

Adoption Agency Annual Report 2005 to 2006

1. Introduction

The annual report provides an overview of NCH Adoption Agency activity for the year 1st April 2005 to 31st March 2006.

This year has been one of significant change and development for the agency. The Adoption Business Manager came into post mid March 2005 and the adoption projects moved into the Business Management Unit during April 2005 with line management responsibilities being taken over by the Business Manager.

The Adoption projects have increased their performance rates over the last 12 months with an increase in both the numbers of families approved as suitable to adopt and an increase in the number of children placed.

A smaller branch of the agency, Middlesbrough, was closed down at the end of the year and its work amalgamated into the Yorkshire project. The increase in the work of Black Family Finding has continued and the agency has continued to invest in the growth of the Black Families project.

On a national level the Adoption and Children Act was implemented in full on December 30th 2005 and work has been undertaken to ensure the agency is fully compliant with the new legislation and statutory obligations this places upon Adoption work.

2. Recruitment and Marketing

The agency continues to focus on meeting the needs of children from sibling groups, with disability or special needs, from minority ethnic populations, or single children with complex needs.

In order to meet the needs of these children it is important to recruit adopters from all walks of life. Marketing and recruitment activity has been focussed on information provided over the internet, direct advertising, open days at projects, exchange days with consortiums and the national register, radio and TV interviews, and the positive feedback of our adopters to their friends and relatives. The adopters information pack has been updated and profiles on children have been improved to ensure that adopters receive comprehensive information informing their decision to adopt. Work has started on the development of the web site to further increase the accessibility on information about families available for placements.

National Adoption Week in November was very positive with interviews being arranged with GMTV and regional TV, and good local press and radio interest. Interest from corporate sponsors, such as Centrica, and links made

through adopters, further increased the profile of the work NCH does in Adoption.

Over the 12 month period 13 local recruitment campaigns were run and 14 preparation groups held.

The number of enquiries generated is shown below. The majority of enquiries have been generated via the internet generating 767 enquiries. The conversion rate of enquires into actual applications is 7.5% which is an improvement on last years conversion rate of 5.7%.

	2004-05	2005-06
Number of Enquiries	1344	1357
Number of Initial Visits	189	190
Number of Formal applications	76	102
Number of applicants withdrawing before panel	11	18

3. Projects and People

The year started with 6 adoption projects across England, all providing services in the placement of children and adoption support. The South West project based in Bristol provides both adoption and permanent fostering placements. The London Black Families project specialises in finding families for children from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

The small branch in Middlesbrough closed at the end of the year, with the services it was offering amalgamating into the Yorkshire based project. The table below shows the staffing structure at the end of the year, as can be seen a number of vacancies were held during the year whilst a review of the projects took place.

	2004-05	2005-06
Number of project managers/deputies (fte)	11	8.4
Number of FTE Social Workers	30	20.5(lowest)
Number of administrative staff	10	8.8 (lowest)
Number of FTE with 3yrs experience of SW	All	All
Number of staff with less than 3yrs experience	0	0
Number of vacancies	1	9.5

4. Work of the Adoption Panels

There are 5 adoption panels serving the work of the agency. The panels are busy and on general meet every month. This year has seen a slight increase in the number of adopters approved by panels. The adoption agency decision maker is a senior manager from the region in which the panel is based.

In line with the new regulations all panels were stood down and reconstituted on December 30th 2005. Panel policy and procedure has been revised in line

with the regulation and training has been provided for all panel members and staff in the new legislation.

The table below show the work undertaken by the panels over the last 12 months;

Number of adopters approved by panel

	2004-05	2005-06
Number of adopters approved at panel	70	73
Number of adopters turned down at panel	1	1
Number of adopters referred to IRM	1	0
Number approved following IRM	1	0
Number of applicants withdrawing after panel approval	8	10

Profile of Adopters

	2004-05	2005-06
Number of families approved for a sibling group	24	34
Number of single adopters approved	13	15
Number of families including someone from a black or ethnic minority background	29	36

Length of time families waited for placement

(need to enter returns all projects for 2005-06)

	2004-05	2005-06
Less than 6 months	14	
Between 6 to 12 months	30	
Between 12 to 18 months	12	
More than 18 months	8	

5. Profile of Children placed with Prospective Adopters

NCH placed 84 children this year; this is an increase from the 75 children placed the preceding year. The children who we found adoptive families for were from the specified profiles below;

Sibling groups

	2004-05	2005-06
Sibling groups of 2	15	17
Sibling groups of 3	5	4
Sibling groups of 4	1	1
Children of black or minority ethnic origin	20	25
Children with identified special needs	13	4

Ages of children placed

No comparison with previous year available because of change in age range definitions.

Under 1 year	5
1-3 years	29
3 Up to 5 years	16
5 Up to 7 years	24
7 up to 9 years	13
9 up to 11 years	1

6. Outcomes

Over the 12 month period 64 adoption orders were granted, this is an increase on the 48 orders made the previous year. There were 4 disruptions involving 6 children, pre legal adoption. This figure is a reduction on the previous year and is below the national average.

7. Post Adoption

We continue to provide a comprehensive post adoption service, both to adoptive families who need ongoing support, but also to adults who have had experience of adoption through NCH in the past and who wish to access information or make contact with birth relatives. The service is generally provided by specialist post adoption workers based in the projects.

- Over the 12 month period we have provided counselling and support to 133 adoptive parents and 19 adoptive children. This represents a slight reduction to the figures last year (198 adults and 24 adoptive children)
- The number of 'Post Box' arrangements at the end of the year was 140, this is a significant reduction from 340 last year and 559 the year before. No new arrangements are opening as local authorities now operate a post box service and the historical arrangements should decrease year on year.
- Contact arrangements have been very low with only the Midlands project supervising 4 contact arrangements over the last 12 months.
- All the projects held groups support events and training for adopters, amounting to 23 events this year compared to 25 the previous year.
- Birth parent counselling was offered to 5 birth parents on behalf of the local authority (outside of any commissioned arrangements)
- 96 enquiries were made in respect of adoption record counselling (Schedule 2 counselling) and 91 individuals were seen for counselling,

the remaining 5 not following up their enquiry, 146 cases of birth counselling were active at any one time, accounting for enquiries returning or open from the previous year.

- 72 Birth Relative initiated counselling enquiries were dealt with over the 12 month period.
- 71 New enquiries from ex service users were received and 79 were active at any one time.

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