



Public Document Pack

WEST YORKSHIRE ADOPTION JOINT COMMITTEE

**Meeting to be held in Civic Hall, Leeds on
Thursday, 23rd September, 2021 at 3.00 pm**

MEMBERSHIP

Sue Duffy - City of Bradford MDC

Adam Wilkinson -Calderdale MBC

Viv Kendrick - Kirklees MBC

Fiona Venner (Chair) - Leeds City Council

Margaret Isherwood - City of Wakefield MDC

Please Note - Members of the public are now able to attend the meeting in person but please be mindful that Coronavirus is still circulating in Leeds. Therefore, even if you have had the vaccine, if you have Coronavirus symptoms: a high temperature; a new, continuous cough; or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste, you should NOT attend the meeting and stay at home and get a PCR test. For those who are attending the meeting, please bring a face covering unless you are exempt.

A G E N D A

Item No	Ward/Equal Opportunities	Item Not Open		Page No
1			<p>APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS</p> <p>To consider any appeals in accordance with Procedure Rule 15.2 of the Access to Information Rules (in the event of an Appeal the press and public will be excluded)</p> <p>(In accordance with Procedure Rule 15.2, written notice of an appeal must be received by the Head of Governance Services at least 24 hours before the meeting)</p>	
2			<p>EXEMPT INFORMATION - POSSIBLE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC</p> <p>1 To highlight reports or appendices which officers have identified as containing exempt information, and where officers consider that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, for the reasons outlined in the report.</p> <p>2 To consider whether or not to accept the officers recommendation in respect of the above information.</p> <p>3 If so, to formally pass the following resolution:-</p> <p>RESOLVED – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following parts of the agenda designated as containing exempt information on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information, as follows:-</p>	

3

LATE ITEMS

To identify items which have been admitted to the agenda by the Chair for consideration

(The special circumstances shall be specified in the minutes)

4

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

To disclose or draw attention to any interests in accordance with Leeds City Council's 'Councillor Code of Conduct'.

5

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive apologies for absence (If any)

6

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

To confirm as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 26th January 2021.

5 - 8

(Copy attached)

7

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

To consider any matters arising from the minutes.

8

ANNUAL REPORT OF ONE ADOPTION WEST YORKSHIRE & STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

9 - 74

To consider a report by the Director of Children’s Services which presents the Annual Report of the One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY) and provides an overview of adoption service activity from April 2020 to March 2021. (Appendix A refers)

The report provides an updated statement of purpose for One Adoption West Yorkshire (Appendix B refers). The Statement of Purpose is required as part of the national minimum standards to provide those services.

(Report attached)

9

HEAD OF SERVICE REPORT

75 - 112

To consider a report by the Director of Children’s Services which provides a summary of the developments of the service since the Annual Report was completed in May 2021.

(Report attached)

10

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting will take place in January 2022, exact date and time to be confirmed at a later date.

Third Party Recording

Recording of this meeting is allowed to enable those not present to see or hear the proceedings either as they take place (or later) and to enable the reporting of those proceedings. A copy of the recording protocol is available from the contacts named on the front of this agenda.

Use of Recordings by Third Parties– code of practice

- a) Any published recording should be accompanied by a statement of when and where the recording was made, the context of the discussion that took place, and a clear identification of the main speakers and their role or title.
- b) Those making recordings must not edit the recording in a way that could lead to misinterpretation or misrepresentation of the proceedings or comments made by attendees. In particular there should be no internal editing of published extracts; recordings may start at any point and end at any point but the material between those points must be complete.

WEST YORKSHIRE ADOPTION JOINT COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 26TH JANUARY, 2021

Present: Councillor F Venner (Leeds) – Chair

Councillors: A Farley (City of Bradford MDC), R Forster (City of Wakefield MDC) and V Kendrick (Kirklees MBC)

In Attendance: S Johal (ODWY), J Longworth (LCC) J Jenkins (Calderdale MBC) and J Grieve (LCC)

11 APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection of documents.

12 EXEMPT INFORMATION - POSSIBLE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items identified where it was considered necessary to exclude the press or public.

13 LATE ITEMS

There were no late items of business identified.

14 DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests made at the meeting.

15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A Wilkinson.

16 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 28th July 2020 were submitted for comment/ approval.

Referring to Minute No. 7 - Head of Service Report – Report on Adoption Allowances (financial support for adopters and special guardians) an amendment was requested removing the words “aligning with other local authorities” and replacing with “aligning with the proposed Regional Framework”.

RESOLVED – That, with the inclusion of the above, the minutes of the previous meeting held on 28th July 2020 were agreed as a true and correct record.

17 Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no issues raised under matters arising.

18 Head of Service Report

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report and provided a summary of the developments within the service since October 2020, which included:

- Staffing & HR
- Partnership Working
- Financial Support in Adoption
- Special Guardianship regional work
- Performance Monitoring
- Practice, Quality of Provision and Management Oversight
- Adoption Panel
- Advertising and Marketing
- Family Finding
- Virtual Profiling Event
- Inter-agency Adoption Placements Service
- Link Maker
- Adoption Support
- Continuous Professional Development and Service Development

Referring to sickness absence/ self-isolation as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, Members queried if any discussions had taken place on the possibility of staff being able to access the vaccine.

The Head of Services reported that discussions had taken place with Leeds City Council and it had been agreed that all staff within Group 1 would be invited to receive a vaccination. Some Social Workers fell into Group 1 and some into Group 2 as they could continue to social distance.

Referring to staff who were categorised as most vulnerable, Members queried how the pandemic had impacted on those staff, how had they adapted.

In responding the Head of Service said that Management's focus was on the wellbeing of the staff. Management was mindful that the more we remained in lock down, the more people would struggle. Everyone was working online, the emphasis was to engage staff with regular meetings: all staff events, one to one's, coffee chats and WhatsApp messaging.

Members were informed that individual counselling sessions were also available and encouraged for any members of staff with emotional wellbeing issues.

With regard to formal wellbeing discussions, Members queried if the discussion of these meetings were recorded and actioned.

The Head of Service confirmed this was the case.

Members noted the number of prospective adopters approaching the agency had increased significantly over the last 3 years and that the Management Board had agreed to additional funding for 2 social workers to maintain the momentum of increased approvals (120 projected for the 2020/21 period).

Members welcomed these figures and asked that the thanks of the Joint Committee be conveyed to the Adoption Teams.

RESOLVED -

- (i) To note the progress of the agency
- (ii) To Support the progression of the arrangements, as set out in the submitted report.

19 Half yearly Report for One Adoption West Yorkshire

The Director of Children's and Families submitted a report which presented the half yearly report of the One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY), as detailed in Appendix A of this report, as required by the National Minimum Standards 2014.

The Head of Service explained that the purpose of the report was to enable the Joint Committee to monitor the management and outcomes of the service so that they may be satisfied that the agency was effective and was achieving good outcomes for children and/or service users; and that they were satisfied that the agency was complying with the conditions of registration.

Commenting on Family Finding, the Head of Service said 98 children had been placed in the first half of the year. Staff had worked creatively to undertake family finding and achieve the matches for children. It was suggested that online working had assisted in this process, staff were no longer travelling and all parties were more available (virtually).

Referring to Meetings with Medical Advisors, Members were informed that GP's were not always available due to the pandemic, consequently there was some delay in medical reports being received.

The Chair thanked the Head of Service for her report commenting that there were some really welcome outcomes.

RESOLVED – That the assurances provided by the Director of Children’s and Families, that the agency is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or service users; and the agency is complying with the conditions of registration (as required by the National Minimum Standards for Adoption 2014, pursuant to the Care Standards Act 2000) be accepted.

20 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – To note that the next meeting will take place in July 2021, exact date and time to be confirmed at a later date.



Report author: Sarah Johal

Tel: 0113 2783623

Report of Director of Children's Services

Report to West Yorkshire Adoption Joint Committee

Date: 23rd September 2021

Subject: Annual Report of One Adoption West Yorkshire & Statement of Purpose

Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, access to information procedure rule number:		
Appendix number:		

Main issues

1. The West Yorkshire Joint Committee has the responsibility to consider the annual report and statement of purpose of One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY), the Regional Adoption Agency.
2. The West Yorkshire Joint Committee recognise the importance of adoption and want to be updated about the management and outcomes of the service. The report provides an overview of adoption service activity from April 2020 to March 2021. The report is attached at appendix A.
3. This report provides the Joint Committee with an updated statement of purpose for One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY). The Statement of Purpose for the service is attached at appendix B. The Statement of Purpose is required as part of the national minimum standards to provide those services.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the Joint Committee receives the annual report of One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY), detailed in appendix A of this report, as required by the National Minimum Standards for Adoption 2014, pursuant to the Care Standards Act 2000. The report is to enable to committee to monitor the management and outcomes of the service so that they may be satisfied that the agency is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or services users.

2. This report also asks the Joint Committee to note the updated statement of purpose for OAWY. The Statement of Purpose for the service is attached at appendix B. The Statement of Purpose is required as part of the national minimum standards to provide those services and enables to Joint Committee to agree the changes to the Statement of Purpose on an annual basis.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report asks the West Yorkshire Joint Committee to consider the annual report of the One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY), as detailed in appendix A of this report, as required by the National Minimum Standards 2011. This is to enable the Joint Committee to monitor the management and outcomes of the service so that they may be satisfied that the agency is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or services users; and satisfy themselves that the agency is complying with the conditions of registration.
- 1.2 This report also seeks elected members to note the updated statement of purpose for OAWY. The Statement of Purpose for the service is attached at appendix B. The Statement of Purpose is required as part of the national minimum standards in adoption in order to be able to provide those services.

2 Background information

- 2.1 It is a requirement of the National Minimum Standards for Adoption Services, that each adoption service produces a statement of purpose, including its aims and objectives, a description of the service it provides and the facilities that are provided. This Statement of Purpose gives an outline of those requirements and how the service is managed and its fitness to provide a comprehensive adoption service. It shows the policy and performance framework that underpins the work and shows how the welfare of children will be met. It also demonstrates the systems which we have set in place to recruit, assess, prepare and support adopters and to family find for children with a plan for adoption.
- 2.2 Children's services are inspected against these standards by Ofsted. The statement of purpose and any updates must be approved through the 'Executive side of the council' on an annual basis and following legal advice and guidance it the Leeds City Council Executive Board agreed in 2019 that future reports will be submitted to the West Yorkshire Joint Committee for the regional adoption agency, as a more appropriate forum for this to be received, given this is a regional service.
- 2.3 The background issues in relation to the adoption annual report are addressed in detail in the report itself at appendix A.

3 Main issues

The statement of purpose and the annual report was last submitted to the West Yorkshire Joint Committee in July 2020. The main issues are contained within the report itself at appendix A.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 One Adoption West Yorkshire has good mechanisms to consult with and engage adopters and young people in order to develop and deliver service and the annual report contains a report regarding the voice and influence of those using the services.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 OAWY completed a full Equality Impact Assessment in 2021 and is an appendix to the annual report.

4.3 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 One Adoption West Yorkshire is resourced through a joint pooled budget and underpinned by a partnership agreement. This is discussed more fully in the main body of the annual report at appendix A.

4.4 Legal Implications and Access to Information

4.4.1 It is a requirement of the National Minimum Standards 2011 for adoption that the Executive side of the council receives a written report, and all reports are now submitted to the West Yorkshire Joint Committee for the regional adoption agency, as a more appropriate forum for this to be received, given this is a regional service.

4.5 Risk Management

4.5.1 Not applicable

5 Conclusions

5.1 This report seeks that Joint Committee review the annual report, as outlined in appendix A, and continue to support the work of OAWY to ensure our children receive the best possible support.

5.2 This report also seeks the Joint Committee to note the updated statement of purpose for One Adoption West Yorkshire. The Statement of Purpose for the service is attached at appendix B. The Statement of Purpose is required as part of the national minimum standards in order to be able to provide those services.

6 Recommendations

6.3 It is recommended that the West Yorkshire Joint Committee receive the annual report of One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY), detailed in appendix A of this report, as required by the National Minimum Standards for Adoption 2014, pursuant to the Care Standards Act 2000. This is to enable the Committee to monitor the management and outcomes of the service so that they may be satisfied that the agency is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or services users; and satisfy themselves that the agency is complying with the conditions of registration.

6.4 This report also asks the Joint Committee to note the updated statement of purpose for OAWY. The Statement of Purpose for the service is attached at appendix B. The Statement of Purpose is required as part of the national minimum standards in order to be able to provide those services and enables to Joint Committee to agree the changes to the Statement of Purpose on an annual basis.

7 Background documents¹

7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

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1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report sets out the developments within One Adoption West Yorkshire from April 2020 to March 2021.

2 Background information

- 2.1 Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield adoption functions as specified in the partnership agreement were delegated on the 1st April 2017 to Leeds City Council & One Adoption West Yorkshire formally opened on this date.
- 2.2 The regionalisation of adoption services by the government as a structural reform programme is almost complete with 31 Regional Adoption Agencies (RAA's) and 145 local authorities (LA's) now live, with the remaining 6 local authorities likely join existing RAA's. The government is supporting the RAA's and is funding the development of a small national team to develop and improve services and support across for vulnerable children and families within the adoption system, working closely with Association of Directors of Children's services (ADCS) and others across the sector.
- 2.3 The latest figures released nationally show that there is no longer a be a gap between children waiting and the number of adopters available. However, there is a mismatch between the needs of the children requiring adoption and the adopters willing to consider these priority children. There remain a high number of children waiting with a placement order for 18 months or more. The government provided £1million to the adoption sector to improve the recruitment and preparation of adopters, with a key focus on attracting more adopters from the black and minority ethnic communities. The national campaign #YouCanAdopt was launched in September 2020 focussing on myth busting about who can adopt followed up with a pilot project for Black Adopters in Birmingham and London. In April, a further national campaign around adopting brothers and sisters together was launched with a more targeted approach to seek adopters specifically for priority children.
- 2.4 The future of the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) remains uncertain although a cross party all parliamentary group fully supports the continuation of the fund and the fund is committed to continue until July 2022. The government are undertaking a review of the ASF and this will inform the future plans for the ASF. The next Spending Review will hopefully clarify the longer-term plans for the adoption support fund.

3 Main issues

3.1 Use of Resources

3.1.1 Staffing

The last year has been unprecedented for everyone and the teams have adapted well and have found creative ways to ensure that families are supported and children's plans progressed as far as possible. All staff and managers have been supported throughout the year in a variety of different ways from formal wellbeing support meetings with regular check ins as well informal support and buddying arrangements. There has been a range of materials and tips for self-care in these difficult times and as a service we have advocated flexible working and this has been well received by the staff. It is fair to say that morale across the teams has fluctuated at different times over the last year and as a management team we have tried to be proactive ins supporting staff whilst also being responsive to need.

- 3.1.2 Sickness levels have remained low however, there are a small number of staff experiencing long term health problems related to emotional and mental health. These issues impact upon the capacity within certain areas of the service which are discussed later in the report. Occupational health is involved in advising and supporting staff and managers in these circumstances.

- 3.1.3 Recruitment has taken place regarding social worker appointments and business support staff with a number of new staff starting work in lockdown. Staff are looking forward to getting out to meet others outside initially as things open up. We have just completed a staff survey regarding future working arrangements and this will need analysis and further consideration over the coming months.

3.1.4 Duty System

The duty and advice service has been maintained with staff working this from home and as such we have continued to provide the same level of duty service as we were pre-COVID/ lockdown. The use of a collective check-in call at the start of each day between duty manager and duty workers, has meant work has been able to be prioritised and breaks for workers throughout the day agreed. This has enabled the workers to identify each other as the 'duty team' and they have been able to

keep in contact with each other throughout the day. The overarching view is that a better service has been offered to callers, without the distractions of the office environment.

3.1.5 At the beginning of August, a choice system was implemented when a member of the public calls the duty and advice line. They can choose option 1 if they are interested in becoming an adopter; option 2 if they have a letterbox or contact query; and option 3 for any other type of call. This has reduced the number of calls to option 3 (which is essentially the 'old' main duty and advice line) and ensures that callers are able to immediately speak with someone who can better respond to the nature of their call. It also means that we can better understand the amount and type of calls into the service. Latterly there have been some difficulties with staff capacity to respond to option 2 and so these calls have been temporarily diverted to option 3 due to staffing issues which will be discussed later in the report. The total number of calls to the duty and advice line for the year is 3893. This averages at 75 calls per week. During lockdown periods when schools have been mostly closed we experienced a lower number of calls to the line, but this has since picked up again, although it is noted the average weekly calls for 2019/20 was 98 with total for the year at 5119, so it is clear that the number of calls to the duty and advice line have been lower over the past year. There has, however, been a significant increase in callers interested in becoming adopters across the year.

3.1.6 Accommodation & service delivery

Staff are continuing working from home with one member of staff in each area collecting the post with some managers going in for the induction of new staff and some staff go into the office for wellbeing or practical reasons when they are unable to work from home. The managers have been meeting up with staff for 1-2-1's and teams are starting to meet up in person. There is currently no accommodation for staff in Kirklees or Calderdale areas due to refurbishment and other staff using the space respectively. Bradford relocated OAWY staff to another floor that has no network for the Leeds computers and this is currently been looked at to address this issue. The local authorities are trying to identify interim accommodation, pending a more permanent relocation. The completion of the letterbox work and access to files work has been challenging without an office base in these areas leading to a full service not being able to be provided. The letterbox post has been re-directed from Huddersfield office to Leeds creating some delays and staff needing to travel to Leeds to process the work.

3.1.7 There are a lot of benefits with regards to staff working from home and it is clear there are efficiencies in this way of working as we can see from the performance data later in the report. The need to come together for collaboration, peer support and team discussions are high on the priority, therefore a different way of working is likely to be needed moving forward. The impact of this on service delivery needs to be fully assessed and we are currently working with staff to understand which elements can continue virtually and what needs to be carried out face to face. The importance of relationships with families and colleagues is critical and this must be taken into consideration when planning future arrangements.

3.1.8 Information Technology

The Bradford, Calderdale and Wakefield portals have been working effectively for most of the year. This has been essential with all staff working from home. The Kirklees portal remains an issue and has not been prioritised for resolution over the last year. However, this needs to be a key priority for next year as staff working with Kirklees still must use two laptops and the information regarding care planning is not as easily accessed.

3.2 **Partnership working**

3.2.1 Operational leads meetings

Over the last year this group has continued to address interface issues and particularly focussing on the impact of coronavirus upon children's care planning and moving onto adoption. Discussions have also taken place around the implementation of aligning adoption and special guardianship payments and joint audit work has also been discussed and agreed.

3.2.2 Multidisciplinary Team

The inaugural year of the OAWY Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic, which delayed the start of the full operational service. Leeds Community Healthcare was awarded the contract to provide the health element of the MDT service in early December 2020. The recruitment of the health staff was quickly commenced, and all positions were successfully recruited in early 2021. The full team is expected to be in positions in summer 2021 when the Speech & Language Therapist and the Clinical Psychologists start in their roles.

The annual report regarding the work of the MDT is discussed more fully in Appendix 1 of this report with an evaluation of the work over the year and the planning for the forthcoming year.

3.2.3 Agency Medical Advisors and GP's

Medical advisors have continued to work hard during the Covid 19 pandemic to ensure that they provide medical information for children in a timely way for their adoption plans to progress. Medical advisors have also continued to support adoption panels. Due to increased demand the number of adoption panels has now increased from 7 to 8 per month and commissioning discussions are under way with health in relation to providing medical advice for the additional panel on a consistent basis. The issue of GP's undertaking medical assessments of adopters has been a crucial issue this year with the focus of health staff towards managing the impact of Covid within the NHS. GP's largely have tried to work with the agency to

progress matters but inevitably there has been delays. There are a small number of GP's who have refused to carry out medicals regarding prospective adopters or who request large fees and in these cases issues have been escalated within the Clinical Commissioning Groups local.

3.2.4 Virtual school heads (VSH)

The work across the region from our Education Lead alongside the five Virtual School Heads (VSH) continues to grow. The helpline is well used and accessed by adoptive parents, schools and other professionals offering advice and support as needed. This allows us to have a very current understanding of the difficulties faced by families and professionals, informing training needs, developing the services understanding of how best to support our families and to develop online tools as needed. We continue to work to increase the awareness of attachment and trauma in West Yorkshire schools and see this as such an important piece of work that it is now outlined within the Terms of Reference for the VSH meetings. We remain passionate in our delivery of Attachment and Trauma training to school staff and childcare provisions and by providing workshops to adopters in partnership with the service delivery teams. This is discussed more in the Appendix 1.

3.2.5 Grandparents plus continue to attend allowing further opportunities to share information and knowledge across the region regarding support for special guardians around education issues and the growth of referrals to Kinship has been helped given information provided to schools raising awareness about special guardianship arrangements.

3.2.6 Special Guardianship

The two key areas for development over the last year across the region regarding Special Guardians has been the implementation of a regional support plan and the implementation of a regional approach regarding the financial support to SG's. The Special Guardianship (SG) Support Plan is being rolled out across West Yorkshire and is currently being used in all the local authorities (LA) for post order support and testing is underway for its use following initial assessment and during proceedings. The financial offer for Special Guardians is being implemented in each LA with some differences regarding post 18 support and additional benefits to mirror the fostering offers. Calderdale remain the only LA to have executive sign off on their offer. Leeds have an in principal agreement and are aiming to implement their offer by July 2021. Bradford is likely to be the last LA to implement their offer in April 2022 although in principal agrees to the proposals. Wakefield are considering this following financial and legal advice with a decision due in the next two months.

3.2.7 The Kinship (formerly Grandparents Plus) project is progressing well with the further support provided from the ASF Covid-19 funds. There are three project workers offering 1:1 Support to kinship carers in the region, alongside support groups and access to telephone advice. Their regional Facebook group is now moderated and had over 200 very active members. This allows us to connect with many special guardians in the region and hear their views. OAWY is also exploring the use of two casual Youth Workers to establish an advocacy group for young people on SGOs to develop the voice and influence of young people in these arrangements across the region. Training in Non-Violent Resistance for the kinship teams across the 5 LA's took place in January 2021. 23 support workers and managers undertook this training Two of these were the project workers from Kinship. There were four follow up practice sessions to help embed the model in practice and the participants can attend the OAWY practice sessions on an ongoing basis.

3.2.8 A therapeutic parenting programme designed for special guardians called 'Guiding Guardians' has been commissioned. The first program was in March and OAWY made a group application to the fund on behalf of the region. OAWY are working with the kinship manager's in the region to find ways to increase the use of the Adoption Support Fund, to provide much needed therapeutic support to special guardian families.

3.2.9 OAWY hosted a development day on 21st April 2021 with senior leaders and practice managers from the 5 LAs, Kinship and two special guardians. The focus was on the vision for special guardianship support across the region, reaffirming current goals and considering future priorities. There is current discussion about where OAWY can add value to local services and the benefit of regional working to deliver or co-ordinate some services for special guardians such as a website/information pack, preparation, ASF applications, Family Time support etc. An options paper for considering the progression of this regional approach to developing services will be discussed with the management board in the next few months.

3.3 **Performance Management**

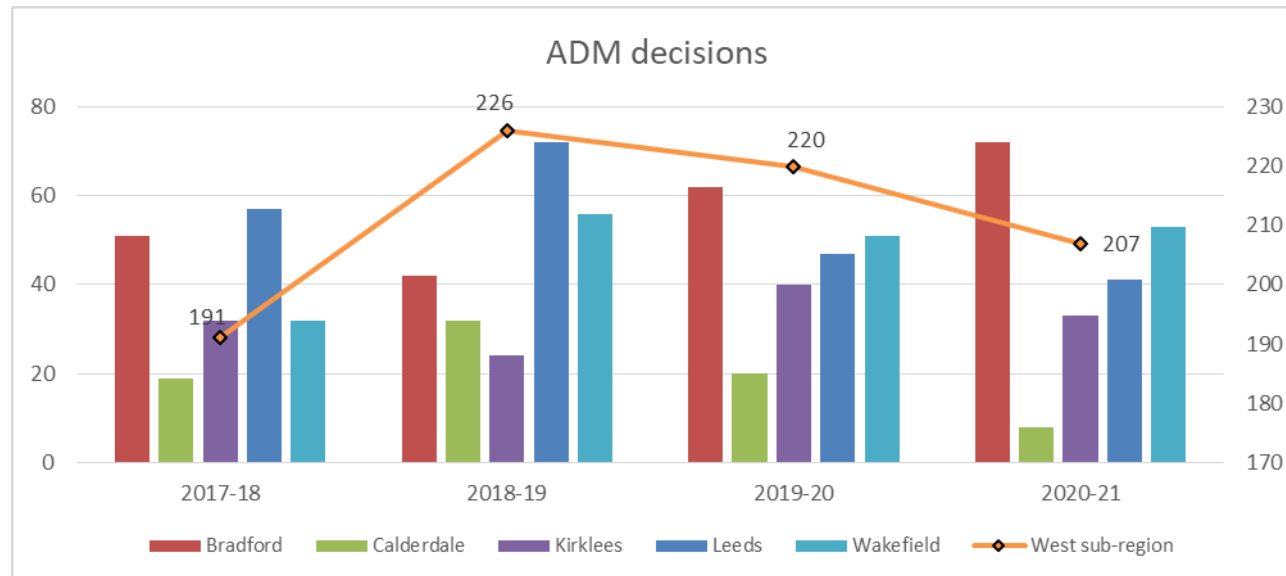
3.3.1 The agency provides quarterly reports to the management board. This data provided has developed over the last 4 years and is gathered to ensure that we are aware of how much work is undertaken, how well was it undertaken and if anyone is any better off.

A) Sufficiency: Are enough of the right kind of adopters being recruited and approved to meet the needs of the children waiting:

3.3.2 The children with a plan ratified for adoption during 2020/21

Between April 2020 and March 2021, 207 children had a plan for adoption ratified by the 5 West Yorkshire local authorities Agency Decision Makers. Of the 207 children with a plan for adoption, there were 99 female and 108 male children. In total,

this is a reduction from last year's full year figure of 220 children from across the 5 West Yorkshire local authorities and reflects the delays in the court arena caused by the pandemic. Adoption decisions across Bradford continue to rise and Wakefields number have remained high for the last three years. Conversely numbers in Calderdale, Kirklees and Leeds have reduced.



3.3.3 Ethnicity

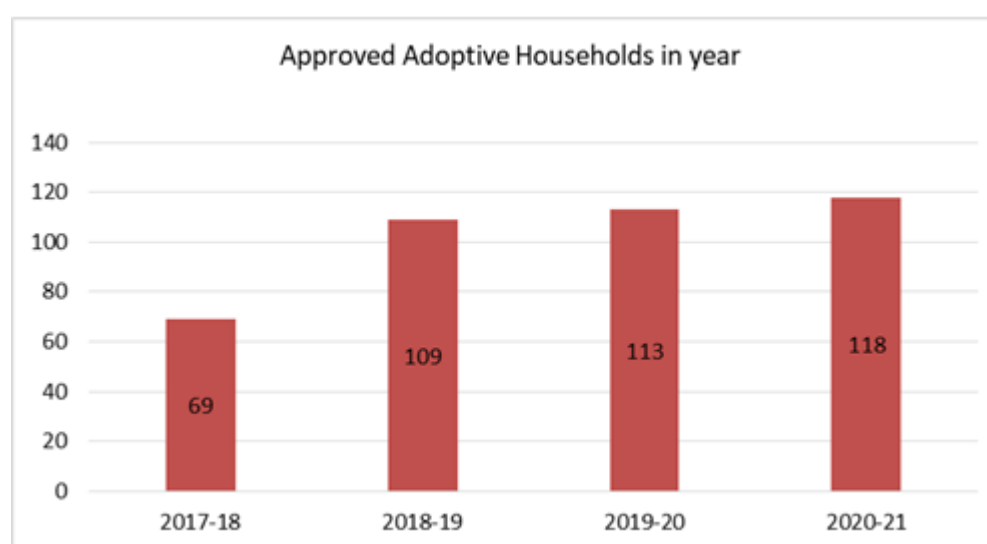
Of the 207 children with a plan for adoption ratified this year, 167 (81%) children were from white British backgrounds (including information not obtained) and 40 children (19%) were from Black and Minority Ethnic groups, including children from eastern European, Gypsy Roma, Black African and Black Caribbean backgrounds.

