

What do you know about one adoption west? -What do the agency do, where do you fit in?

Members of AT-iD knew very little about One Adoption. They knew a little more about their local authorities, as some have had contact with social workers and services.

How can we improve the communications with children and young people adopted in the west to improve engagement and participation?

Suggestions were

- Section in a newsletter for teenagers/ young people – but it is parents who receive these and not the teenager.
- Email (although from my experience it is hit and miss depending on the teenager) Many don't use it and can often loose the password is lost so multiple emails addresses are created.
- Those who do use it, tend to be teens who have used it in school or college.
- Posters– perhaps maybe making them visible in school, library's, GP surgeries. church was also suggested.
- Social workers having info and sharing with families – knowledgeable & prepared with info for signposting
- Social media – twitter and Instagram – being the most popular – Facebook isn't as popular for teenagers – but is with parents.
- Information through parents – it seemed that that is how most members here about events/ services at current. Does this pose a problem of it being parent led, or sometimes off putting for teens because its being suggested by a parent (for some, doing something a parent suggest will cause immediate resistance) rather than a peer.

Members were nearly all in agreement that they wouldn't go to a website and search out the information themselves, although some have sought out information relating to other interests. Depends partly on motivation, knowledge and skill.

Schools

Increasing school counsellor knowledge of adoption and services available was desirable to the group – this led to a wider conversation about complexities of school and the sharing of information.

The outcome being that members want school staff (leadership, teachers and pastoral care) to have a better understanding of adoption and be able to treat them as individuals, rather than a group of people who all have the same needs.

Members specifically talked about the desire for teachers to ascertain how and who information about them is shared.

It would be useful to set up a meeting with the virtual head perhaps?

Other groups that members are involved in or aware of are;

- Chill and chat Barnsley
- Leeds teenager groups and cooking crew
- Single adopters group (for parents)
- Youth group in York (not specifically aimed at adoptees)

The lack of knowledge about other groups possibly suggests that they are not getting the communication, or current communication isn't best fit for them. Or perhaps services aren't best fit... probably needs more work on that

People motivation for joining groups were

- Fun!
- Feeling part of a community and belonging
- Sense of support from people who get it and to support others.

How can we improve the understanding of adoptive parents regarding the perspective of young people who are adopted?

Messages to adoptive parents

- We want to feel the same as everyone else
- Parents aren't always the right people to talk to about their feelings
- Don't want conversations to always be parent led, however also helpful for parents to start conversations so child not left feeling anxious about bringing it up.
- Make a special time of the year to talk about it, but also don't want it to be restricted by this time only.

Talking about their story is complex – there is no one size fits all, the response from the group about their memories and ages at which they were told reflected how confusing and traumatic it can be. Their memories and perception differs from actual events

Some felt being told at a young age was inappropriate and should be told older – although they also felt holding back info would impact trust

This highlighted the importance of the right information at the right time.

Parents need support to find the right words

Creative arts help - Films, music, stories and poems

Letterbox

Frustrations at it being process led – e.g waiting for date of letter box to receive it rather than when it was sent

Members want more transparency and explanation as to why information is removed. Or ask for it to be re-written rather than info removed.

Can letterbox agreements change post order to meet the needs of the child – a more individualised approach

Can adoptee have more control over their letterbox as they become adolescents