children plus, a communal lunch which is much enjoyed by all.

We also run five workshops for prospective adopters before a placement that cover the following topics: Prospective Adopters Report, Brothers and Sisters, Family and Friends, Linking and Introductions and Talking to Children About Adoption.

We look forward to meeting you.



Vale Valleys and Cardiff Adoption

adopt4vvc.org

2018 has seen some great highlights in the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff.

A big thank you to everyone who attended our family fun days. Our parties are a great opportunity adopted children and adoptive parents to meet and share experiences. We also love these days because we can see children growing up in families we have matched them with.

For National Adoption Week 2018 we released a series called 'Becoming Parents' which highlights the adoption process through the eyes of several of our adopters. This series is live on our website: www.adopt4vvc.org/en/Videos-and-Series or our new YouTube channel @valevalleysandcardiffadoption.

Thank you to Philipa, Ross, Michael, Gareth and Claire for taking part!

We're in the process of updating our website to include adopter stories and recommendations for books, series and vlogs that inspire and inform people in the adoption process. If you've read a good book / watched something interesting related to adoption or would like to share your own personal story of adoption, please contact our Marketing Officer, Natalie on 01446 706152.

We are now settled in our new home in Barry. The move was a period of transition. We would like to thank all our adopters for their understanding.

Lastly, we want to make sure that all our children find homes. One of the biggest motivators is word of mouth and we really value your positive recommendations. Please continue to recommend us to your friends, colleagues and acquaintances who are interested in adoption.



Western Bay

westernbayadoption.org

We'd like to thank our adopters for their considerable support and help with a number of events and activities over the last year.

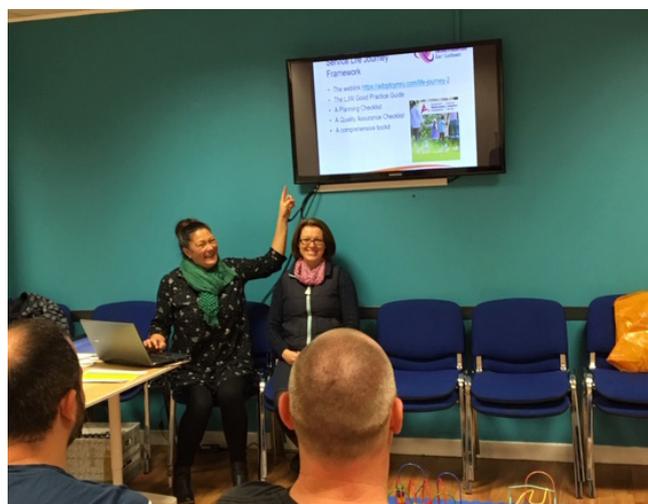
From our successful annual celebration for adopters and children and our brand new website to the continued development of the adoption support services. Your support is pivotal.

The views and feedback from the adopters has helped develop user friendly materials for Life Journey Framework training, guidance and workshops, two new support groups bringing new and longer term adopters together and placing more children at our profiling events.

Thank you also to our social workers for your attendance at our workshops and your desire to support adopters to become actively engaged with the Life Journey Framework.

Our big news for 2018 is the launch of our new website. It is now live with lots of new resources and an improved enquiry process. Still to come, is a new members area so please keep an eye out for that, along with all our support and profiling events.

To top it off, Western Bay staff have been raising money for Children in Need with a cake sale in office.



Thank you from
everyone at the
National Adoption
Service.

Have a Merry
Christmas!



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