3.3.4 Placement with Siblings

As a general principle, siblings will be placed together; however, due to the individual needs of children, this is not always appropriate and cannot always be achieved. It is essential that sibling assessments are carried out to ensure good quality decision making and support plans are evidence based if children are placed together or apart. Of the 91 individual siblings placed during the year, 35 individual children were placed apart, for which 32 the plan was to be placed apart.

3.3.5 Adopter recruitment

118 adoptive households were approved during the year and you will note from the table below that this is another increase compared to the previous three years.



3.3.6 Within the 118 households, 221 individuals were approved throughout 2020-21. Of these, 22 (10%) are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds (last year it was 10%). We need to improve our percentage of BME carers and keep a focus on ensuring that we approve a full range of adoptive families to meet the range of children requiring placement, while at the same time not relying on matching children with regard to ethnic identity as an overriding factor. Over the last year we commissioned an organisation called My Adoption Family to work with us in engaging with Black African and Black Caribbean communities in the region to help us increase the diverse range of adopters available. We undertook a webinar with key organisations to discuss local reflections on the barriers for people coming forward and to seek their help in our campaign to attract more adopters to come forward. The feedback from this discussion highlighted issues of trust regarding public services. Face to face engagement and building trust and credibility is key in increasing the recruitment of adopters within the Black communities and working with faith and community-based organisations is key moving forward. During the pandemic this development work has been hindered and with the court delays we now have a number of adopters from BAME communities who are waiting for a match.

3.3.7 Households approved for sibling groups has increased by 8 this year with 24 households approved for sibling groups, all 24 for 2 children; and 28 households open to an Early Permanence Placements ..this has reduced but has, nevertheless, exceeded the demands for these placements over the year. The implementation of a new training course has helped to shift thinking of those prospective adopters in being able to have the confidence to consider adopting brothers and sisters together.

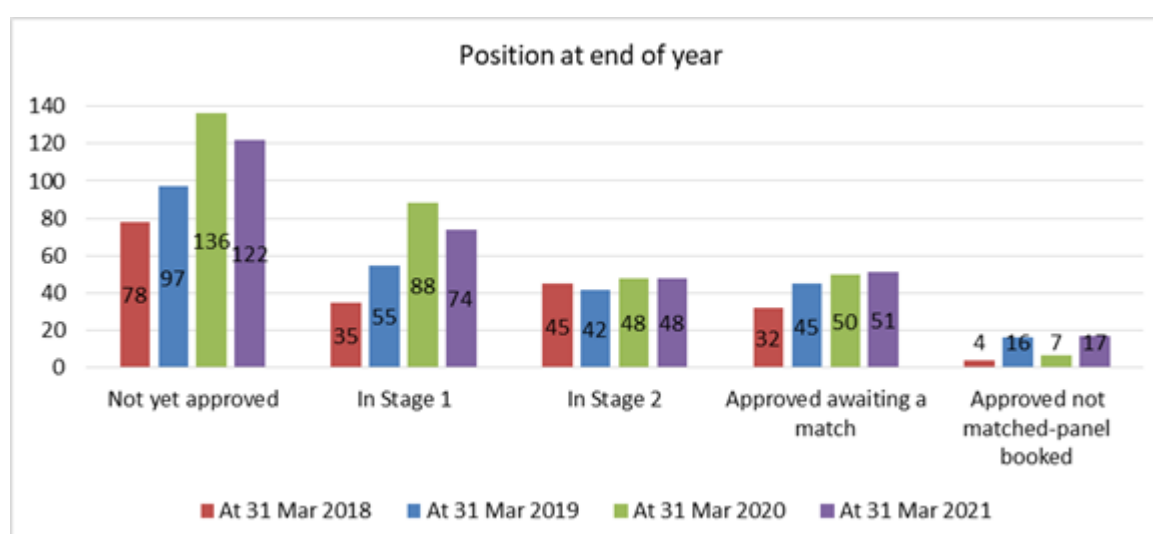
3.3.8 Children currently with an adoption plan

As of the end of March 2021 there are 137 children with a plan for adoption and have a placement order, from the 5 West Yorkshire local authorities not currently placed and requiring adopters. 64 children out of the 137 are 0 - 2 years, 52 are between 2 and 4 years and 21 children are 5 years of age or older.

3.3.9 From the children waiting for a placement there are 66 girls and 71 boys, and 22% are children from BME backgrounds (including children from eastern European, Gypsy Roma, Black African and Black Caribbean backgrounds). 65 children are from sibling groups. The plans for these children are actively reviewed with the local authorities with clear monitoring and tracking systems to understand the range of family finding activity going on for these children and whether adoption remains the right plan for each child. The delays for these children are related primarily to the needs of the children; the need to place siblings together, the age of the children or their particular special needs or complexity.

3.3.10 Adopters available

As of the end of March 2021, there are 51 approved adoptive households that have not been matched and 34 are in the process of looking and are in discussions about considering placements and 17 have a panel date booked.



3.3.11 On the 31st March 2021 122 adopters are in the process of assessment (in stage 1 or 2) although these will take a number of months to become approved. This is a positive picture as the number of adopters approved is healthier than previously and allows for placement choice for some children. However, a more nuanced approach to recruitment and approval is required to ensure that we have adopters who can meet the needs of children with a plan for adoption and particularly the children we know who wait longer. This will be discussed later in the report.

B) Timeliness: Are children being matched and placed without delay including those children who wait longer?

3.3.12 Children matched in the year for adoption

Between April 2020 and March 2021, 183 children from the 5 West Yorkshire local authorities were matched with families at adoption panels; this is an increase compared to the previous three years from across the 5 West Yorkshire local authorities and is really positive given the pandemic. From April 2020 to March 2021, 23% (42) of the children matched were from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities and this is extremely positive news as these children often wait longer to be placed.

- 138 of the children matched were 0 to 2 years old.
- 30 children matched were 2 to 4 years old.
- 15 children were aged 5 years or older.
- 88 children were part of a sibling group (of the 183 matched).
- 81 children (of the 183 matched) were placed who are part of a sibling group of which 33 were placed apart, 31 had a plan to place apart due to their individual needs.
- 19 children (of the 183 matched) had been previously placed in early permanence placements (11 during the year) of which 6 of these 19 children have been adopted in the year. This is a very positive step in reducing the number of moves for children before they reach their permanent family.

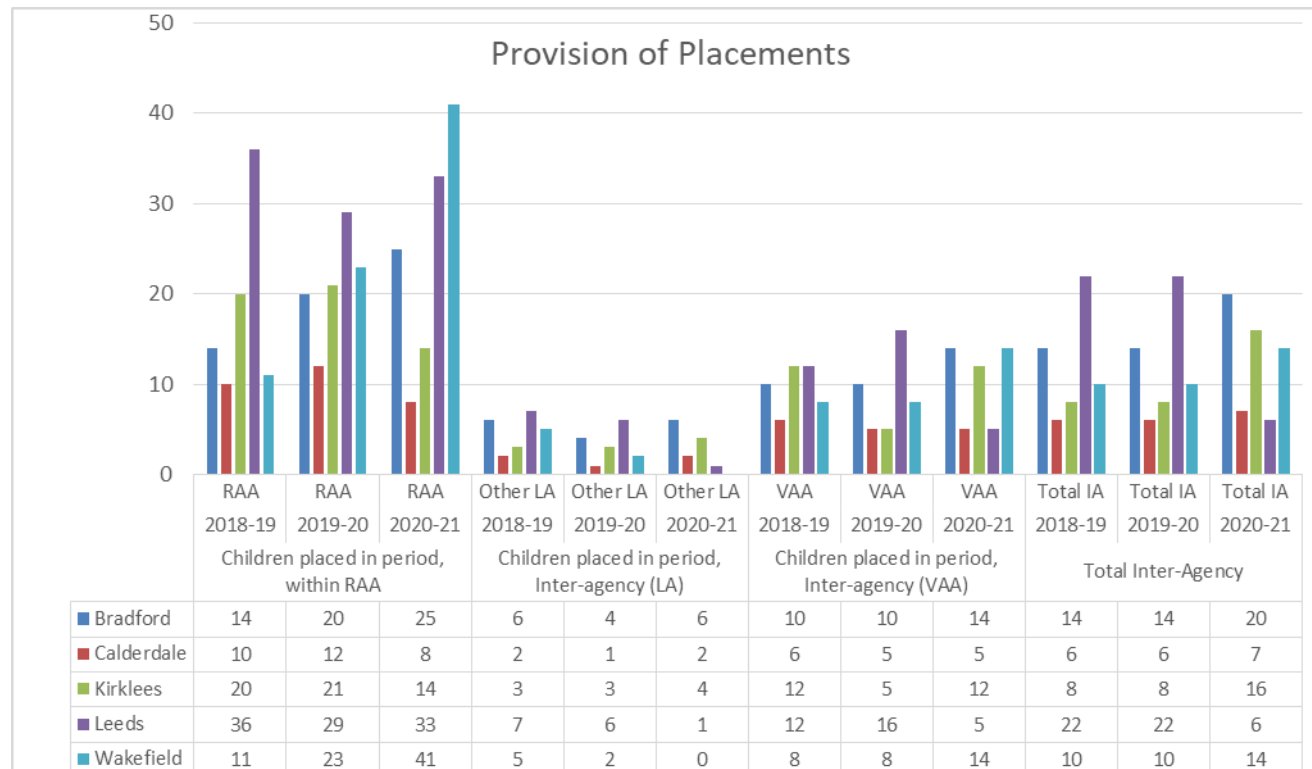
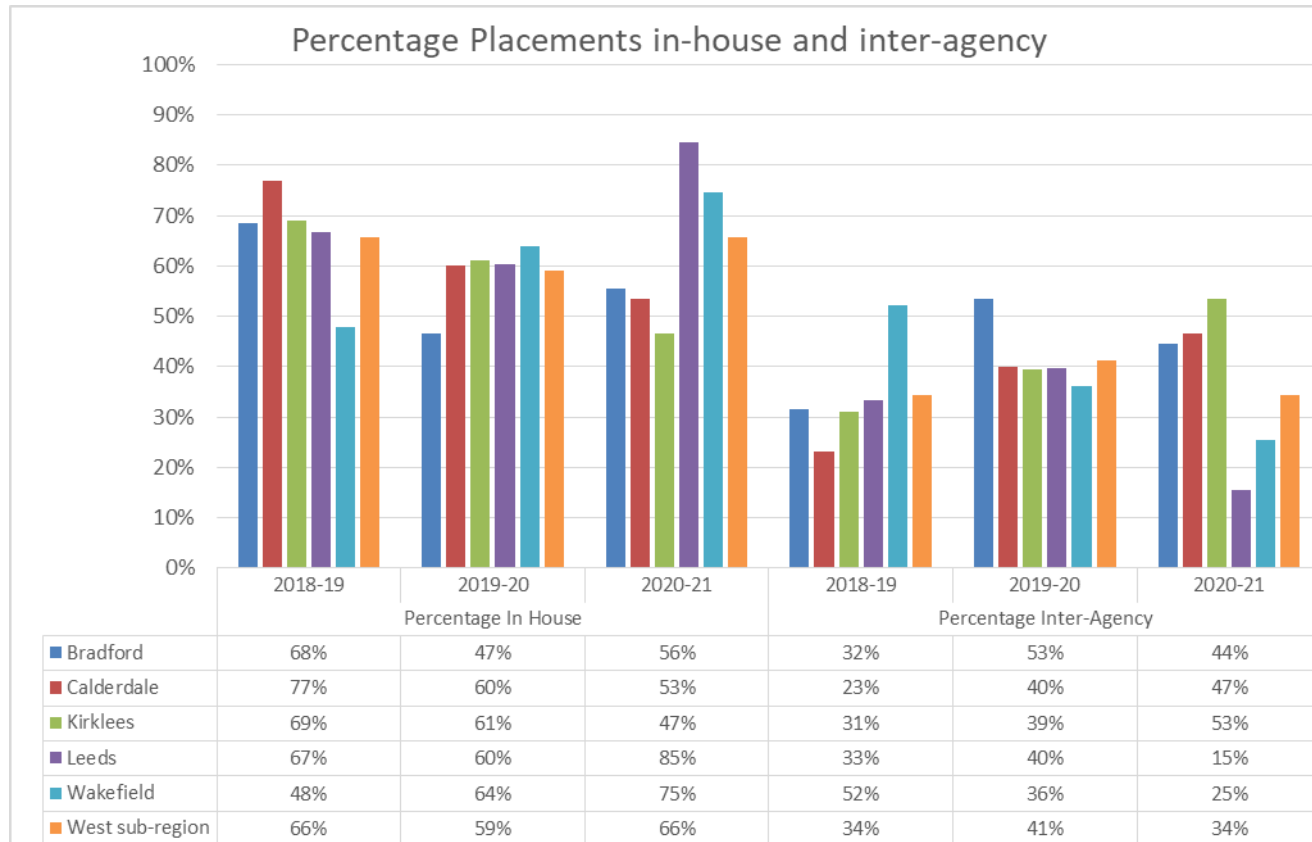
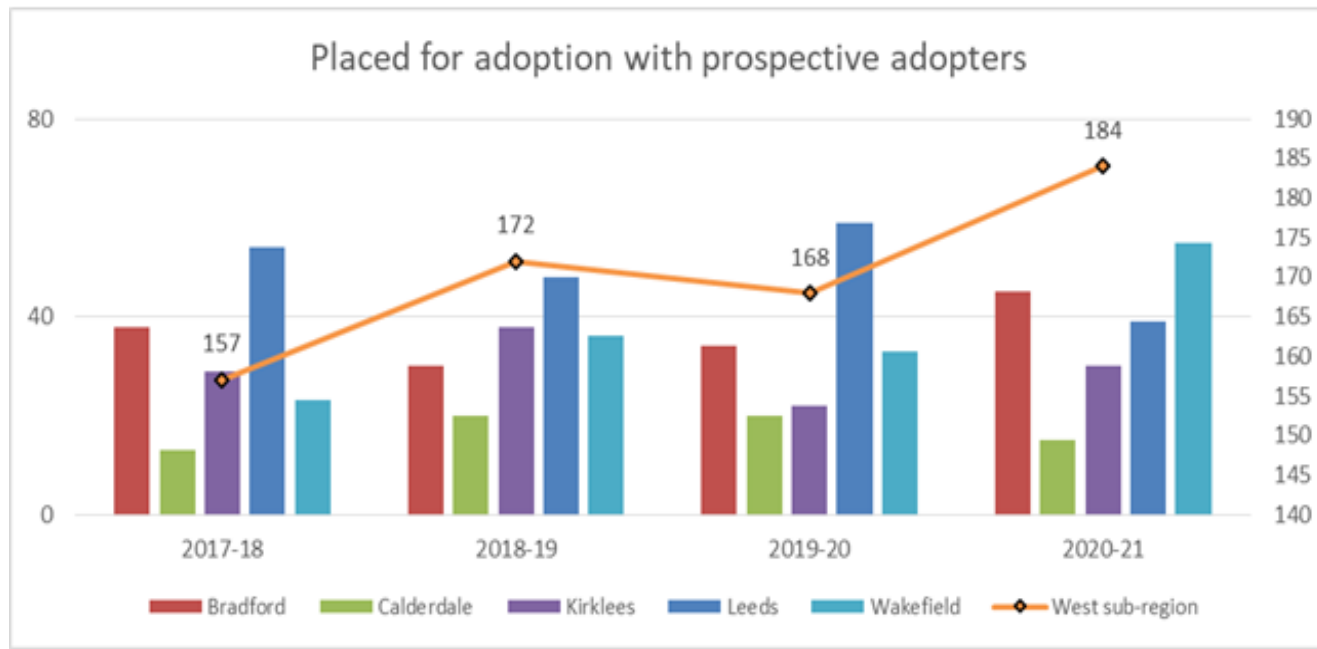
3.3.13 Provision of Placements

184 children were placed this year. The percentage of placements provided in-house within the region has increased significantly this year.

121 children within OAWY.

- 13 children with other local authorities or other Regional agencies.
- 50 children with Voluntary Adoption Agencies

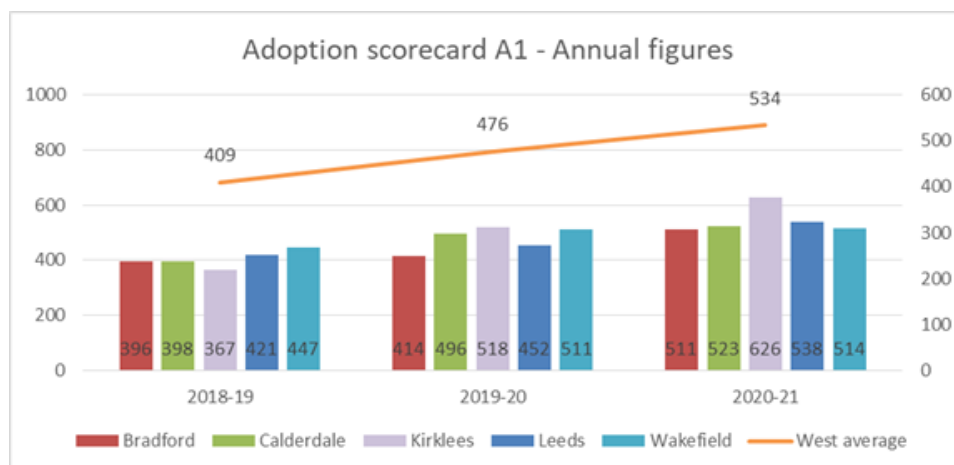
The percentage this year was 66% in house and 34% interagency. Last year it was 59% in house and 41% interagency and is a positive picture.



3.3.14 Adoption Scorecards

A1 indicator

The average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family (indicator A1) for children in West Yorkshire is 534 days, the National Indicator target is 426 days.

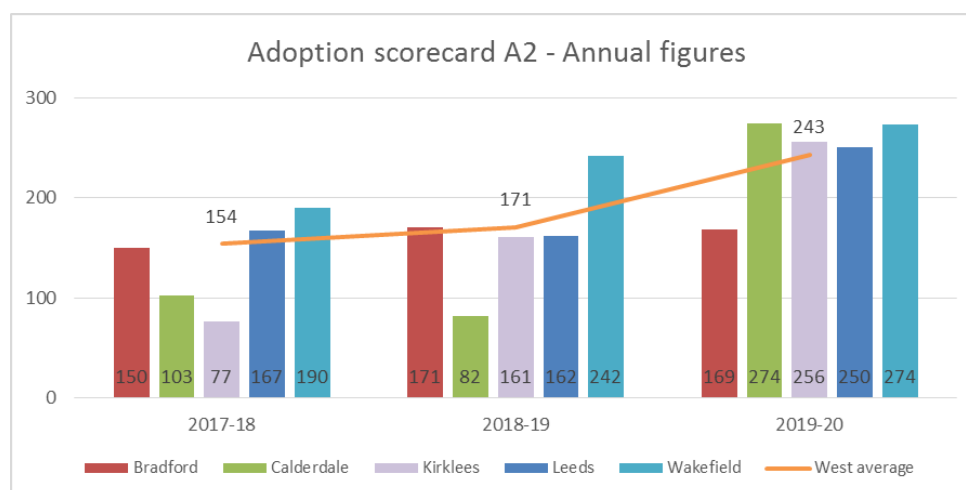


- 39 of the 157 children adopted entered care more than 3 years ago.
- 94 of the 157 children adopted were hard to place children.
- 70 of the 157 children adopted took more than 500 days between entering care and being placed,
- Of the 70 children that took more than 500 days 45 of the 70 were hard to place children with 20 having 2 or more characteristics

3.3.15 These figures relate to the time children entered care and were then adopted in the year. It is clear that some of the children being older and with more complex needs has resulted in adoption taking longer to achieve and there are positives that adoption has been achieved for some of these children who would otherwise remain in care. Some children entered care and there were delays in the court processes and plans that did not come to fruition with family members. It is important to look at the individual local authorities and situations but on the whole most of the children will have actually been placed in the last 3 years and formally adopted more recently, reflecting a number of years of local authority practice and care planning from a number of years ago.

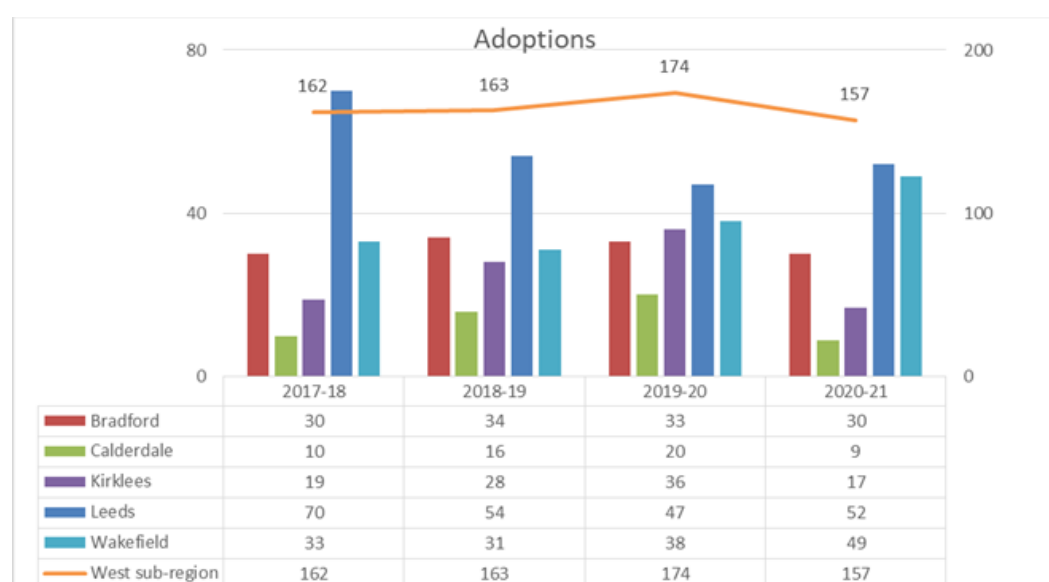
3.3.16 **A2 indicator**

The average time for those children adopted in the period, between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family (Indicator A2) for children in West Yorkshire has increased to 259 days, the National indicator target is 121 days. This is above the national indicator and reflects an issue of a national decline in the number of adopters available and the complexity of children waiting for adoption. However, as discussed in the above paragraph the cohort of these children adopted is important to note and the fact that children have secured permanence and an adoptive family is positive for each of these individual children.



3.3.17 Children adopted from care

The number of children who have been formally adopted has decreased by 17 (157) with 12% of children leaving care being adopted across the region. The National average is 12%. This is reduced due to the pandemic and delay in the family courts hearing adoption cases.



3.4 Practice, quality of provision and management oversight

3.4.1 Recruitment and Assessment

The first half of the year saw an increase in enquiries to adopt and with a backlog caused by the pandemic this presented real challenges for the recruitment teams. The number of people entering the adoption process slowed during Quarters 3 and 4 of the year as a result of the decision to temporarily decline applications from those seeking to adopt a child under two years of age unless they were interested in adopting children from a Black African/Caribbean or mixed heritage background or siblings or children with a disability of complex health issues. This provided much needed respite to the Recruitment and Assessment teams to progress applicants in the assessment process from the beginning of 2020/21. The number of sessional assessment workers was increased to help with the capacity to progress assessments in a timelier way and there are currently no adopters waiting to be allocated an assessing social worker for their stage two assessment.

3.4.2 Two additional social workers have been recruited and are due to join the Recruitment and Assessment teams in the coming month to add further capacity. Despite the ongoing challenges relating to staff sickness and the impact of Covid 19, 118 households were approved to adopt in 2020/21, an increase of five households from the previous year. The feedback from adopters during the pandemic regarding their experience has, overall, being very positive. This is some feedback from one adopter:

“We have always felt that K. has always been in our corner even in the most difficult of times. This sometimes meant advising us what we needed to hear rather than what we wanted to hear! She has always offered emotional and practical support whilst being her calm and measured self.... We did not always initially understand the reasons why K was so thorough, but as the process progressed this always became clear and we quickly realised it was best to follow her advice! She left no stone unturned and her preparation for the panel reviews meant we felt confident on both occasions.”

3.4.3 Online training and preparation for prospective adopters has continued to develop and now includes:

- Preparation Training (3 days via webinar)
- Building Relationships (E-learning)
- Early Permanence (Half day webinar)
- Adopting Siblings (Half day webinar)
- Experienced Parents (Half day webinar)
- Foster Carers Adopting (One day webinar)
- Connected by Adoption (Half day webinar)

3.4.4 Further training is now in development to offer additional support to adoptive parents in relation to preparing to become parents and in relation to issues around contact and identity. We have engaged the support of a number of adopted adults, alongside adoptive parents to develop and co-facilitate elements of the training. We remain in regular contact with PAC-UK, who provide support to birth parents, and will revisit their involvement in the preparation of adopters when they feel able to facilitate this.

3.4.5 Following a review of Stage One data and extensive consultation with staff, from 1st April 2021 the Recruitment and Assessment service was re-structured with two managers overseeing all adoption advisors and families in stage one of the adoption process. The implementation of this change has resulted in some line manager change for staff, but this has been kept to a minimum. It is hoped that the re-structure will provide greater consistency in the experience of prospective adopters and in decision making early in their adoption journey. The business support to the recruitment and assessment work is key in moving adopters through the process ensuring that checks and training are progressed from stage 1 to stage 2 of the process.

3.4.6 We are now taking steps to increase the number of adopter enquiries again through our marketing strategy for priority children in particular, and through increasing the possible number of attendees at online information events, which take place twice per month.

3.4.7 Adoption Panels

Adoption panel is working online via Zoom and is operating well although capacity continues to be a challenge and we meet regularly review agendas to ensure that items can be progressed. We have moved from 7 to 8 panels per month to increase capacity and continue to hold two panels per month specifically for approvals as this allows us to add an additional case. The panel chairs provide a biannual report for the adoption agency and this feedback is discussed with the local authority adoption leads and decision makers regularly. The business support teams are central to the effective running of panels and the feedback regarding the quality of the organisation of these and minutes are very positive.

See 3.4.31 for quality assurance data relating to adoption panels.

3.4.8 Family Finding

With 184 children being placed for adoption during the year the family finding teams have worked creatively to undertake family finding and achieve matches for children within the constraints of a challenging and the increase in the number of children being placed for adoption is reflective of this work. The number of children placed for adoption is the highest number of children placed since the regionalisation of adoption services within West Yorkshire.

3.4.9 There have been additional pressures on all the teams in family finding, the complexities of transitions during the pandemic have remained challenging throughout the year with the differing restrictions in place during the year, this has meant an increase in the work required to ensure effective planning including individual risk assessments being carried out to ensure transitions can be undertaken safely as well as a higher level of support needed for both adopters and foster carers. The University of East Anglia Moving to Adoption model has been utilised where possible to support transitions and has particularly supported the getting to know you phased of introductions.

3.4.10 There has been an increase in the number of children placed within the West Yorkshire region during 2020/21, which has increased from 61.5% (during 2019/20) of children placed to 64.7% of children, children placed in the wider Yorkshire and Humber region has also increased from 8.9% in 2019/20 to 11.4% in 2020/21. The number of placements outside of Yorkshire has fallen from 29.6% during 2019/20 to 23.9% in 2020/21.

3.4.11 This is largely due to an increase in the availability of in-house families and the fact that OAWY commissioned the Voluntary Adoption Alliance within the region to provide families more locally for priority children. This contract commenced at the end of May 2020 with the aim of 30 families being provided within an 80-mile radius, in fact, 34 children were placed by the end of the year. A project lead has worked with OAWY to enhance the knowledge regarding the needs of children requiring external placements through the contract. We have also established external linking meetings where children are profiled to partner agencies under the contract and work continues to ensure placements are utilised and working relationships continue to be developed.

3.4.12 Feedback from families have been positive regarding the work of the family finders includes this quote:

"The adoption process has not always been easy as single adopter however C is a fantastic asset to your organisation! Over the last 6 months his professionalism, efficiency and conscientious approach ensured our match continued to progress swiftly during the difficulties we encountered."

3.4.13 Social workers from the local authorities also welcome the support of the family finders:

"It's my first Early Permanence case and L has really taken the time to explain everything to me which I really appreciate. It was also clear that she had really taken the time to read the case files in detail before the linking meeting and she has done an amazing job with the EPP paperwork"

3.4.14 Profiling events have been delivered virtually during the year with five events taking place, the initial event engaged adopters approved by OAWY and the subsequent events have also included adopters from the Voluntary Adoption Alliance and local regional adoption agencies (RAA's) and LA's. These events take a great deal of organisation and the business support staff are key in ensuring the booking system works well and that the technology is working well to manage such big events. 55 children have been profiled at the events, including 8 sets of siblings (2 children in sibling group), 166 adoptive families have attended the events, with 27 children receiving expressions of interest. 3 children have subsequently matched with adopters, with 2 now being placed for adoption and one who was in the introduction process at the end of the year, in addition 1 child was linked with adopters at the end of the year (matched at the start of 2021/22) and there are 2 linking visits scheduled from the latest profiling event.

3.4.15 OAWY is utilising Link Maker to profile children to OAWY approved families as well as being able to use the system to profile children to a wider reach of adopters, including targeted profiling to adopters through the contract with the Voluntary Adoption Alliance and nationally where needed. During the year we have reviewed our approach to internal linking meetings and have made these more practitioner led with both family finding and adoption social workers profiling the children and families they

are family finding for, this change continues to be under review to ensure we are able to achieve timely matches for children. Alongside utilising Link Maker, networks between teams and profiling events we have a number of family finding methodologies to support children being matched with adoptive families.

3.4.16 Adoption Support

a) **Adoption support:** Do children and families have timely access to high quality support services?

The teams adapted very quickly to the pandemic and their first concern was the wellbeing of families they support and ensured that families were aware quickly about support available. The teams have continued to work with families via virtual means and undertake risk-assessed home visits where it is considered to be necessary from a well-being point of view, in addition to those where there is a risk of breakdown or potential safeguarding concerns. As part of the virtual contact with families we have been able to continue to complete Adoption Support Assessments and reviews as well as keeping in touch calls. As we anticipated we saw an increased number of calls to the duty and advice line since the schools re-opened in September with key themes from parents relating to difficulties their children were experiencing with the transitions from school to home-schooling (and vice versa); we have been able to support parents to seek ongoing places in school for those children who needed the consistency and predictability of going to school through the lockdowns. Some feedback from adopters about the work undertaken by OAWY staff in the last year include:

- *Thank you for always being there for us. You are amazing and always have the right things to say. Also thank you for your letter that you wrote to for his high school. Really appreciated.*
- *I just need to say Thank you, from the bottom of my heart. When we were in crisis you listened and more importantly you acted. You have saved this family*
- *Once again...many thanks for your engagement, kindness and understanding yesterday. I appreciate all that you have sent to me today (from a caller to duty and advice)*

3.4.17 Applications to the Adoption Support Fund have continued unabated throughout the year. Some of the therapy provided to children, young people and families has been able to be delivered by providers via virtual means and where this hasn't been an appropriate method, therapy has paused by agreement and the therapist has had a minimum contact to keep in touch and maintain relationships. Some providers have been able latterly to explore with families safe means for therapy to be delivered face to face again. This year we have successfully accessed £1,995,729 of adoption support funding for families via 534 applications to the ASF. Because funding to the ASF was only agreed for 1 year there has been a high-intensity of activity since February 2020 with workers reviewing support plans and applying to the ASF in order that there is no break in therapy from the old financial year to the new – since 1st February to end March there were 237 applications made for therapy to take place in 2021/22. The administrative burden of the ASF is a constant issue and the business support team manage the applications and the invoicing arrangements professionally and are extremely effective and efficient in overseeing this work.

3.4.18 The Adoption Support Fund COVID packages proved popular with families, in particular workshops in relation to Child to Parent Violence, support to adopted teens, Adoption UK webinars and support groups and the offer of EMDR sessions to parents. It is estimated that through these additional packages we were able to provide support to over 2,500 families.

3.4.19 The NVR (Non-violent Resistance) programme has been adapted as a virtual model and is being delivered from April '21. A new programme 'Talking Teens' has also been able to be delivered successfully online in February/March with further programmes due to be delivered later in the year. Brain based parenting webinars and FASD webinars are really popular. Stay and Play support groups have moved to be run outdoors with smaller groups attending when restrictions have allowed that to happen. The single adopters' group has resumed, with a mixture of outdoors meet-ups and online support and the general adopter support group has started back up – now a regional online support group, meeting monthly via Zoom. There are further plans for a support group for Dads and one for those involved in Trans-racial adoption to be established during the next year. Other groups and parenting programmes have had to be paused because they work best on a face-to-face basis.

3.4.20 Access to records work had virtually ceased at the start of the lockdown and the archivist but with a revised protocol with the local authorities being agreed, some work has been able to be undertaken although this involves electronic records only at this stage. The Letterbox service has been impacted over the last year. The work has had to focus upon electronic exchanges where possible. One Adoption West Yorkshire has been involved in early discussions around the development and piloting of an App specifically to aid contact between Adoptive and First (aka birth) families. It is hoped we will be able to pilot this with a small number of families towards the end of this year.

3.4.21 Commissioned Contracts: Adoption UK and PAC/UK

Adoption UK: Peer Mentoring

There are currently 24 active peer mentors supporting 57 families across the region via the 1:1 support service. Furthermore, there are 6 families who are accessing the enhanced peer mentor support package.

Here are some comments from those accessing the mentoring service:

- Mentee – *“To normalize in some way what feels so alien at times and at my lowest points to bring some hope and strong sense that this too will pass. Hearing about the mentors’ journey, empathy and hearing something familiar at such a strange time was reassuring.”*
- Mentor – *“It just gives the personal side to the adoption process, because from day one you meet professionals and I think it brings adopted children to life.”*
- Social Worker – *“I don’t live the experience of adoptive life every day. I can talk about it anecdotally...but peer mentoring has really helped support and complement what we do as it gives adopters whether in assessment or post placement a very real perspective about the emotional impact but also the practical things.”*

3.4.22 Adoption UK: Adopter Engagement

The Adopter Engagement provision has been active in One Adoption West Yorkshire in the following work:

- Q&A Prep Training x2
- Sibling Training co delivered
- Sibling Webinar
- Experienced adopter planning meeting
- Experienced adopter webinar

3.4.23 In addition Facebook groups run by Adopter Engagement coordinators across the whole of the Yorkshire and Humber region have reported the following activity:

- Adopter Voice Facebook group 732 Members. Facebook Early years and Primary school group 226 members. Facebook Secondary and Further Education group 124 members.
- Themes on Facebook have been around children’s behaviour responses, Mother’s Day difficulties and anxiety increase amongst children, particularly teenagers. Also, parents’ understanding of different kinds of therapies on offer and the adoption support fund.

3.4.24 PAC-UK: adults work

PAC-UK have dealt with 472 calls to their advice line and worked with 184 service users (existing and new) across the year. These services are provided for all adults affected by adoption but most of the work is undertaken with birth parents and adopted adults.

3.4.25 PAC-UK: Adopteens service

71 young people from West Yorkshire have been involved in Adopteens during the year. Additionally, 6 of the members of the Adopteens Youth Council are from West Yorkshire. Activities over the past year have been mostly online activities and a chat forum, which has been a new service introduced to offer support since the introduction of the Covid restrictions.

3.4.26 Non-Agency Adoption

One Adoption West Yorkshire undertakes non-agency adoption on behalf of Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield councils, Bradford and Leeds councils undertake their own. Due to the pandemic this work was temporarily suspended due to priorities within the service and the court process. There were a number of urgent matters to progress as directed by the court and these were completed. This work has now fully resumed.

3.4.27 Over the last 12 months there were a total of 10 enquiries received for non-agency adoption. 40% of enquiries were from families living in Wakefield, 10% were from families living in Calderdale and 50% were from families living in Kirklees.

3.4.28 Over the past 12 months there were 12 non-agency adoption orders granted, 33% were for families from Calderdale, 25% were for families from Wakefield and 42% were for families from Kirklees.

3.4.29 Disruptions

There were 2 disruptions of adoption placements (preadoption order) during 2020/21 which relate to 1 placement (the 2 children were part of a sibling group) with in house adopters. This is a decrease from last year of 7 disruptions. The children’s ages at disruption were 1 and 2 years of age, their placement disrupted shortly after placement (6 days for one of the children and 2 days for the second child). A disruption review has been commissioned to analyse the circumstances of the disruption. Given the circumstances of the lockdown and availability of support services I would have expected higher rates of disruption given the stresses of lockdown. This reflects the hard work and support provided by staff across the region to supporting children moving in with their new family.

3.4.30 Quality Assurance

One Adoption West Yorkshire has developed a practice improvement framework and is committed to an improvement culture of learning. The principal sources of feedback are:

- Views of Children and Families: The views and experiences of children & young adults.
- Performance Data: Any statistical data that helps us judge the quality and effectiveness of our professional practice.

- Practice Wisdom & Knowledge: The practice wisdom of those staff who work with children, young people and families, adoption panels and learning from disruptions.
- The findings of external and internal inspections, audits and evaluations of our practice.

3.4.31 A Quality Assurance mechanism for panel work is used as a matter of course and has found that 93% of prospective adopter reports were of a good or outstanding standard (14% outstanding, 79% good, 1% requiring improvement and 6% not recorded) this is an improvement on last year's figure of 82%.

3.4.32 In relation to Child Permanence Reports (CPRs) provided by local authority social workers 85% were considered good or outstanding (2% outstanding, 83% good, 11% requiring improvement and 3% not recorded) this is an improvement on last year figure of 57%. OAWY continue to work with the 5 local authorities to raise the quality of CPRs and support them with training and development work. More detailed feedback is provided for each local authority.

3.4.33 There has been 42 responses to the panel survey in 2020/21. Attendees were asked to rate their overall experience of attending adoption panel, the responses were:

- Very good – 33 (78.57%).
- Good – 7 (16.67%).
- Neither good nor poor - 1 (2.38%).
- Very poor – 1 (2.38%).

3.4.34 Between 01 April 2020 and 31 March 2021 the Customer Relations Service logged twelve complaints for One Adoption West Yorkshire. Three customers complained wishing to challenge an assessment, two complained about a breakdown in the adoption process and one customer complained about both of these areas. Three people complained about a lack of post-adoption support. Issues relating to letterbox contact, disagreement with placement and sexual orientation discrimination each received one complaint respectively.

3.4.35 No complaints were logged at stage two which is extremely positive. The customer relations team's experience of working with OAWY is that stage one investigating officers are proactive in making phone/ face to face contact with complainants and very rarely exceed the corporate or statutory response timescales. Where this is unavoidable the team liaise well with customer relations so that customer expectations are managed. This approach is positive and an understanding of any themes arising from complainants is regularly discussed at the senior leadership team to see if there is any learning from these in making changes for improvement.

3.4.36 Case File Audits

55 audits were completed across the service during 2020/21 by Service & Team managers. The result of each audit is recorded as either excellent, good, satisfactory or requires improvement. Any actions identified from the audits are fed-back to the worker to support improvement. Of the 55 audits:

- 4 (7.27%) were excellent.
- 32 (58.18%) were good.
- 16 (29.09%) were satisfactory.
- 3 (5.45%) required improvement.

3.4.37 An independent auditor was appointed to undertake specific audit work across the recruitment & assessment teams to ensure the quality of the casework, decision making and management oversight was safe and appropriate. 32 files were audited between September and October 2020. Of the 32 audits:

- Excellent – 5 (15%).
- Good – 10 (31%).
- Satisfactory – 13 (40%).
- Requires improvement – 4 (12%).

An action plan was developed as part of this audit and the majority of points raised have been addressed.

3.4.38 Joint audits were completed across the region, 27 in total, between a OAWY Service Manager and an LA lead during 2020/21. OAWY recorded the result of each audit as either excellent, good, satisfactory or requires improvement. Of the 27 audits:

- Excellent – 6 (22.22%).
- Good – 11 (40.74%).
- Satisfactory – 9 (33.33%).

- Requires improvement – 1 (3.7%).

This joint audit work is work in progress and will be further developed over the coming year to look at themes emerging from these for both agencies.

3.4.39 Voice and Influence of Children, Young People and Adopters

Appendix 2 provides the Voice and Influence of Children, Young People and Adopters report card. This highlights examples of work undertaken to capture the views of service users to help develop and shape the service.

3.5 **Continuous Professional and Service Development**

3.5.1 Staff development and support

Staff development during the year has been challenging with the focus with staff on self-care and emotional wellbeing for themselves and the families they are working with. A staff event was held in June and featured guest speaker Lisa Cherry. The focus was relationships, trauma and adversarial growth. A second event was held in November and the focus was Black Lives Matter with staff hearing from those with lived experience and given time to consider how we can improve our practice as well as support staff regarding these issues.

3.5.2 Training

No training was commissioned during 200/21 due to Covid. However, here are details of what was delivered:

- Adoption Support have had 2 whole-service get togethers in the past year; the first was a social to reconnect people but the second focussed on contact (the pilot of the App and letterbox policy).
- Family Finding and Recruitment & Assessment - to enable connectivity between family finding and adoption teams within OAWY virtual joint practice forums have been established focus on joint areas of practice with the opportunity to network. There have been a number of forums over the year which have focussed on transitions in adoption during the pandemic, adoption disruptions, adoption support provision and contact in adoption.
- HOME-assessment Training: During this reporting period the Multidisciplinary Team continued to deliver Assessment Framework training, by supporting OAWY social work teams in conducting HOME assessments. 15 support / training sessions were delivered during this year. The HOME is a core instrument in the assessment framework and focuses on how a child's day to day experiences are relevant to different aspects of their developmental needs. The instrument traditionally uses interview and observation to explore the key themes during a one-hour home visit to the family. Throughout the interview and visit the interaction between the child and main caregiver is carefully observed. At the beginning of the pandemic an on-line version of the method was developed; using videophones and tablets the team worked with OAWY social workers and carers to create "virtual home visits", which meant that the vital assessments were not delayed during the pandemic;
- School Training: 15 sessions of trauma and attachment training were delivered to schools across the WY region. These training sessions were delivered using on-line platforms and aim to increase school staff's understanding of the impact of trauma and early adversity on child's behaviour and their development.
- The education specialist created and developed an on-line video to help with lock-down and home schooling. In addition, on-line videos were created and published on One Adoption You-Tube Channel to provide information about FASD aimed at schools and returning to school for parents. In August a webinar for 50 parents with school age children provided guidance on returning to school. The feedback from the parents was very positive; the participants appreciated the content of the session and the fact that it was hosted on-line, which made it easier for a larger number of parents to participate.
- FASD and Brain based parenting webinars delivered to over 500 staff and adopters and special guardians

3.5.3 Strategic issues and forward plans

OAWY's 3 Year plan on a page, Appendix 3, outlines the vision, mission, outcomes, and priorities up to 2024. Activities linked to the delivery of the plan are tracked through the OAWY Service Improvement Plan.

Corporate Considerations

4.1 **Consultation and Engagement**

There has been ongoing engagement with staff over the year. 2 all staff events have been held, one in June and one in November which covered relationships, trauma and adversarial growth and Black Live Matters respectively. Quarterly newsletters are in place to keep staff updated as well as email bulletins if needed. Ongoing engagement with adopters,

young people through adoptees and birth parents is an integral part in order to co-develop and co deliver the services provided for children and families in the region.

4.2 Equality and Diversity/ Cohesion and Integration

The OAWY Equality Impact assessment was reviewed and updated February 2021 and can be found as Appendix 4. Actions from this are fed into the annual service improvement plan and tracked throughout the year.

4.3 Resources and value for money

4.3.1 The final 2020/21 outturn position for OAWY was an underspend of £16.6k. The main pressure on the 2020/21 budget was a £292k shortfall of Inter Agency income but this was offset by Staffing savings of £159k, additional income of £104k and Inter Agency expenditure savings of £55k. A further point to note is that a total of £1.95m of expenditure was attributed to the ASF and this was offset by corresponding ASF income received in year.

5. Conclusions

5.1 The Covid-19 pandemic has brought many challenges for the service and the staff have worked tirelessly to ensure that families have been supported and plans for children moved on. The discussions regarding a hybrid approach to working from home and the office and will need to continue given the impact of the pandemic and particularly given some of the positive changes that have been made to improve service delivery. The consultation with staff, partners and service users will be important to shape and develop this as we move forward. The performance this last year has been really positive and it is clear that the staff in the agency are extremely committed, passionate and well motivated in their work and they are all focussed about improving outcomes for children in the region.

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One Adoption West Yorkshire – Multidisciplinary Team Quarterly Report – Quarter 1- 1st April 2021 - 30 June 2021

Date: 16th July 2021

1. Purpose of this report

This report sets out the work and developments within OAWY Multidisciplinary team during the first quarter of the financial year of 2021-22 1st April 2021 and 30 June 2021.

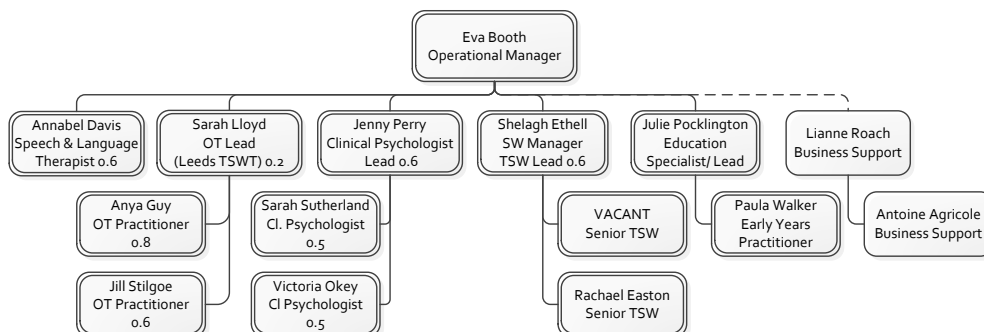
2. Main issues

2.1. Use of Resources

2.1.1. Staffing & HR

The recruitment of the health staff continued during the first quarter of this year. Clinical Psychologist, Sarah Sutherland took her post in May 2021, Annabel Davis, the Speech Language and Communication Therapist started in June 2021 and Victoria O’Key, Clinical Psychologist started in July, just after the end of the quarter 1.

Kim Webb, our senior therapeutic social worker left the team and OAWY in early July to pursue other career options. Shelagh Ethell, the Team Manager of the therapeutic social work team also expressed her wish to retire and will leave the team on 1st September 2021. Recruitment for these two posts is on-going.



2.2. Budget

Due to the late start of some of the team members, a small saving has been made, which will be used to cover a known funding gap in the FY 2023-24 budget.

2.3. Partnership working

2.3.1. West Yorkshire CAMHS Providers

The team has continued to explore future joint care pathways with a number of health providers across the WY region. Constructive discussions are on-going with Bradford, Kirklees, and Leeds.

2.3.2. West Yorkshire and Harrogate Health and Care Partnership

Members of the MDT team are participants in the West Yorkshire and Harrogate Health and Care Partnership's Adversity, Trauma and Resilience Steering Group. This is an initiative with the broad remit of developing and improving services for people who have experienced trauma as a result of early adversity.

The members of the team are participating in the WY&H regional FASD pathway development work, which aims to build a regional assessment/ diagnosis/ support pathway and run a pilot site. OAWY MDT have volunteered to become part of the development and pilot work.

2.3.3. National Network of Adoption Multidisciplinary Teams

The team has continued to work in partnership with other adoption multidisciplinary teams in England, with Birmingham Children's Trust and Adoption Counts in Salford and Manchester.

2.3.4. Virtual Schools in West Yorkshire

The Education Consultant has continued to work in close partnership with the Virtual Schools across the West Yorkshire area. The Education helpline provides an additional source of information, advice, and support for adopted parents and schools, and the team is improving the education related information on the One Adoption Web site. We continue to work to increase the awareness of attachment and trauma at West Yorkshire schools by delivering training to school staff and by providing workshops to adopters in partnership with the adoption support teams.

2.3.5. Working with the local authorities

The team has been working in conjunction with the adoption and local authority children's social work teams on individual cases and the sibling assessment work. Further discussions will take place over the next year with the operational leads across the region regarding the added value that this team can provide working with children's social workers.

2.3.6. Working with Adopters

MDT Education consultant and the Specialist Peer Mentors have been exploring how the MDT and the peer mentors could work together to establish a support network for families with school age children. Now that the Y&H peer mentoring contract has been re-awarded to Adoption UK, we are able to start building partnership working models.

3. Service Performance / Output

3.1. Assessments

3.1.1. Sibling Assessments

The team has continued working with OAWY Family Finding team to pilot Coram Baaf's national initiative to develop a more robust framework for sibling assessments. The MDT has provided consultation support to the Family Finder's and the Local Authority children's Social Worker with an aim to deepen the knowledge of the new sibling assessment framework and support to employ the use of unfamiliar assessment tools. The MDT has provided specialist knowledge of child development and the impact of early adversity to support the analysis of the assessment information to create a picture of each child's presentation, their needs and likely outcomes. The SW teams and MDT worked together to develop a suitable proposal for support within a prospective placement.

3.1.2. Cognitive Assessments

Jenny Perry has continued to complete cognitive assessments. During this quarter one full assessment was completed. Now that we have the full Clinical Psychology capacity on-board, we can schedule more assessments. The feedback from the school following the completed cognitive assessment was good.

"Very comprehensive – all requirements met." Most helpful: Background information, analysis of what is happening, logic behind events and real life scenarios...It has improved school life and the individuals life at school."

The availability of clinical space is causing problems. The team was able to use the Leeds CAMHS clinical room in Bramley, but this is no-longer available, due to increased activity by the CAMHS. A temporary solution, which is available during the school holidays, has been found in South Leeds.

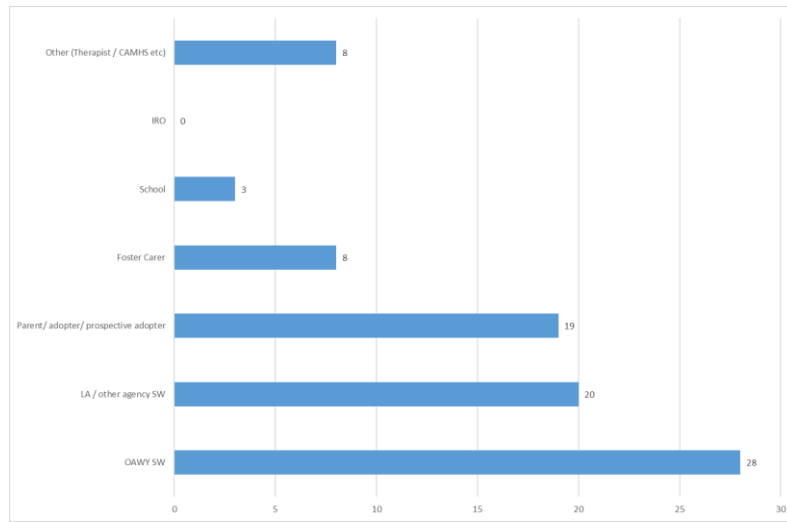
The team is trying to locate suitable spaces across the region.

3.2. Support

3.2.1. Consultations

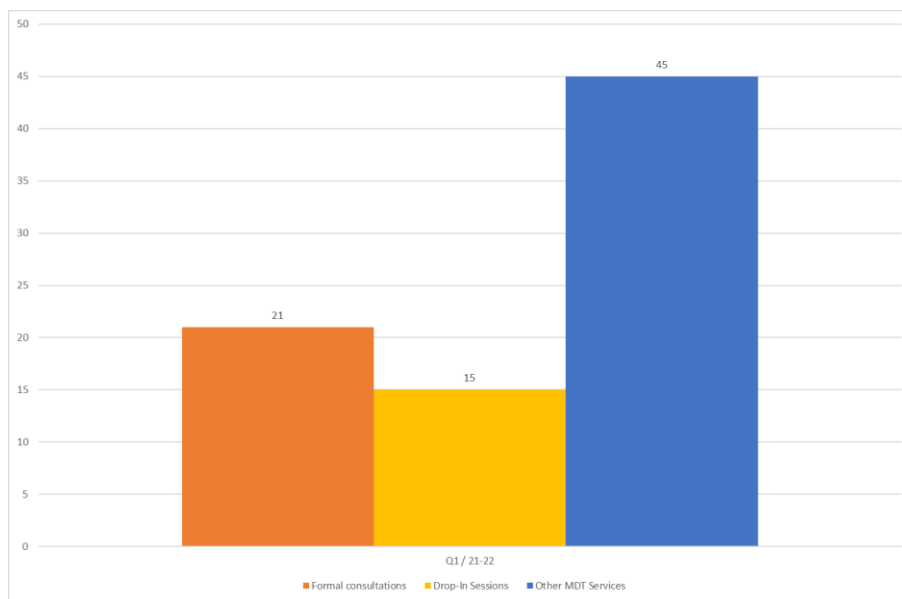
Multi-disciplinary consultations, both formal and informal, which are offered to staff at OAWY, local authority and education settings and families, continued without disruption using video conferencing platforms. The on-line format, in most cases, proved to work even better than face to face sessions as people did not need to travel to take part, however, sometimes the meetings suffered from bad connectivity or other technical issues. The demand for the consultations increased as the year progressed.

During the reporting period in total 21 formal consultation sessions were used. Formal consultations last up to 90 minutes and the case holding social worker provides written information about the case prior to the meeting and the member of the MDT familiarise with the details in advance. During the consultations 36 children's cases were discussed, some cases were brought to consultations more than once. In total 86 people (not MDT members) attended formal consultation sessions, including 19 adoptive parents (prospective or current) and 8 foster carers.



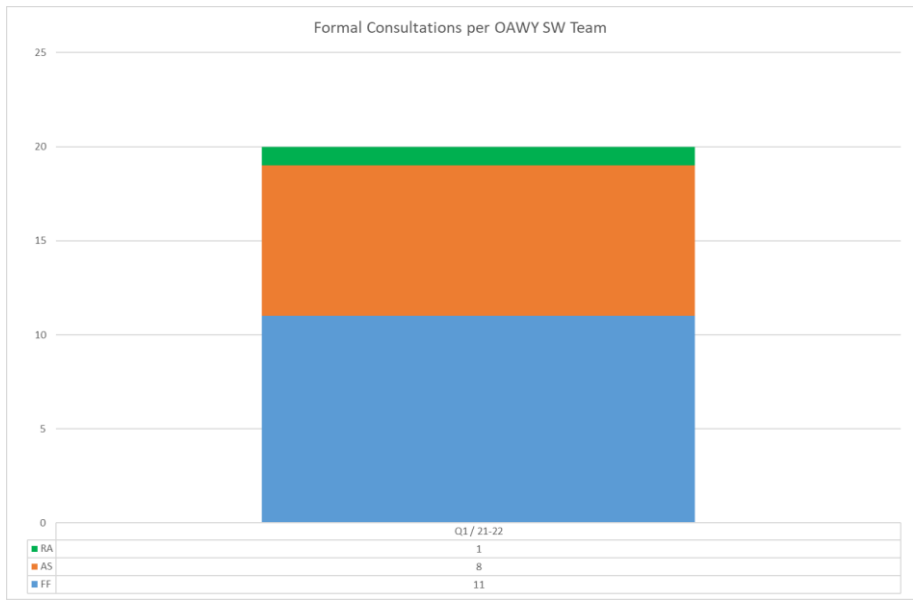
Formal Consultations Participants

In addition, the team delivered 15 drop-in consultation session. The drop-in sessions are shorter, more informal sessions and do not require advance preparation from the members of MDT. During this quarter 45 sessions of other services were delivered.



MDT Overview of Output

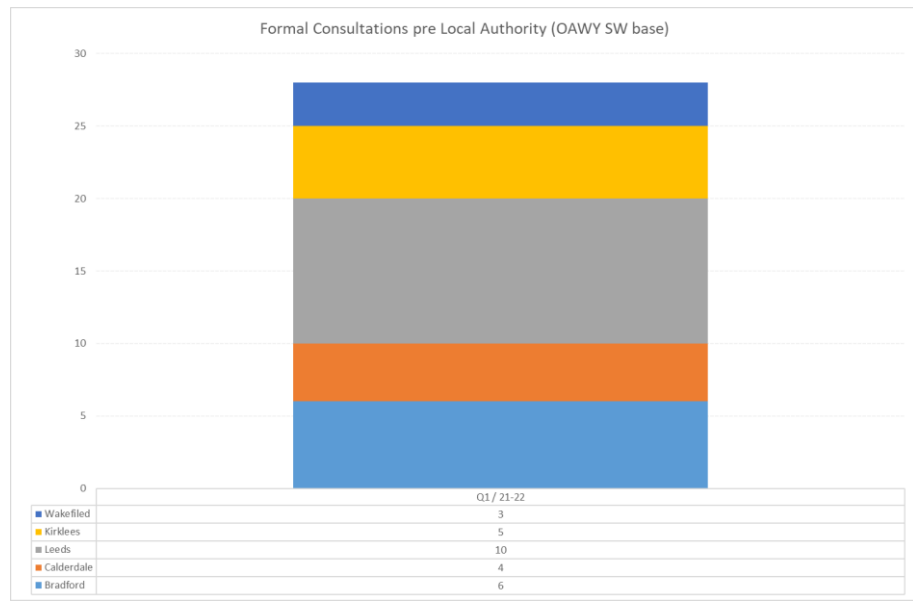
This quarter the formal consultations have been used by social workers in particularly during the early stages of family finding and matching process and to support the post-adoption support social workers. 55% (11) of the sessions were requested by a Family Finding Social worker, Adoption Support Team SWs initiated 40% (8) of the consultations and 5% (1) of the consultation requests came from Recruitment and Assessment Teams.



Formal Consultations by the requesting Social Worker

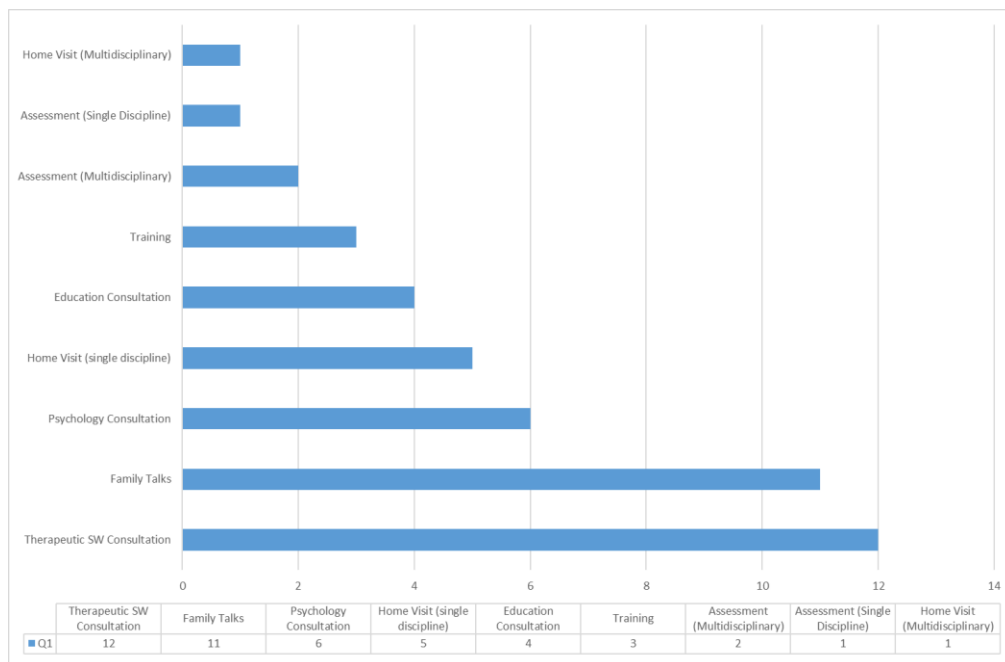
The consultations are benefitting children, families, and staff across the West-Yorkshire area. When analysing which local authority the OAWY are “connected with”, i.e. where the child comes from or where the child and adopted family currently live, the formal consultations seem to support teams evenly across the region: 36% were from Leeds, 21% from Bradford, 18% from Kirklees, 11% from Wakefield and 14% from Calderdale.

The formal consultations are supporting OAWY social workers, but also workers from our LA partners, schools, and other partner agencies. When analysing the number of participants, 33% of these are OAWY staff and 67% represent people outside the agency, either the child’s parents, prospective adopters and foster carers or professionals from our partner organisations.



Formal Consultations by Local Authority

The services in addition to consultations that the MDT is providing, include informal consultations with one discipline, assessments, home visits, co-working sessions (Home Assessments), training sessions and Family Talks direct interventions.

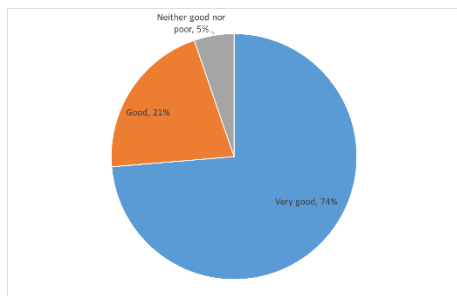


MDT Other Services

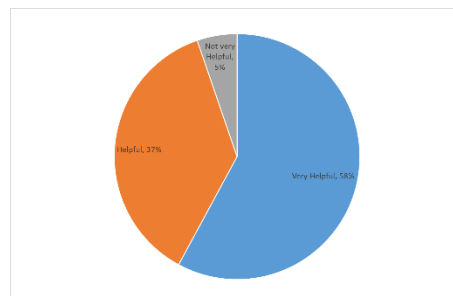
3.2.2. Feedback regarding consultations

95% of the participants, both OAWY staff and other participants, rated the formal consultations either good or very good.

All participants attending the formal consultations are asked to provide feedback following the sessions. Both OAWY staff and the other participants are asked what they liked about the sessions and what could be improved. The participants rate the session on a scale of 1-5. In addition, the OAWY staff evaluate the added value of the sessions to the work with the child/family. In our analysis we include all feedback received and are building a cumulative picture of the views of people using this service. This far in total 38 responses have been received: 19 from OAWY staff and 19 from other participants.



Satisfaction – Other Participants



Satisfaction – OAWY Staff

The participants appreciated the opportunity to discuss matters openly with different professionals at the same time and the clarity of the advice.

"Everyone explained everything clearly and were very welcoming. (Foster Carer)

" Professionals involved were knowledgeable and skilled supporting transition of a young child with complex needs." (Supervising SW)

"Open discussions informed by lots of professionals and practical tips for foster carer" (CSW)

"Amazing to have so many relevant professionals in one place after years of seeing people in silos. Relevant professional views and knowledge with our child's best interests at the forefront. Hearing 'yes' to assessments we have been trying to access for years." (Adoptive Parent)

"It was collaborative, informative, solution focused and productive. The families voices were heard also." (School professional)

This quarter's comments from the OAWY Staff:

"I genuinely believe in a head together perspective."

"Informal and receptive to the family."

"The knowledge of priority target and the collaborative needs-based assessment/evaluation."

"For example, in acknowledging the adoptive parents difficulties/stress and needs, enabling them to open up about their feelings and providing support on the day to day basis as situation evolves around the child and their home. "

"... had lots of ideas around why the children are behaving as they are. she was able to reassure me that what we have been trying to advice the adopters was correct."

"... were very helpful considering it was a last minute consultation without any real conversation or preparation beforehand. They gave us some real "back to basic ideas" about focusing on what is going on in the now, and use of language that the adopters can use with RH which will be very helpful and not too complex or overwhelming for the adopters to embrace at the moment."

"It felt inclusive and no-judgemental. Good minutes sent out afterwards."

"Great that we had a full discussion and the whole panel contributed."

"Clear advice."

"A chance for the adopters to off-load"

Improvement opportunities identified:

"Whether it would be possible to involve medical professionals i.e.paediatric neuro specialists just to have a completely rounded approach. But this was amazing anyway." (Adoptive Parent)

"I was unclear about how we accessed subsequent support." (OAWY Staff)

"I wished to have had more time, due to the urgency it was not possible." (OAWY Staff)

"It wasn't easy over zoom, but couldn't be helped under the circumstances." (OAWY Staff)

"It felt like I had quite a lot more things that I needed to be doing after the consultation on a case where I already had a lot to do." (OAWY Staff)

3.2.3. Family Talks

Family Talks, an approach using family therapy techniques, is provided by a Therapeutic Social Worker (TSW) or a Systemic Practitioner in the Multidisciplinary Team following OAWY adoption social worker's assessment. The approach considers the strengths of the family relationships and draws on resources the family members already have to find solutions to problems they are having. The approach provides space for conversations that help family members communicate and listen to each other more effectively and gain a clearer idea of each other's perspectives as a starting point for change. The approach draws on systemic family therapy and uses aspects of DDP (Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy), NVR (Non-Violent Resistance) and Theraplay and knowledge from attachment and trauma theories.

During the reporting period 11 sessions of the intervention was delivered.

ASF has been awarded for some of these sessions (post adoption support).

3.2.4. Building Underdeveloped Sensorisystems (BUSS) Group

The first multidisciplinary BUSS group took place between March and July 2021 with 6 children and their parents/carers taking part. Adoption Support Fund was awarded for this group. The aims for the group were to support sensory motor development; to offer early support to adopters and; to enable adopters to make relationships with the MDT. The team members were also using the group to provide broader observation of the children's progress.

This first group gave the team an opportunity to explore what the roles of the different professional in the group could be; could the Early Years professional act as a bridge into nursery or school for children who come through the group; would the SLT to influence the structure of the group; could the psychologists provide screening for neurodiversity and -developmental issues, and how could the group help to enhance attachment and relationships.

Clinical Psychologist will conduct semi structured interviews to review the group with parents in terms of sensory motor progress and experience of attending.

The next group will also take place in Leeds but will provide services to children across the WY area. When our Occupational Therapist are fully trained, the plan is to run similar courses across the region.

3.2.5. Speech and Language Services

Annabel Davis joined the team in early June. A draft plan for the role for the first year includes: provision of clinical work, possibly in a form of weekly clinics rotating between Bradford, Huddersfield, and Leeds (subject to availability of clinical space); attending specific sessions in the autumn BUSS group. Linking with OASW who deliver Stay and Play- sessions to engage parents. Development of SLT drop-in sessions, supported by another member of the MDT. Creation of training package for MDT, SW's, and adopters to share basic information about communication development, highlighting issues for adopted children, and contribute to the development of training such as Early Years Training, FASD training. The plan is that Annabel will also make links with community SLT teams across the WY region to facilitate partnership working.

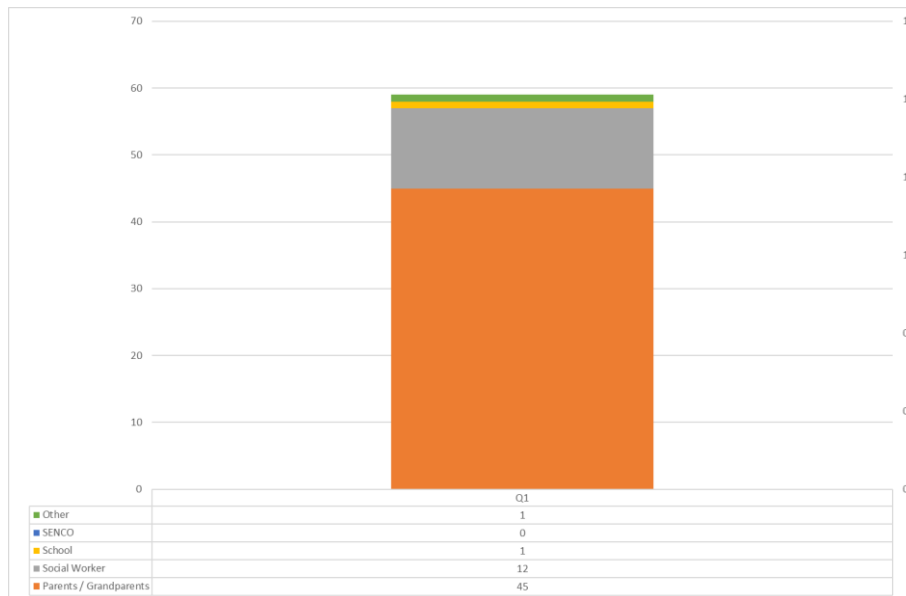
3.2.6. Child's Pace

Paula Walker our Early Years Practitioner has developed a parenting programme called Child's Pace, which offers structured, time limited (typically 6 sessions) intervention / training to new parents helping them to gain a deeper understanding of their child and the impact of trauma and early adversity. The programme promotes therapeutic parenting and creates good relationships within the family. This programme is still under development.

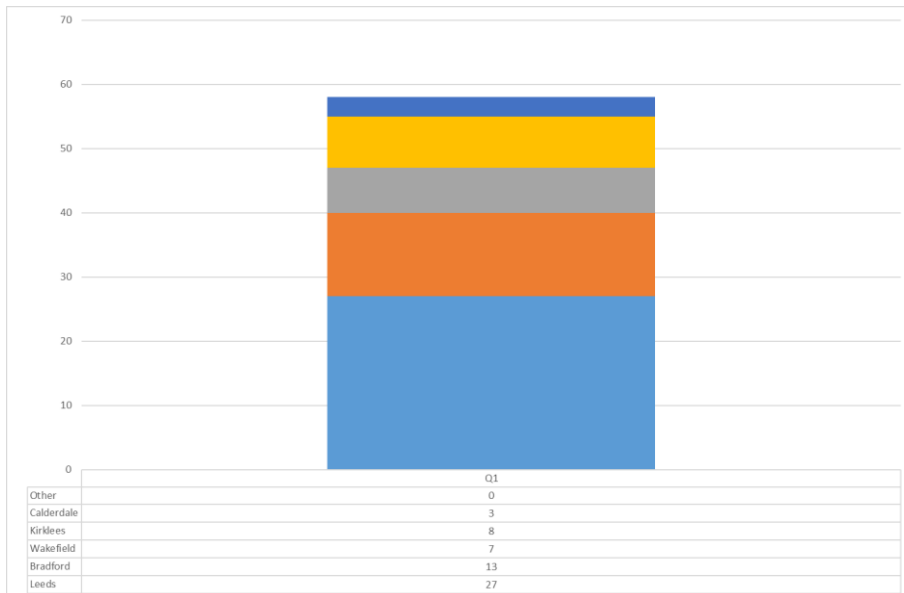
3.2.7. Education Helpline & Other Education Activity

The education helpline received 59 calls and provided in total 27 hours of support and advice mainly to parents and grandparents (76%) and social workers (20%). Most of the callers were from Leeds area (47%) followed by Bradford (22%), Kirklees (14%) and Wakefield (11%).

The issues covered during these calls varied from information about Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and its relevance for an individual child; advise on what to look for when moving a school for a child to discussing individual child's situation, and discussions with parents who suspect their children has autism or is affected by FASD.



Education Helpline Calls by type of callers



Education Helpline Calls by location of callers

In addition, the Education and Early Years team members provide relevant information for adopters in their “Regular Slot” on OAWY Newsletter to parents. The theme in the last newsletter was “Moving to High School and Beyond”.

Julie Pocklington, our education consultant co-delivered a very popular special educational needs workshop with Samantha Booth from Kirklees and Calderdale SENDIASS. The on-line workshop was attended by nearly 40 families across the region.

4. Development & Innovation

4.1. School Training

3 sessions of trauma and attachment training were delivered to schools across the WY region. These training sessions were delivered using on-line platforms and aim to increase school staff’s understanding of the impact of trauma and early adversity on child’s behaviour and their development.

The feedback from the school staff has been consistently good:

“Personally I found it really helpful and it made me think carefully about my practice in school and my own parenting!”

“I found that what you were describing not only rang true for our adopted children, but also children whose primary care giver passed away when they were a young age.”

“Tonight was brilliant, thank you so much. The staff stayed behind for 30 minutes discussing your session. It was really interesting and thought provoking.”

Julie also delivered a session on Shame at the Bradford Designated Teacher Conference.

5. Continuous Professional Development and Service Development

5.1. MDT Strategic Plan 2021-22

The below document is an overview of the planned activities for One Adoption West Yorkshire's Multidisciplinary Team for the period April 2021 to March 2022.



MDT Strategic Plan
2021-22 1.0.docx

5.2. Staff Development

An individualised induction plan has been created to all new members of the team to accommodate the individual requirements whilst also ensuring both organisational requirements of One Adoption West Yorkshire and Leeds Community Health Care are met.

In addition, Anya Guy (Occupational Therapist), Jillian Stillgoe (Occupational Therapist) and Paula Walker (Early Years Practitioner) completed their Building Underdeveloped Sensorisystems Level 1 training, which will eventually enable them to run BUSS informed groups across the region.

6. Service Evaluation

6.1. External Evaluation

To provide objective and independent evaluation of the multi-disciplinary model, OAWY contacted Oxford Brookes University (incorporating the Institute of Public Care (IPC)), who are seeking funding from What Works for Children's Social Care and National Institute for Health Research to work with 4-5 regional partners across England and Wales including: South East Wales Adoption Service; One Adoption Yorkshire; Adoption Partnership South East; and Adoption Counts (Greater Manchester and Cheshire). They propose an evaluation of integrated social work and psychological support services across these sites over a period of approximately 12-18 months to explore:

- What works for whom and why, in what circumstances and to what extent including with reference to quantitative and qualitative methods.
- The extent to which the hypotheses outlined above are proven.
- The value for money of the model(s) including with reference to potential savings for health as well as social care services.
- The potential for an extension (or actual extension) of the models into support for other types of care experienced children and what some of the different criteria might be or are for these groups of children.

The study would be led by Katy Burch at IPC, as she has recently led and is leading major national adoption studies in both England and Wales (of 'Adoption Support Fund' in its different forms across both nations). In addition, there would be at least one other HEI partner such as the University of East Anglia (led by Professor Beth Neil).

The NIHR funding committee is expected to evaluate the Oxford-Brookes application in June - July 2021.

6.2. Internal Evaluations KPIs and Outcome Measures

The team has continued the work to develop a specific MDT workflow in Mosaic (the case management system used by OAWY), which will allow all the MDT work to be fully integrated in the adoption work within OAWY. The Mosaic Steering Group agreed for the MDT consultation workflow to be developed in 2021. The planning and development started in May 2021 and the skeleton of the workflow and blueprints for the forms have now been completed. Next steps are for the Mosaic development team to build the designs in test system.

The workflow, when in place, will make it easier to track and report on activity and outcomes of the services delivered. Whilst the workflow is being developed, the team will collect activity and outcome information manually. The MDT will collect service satisfaction information from service users and the interventions will use appropriate service outcome measures.

7. Summary

During the first quarter of 2021-22 the team has continued to deliver services to children, parents and staff and integrating the new members of the staff. Covid -19 still restricted the team's ability to provide all the planned services, but the team used the time to plan. The team has continued to develop and offer services that will make a difference to children's lives across West Yorkshire. The accounts from families and staff are extremely positive about the impact of the support and advice provided and the team are fully committed to the implementation of the plans put forward for 21/22.

Eva Booth

Operational Manager – Multidisciplinary Team

16th July 2021



Voice and Influence of Adopters, Children & Young People report Card April 2020 to March 2021

Outcome: Children and adoptive families to have an influence over decisions affecting their families' lives and the services we provide.

Best ideas - what has worked?

Webinar information events – Information events were delivered by a pre-recorded video link in the first half of the year due to Covid. From October upgraded to webinars which allow greater interaction between OAWY and prospective adopters. 13 webinars were delivered between October and the end of March with 190 households attending.



Here are some comments from those who attended:

- *'The interaction was easy and professional'.*
- *'We really loved the part that explained the process that children go through themselves, no one else has put it that way before'.*
- *'It was clear that the staff were passionate about their roles and adoption overall'.*
- *'The speakers were very clear giving the opportunity to ask questions throughout'.*
- *'Overall it was an excellent event and something that I would definitely recommend'.*



Adoptteens chat – This was adapted during Covid and runs between 7 and 8.30pm every Wednesday with 8 - 12 members logging on to use this space. Recently an adult adoptee has been employed who acts as a mentor on the forum and runs the Adoptteen chat sessions alongside us. The idea being that this person will bring the current Adoptee voice into our work and can build relationships and provide support & inspiration to newer members.

Support from our new member has been great and working well to engage the young people online.

Activity Days – 3 online activity days were delivered in October, November and December. Two were baking themed and 1 craft themed. All 3 were successful and well attended. We plan to vary activities in future as we feel it will reach a larger group as some young people like cooking, others arts and crafts whilst others enjoy competitive activities such as scavenger hunts etc.

Here are some comments from the young people who attend the activity days:

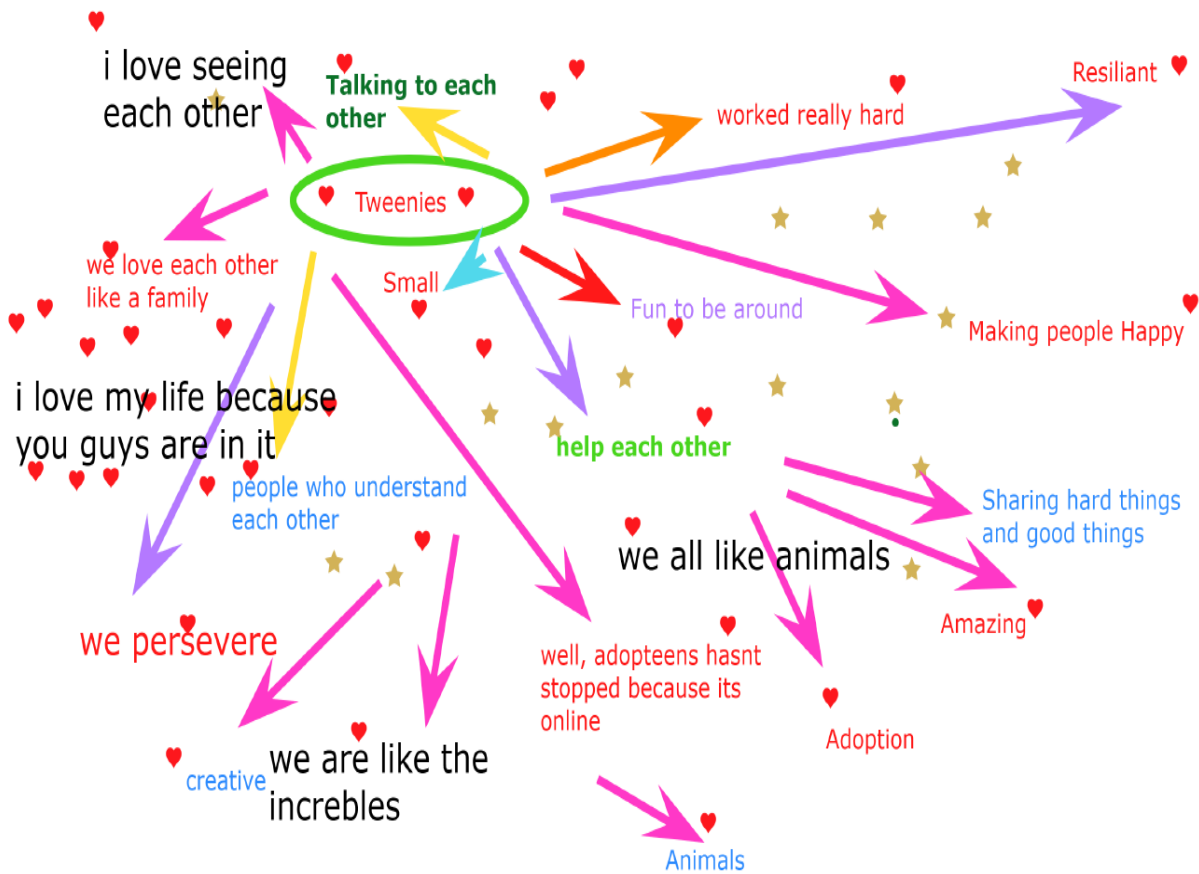
- *'I enjoyed seeing lots of people and it was fun to make the twig tree hanging. I love arts and crafts'.*
- *'It felt good even though I think it was my second activity day with adoptees. I am glad I have made some new friends especially on the chat forum on a Wednesday night'.*
- *'Adoptteens is a really helpful youth group'.*

Bradford Tweens Group has been running throughout lockdown each month on a Saturday via Zoom. There have been scavenger hunts, show and tell, art sessions, video bombing pets and lots of laughter. Here are some quotes from our latest questionnaire to our Tweenies:



- 'I like being able to talk to everyone and see how they are doing as sometimes I feel lonely with not being at school so good to see everyone. Love playing the games';
- 'Every week, I have enjoyed our sessions. Although, it's hard to see each other in person now, we still have fun via our Zoom meetings. Thank you!';
- 'When I am at tweenies on Saturdays, I enjoy it a lot because I love seeing all my friends. I am proud to be part of this wonderful group!'.

The group also worked on an activity to capture their thoughts on the Tween Group, please see below:



Seaglass Collective

Seaglass Collective has been developed with support from OAWY. Seaglass delivers stimulating and exciting arts projects exclusively for adopted children and young people across Yorkshire. Seaglass delivers projects where adopted children and young people can take part within an understanding and supportive environment. Here they can build their self-esteem, creativity, communication, imagination, sense of play and confidence.



Adopted young people have taken part in a youth theatre group, a dance group, a drama program, a song writing group, poetry and creative writing and an adoption choir.

'It gave me confidence and I was pleased mum and dad could see what I do- I am not just in my room messing with words- I am being creative and enjoyed the course. Cool'.

'We need more social opportunities for adopted children with trainers who understand attachment disorders and the emotional vulnerability of our wonderful but complex children. This is the first group that our son has managed to cope with outside of school and he has grown in confidence over the seven weeks'.

'Seaglass Collective provides access to the Creative Arts in an inclusive, fun, therapeutic and engaging way with tutors who just get our families. It's been a lifeline for us and has given our child so many tools to support his regulation and development. It's made life better having this to look forward to each week. We can't wait for the next group'.

'Online courses are so difficult to engage people and connect, but my daughter who struggles to communicate effectively loved the course and reminded me every week to log her on to the Sing Owt choir'.

'This was a superbly-run choir, totally accessible for my blended family of adopted and birth children. I appreciated how relaxed it was, how my children were made to feel included and valued whenever they chose to participate, and not admonished when they didn't!'

'It is great to have a choir for adopted children and their families, the experiences we families have are often unique. In this setting there is no need to explain or worry about tricky situations, it is also so beneficial for the children to meet and see each other'.

'It was beautifully run, couldn't have had a more engaging and friendly tutor who seemed to bring out the best in all the children. The routine and structure was perfect it allowed him to take ownership. The bedtime calming activities at the end were ideal as he is on sleep'.

medication, so again it fitted in perfectly between school and bed because of the consideration to the children's needs that went into it'.

'(Sing Owt!) has supported bedtime routine, has given a nice extra structure to a weekday routine and has been an opportunity for his growing confidence. It has been extra speech therapy and OT, with the warm ups and breathing. It has given us bonding time...I've actually sung some of these songs when he's been dysregulated and they've stopped a meltdown...he joins in and it's happy days again. We've been using toothbrushing songs etc before now but this really has shown how important music is for my child for structure, regulation and growth. And in this time of Covid it has been healing and a really positive experience'.

Talking Teenagers (commissioned from Deborah Stead Therapeutic Parenting) - is a parenting programme which considers the particular needs and challenges that come with parenting adopted teenagers. The programme runs over 4 evenings via Zoom and shares information from highly recognised authors and researchers alongside group discussion and learning on issues such as loss and separation, conflict and anger, teen identity and self-care. Here are some parent comments:



'It is not often that you are able to talk about your child's problems and behaviours and just to know that other people understand and empathise, without question. Thankyou.'

'It was made easier by not having to travel, or having to take time off work, we could eat and have a 'nice brew' whilst the training was going on'

Adoption UK - Festival of Families – In January we held a fantastic week-long festival of webinars for Adoption UK members, thanks to their partnership with One Adoption West Yorkshire. Here are some of the sessions that took place:

- FASD - an introduction and detailed insight to the condition;
- Preparing for Primary School with Julie Pocklington and Paula Walker;
- Looking at the map of recovery from complex trauma with Betsy de Thierry;

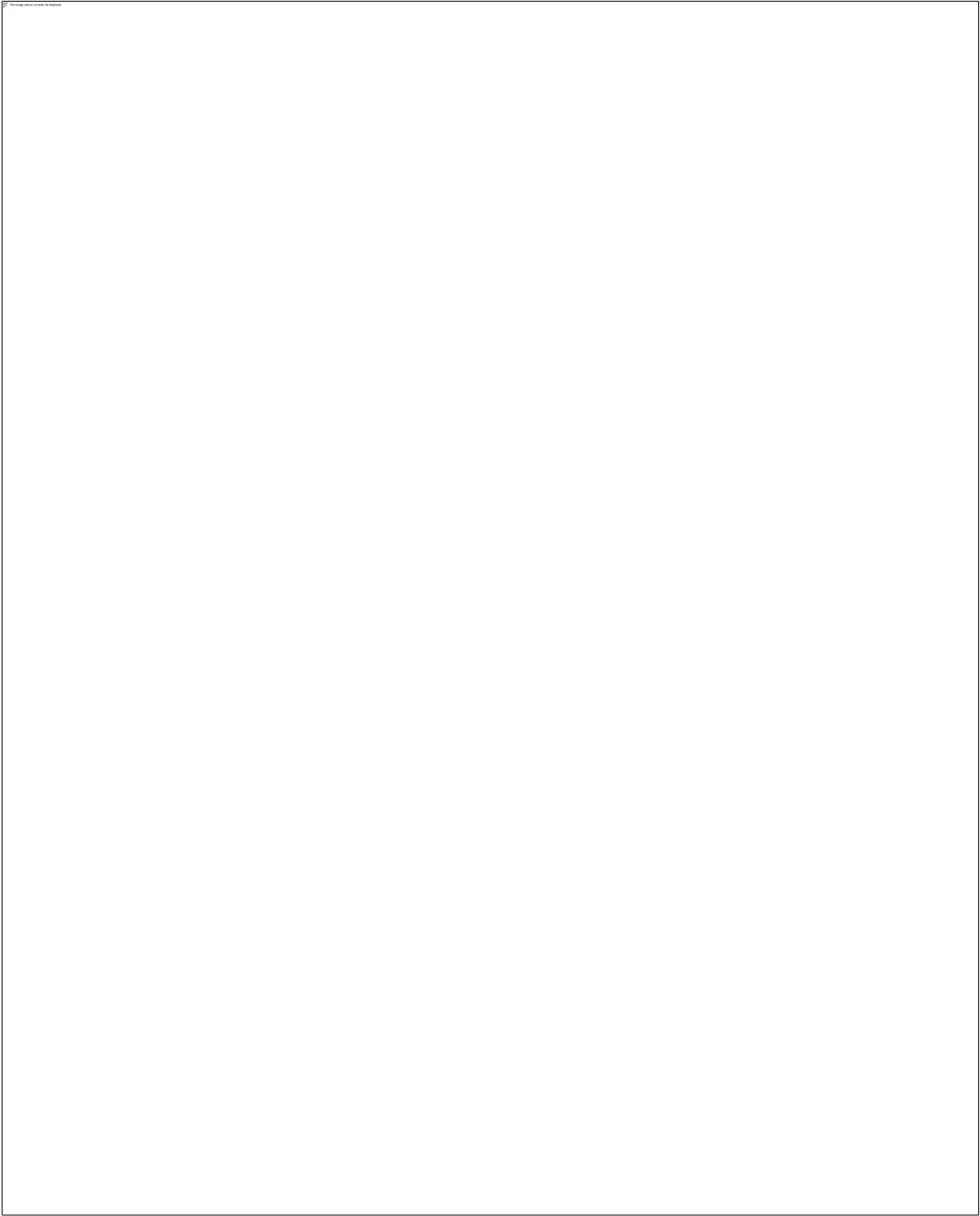
- DDP Principles and Practice: Relevance for Adoptive Families with Dan Hughes;
- Managing Meltdowns with Sarah Fisher;
- Parenting teens - the tricky years? With Rachel Gillett;
- Life Journey Work focus group with Philippa Williams.

This event enabled 97 adoptive families from across the region to access a range of online activities. As well as those listed above there was also magic, wild animals, wacky science gymnastics and arts for children. Here is comment from a parent whose son attended:

- *'I would like to tell you how much my son and I have enjoyed the 2 online events we have joined in. My child is 11 and not the most confident to speak up. We laughed, we joined in, we had fun together. It's made a real difference and has lifted our spirits.'*

Adoption Today is a magazine published by Adoption UK. In the latest additions it featured a piece written by Emily, a OAWY adopter giving positive feedback about her assessment experience during the last year, see below:





Best ideas - what next?

Newsletter for birth families – we will be co-developing a newsletter to send to birth families advising them of developments in One Adoption West Yorkshire. Part of the consideration will be how to ensure this is a 2-way conversation.



Support groups

We are developing 2 additional support groups. 1 for adoptive dads and 1 for parents involved in transracial adoption arrangements.

Support for older children

OAWY have recognised a gap in the support services for older adopted children. 2 sessional Youth Workers have now been recruited and their role will be to enhance the Teens and Tweens service across the region.



Adopteens

An **18 – 25 Therapeutic support group** is planned to start when it is safe to hold face to face meetings.



Train the trainer - The project applied to children in need for funding to develop a train the trainer program based on children's rights training (Total respect) and was successful. £30k over the next 3 years has been secured. The idea is that we will work with a group of Adoptees to develop a half to full day training event based around their experiences (looking at issues such as life story, identity, transitions/ contact) aimed at supporting social work practice , but with a scope to widen/ adapt this for education and health care workers. The aim will be that the core group of young people will go on to train other Adoptees in other regions so the initiative can grow.

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One Adoption West Yorkshire's plan 2021 – 2024

What we'll do...

How we'll do it...

Our vision

To be a flagship adoption agency that develops and promotes best practice, improving adoption standards nationally.

Our mission

To find loving families who can meet the needs of children and offer an innovative and supportive approach to all those affected by adoption.

4 outcomes

- 1 Children move in with their adoptive family without unnecessary delay.
- 2 Families get help and support at every stage of the adoption journey.
- 3 Children have good quality care, a good understanding of their identity, a sense of belonging and stability within their adoptive family.
- 4 Children, adoptive and birth parents and adopted adults feel they have a voice and influence.

7 priorities:

- 1 To meet the needs of the children we will recruit and assess a diverse range of adopters.
- 2 Work with local authorities and partners to: improve the early identification of children needing adoption; the use of early permanence and; to promote children remaining within or close to West Yorkshire.
- 3 To improve the timeliness, accessibility and flexibility of adoption support provision across in the region.
- 4 To implement a multi-disciplinary model of adoption support to help parents support their children and build strong relationships.
- 5 To collaborate with local authorities to improve the help and support for teenagers and young adults who are moving towards independence.
- 6 To achieve the Cultural Cohesion Quality Mark.
- 7 To work collaboratively with partners to Improve the flexibility, variety and quality of contact arrangements.



How we'll know if we've made a difference

Increased diversity of adopters approved and matched.	High level of family stability.	Improved outcomes from evidenced based evaluations.
Reduced timescale in which children move in with their adoptive family.	Positive service user feedback.	An increase in the frequency and type of contact between families.



Three behaviours which underpin everything:

1. Listening and responding to the voice of the child.
2. Using restorative practice: Doing with, not for, or to.
3. Using Outcomes Based Accountability: 'Is anyone better off?'

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Equality,

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration. In all appropriate instances we will need to carry out an equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessment.

This form:

- can be used to prompt discussion when carrying out your impact assessment
- should be completed either during the assessment process or following completion of the assessment
- should include a brief explanation where a section is not applicable

Directorate: Children & Families	Service area: One Adoption West Yorkshire
Lead person: Sarah Johal	Contact number: 07891277316
Date of the equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessment: January & February 2021	

1. Title: One Adoption West Yorkshire
Is this a:
<input type="checkbox"/> Strategy /Policy <input type="checkbox"/> Service / Function <input type="checkbox"/> Other
If other, please specify

2. Members of the assessment team:

Name	Organisation	Role on assessment team e.g. service user, manager of service, specialist
Sarah Johal	One Adoption West Yorkshire	Head of One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY)
Julie Chew	One Adoption West Yorkshire	Service Delivery Manager, OAWY
Michelle Rawlings	One Adoption West Yorkshire	Service Delivery Manager, OAWY
Suzanne Whiteley	One Adoption West Yorkshire	Service Delivery Manager, OAWY
Richard Stevenson	One Adoption West Yorkshire	Practice Improvement & Development Manager, One Adoption West Yorkshire

3. Summary of strategy, policy, service or function that was assessed:

In 'Regionalising adoption' in June 2015 the Government set out its commitment to markedly improve outcomes for children through the delivery of a regional adoption system where:

- children are matched with the most suitable adopter as quickly as possible;
- recruitment takes place at an efficient scale to provide a pool of 'adoption ready' adopters large enough and well enough matched to the needs of children waiting and;
- enough high quality adoption support services are available nationwide.

OAWY was the first Regional Adoption Agency to go-live on the 1st of April 2017. OAWY is made up of the 5 separate Local Authority adoption teams which provided adoption services for West Yorkshire; Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield and is the largest adoption agency in the North of England.

OAWY is designed to offer an innovative and adopter friendly approach to adoption recruitment, adoption support, and family finding for children and prospective adopters as well as high quality training.

By working together we will provide even higher levels of expertise and support to our adoptive families at all stages of the adoption process and with the inspiration and direction provided by our adoptive parents we will ensure that we provide the kind of support that families want and need.

We want every child to have a family to grow up in and we need more adoptive parents to play a vital role in fulfilling this vision. Adoption is an exciting and challenging experience for everyone involved. We are seeking adoptive parents from all walks of life to reflect the range of children we have who are looking for a secure home with patience, understanding and loving kindness.

This Assessment looks at how OAWY considers Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration throughout the adoption process. It will also highlight areas that need to be improved and the actions that will be taken to address them.

4. Scope of the equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessment
(complete - 4a. if you are assessing a strategy, policy or plan and 4b. if you are assessing a service, function or event)

4a. Strategy, policy or plan

(please tick the appropriate box below)

The vision and themes, objectives or outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>
The vision and themes, objectives or outcomes and the supporting guidance	<input type="checkbox"/>
A specific section within the strategy, policy or plan	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please provide detail:

4b. Service, function, event

please tick the appropriate box below	
The whole service (including service provision and employment)	<input type="checkbox"/>
A specific part of the service (including service provision or employment or a specific section of the service)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Procuring of a service (by contract or grant)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Please provide detail: This assessment will cover the three core elements of service delivery; Recruitment and Assessment, Family Finding and Adoption Support and the services users; the child/ adopted person, prospective adopters, adopters, birth parent and staff.</p>	

<p>5. Fact finding – what do we already know Make a note here of all information you will be using to carry out this assessment. This could include: previous consultation, involvement, research, results from perception surveys, equality monitoring and customer/ staff feedback.</p> <p>(priority should be given to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration related information)</p> <p>There are no restrictions to adoptive applicants regardless of age, religion/ belief/ faith, disability, gender, sexual orientation or race provided they are deemed able to meet the needs of the child/ children who have a plan for adoption.</p> <p>Children who wait longer to be adopted generally have one of more of the following characteristics; they are older (5+ years old), BME, have a disability or are part of a sibling group.</p>		
	Strengths	Weaknesses
Age	Age restrictions for people applying to adopt are flexible provided they meet all the relevant criteria and are able to meet the needs of the children with a plan for adoption.	There is a shortage of adopters for older children. The lack of placements could have a negative impact on this group as these children may be placed out of their local area which in turn may impact on their continued contact with their family and local support structures (see section 12, action 1 & 2).
Religion/ Belief / Faith	OAWY accepts adoption applicants of all religions/ beliefs/ faiths provided they meet all the relevant criteria and are able to meet the needs of the children with a plan for adoption. This ensures there is	There are not always adequate numbers of potential adopters or children to meet the religious/ belief/ faith needs of either party (see section 12, action 1 & 2).

	potential for a wide range of adopters recruited to meet the range of children needing placement.	
Disability	<p>Adopters with a disability are able to adopt. The services of the medical advisor are used to ensure decision making is always done to prevent discrimination, whilst ensuring the needs of the child are paramount.</p> <p>OAWY offers a range of key services virtually (i.e. information events, training and support) throughout the adoption journey. This means people who may struggle or be unable to travel to events still have access.</p>	<p>Potentially some adoptive applicants with a disability may view this as negatively impacting upon their right to adopt. For example, the issue of mental health or a life limiting health issue/ disability can be a limiting factor when deciding someone is suitable to adopt a child. However, the needs of the children to have stability and care throughout their childhood must remain the primary focus and therefore some applicants may feel they have been discriminated against.</p> <p>Some children, because of their complex needs, often wait longer for permanent placements. There is a need for more Adopters to offer a permanent home for disabled children. In particular children on the Autistic spectrum are particularly hard to place and consideration needs to be given to recruiting and supporting adopters who have the skills to look after these children (see section 12, action 1 & 2).</p>
Gender	<p>Gender identity does not impact a person's ability to adopt provided they meet all the relevant criteria and are able to meet the needs of the children with a plan for adoption.</p>	<p>Single adopters at times are not aware they can adopt on their own and applicants from single males are few. However, our marketing does make clear it is not an issue (No action required).</p> <p>Although there are no gender considerations in recruiting Adopters and the service operates according to our own anti-discriminatory practice the main carer within the household within adoption is often female. A negative impact of this may be that there is a potential for male adopters (Dads) to feel isolated and in these instances they should be encouraged to attend support groups (see section 12, action 3).</p> <p>Of all the diversity strands OAWY has the least knowledge and experience in working with trans people. Staff training and development needs to be undertaken to ensure trans people</p>

		who wish to adopt have fair access to the process and feel confident to adopt and that we can support trans adopters and/ or adoptees (see section 12, action 4).
Sexual Orientation	<p>OAWY recruitment procedures are anti-discriminatory and welcome applicants who are LGBT+ provided they meet all the relevant criteria and are able to meet the needs of the children with a plan for adoption.</p> <p>The assessment process for adopters conforms to the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (Coram BAAF) guidance.</p> <p>Some OAWY social workers have been trained in assessing gay and lesbian adopters.</p> <p>OAWY attends regional Pride events annually to promote adoption.</p>	<p>OAWY are successful in recruiting gay and lesbian adopters however there may still be perceived barriers for this group. OAWY's marketing continues to promote adoption to members of the LGBT+ community and actively supports LGBT+ national events and campaigns (see section 12, action 5).</p>
Race	<p>Adopters from any racial background are recruited by OAWY, provided they meet all the relevant criteria and are able to meet the needs of the children with a plan for adoption.</p>	<p>Recruiting adopters for children from non-white British backgrounds particularly children with mixed heritage remains a challenge. Resources are available to purchase appropriate adoptive placements for children and we have a growing number of out of authority placements that reflect this (see section 12, action 1 & 2).</p> <p>The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement has led to OAWY forming a BLM working group and action plan. This plan includes actions on access to services and support, training for adopters and staff, recruitment and representation (see section 12, action 6 and Appendix B).</p>
<p>Are there any gaps in equality and diversity information Please provide detail:</p> <p>N/A.</p>		
<p>Action required:</p> <p>See section 12.</p>		

6. Wider involvement – have you involved groups of people who are most likely to be affected or interested

Yes

No

Please provide detail:

Sent to Adoption UK, New Family Social and PAC-UK for feedback 26/02/2021. No feedback received 25/03/2021.

Action required:

N/A

7. Who may be affected by this activity?

please tick all relevant and significant equality characteristics, stakeholders and barriers that apply to your strategy, policy, service or function

Equality characteristics

Age

Carers

Disability

Gender reassignment

Race

**Religion
or Belief**

Sex (male or female)

Sexual orientation

Other

(**Other** can include – marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, and those areas that impact on or relate to equality: tackling poverty and improving health and well-being)

Please specify: n/a

Stakeholders

Services users

Employees

Trade Unions

Partners

Members

Suppliers

Other please specify

Potential barriers.

Built environment		Location of premises and services	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Information and communication	<input type="checkbox"/>	Customer care
<input type="checkbox"/>	Timing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Stereotypes and assumptions
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cost	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Consultation and involvement
<input type="checkbox"/>	Financial exclusion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Employment and training
<input type="checkbox"/>	specific barriers to the strategy, policy, services or function		

Please specify

The above are noted as potential barriers but are not known to be. Action 4, section 12 will seek to evidence if there are any such barriers which OAWY will then plan to address.

8. Positive and negative impact
 Think about what you are assessing (scope), the fact finding information, the potential positive and negative impact on equality characteristics, stakeholders and the effect of the barriers

8a. Positive impact:

Recruitment & Assessment of Adopters

1. The OAWY website signposts prospective adopters to Information Events which are held virtually. Events being held virtually means that prospective adopters don't have any issues with the access limitations some building and locations may have.
2. OAWY accepts and actively recruit adopters regardless of age, religion/ belief/ faith, disability, gender, sexual orientation or race provided that they are deemed to be able to meet the needs of the child/ children who have a plan for adoption.
3. The service focuses on effective partnership working to continue the improvement of services to children affected by adoption irrespective of age, religion/ belief/ faith, disability, gender, sexual orientation or race. Our website uses positive images to promote our approach to equality within our advertising, see Appendix A.
4. OAWY have approved a diverse range of adopters, including same sex couples and single people. We have undertaken specific LGBT+ recruitment for adoptive families.
5. Adopter preparation events are held at virtually or at venues which can meet the needs of adopters with a disability.

Family Finding for Children

6. Profiling Events, which are aimed at approved adopters and adopters in assessment, are held virtually making them accessible to both internal and external adopters. This enables people to obtain information early about the reality of the children OAWY are seeking to place.
7. Fun days (post Covid-19) will be held in an accessible and child friendly locations – taking place at least 4 times per year aimed at approved adopters and adopters in assessment. Fun days allow a focused event for children who are deemed harder to place, typically older (5+ years old), BME, have a disability or are part of a sibling group. These events are designed to give children a greater chance of a timely match.
8. OAWY has a robust approach to ensuring that children’s religious and cultural needs are met through effective matching meetings identifying need and support plans.
9. OAWY seeks to identify and meet any additional support needs adopters may have in order to care for children from different ethnic, cultural and religious groups and children with disabilities.
10. OAWY uses Link Maker to identify placements for those children who wait longer.
11. OAWY attends national exchange days and activity days (when they are held). These events allow OAWY to identify adopters who can meet the specific needs of the child with a plan for adoption.

Adoption Support

12. OAWY provides generic support services to all affected by adoption (birth relations, adopters and adoptees).
13. Adoption Support Assessments are based upon the individual needs of the person/people.
14. Initial advice and information is free and the majority of services are free to access.
15. Adoption Support is provided via a range of accessible means;

Adopters

16. Adopter Voice are an adopter led group that work with OAWY to ‘challenge, support and input into the development of adoption services at local, regional and national levels so that they are adopter led’. Adopter Voice is available to all adopters and encourages adopters to become involved and/ or access support on-line.
17. A Peer Mentor service is available to OAWY adopters.
18. Adoption UK provides an arena for all adopters to access information and advice - <https://www.adoptionuk.org/>
19. We are members of New Family social, a LGBT+ group who offer specific support

to the LGBT+ community of adopters. There are support groups across the region for single adopters.

Birth Parent Groups

20. OAWY work with PAC-UK (the country's largest independent Adoption Support Agency) to learn from feedback from birth parents - <http://www.pac-uk.org/>

Adopted Teens

21. OAWY work with ADOPTTEENS (adopted teens identity) to learn from feedback from adopted teenagers. ADOPTTEENS is a project that was originally set up by the Yorkshire & Humber adoption consortium (a group of local authority adoption teams and voluntary adoption agencies) back in 2014. Their vision is to offer adopted teenagers their own space online and as part of a group that has the power to speak out and make a difference! - <https://www.adopteens.org.uk/>

22. OAWY also runs its own Teens groups. There are (post Covid-19) 3 regional groups that monthly. Attendees for these group are identified following work in-house.

Tweens (9 to 12 years old)

23. OAWY runs a range of Tween support groups aimed at children aged 9 to 12 years.

Staffing

24. Social workers are trained regarding equality and diversity issues in their degree in social work.

25. All staff events are held at least twice a year which often have a training element to them i.e. unconscious bias, cultural awareness/ understanding, BLM;

Specialist Advice

26. We commission a service for Inter Country Adoption from the Yorkshire adoption agency. All inter country adopters attend specialist training specific to adopting from overseas provided by this agency.

Action required:

See section 12.

8b. Negative impact:

Recruitment and Assessment of Adopters

1. There are insufficient adopters with a diverse background coming forward to adopt (see section 12, action 1 & 2).
2. OAWY have a high level of interest from the south Asian communities to adopt full Asian babies rather than older children of mixed ethnicity (see section 12, action 2).

*Please note: Work has been undertaken with My Adoption Family to ensure that the messaging around adoption is clear regarding the needs of children waiting in England for adoption. Asking adopters to consider children of mixed heritage and older children and sibling groups is a key priority when working with the faith and community organisations to ensure that those coming forward are clear about the need for the service to prioritise those who can consider a range of children.

Family Finding for Children

3. There can be unconscious bias from Children's Social Workers regarding considering single females and males for sibling groups they have waiting (see section 12, action 7).
4. There is a lack of awareness towards adopters who are Trans (see section 12, action 4).
5. Children cannot always be matched with families that meet their own cultural heritage and social workers are not always willing to consider families with a different heritage from the child's (see section 12, action 1, 2, 6 and 7).

Adoption Support

6. We are aware of some gaps in support group provision for fathers and transracial adoptive families (see section 12, action 3 & 7).
7. The feedback from 2020 adopter survey highlighted a need for more flexibility in the training and support we offer in terms of timings and day delivered. This would improve access for full-time parents and/ or working parents (see section 12, action 9).

Staffing

8. Interview panels are not always diverse (see section 12, action 10).

Training

9. Of all the diversity stands Trans is the area we have the least knowledge of, training is needed in this area. This is so that we can properly assess and support Trans adopters as well as young adopted people (see section 12, action 4).

Action Required

See section 12.

9. Will this activity promote strong and positive relationships between the groups/communities identified?

Yes

No

Please provide detail:

OAWY will always work to build and maintain positive and open relationships for people aiming to or being involved in the adoption process.

Action required:

None.

10. Does this activity bring groups/communities into increased contact with each other? (e.g. in schools, neighbourhood, workplace)

Yes

No

Please provide detail:

Action required:

None.

11. Could this activity be perceived as benefiting one group at the expense of another? (e.g. where your activity/decision is aimed at adults could it have an impact on children and young people)

Yes

No

Please provide detail:

There could be the perception that certain groups are less likely to adopt than others. OAWY will always promote that this is not the case. The primary focus of OAWY will always be the child. The decision to place a child will be based upon the individual's ability to meet the child's ongoing needs and not based upon any of their diversity characteristics.

Action required:

None.

12. Equality, diversity, cohesion and integration action plan

(insert all your actions from your assessment here, set timescales, measures and identify a lead person for each action)

Action	Timescale	Measure	Lead person
Action 1 - Develop an innovative & bespoke family finding/ matching process for children who wait longer. *Project underway, started 2019/20.	31/03/2022	A new approach to reduce waiting time for children who wait longer piloted.	Suzanne Whiteley
Action 2 – Recruit and assess a diverse range of adopters to meet the needs of the children.	31/03/2022	Improved wait times for children from diverse backgrounds.	Michelle Rawlings
Action 3 – Implement support groups for Dads.	31/03/2022	Established support groups running regularly.	Julie Chew
Action 4 – Staff to be trained to improve their awareness and understanding of trans people.	31/03/2022	Training delivered to staff.	SLT
Action 5 – OAWY to attend regional Pride events to promote adoption to the LGBT+ community.	31/03/2022	OAWY have attended all regional (West Yorkshire) events.	Michelle Rawlings
Action 6 – Implement Black Lives Matter action plan, see Appendix B.	31/03/2022	BLM action plan actions created, assigned and monitored.	BLM working group
Action 7 – Identify and deliver appropriate training on unconscious bias for OAWY staff and children’s social workers.	31/03/2022	Training delivered to staff.	SLT
Action 8 – Implement transracial adoption support group.	31/03/2022	Established support groups running regularly.	Julie Chew

Action 9 – Review existing support and training offer and identify which can be made more accessible in terms of times/ days delivered.	31/03/2022	Support/ training offered with a wider variety of times/ days.	Julie Chew
Action 10 – Improve the diversity of our interview panels when possible.	31/03/2022	Need for diverse interview panels communicated to relevant staff and monitored via quarterly SIP reporting.	All staff who lead interviews

***please note above actions are added to the OAWY Strategic SIP**

13. Governance, ownership and approval

State here who has approved the actions and outcomes from the equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessment

Name	Job Title	Date
Sarah Johal	Head of OAWY	TBC
Date impact assessment completed		

14. Monitoring progress for equality, diversity, cohesion and integration actions (please tick)

- As part of Service Planning performance monitoring
- As part of Project monitoring
- Update report will be agreed and provided to the appropriate board
Please specify which board
- Other (please specify)

15. Publishing

Though **all** key decisions are required to give due regard to equality the council **only** publishes those related to **Executive Board, Full Council, Key Delegated Decisions** or a **Significant Operational Decision**.

A copy of this equality impact assessment should be attached as an appendix to the decision making report:

- Governance Services will publish those relating to Executive Board and Full Council.
- The appropriate directorate will publish those relating to Delegated Decisions and Significant Operational Decisions.
- A copy of all other equality impact assessments that are not to be published should be sent to equalityteam@leeds.gov.uk for record.

Complete the appropriate section below with the date the report and attached assessment was sent:

For Executive Board or Full Council – sent to Governance Services	Date sent: TBC
For Delegated Decisions or Significant Operational Decisions – sent to appropriate Directorate	Date sent: TBC
All other decisions – sent to equalityteam@leeds.gov.uk	Date sent: TBC



Who can adopt



Steps to adoption



The children



Events



Support



About One Adoption



Information and support for first parents and relatives



Information for people who have been adopted



Partner or step parent adoption

Children from African, Caribbean, mixed ethnicity and Gypsy Roma backgrounds

In the West Yorkshire area especially we have a shortage of prospective adopters coming forward who can meet the needs of children from African, Caribbean, mixed ethnicity and Gypsy Roma backgrounds. If you are considering adoption and feel you can meet the needs of these children, please get in touch.



Children with unknown health needs or additional needs

All children need secure and loving homes. We are looking for adopters willing to help meet the needs of children with additional health needs or disabilities. Sometimes we do not know what the likely health or developmental outcomes may be for a child, for example if they have a chromosome abnormality. We need adopters who are willing to accept and understand these uncertainties and help the child develop and succeed at their own pace. With the right support and training, we aim to help every child reach their full potential.



Black Lives Matter 2021/22 ACTION PLAN

Outcomes

1. Black children’s life chances are as good as any other child's
2. Black adopters have a positive experience throughout the adoption journey
3. A culturally literate organisation able to support a diverse range of families

Action No.	Source	Specific Action	Measurable outcome/ Impact	Lead Person(s)	Planned Start Date	Due Date	Milestones	Milestone Due Date	Status	Update/ comments
1	Outcome 1	Increase the number/ proportion of black adopters	An increase in the number/ proportion of black adopters; Black children's wait time to match that of other children.	MR	01/04/2021	31/03/2022	1) RS - Obtain the data on total number of adopters approved and proportion of which were black for the last 3 years; 2) Deliver Adoption events focused directly to the black community supported by staff who reflect that community; 3) RS - Obtain the data on total number of adopters approved 2021/22 and the proportion of which were black to measure the impact.	31/04/2021 31/03/2022 31/03/2022	In development	
2	Outcome 1	Provide cultural awareness training to prospective adopters	An increase in the number of adopters able to adopt black children; Black children's wait time to match that of other children.	MR	01/04/2021	31/03/2022	1) Identify training options, present to BLM working group for discussion & decide on best option; 2) Deliver training through the year and survey attendees; 3) Analyse survey results to see impact and use results to tweak training as required.	31/07/2021 31/03/2022 31/03/2022	In development	

3	Outcome 2	Establish specific support/ support group for BAME adopters	Support group set-up and run throughout the year. Positive feedback from attendees.	JC	01/04/2021	31/03/2021	1) Contact adopters via the newsletter to see if there is a demand for a BAME group (if no close action, if yes see milestone 2); 2) Determine date, time & format of initial meeting. Schedule for remainder of 2021/22 accordingly; 3) Review success of support/ support groups (seek feedback from attendees) and plan for 2022/23.	31/05/2021 30/06/2021 31/03/2022	In development	Support group and training for transcultural adoption - already established.
4	Outcome 2 Outcome 3	Education of staff - deliver training around cultural awareness, white privilege and discrimination	Staff have attended training events and improved awareness; Improved experience for adopters.	TBC	01/04/2021	31/03/2022	1) Identify training options, present to BLM working group for discussion & decide on best option; 2) Book training course(s) for identified staff; 3) Review feedback from training - what difference has it made?	31/06/2021 TBC 31/03/2022	In development	
5	Outcome 3	Establish group for BAME members of staff	Group set-up and impact viewed as positive by attendees	VS	01/04/2021	31/03/2022	1) Contact staff via the newsletter to see if there is a demand for a BAME group (if no close action, if yes see milestone 2); 2) Determine date, time & format of initial meeting. Schedule for remainder of 2021/22 accordingly; 3) Review success of support/ support groups (seek feedback from attendees) and plan for 2022/23.	31/06/2021 31/09/2021 31/03/2022	In development	
6	Objective 3	Create a safe environment for staff to discuss ethnicity, culture and race, able to challenge views, discuss racism and bias with permission to make mistakes	A range of contacts and resources available for OAWY staff to access.	TBC	01/04/2021	31/07/2021	1) Identify staff within OAWY who would be happy and able to offer cultural support/ advice to other workers; 2) Identify gaps within our cultural knowledge and solutions to fill them; 3) Create area (LCC cultural profiles link to this) so staff can access info on cultural profile. and communicate to staff who the contacts are and where resources can be found.	31/04/2021 31/05/2021 31/07/2021	In development	
7	Objective 3	OAWY to have a presence on the social care Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES).	The new model aims to tackle discrimination and inequalities faced by Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) social	SJ	01/04/2021	31/03/2021	1) OAWY lead identified and joined the group; 2) Feedback provided to staff throughout the year.	31/04/2021 31/03/2022	In development	

			care practitioners in the workplace.						
8	Outcome 1 Outcome 2	Monitor and report timescales for black children and adopters and compare with other ethnicities	A 6 monthly report that shows local, and where possible national, data/ trends	RS	01/04/2021	31/03/2022	1) Obtain data on current timescales and attainment levels regionally and nationally; 2) Produce 6 monthly report and present to BLM working group and consider actions; 3) Produce 6 monthly report and present to BLM working group and consider actions.	31/04/2021 30/09/2021 31/03/2022	In development

KEY	
Complete	Action complete.
On target	Action on target for completion by due date (though milestones may have slipped).
Off target	Action not completed or at risk of not being completed by due date.
Cancelled	Action cancelled.



Report author: Sarah Johal

Tel: 0113 2783623

Report of Director of Children and Families

Report to West Yorkshire Adoption Joint Committee

Date: 23rd September 2021

Subject: Head of Service Report

Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	X No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number:	X No

Summary of main issues

1. This report is a brief report and provides a summary from the Head of Service on the developments of the service since the annual report was completed in May 2021.

Recommendations

1. The Joint Committee is requested to:
 - a) Note the progress of the agency; and
 - b) Support the progression of these arrangements.

1.	Use of Resources
1.1	<u>Staffing & HR</u>
1.1.1	Staffing is largely stable with a number of new staff joining the last year. The Head of Service is moving onto a new role in September on a secondment basis for an initial period of one year. Michelle Rawlings has been appointed to cover this position from the 16 th September. Michelle is moving from being a service manager within OAWY and Rhian Beynon is going to be moving to cover Michelle's role.
1.1.2	Following discussion at the last management board, OAWY have recruited to the permanent and temporary family finding positions and they are expected to join the service in September. Recruitment is underway for the letterbox team given some recent changes.
1.2	<u>Adoption Panel</u>
1.2.1	Panels continue to be busy and there are increasing pressures during the summer months due to social worker and foster carer plans for leave. We have recently recruited two new panel chairs: Michaela Bass and Bridget Puddepha who have taken up post this week. The panel protocols are in the process of being reviewed and we are developing our guidance for new panel members in recognition of the challenge of joining panels remotely. Coffee and Catch up meetings have also been arranged for panel members to allow them chance to meet socially and ask and questions they might have in response to feedback that this has been lost from the virtual panels. From August adopter approvals at panel will include a question from an adopted child; the questions have been devised by our Tween Group.
1.2.2	After lengthy discussions with the provider and health commissioners in Wakefield they have now agreed a permanent medical advisor to cover for the additional panel.
1.2.3	<u>Budget</u> The budget at the end of period 4 is currently projecting a pressure of £75K. This is due to a reduced income from the Adoption Support Fund and Interagency Income. Despite reducing the income levels last year this remains problematic and is largely due to the pandemic and impact of direct work only just restarting and families not been matched with children from outside West Yorkshire as they are being used for children within the region. However, an action plan is in place with savings identified from other budget lines with regards to travel and expenses and settling in grants in order to ensure that the budget comes in as agreed.

1.2.4	The recent discussions with the trade unions regarding the pay award that are underway will cause additional pressure and local authorities are aware of the need to address this in line with the partnership agreement.
1.2.5	There are a number of staffing pressures across family finding discussed with the management board which may create pressures in the staffing budget and a number of staff in the adoption support teams about to go on maternity leave which causes additional pressures as positions need to be covered to ensure an essential service can be provided.
2	Partnership working
2.1	The variation to the partnership agreement for the changes to the funding formula has been agreed by all local authorities and arrangements are in train with legal services for this to be formally signed and completed.
2.1.2	The partnership agreement has been in place for almost 5 years and a mid way review point has been reached. I have been in contact with Directors of each local authority to provide their agreement for the continuation of the partnership agreement for a further 5 years. Agreement has been received to date from Calderdale, Wakefield and Bradford and I have followed up with Leeds and Kirklees. Once agreed then Leeds legal department will discuss with other legal advisors any amendments to the agreement necessary for completion of the review and continuance of the arrangement for another 5 years until the term of the agreement is reached.
2.2	Performance Management
2.2.1	The first quarter report is attached at Appendix 1
3.	Practice, quality of provision and management oversight
3.1	<i>Recruitment and Assessment</i>
3.1.1	Planned changes to the recruitment and assessment service structure have been made, with a new stage one team having been in place from 1st April. The initial review has highlighted that while the change has been challenging for some of the adoption advisors, they are positive about the change and are feeling more valued as a result.
3.1.2	The numbers of adopters entering the process increased last year and more recently we have seen a reduction right across Yorkshire and Humberside. Marketing activity has been stepped up to ensure that we get a good number of enquiries coming through. This may be due to

	<p>uncertainties given job security now that furlough arrangements are reducing.</p> <p>The Adoption Passport, a new service developed by adopters for prospective adopters to provide a varied array of webinars and training and increased level of preparation for adopters has been included as part of the preparation training for adopters. This gives adopters a safe space to meet with other adopters as well as providing support and resources regarding a wide range of issues. This is excellent value for money and came about from trialling this approach during the pandemic with the Covid ASF funds.</p>
3.1.3	
3.2	Family Finding
3.2.1	<p>The teams delivered a pre-recorded virtual sibling event on the weekend of 21 – 24 May (with the event running from 4pm on Friday 21 May until 9am on 24 May). 12 children (6 sets of sibling groups) were profiled, 51 adoptive families registered to attend the event and following the event 7 expressions of interest were submitted for 4 groups of siblings. Following the exploration of the expressions of interest 2 sibling groups had positive linking meetings and the matches have been booked into panel. Feedback from adopters, family finders and adoption social workers following the event was positive.</p>
3.2.2	<p>Adopters said : <i>“We are really pleased that we attended the event. We've attended some in person events recently, and they can be quite overwhelming, especially with the current covid safe way of running them, so being able to go through the video profiles at our own pace and being able to re-watch them was, a much calmer and more organised way of attending a profiling event...we didn't feel rushed and could engage with only the profiles of children who we think we are suitable for”</i></p>
3.3.3	<p>Given the positive feedback we have continued to use this format of profiling events and presented our second pre-recorded profiling event the weekend of 16 – 19 July. 23 children were profiled (including 8 sets of siblings). 81 adoptive households registered for the event, as well as 16 adoption social workers. Initial expressions of interest have been received, on Monday 19 July 9 expressions were received in relation to 3 children.</p>
3.3.4	<p>The contract with the VAA's has been utilised well over the last year and Suzanne Whiteley, service manager lead for family finding has completed a review of the profile of children where external placements have been agreed. This was presented to the management board for discussion and oversight.</p>
3.4	Adoption Support
3.4.1	<p>The Adoption Support service has continued to be busy and requests for a service from us remain high, with all 4 of the teams having a waiting list (of varying sizes) of families waiting for an allocated social work</p>

<p>3.4.2</p> <p>3.4.3</p> <p>3.4.4</p> <p>3.4.5</p> <p>3.4.6</p>	<p>service from us. Overall, there has been stability in the staff group in adoption support, although a number of workers will be taking maternity leave in the autumn and this will seriously impact the service. Whilst previously cover has generally been managed and agreed where necessary within existing budgets, the pressures this year on the budget will need to be considered and can be discussed in more detail.</p> <p>There has been an ongoing and specific issue regarding capacity within the adoption support service and specifically regarding the team based in Leeds. This is with regard to long term sickness in the team, a long waiting list and now exacerbated by two members of staff about to go on maternity leave at the same time within the team. The management board are aware of the issue and discussions are ongoing about how we address these issues.</p> <p>Social workers are working more of a hybrid model with families, undertaking some face to face visits where it is assessed there is a need to visit and it is safe to do so, but working remotely on all other occasions. The team managers have worked really hard at creating opportunities for them and their teams to meet up out doors when they have been able to do so.</p> <p>Triage pilot – in May we commenced a pilot in the Leeds Adoption Support team involving a specific worker undertaking a ‘Triage’ role with enquiries coming across from duty and also those families who are currently waiting for an allocated social worker. This pilot will be evaluated in Autumn but early indicators are that it is proving useful for families waiting to have a ‘keep in touch’ call from the worker; also some advice or signposting to other services by the worker is proving useful to hold families in the meantime; finally, there are some ‘one off’ tasks that have been able to be completed by the worker thus meaning the family don’t need to be allocated.</p> <p>Training and workshops – we have been able to successfully deliver an NVR (Non-violent resistance) training course for parents via Zoom and also a Talking Teens programme (also delivered remotely) has been commissioned and delivered. There are plans for more of both programmes to be offered later in the year. Both are funded via the ASF (Adoption Support Fund). We have continued to deliver workshops remotely, namely around education and brain-based parenting.</p> <p>Support groups – the general Adopters’ support group has continued to run online on a monthly basis. We have been able to move the single adopters’ support group to a hybrid model with an online meeting once a month and actual meet-ups with children twice a year. I am pleased to report that we have also launched our dads’ support group – also run online once a month; this is aimed at any dads or father figures who are involved in adoption. Our stay and play groups are again up and running face-to-face, although not all are yet back inside a building.</p>
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3.5	<p><u>Commissioned Services</u></p> <p>The Approved Providers list for therapeutic support is in the process of being reviewed with a revised new date for a new framework for April 2022. North Yorkshire County Council take a lead on the procurement for this.</p> <p>The Peer mentoring contract has been awarded with Adoption UK being awarded the new contract. OAWY is contract managing this contract and North and South Yorkshire will be charged for this contract management.</p> <p>The contract for adult work, birth parent work and voice and influence work with adopters is due to be extended for 1 year in March 2022.</p>
4.	<p>Special Guardianship</p> <p>4.1.1 The management board held a workshop on the 21st April regarding Special Guardianship listening to those with lived experience in the region and to meet with officers to discuss the priorities for the development and improvement in service delivery across the region. The majority of this work is carried out within the local areas by the local authorities. However, it was felt that there are some areas where it may make sense to collaborate and to join resources and to provide some things across the West Yorkshire region. This follows on from the successful contract with Kinship to deliver services across the region and the implementation of the support plan being used by all 5 local authorities as well as the development work regarding the improved financial support and work on the regional approach to financial assessment of adopters and special guardians. The notes from the workshop are attached at Appendix 2</p> <p>4.1.2 Calderdale, Leeds and Kirklees Cabinets have now formally agreed the implementation of the regional support provision for adopters and special guardians and the revisions made to the financial assessment tool. Bradford are supportive of this in principal but other priorities are taking precedent at the moment. Wakefield were taking advice regarding the regional approach at the last board meeting and were assessing any implications for their local authority.</p> <p>4.1.3 Nationally, the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board are asking for good practice examples across the country regarding financial support to special guardians and the work across the three local authorities who have implemented the changes are seen as extremely positive and shared as a pioneering example across the country.</p> <p>4.1.4 The commissioned service with Grandparents Plus is due for re-procurement at the end of March 2022. The service is very much valued by special guardians in the region and the project workers have worked hard with each LA to develop the offer and the voice and influence of SG's in the region.</p>

5	<p><u>Accommodation</u></p> <p>Given the relaxation of lock down we are looking at a rota for staff to return to the office in hybrid manner with continued working from home for part of the week. Discussions are being progressed with the relevant asset manager in each area to determine suitable meeting spaces and accommodation as this is a key challenge for the agency. There is no identified space for teams to come together in Kirklees or Calderdale at the present time and accommodation and appropriate rooms for direct work with families (free of charge) is an issue we are discussing with local authorities and CAMHS services to try and resolve and gain access to.</p>
6	<p><u>Staff development and service Improvement</u></p> <p>An all staff event was held at the end of June with 114 staff in attendance. The focus of the day was to bring people together to update each other on the different developments in the services. Work was also undertaken in teams regarding the work we are progressing regarding the cultural cohesion quality mark (CCQM). This followed on from last year's staff event regarding Black lives matter. We have now completed Phase 1 (Foundation) and have moved to Phase 2 (Developing) with access to a wide range of online resources via the CCQM website and all staff and managers are building in some time over the next year within team meetings to further their understanding and knowledge regarding these issues.</p> <p>During the last 18 months the training and development of staff has been on hold. Over the next year we have agreed a focus on gender variation training, theraplay and Dyadic Development Psychotherapy in order to better work with families across the region and ensure that staff are skilled in working with the children and families to promote improved relationships and understanding of the impact of trauma.</p>

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One
Adoption
Agency
WEST YORKSHIRE

One Adoption West Yorkshire Quarterly performance report

Page 83

**2021 – 2022
April to June**

Introduction/summary

This is the first quarter report for 2021-22, providing an update on One Adoption West Yorkshire.

This report is based in the premise of how much work has been undertaken in the period, how well and what difference has it made. The report is a simple and concise report, with detailed tables in appendix. The report contains a number of tables and charts.

Children

This section of the report provides headline figures relating to children and young people at various stages of the adoption process within West Yorkshire. Greater detail, including a breakdown by the five local authorities, is contained within the graphs on the following page and Appendix one. The figures in bold are for the current quarter and those in brackets are for the same quarter of the previous year.

How much did we do?	How well did we do it?
<p>During the quarter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 357 (274) children left care, 40 (21) were adopted <i>During 2020/21 157 children were adopted, average 39 per quarter</i> • 59 (47) children had an ADM decision made <i>During 2020/21 207 children had ADM decision made, average 51 per quarter</i> • 49 (32) placement orders were granted <i>During 2020/21 179 placement orders were granted, average 45 per quarter</i> • 48 (32) children were matched to an adoptive family – 8 (7 inter agency placements 17% (22%)) <i>During 2020/21 183 children were matched, average 46 per quarter</i> • 47 (36) children were placed with an adoptive family <i>During 2020/21 184 children were placed, average 46 per quarter</i> • 2 (8) children with new EPP decision <i>During 2020/21 21 children had a new EPP decision, average 4 per quarter</i> • 2 (5) children in new EPP (placed in EPP) <i>During 2020/21 19 children were placed in new EPP, average 4 per quarter</i> • 6 (11) Children had a change of plan away from adoption – see Appendix One, Table A5a for reasons <i>During 2020/21 56 children had a change of plan away from adoption, average 14 per quarter</i> • 4 (0) Child had an adoption disruption <i>During 2020/21 2 children had an adoption disruption, average 0.5 per quarter</i> 	<p>How well did we do it?</p> <p>For the 40 (21) children who were adopted during quarter 1 2021/22, it took an average of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 519 (486) days between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family - A1 indicator (National Indicator is 426 days) • 501 days between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family – adjusted for those adopted by their foster carers – A10 indicator • 228 (220) days between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family (National indicator is 121 days) (England average is 178) • 16 (11) were placed within 426 days of entering care, this is 40% (52%) • 10 (5) were matched within 121 days, this is 25% (24%) <hr/> <p>For the 47 (36) children who were placed during quarter 1 2021/22, it took an average of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 551 (566) days between a child entering care and moving in with their adopter family – A1 indicator • 551 days between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family – adjusted for those adopted by their foster carers – A10 indicator • 206 (282) days between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family • 20 (15) were placed within 426 days of entering care, this is 43% (42%) • 16 (7) were matched within 121 days, this is 34% (19%) • 11% (8%) of children leaving care were adopted, (England average is 12%)

How much did we do?

At the end of the quarter

- **192** (209) children have an ADM decision but not yet matched
- **205** (223) children have an ADM decision but are not yet placed
- **140** (155) children have a placement order but are not yet placed. Of these, **64** (71) have been waiting for at least 18 months since entering care. **73** (119) children have been waiting more than 121 days since the placement order was made
- **42** (15) children with an ADM decision have a potential match identified, of which 25 have a match panel booked and 3 of the 42 children are placed EPP

How well did we do it?

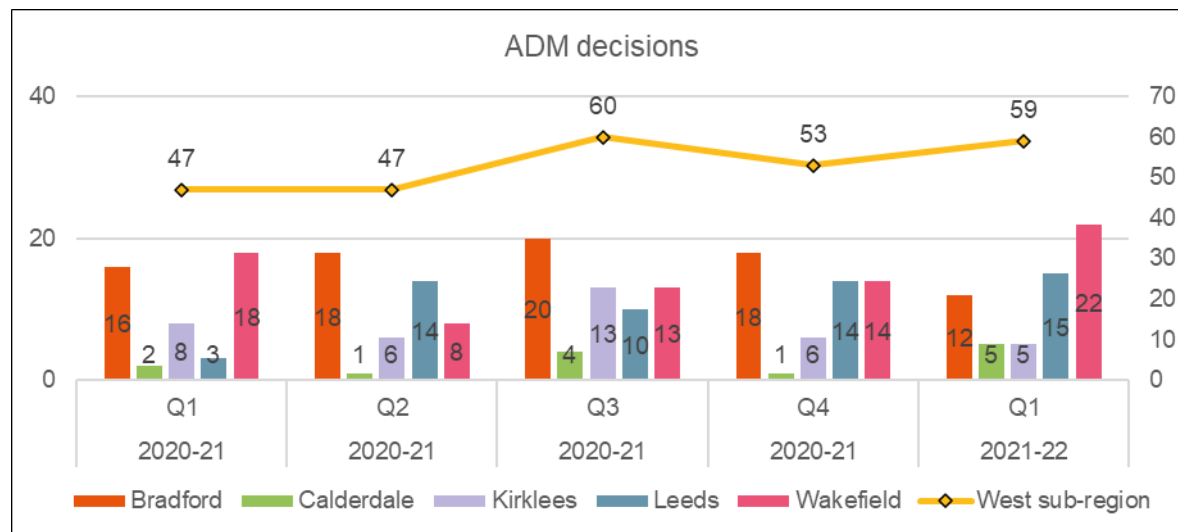
- There is an increase, against the previous quarter, in the number of children who have an ADM decision but who are not yet matched and children who have an ADM decision but are not yet placed
- There have been an increase in the number of children, from the previous quarter, who have a placement order and are not yet placed, there has been a slight increase of children who have been waiting for at least 18 months since entering care, 88% of the children have been waiting at least 18 months are children who wait longer for adoption
- There is a slight increase in the number of children who have been waiting more than 121 days since the placement order was made.
- There has been a decrease in the number of children placed EPP.

What would we like to do better?

- We would like to ensure that children are placed in a timely manner and whilst we are able to do this for some children, others take longer
- Continue to increase the number of children placed within the Yorkshire and Humber region
- Continue to increase the number of children placed with in-house families
- Continue to promote the use of early permanence placements where appropriate and to increase the number of early permanence placements

What difference did we make?

- A greater number of children were matched in quarter for adoption
- A greater number of children were placed in quarter, 27 (57%) of the children are children who wait longer, 1 child is aged 5+, 21 children are part of a sibling group and 13 children are of Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds
- Online profiling events have continued with two events taking place in the quarter, the second of these was a pre-recorded profiling event taking place over a week. Adjustments were made to the format of the event taking into account adopter feedback to make it more accessible. This event was a sibling event with 6 sets of siblings profiled. 8 expressions of interest were received, 2 of these progressed to linking visits with matched subsequently agreed to progress to adoption panel for match.



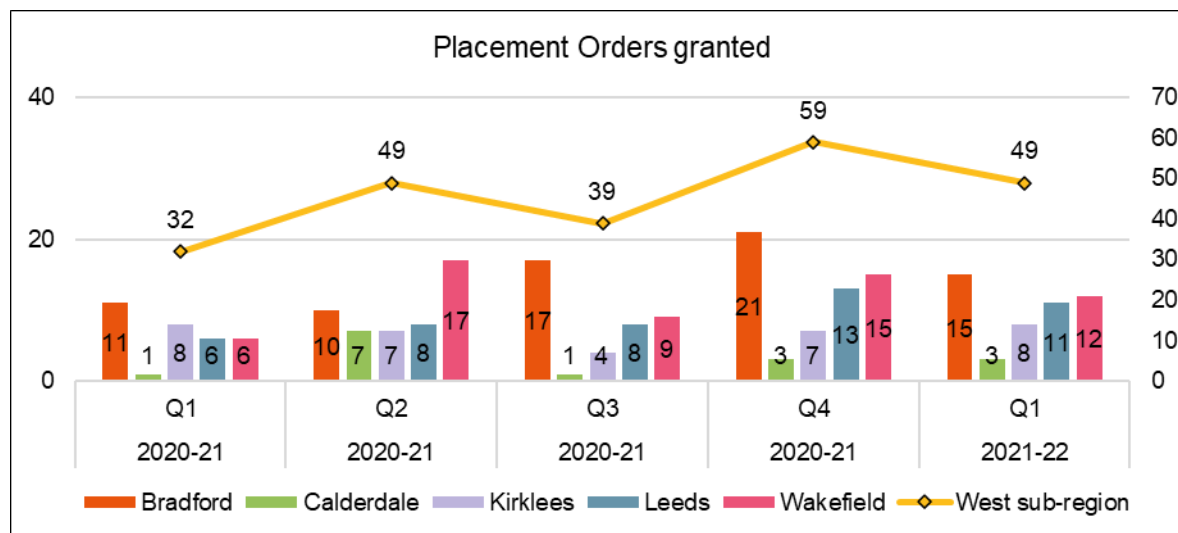
Commentary

This graph shows numbers of children who had an ADM decision over the last 5 quarters, thus showing figures for the same quarter in the previous year

Wakefield has seen a higher number of children with ADM decisions this quarter, as well as Leeds and Calderdale.

Bradford and Kirkless have seen a decrease this quarter.

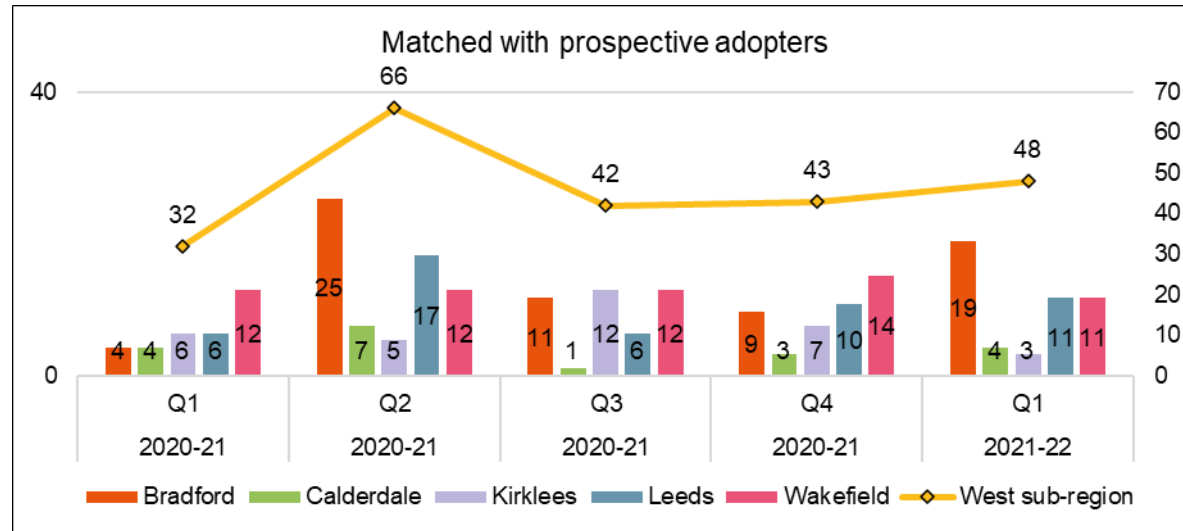
The overall number of ADM decisions has increased against the previous quarter.



Commentary

This graph shows numbers of children who had a placement order granted over the last 5 quarters, thus showing figures for the same quarter in the previous year

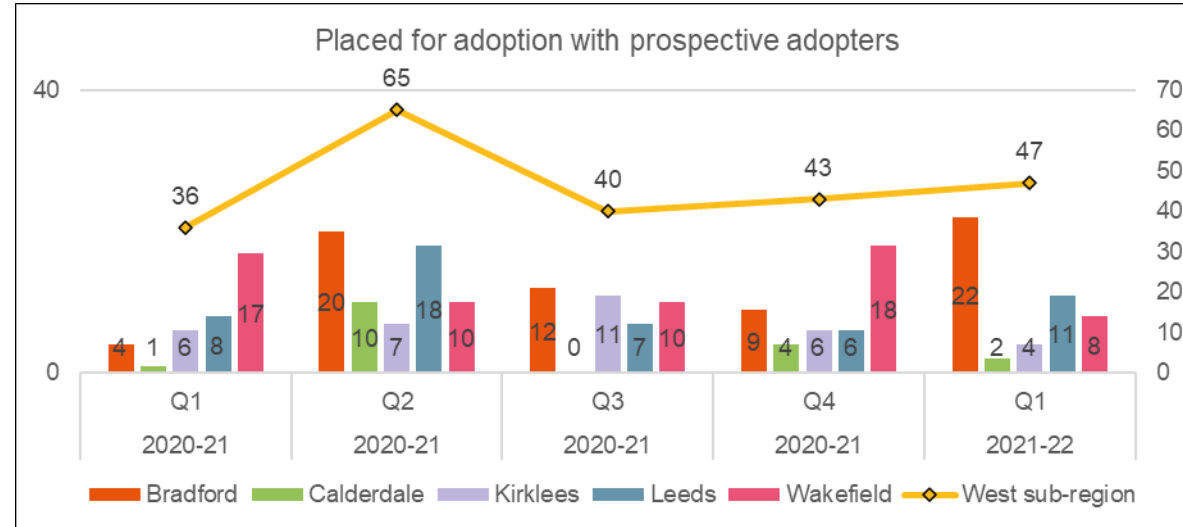
There has been an overall decrease in the number of placement orders granted in Q1. This is set against an increase in the previous quarter where delays in court were catching up.



Commentary

This graph shows numbers of children who were matched over the last 5 quarters, thus showing figures for the same quarter in the previous year

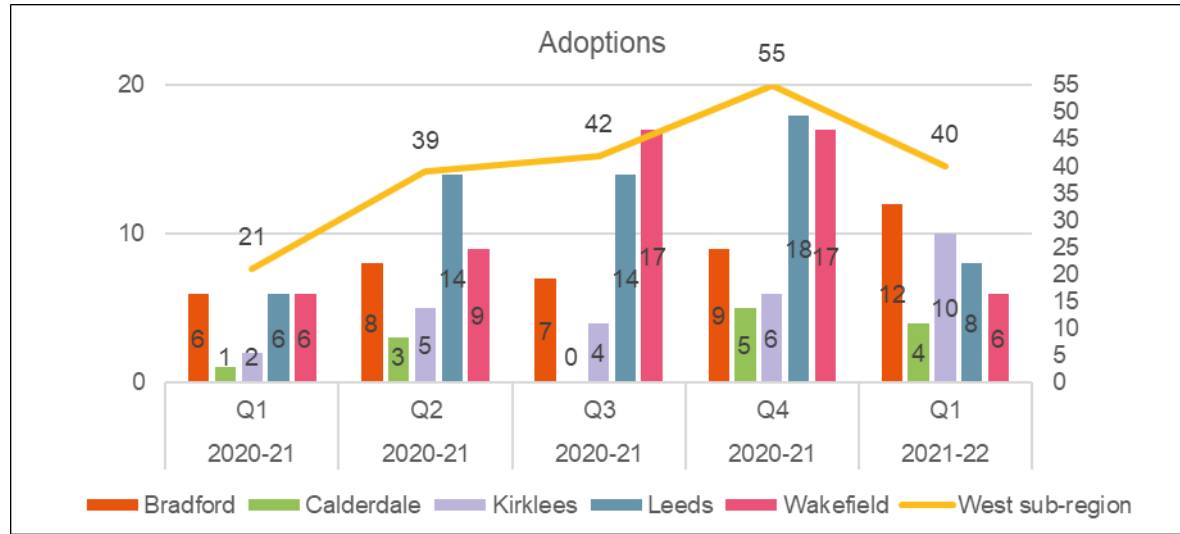
There has been an increase in the number of children matched with prospective adopters in Q1.



Commentary

This graph shows the number of children placed over the last 5 quarters, thus showing figures for the same quarter in the previous year.

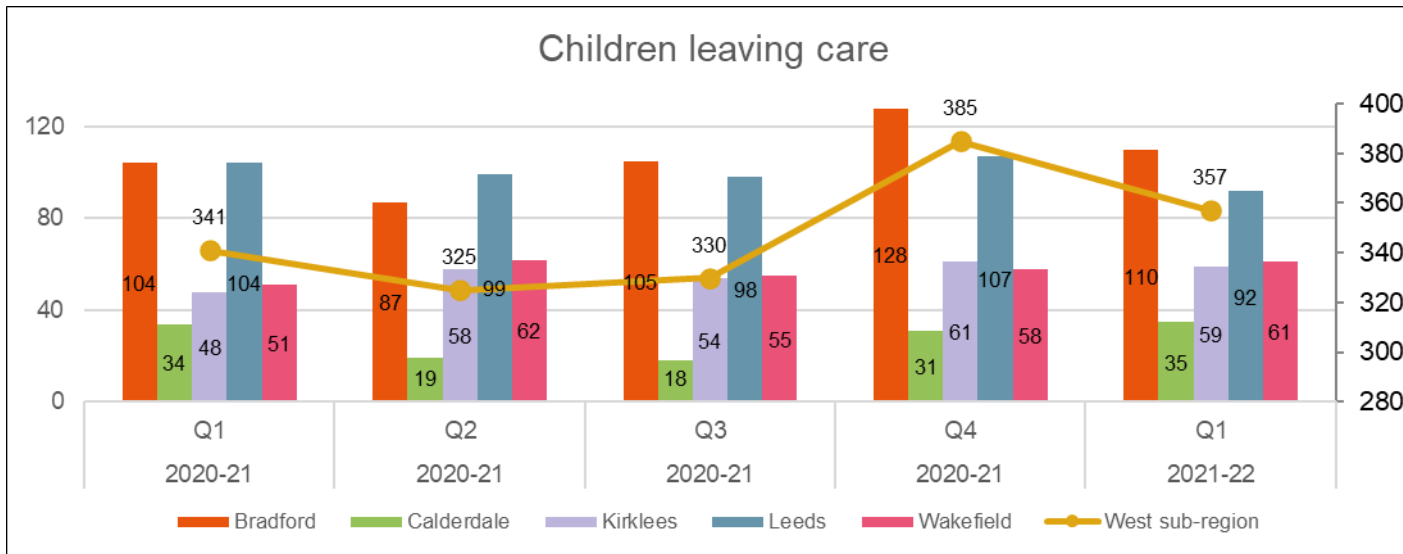
There has been an increase in the number of children placed with prospective adopters in Q1.



Commentary

This graph shows numbers of children who were adopted over the last 5 quarters, thus showing figures for the same quarter in the previous year

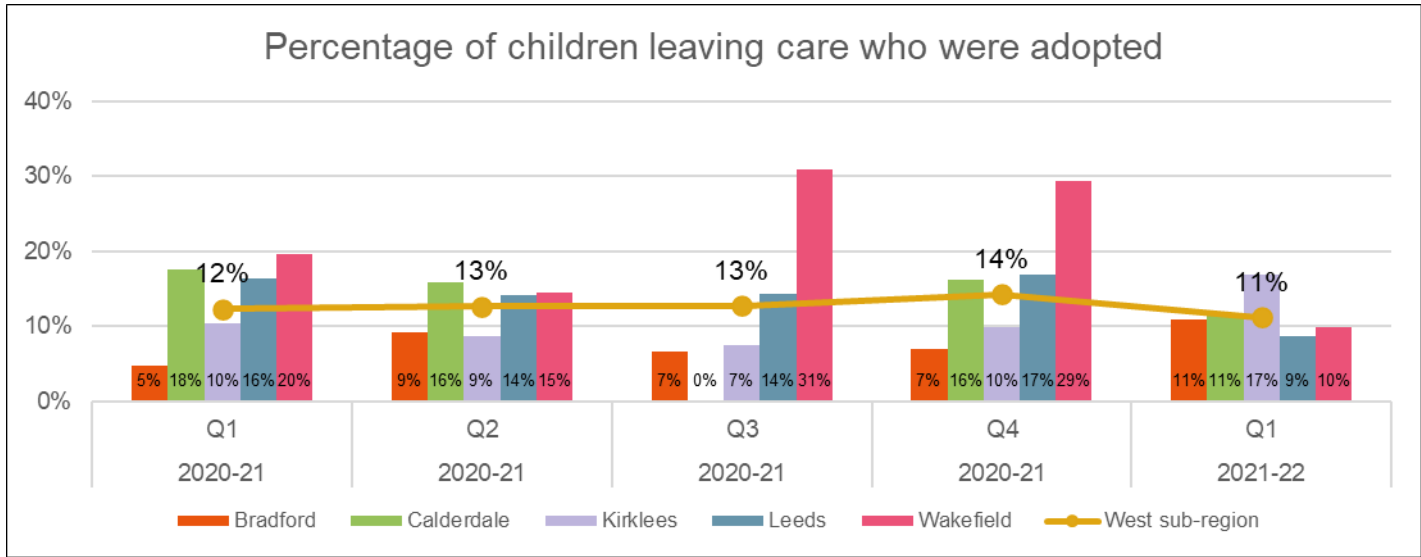
The number of adoption orders have reduced in Q1 and are broadly consistent with the number of adoption orders granted in Q2 and 3 in 2020-2021. There was a peak in Q4 due to delays in court being reduced.



Commentary

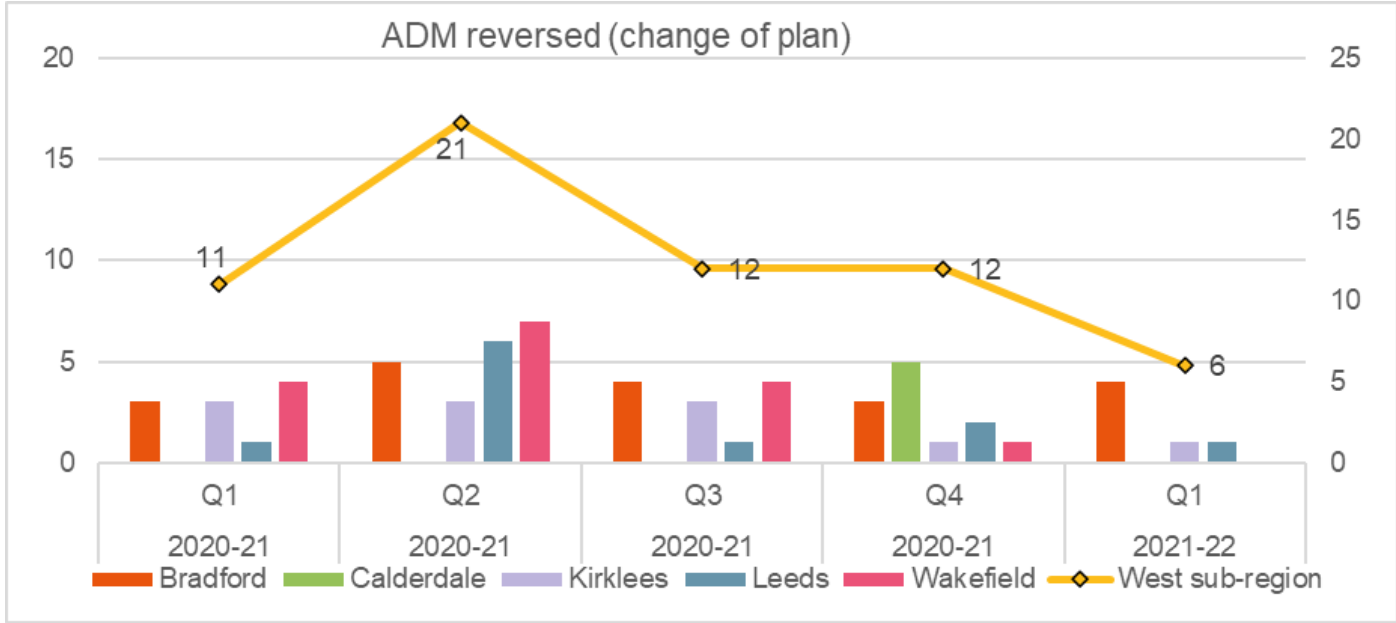
This graph shows the number of children leaving care over the last 5 quarters, thus showing figures for the same quarter in the previous year

The number of children leaving care has reduced against the previous quarters peak but continue to be above levels prior to the peak.



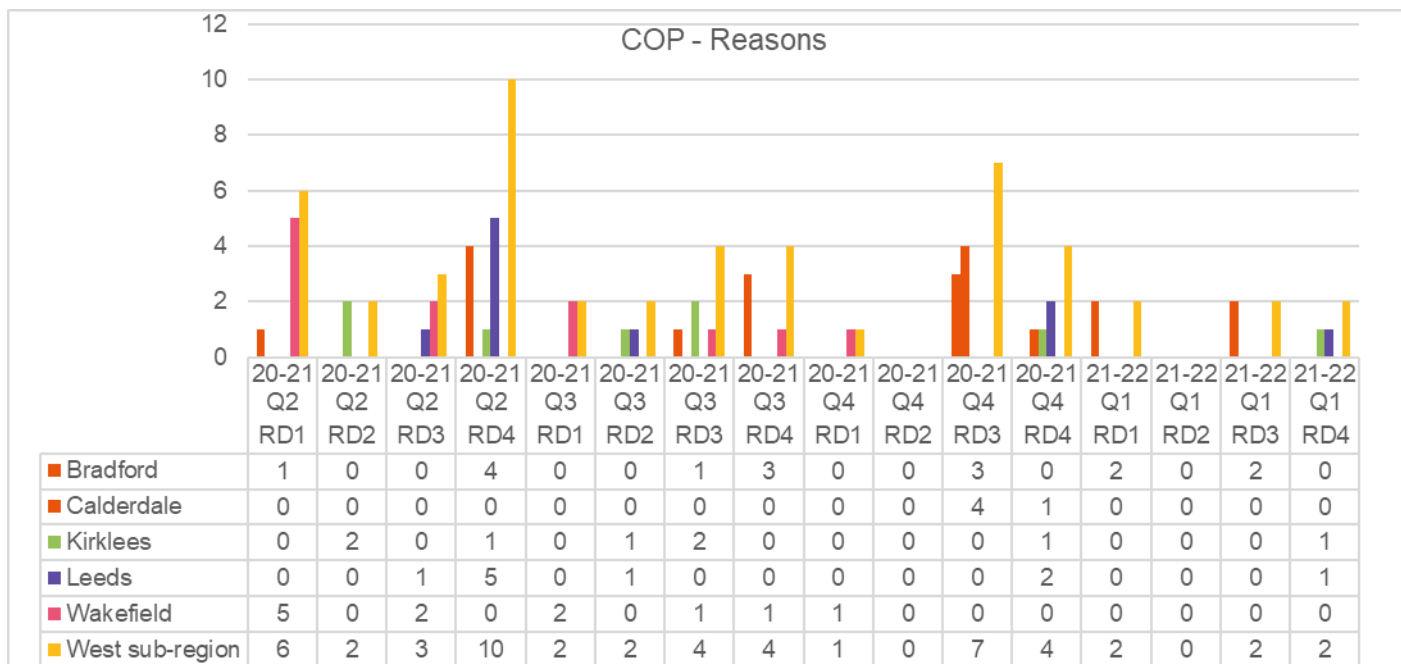
Commentary

This graph shows the percentage of children leaving care who were adopted in the last 5 quarters, thus showing figures for the same quarter in the previous year



Commentary

This graph shows the number of children who had a change of plan away from adoption over the last 5 quarters, thus showing figures for the same quarter in the previous year

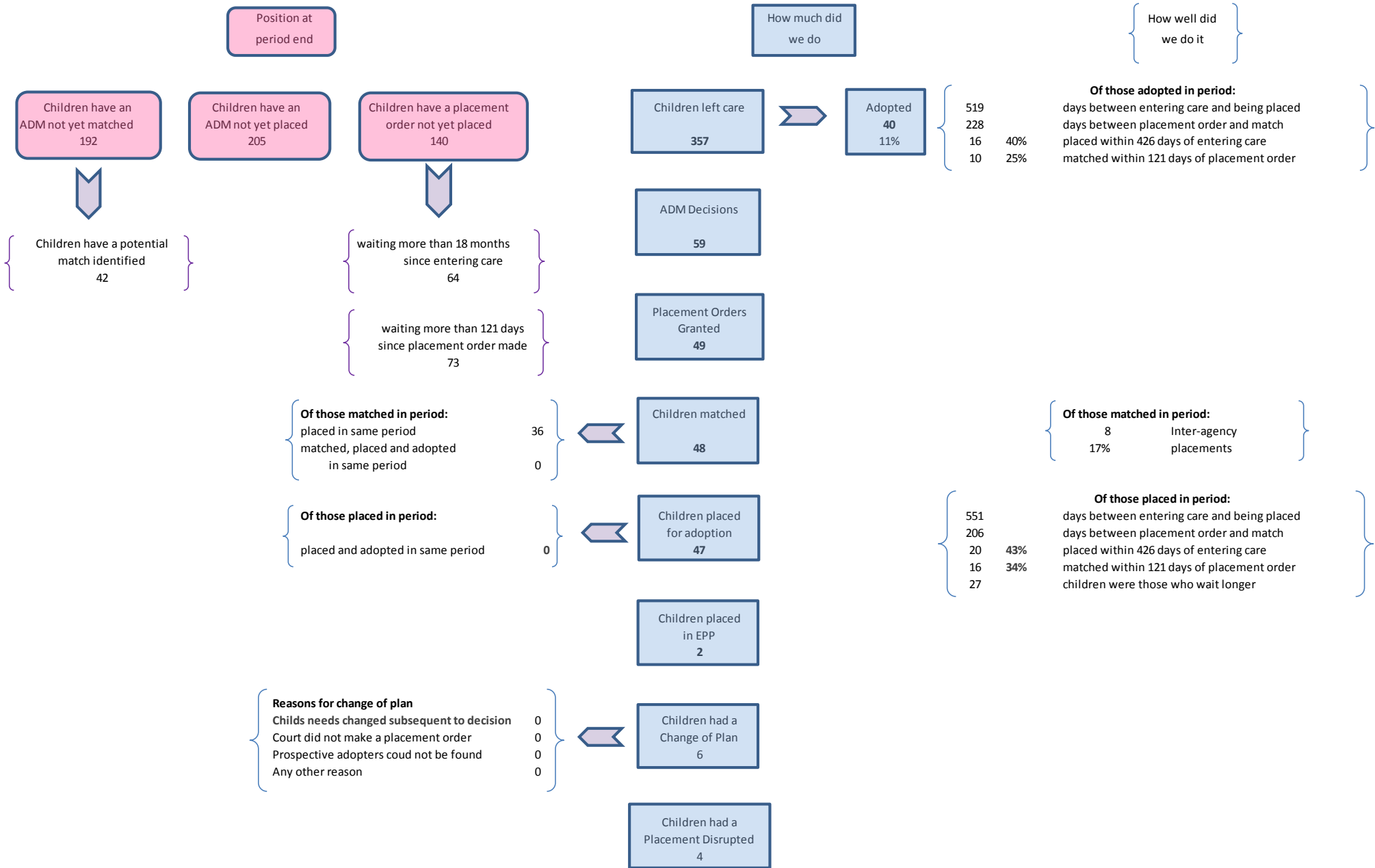


Commentary

This graph shows the reasons for the change of plan away from adoption. This is from Quarter 2 2020-21 to Quarter 1 2021-22 to show a four month trend.

- RD1 – The child’s needs changed subsequent to the decision
- RD2 – The court did not make a placement order
- RD3 – Prospective adopters could not be found
- R43 – Any other reason

Performance Overview – Children



Adopters

This section of the report provides headline figures relating to prospective and approved adopters at various stages of the adoption process in One Adoption. Appendix two contains figures for the last 5 quarters to give comparison between same quarter in the previous year. Figures in bold are for current quarter, those in brackets are for the same quarter in the previous year.

How much did we do?

During the quarter

- **136** (321) prospective adoptive families attended information sessions
During 2020/21 671 prospective adoptive households attended information sessions, average 168 per quarter
- **33** (45) prospective adoptive families started Stage 1
During 2020/21 166 prospective adoptive families started Stage 1, average 42 per quarter
- **27** (11) prospective adoptive families attended preparation training
During 2020/21 130 prospective adoptive families attended preparation training, average 32 per quarter
- **27** (27) prospective adoptive families started Stage 2
During 2020/21 127 prospective adoptive families started Stage 2, average 32 per quarter
- **37** (29) prospective adoptive families were approved, of these, 3 (7) families were Foster Carer Adopters
During 2020/21 118 prospective adoptive families were approved, average 30 per quarter
- **32** (20) prospective adoptive families were matched, of these, 0 (0) families were matched with children outside the RAA and **32** (20) were matched with children from within the RAA
During 2020/21 107 prospective adoptive families were matched, average 27 per quarter
- **28** (21) prospective adoptive families had a child(ren) placed, of these, 0 (0) families had children placed from outside RAA and **28** (21) had children placed from within the RAA
During 2020/21 106 prospective adoptive families had a child placed, average 27 per quarter
- **17** (12) adoptive families adopted a child/young person
During 2020/21 89 adoptive families adopted a child/young person, average 23 per quarter
- **10** (12) prospective adoptive families withdrew from the process
During 2020/21 55 prospective adoptive families withdrew from the process, average 14 per quarter

How well did we do it?

- Of those prospective adoptive families who ended Stage 1, **36** (36) in the quarter, they were in Stage 1 for an average of **4** (3) months
 - **33%** (47%) were within timescales (Lowest was **0** (0) month, highest was **13** (20) months)
 - Those still in Stage 1, **67** at the end of the quarter have been in Stage 1 for an average of **3** months
 - **44%** are within timescales
- Of those prospective adoptive families who ended Stage 2, **37** (29) in the quarter, they were in Stage 2 for an average of **4** (5) months
 - **81%** (69%) were within timescales (Lowest was **1** (2) months, highest was **16** (8) months)
 - Those still in Stage 2, **37** at the end of the quarter have been in Stage 2 for an average of **2** months
 - **89%** are within timescales

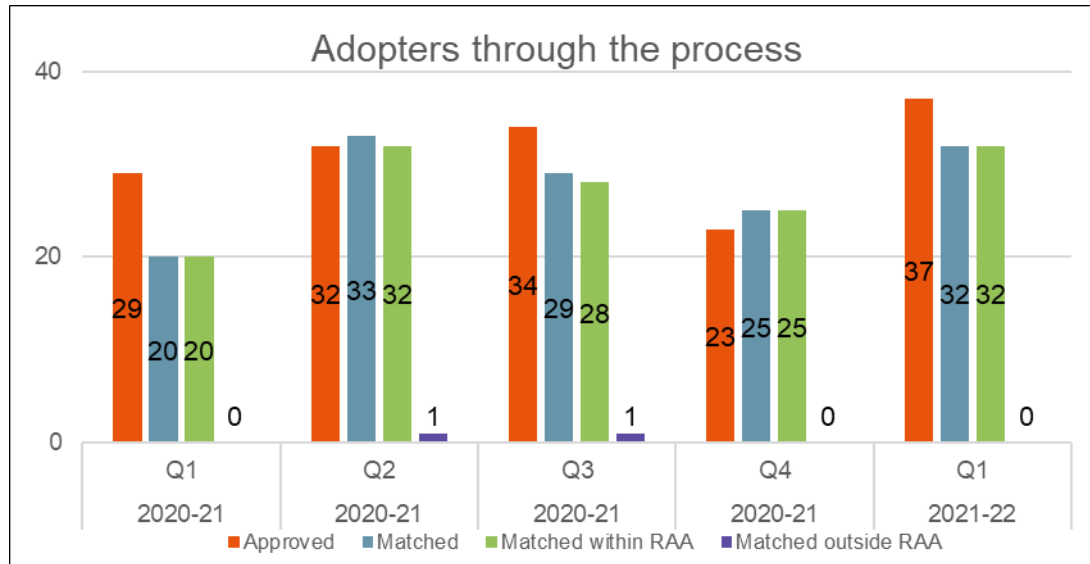
Of those approved **10** (8) months was the average time between registration of interest and approval.

16 (12) adoptive families were matched within three months of their approval;

16 (8) were matched after three months of their approval, of which 3 were EPP carers

The average time taken from approval to matching was **6** (4) months

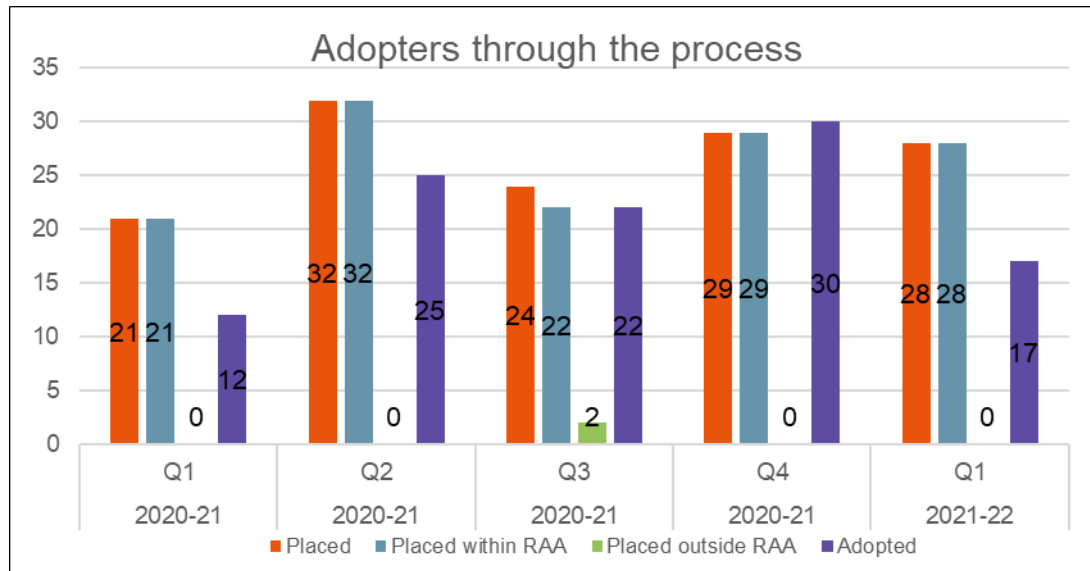
<p>How much did we do?</p> <p><i>At the end of the quarter</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of the 105 (110) individual approved adopters (not yet matched), 46 (56) are female and 59 (54) are male. 22% (15%) are from a BME background • 104 (140) prospective adoptive families are not yet approved • 67 (100) prospective adoptive families are in stage one; 37 (40) are in stage two • 55 (57) approved adoptive families are yet to be matched Of which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 8 (12) have been waiting more than six months – 4 are open to EPP ○ 18 (19) have a matching panel booked ○ 1 (0) has a match identified but no panel date booked <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 36 approved adoptive families are yet to have a match identified • 1 adoptive family has a child placed in EPP – not yet formally matched • 16 (19) prospective adoptive families are on hold 	<p>How well did we do it?</p> <p>We have approved slightly fewer adopters than in the same quarter last year, However, we have increased the diversity within the adopters approved, which is a positive step towards our aim to recruit a more diverse range of adopters to meet the needs of West Yorkshire children.</p> <p>There are fewer families within the assessment process, in particular in stage one, which reflects fewer applicants waiting for allocation to a social worker to begin the stage two assessment.</p> <p>Fewer families have been waiting in excess of 6 months for a match.</p> <p>There are fewer families on hold than in the same period last year.</p>
<p>What would we like to do better?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move people through the adoption process in a more timely way. • Increase the number of available adopters, thus reducing the need for interagency placements. • Increase the diversity of adopters, in particular recruiting Black African and Black Caribbean adopters, to meet the needs of our children. • Increase the number of adopters open to siblings due to the demographic of the children needing adoptive families. • Increase the number of families open to considering children with a disability or children over the age of 3 years, as these children wait longer for families. 	<p>What difference did we make</p> <p>We have approved 8 more families than in the same period last year and 14 more than in the last quarter. This means that there are more families available for the children in West Yorkshire with a plan of adoption.</p> <p>32 families were matched in the quarter, an increase of 12 from the same quarter last year and 7 more than in the previous quarter. All the matches were with children from within the RAA which means that more children are being placed for adoption locally where they and their families can be well supported.</p> <p>We have increased the diversity of the available adopters to meet the needs of West Yorkshire children.</p>



Commentary

This graph shows numbers of adopters going through the process from 2020-21 Quarter 1 through to 2021-22 Quarter 1

This provides a comparison of the same quarter in the previous year; there has been an increase in adopters approved this quarter, along with an increase in families matched.

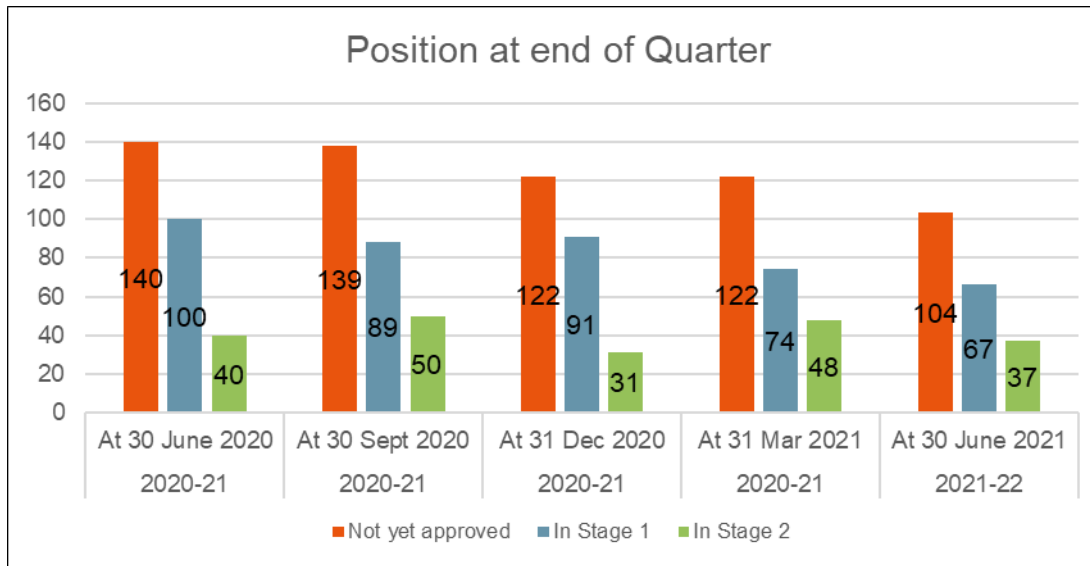


Commentary

This graph shows numbers of adopters going through the process from 2020-21 Quarter 1 through to 2021-22 Quarter 1

This provides a comparison of the same quarter in the previous year, with the number of children placed remaining consistent with the previous quarter and higher than the same period last year.

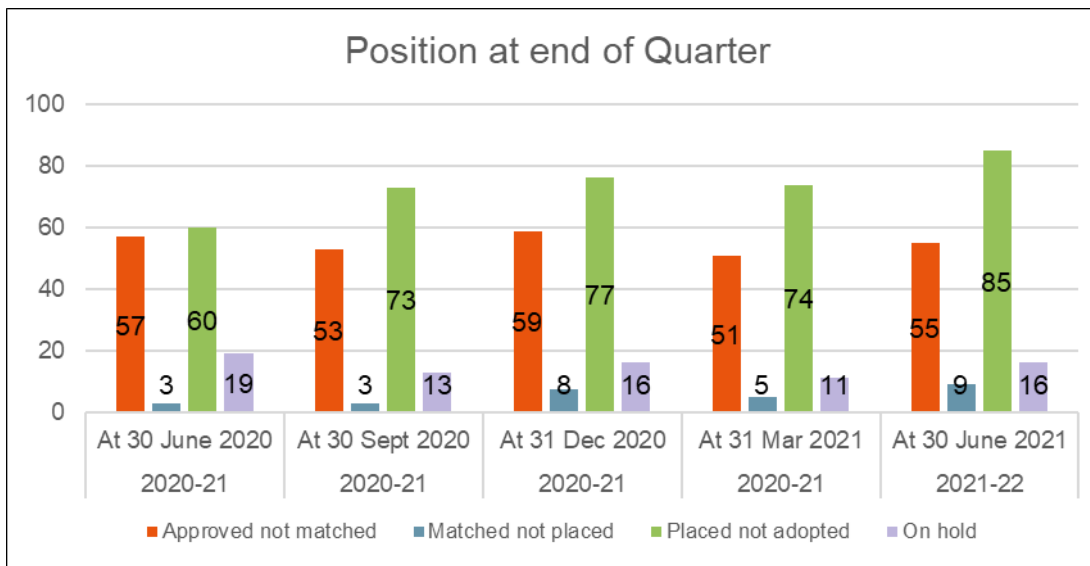
The number of the families obtaining an adoption order has fallen this quarter, but is higher than that same quarter last year.



Commentary

This graph shows the number of adopters at various stages in the process at the end of each quarter. It shows the last 5 quarters so we can compare the same quarter in the previous year.

There has been a decrease in the number of adopters within the assessment process when compared to last year, though the numbers in stage two remains relatively consistent. The capacity of information events has been increased to ensure sufficient enquiries from prospective adopters are received and progressed. Online marketing activity has been increased to encourage more people to start the adoption process.

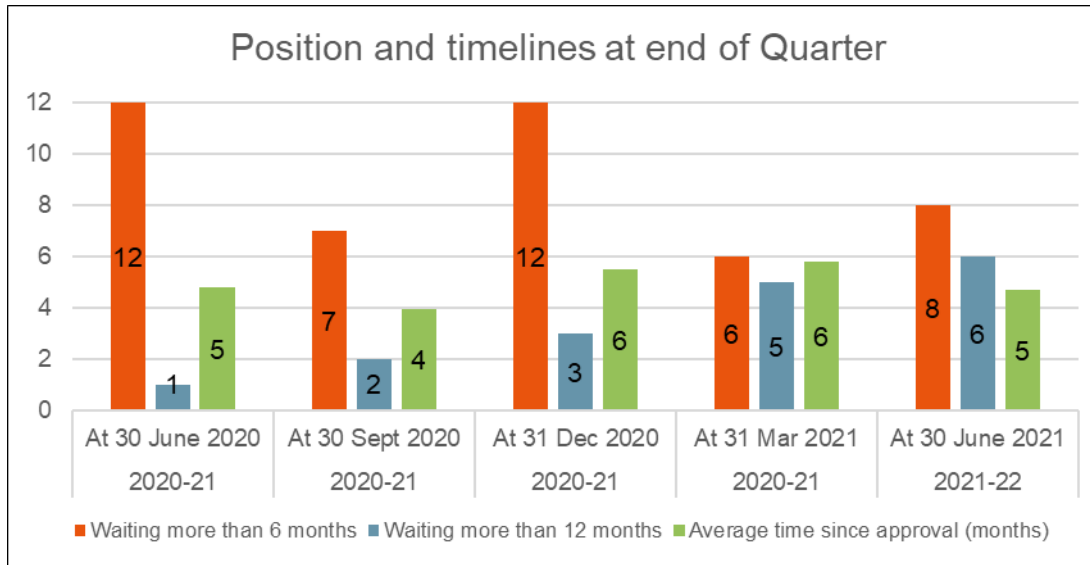


Commentary

This graph shows the number of adopters at various stages in the process at the end of each quarter. It shows the last 5 quarters so we can compare the same quarter in the previous year.

The number of adopters with children placed and not yet adopted remains high, and has increased with a number of children recently placed for adoption, though we are starting to see improvements in court timetabling of adoption hearings.

The number of approved adopters remains consistent.



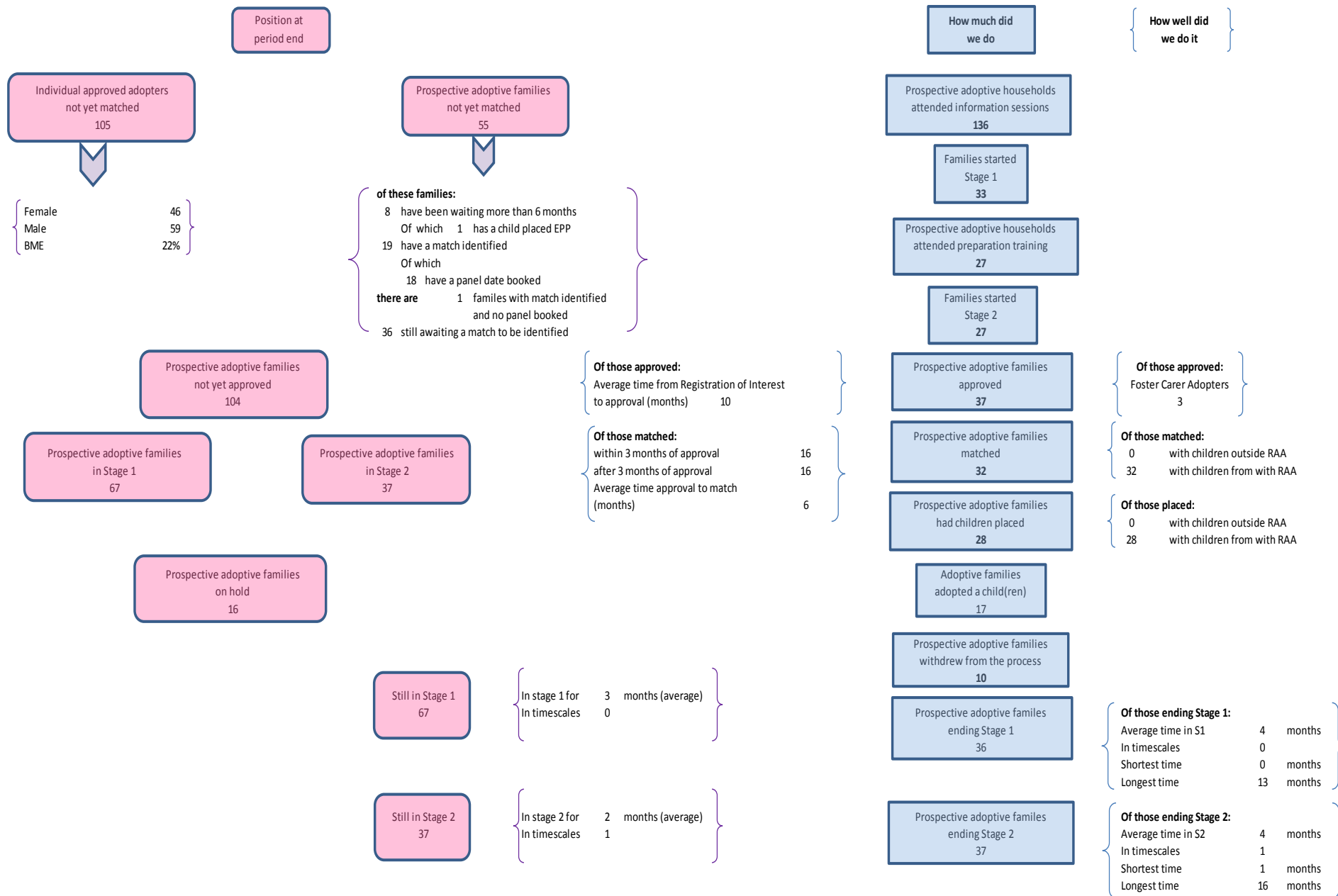
Commentary

This graph shows the number of adopters approved and not matched at the end of each quarter and the timeliness. It shows the last 5 quarters so we can compare the same quarter in the previous year.

There has been a slight increase this quarter of adopters waiting more than 6 months to be matched. Though this remains lower than in the same period last year. Some of the adopters who are not yet matched have children placed with them via Early Permanence and the match cannot progress until a Placement Order is made. For all adopters who have been approved for three months or more national searches are taking place to identify a match with a child who meets the criteria they have specified.

The average time adopters wait following approval for a match has decreased.

Performance Overview – Adopters



Snapshot Figures

This section of the report looks at characteristics of prospective adopters who are approved but not yet matched and those characteristics of children still waiting to be matched as at the end of the quarter.

Characteristics of those adopters who are approved and not yet matched

Ethnicity	Number of individuals
African	3
Any other Asian background	3
Any other Mixed background	1
Any other White background	10
Caribbean	1
Chinese	1
Indian	2
Pakistani	7
White and Black Caribbean	1
White British	72
White Irish	4
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	105

Religion	Number of individuals
Christian	53
Hindu	2
Jewish	4
Muslim	10
No information available	6
No Religion	18
Other	12
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	105

Characteristics of children who have a decision but not yet matched (192), of these, 128 have a Placement Order

Ethnicity	Number of children
African	2
Any other Black background	4
Any other ethnic group	12
Any other Mixed background	6
Any other White background	4
Gypsy/Roma	5
Information not yet obtained	1
Traveller of Irish Heritage	2
White and Asian	7
White and Black African	1
White and Black Caribbean	6
White British	140
White Irish	2
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	192

Children who wait longer (more than one characteristic)	Number of children
Part of a Sibling Group	90
With a Disability	1
BME	47
Aged 5 years +	26
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	164

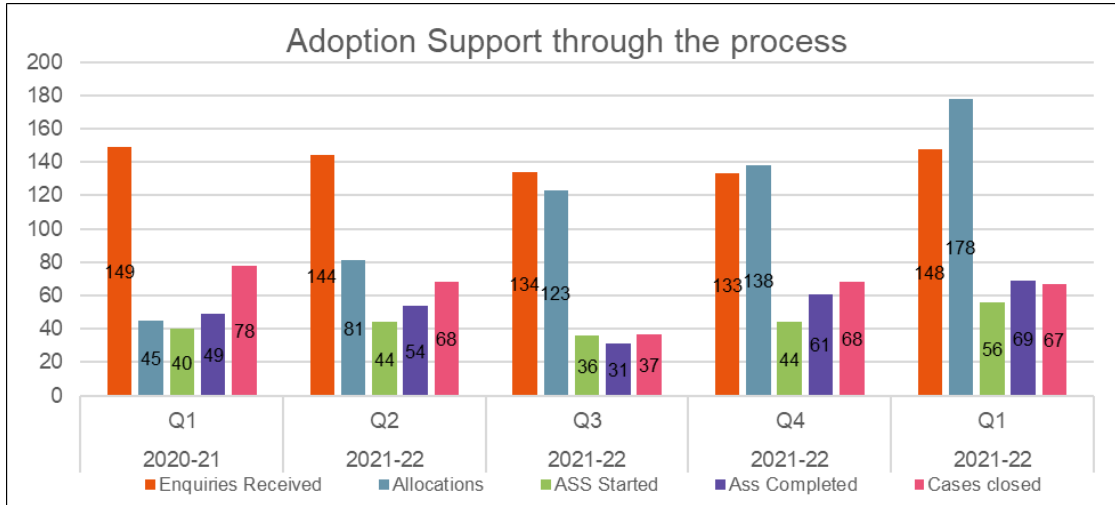
36 Children have 2 of above characteristics
5 Children have 3 of above characteristics

Of those above

ADOPTERS

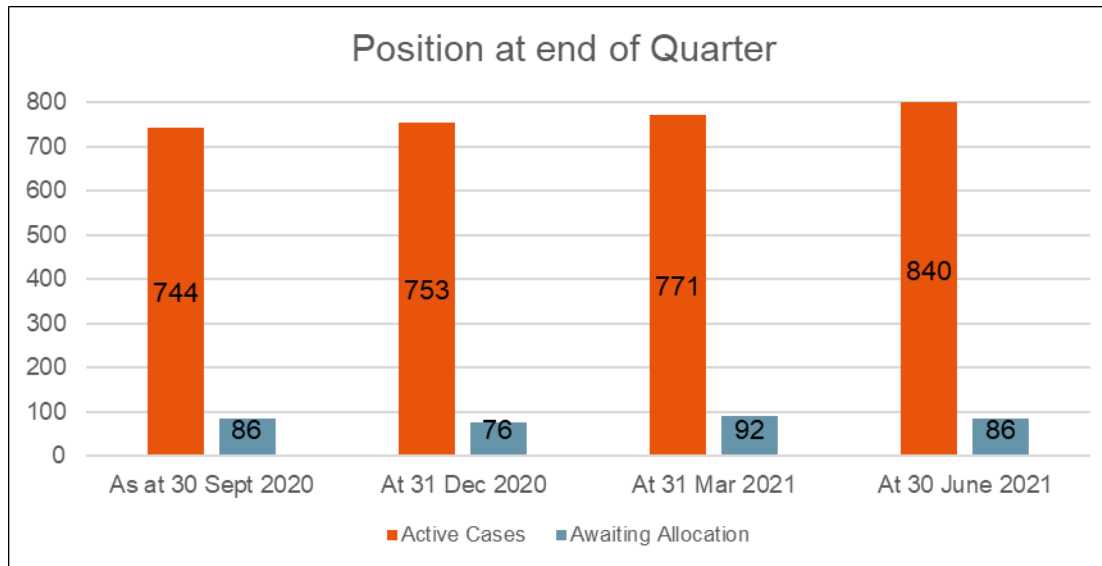
Certain characteristics specified	Number of Households
Potential Match	19
Not specified any age group	17
Specified 0-4 years	32
Sibling groups	24
Specific Gender	9
Open to EPP	6

<p>How much did we do?</p> <p><i>During the quarter</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 148 (133) Adoption Support enquiries received • 178 (138) cases were allocated • 56 (44) Adoption Support assessments were started • 69 (61) Adoption Support assessments were completed • 67 (68) Adoption Support cases were closed <p><i>At the end of the quarter</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 840 (771) Active cases • 86 (92) cases were awaiting allocation 	<p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For those cases allocated in the quarter it took an average of 213 (192) days • For those assessments completed in the quarter it took an average of 81 (114) days from start of assessment to completion (this is for OAWY workers only) • Of those cases closed in quarter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1 (2) was aged 0-23 months ○ 0 (2) were aged between 2-4 years ○ 52 (41) were aged 5+ years ○ 14 (22) were adults <p>Of the active cases at the end of the quarter – xx cases do not show a breakdown</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 9 (9) were aged 0-23 months ○ 128 (117) were aged 2-4 years ○ 616 (570) were aged 5+ years <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 433 (406) were aged 5-11 years ▪ 183 (164) were aged 12-17 years ○ 87 (75) were adults
<p>What would we like to do better?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve on timeliness of allocation to a worker where needed; the Triage system being piloted in the Leeds team is showing early signs of being effective in relation to this. • Continue to improve on the length of time an assessment of support needs takes. • Have a clear core offer of support for adopted young people aged 17+ years. 	<p>What difference did we make?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have continued work on ensuring that support plans are focused and led by outcomes the family/young person has defined. • We have continued to make use of the Adoption Support Fund in the quarter, including being able to make applications against in-house provision meaning that a small amount of income has been generated. • We have begun to work more of a 'hybrid' model of work with children and families via a combination of face to face meetings and via digital platforms. This has meant a better use of targeted support (face to face) and worker time (when digital contact used).



Commentary

This graph shows the number of Adoption Support enquiries and through the process



Commentary

This graph shows the number of adopters at various stages in the process at the end of each quarter 2020-21 from Quarter 2, showing last 4 quarters

Appendix One

This appendix contains a range of measures related to prospective adopters progressing through the approval and adoption process.

Table A9: individuals and families progressing through the approval and adoption processes

		Enquiries		Progress through the adoption process (Families)					
		Individuals	Families	Start Stage 1	Start Stage 2	Approved	Matched	Placed	Adopted
2020-21	Q1		107	45	45	29	20	21	12
2020-21	Q2		121	42	42	32	33	32	25
2020-21	Q3		34	39	39	34	29	24	22
2020-21	Q4		85	40	40	23	25	29	30
2021-22	Q1		53	33	33	37	32	28	17

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Table A10: snapshot numbers of prospective adopters at different stages of the approval process

	Prospective adoptive families				Approved adoptive families waiting		
	Prospective adoptive families not yet approved	In Stage 1	In Stage 2	On hold	Approved adoptive families waiting to be matched	Approved adoptive families waiting to be matched for more than 6 months	Average time since approval (months)
At 30 June 2020	140	100	40	19	57	12	5
At 30 Sept 2020	139	89	50	13	53	7	4
At 31 Dec 2020	122	91	31	16	59	12	6
At 31 Mar 2021	122	74	48	11	51	6	6
At 30 June 2021	104	67	37	16	55	8	5

Appendix three

Children

Of the 40 children adopted:

it took 519 days from entering care to being placed (A1 indicator)

18 of the 40 children took more than 500 days from entering care to being placed

If these 18 children were excluded from the calculation the average would be 368

30 of the 40 children took more than 121 days from placement order to being matched

If these 30 children were excluded from the calculation the average would be 94

32 of the 40 children were those who wait longer

7 were aged 5+ years

26 were part of a sibling group

11 were BAME

A10 indicator was 501 days between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family, adjusted for those adopted by their foster carers

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Of the 47 children who were placed:

It took 551 days from entering care to being placed (A1 indicator)

20 of the 47 children took more than 500 days from entering care to being placed

If these 20 children were excluded from the calculation the average would be 362

30 of the 47 children took more than 121 days from placement order to being matched

If these 30 children were excluded from the calculation the average would be 81

27 of the 47 children were those who wait longer

1 was aged 5+ years

21 were part of a sibling group

13 were BAME

A10 indicator was also 551 days between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family, adjusted for those adopted by their foster carers for this cohort

Of the 48 children matched:

It took 525 days from entering care to being *matched*

19 of the 48 children took more than 500 days from entering care to being

If these 19 children were excluded from the calculation the average would be 337

19 of the 48 children took more than 121 days from placement order to being matched

If these 19 children were excluded from the calculation the average would be 80

25 of the 48 children were those who wait longer

2 aged 5+ years

21 part of a sibling group

12 BAME

Adopters

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Of the 37 families approved, 3 were Foster Carer adopters

All 32 families matched were with children from within OAWY

All 28 families who had a child placed were with children from within OAWY

Those who ended Stage 1 (36), 24 families were in Stage 1 for more than 2 months

Of which 3 subsequently withdrew within the quarter, 3 went on hold and 1 was declined

Those who ended Stage 2 (37) 7 families were in Stage 2 for more than 4 months

Of which 1 was matched in quarter and 1 was matched and placed in quarter

Of those who took more than 3 months from approval to match (16), 3 were EPP adopters,

12 were subsequently placed within quarter, 2 went on hold post approval – 1 for 770 days and 1 for 333 days

Notes from Management Board- Special Guardianship Development Workshop

21 April 2021

Vision - To continue to develop a strategic and planned approach to supporting Special Guardians and kinship carers across the region in order to reduce the number of children looked after and support children to lead happy and healthy lives.

1pm	Check in and Introduction to the session	Julie Jenkins
1:30pm	Recap of work done to date and work in progress-	Sarah Johal
1:55 – 2:10	Reflections	Lucy Peake (CEO Kinship)
2:10 – 2:30	Conversations with Special Guardians	Special guardians
2.30- 3:30	Group work	All
3:30	Feedback and next steps	
4:00	Close.	

In attendance:

Julie Jenkins (Chair) Director of Calderdale, Rob Murray (Assistant Director Calderdale) Vicky Schofield (Assistant Director Wakefield) Elaine McShane (Assistant Director Bradford) Johal (HOS OAWY) Rhian Beynon (Service Manager OAWY), Ruth Cresswell (Team Manager Kirklees), Becky Pearson (Interim Service Manager Calderdale), Ruth Terry (Chief Officer Leeds) Kim Bray (Team manager Bradford), Paul Lydon (Service Manager Bradford) Noushin Mostowfi (Service manager Kirklees); Eva Booth (OAWY) Ancha Stooley (Kinship) Lucy peake (Kinship), Emma Naylor (service Manager Leeds). **Apologies:** Richard Fawcett (Bradford) Cheryl Whitehouse (Wakefield)

Group Work - How can we: Add Value, Work Collaboratively and Make Progress

Feedback:

Provision of advice and information

Both carers' and workers' knowledge of Pupil Premium Plus and Adoption Support Fund are often lacking. Some LAs lacking info packs for Special Guardians. There is a lack of advice and info for social workers.

Lack of knowledge at the front door where families first contact. Can lead to some families being turned away. A central point of contact may help.

- Create resource/information pack to provide more information for carers and share these using TriX. Debs (Kirklees) meeting families/carers to discuss. Adopt Thames Valley prepared an info pack for special guardians which they may share.

- Create a centralised point for information e.g. Web site, which could be used both by workers and carers and which could be kept up to date.
 - The web site could have downloadable information (documents) that workers could print and share with carers.
 - Information could also be used to provide more information to schools.
- Virtual schools could be used to more effectively share SG information / knowledge with schools in the region.
- Need to manage the “flow” of information to ensure the carers do not get overwhelmed but would still have access to information when needed.
- Encourage access to and take up of support mechanisms in place – use of comms
- Consideration of regional newsletter

Action : OAWY To put together an options paper about how this could be progressed.

Benefits and Welfare Advice

There is varying capacity to offer welfare benefit checks across the region, with some LAs having no resource to offer this. ‘Kinship’ can offer some benefits advice through their helpline, but do not have the capacity to offer this to all new SGs in the region.

Bradford/Calderdale would welcome a regional approach to this. Care review and minefield of DWP. Advice needs to look at current situation and projected finances. Advise on issues such as work conditionality.

- Would be helpful to have a view from carers
- ‘Kinship’ could provide regional support through recruiting a specific welfare advisor

Action: OAWY to pull together an options paper for possible approaches which could be taken across the region

Preparation and Support

Often in SGO there is no time for “preparation” before the child moves in with the carer, but the group felt that post-order training for carers was important in topic like Trauma and attachment & Therapeutic Parenting.

Before the carer makes the decision to go-ahead with the SGO they should be given information about the SGO and allowed time to think and reflect on their feelings – even doubts and negative

feelings without being pressured with a threat of the child being taken away from them. Equitable training and time to reflect so have informed choices

Peer Network could possibly provide a safe forum for carers.

Kirklees/Leeds/Calderdale/Bradford interested in a regional approach to preparation. Wakefield??

Kinship ready training is on offer from the Kinship Charity

Action : OAWY will pull together an options paper with the aim to co-produce something with special guardians, coming up with a blended model that is co-produced and co-delivered with carers.

Peer Support/ Advocacy schemes

Discussed how a WY wide peer support scheme would be most effective and sustainable to provide information and support to carers.

- The existing peer support network and the Kinship Facebook group could be used to share information among carers.
- Build community at early stage and peer support from early stage – refer to Kinship early
- Peer support and preparation and advocacy at the beginning support through the process.
- buddying scheme across fostering
- Opportunity for carers to share experiences

Ongoing training for SGs

The group thought that providing training on a regional footprint would be an effective way of doing this, as was demonstrated by the Covid19 schemes.

Contact in SG differs from both fostering and adoption and there should be a dedicated training course for SG to provide tools for carers. The group acknowledged that each carer will ultimately decide what the level and form of the contact will be, but training could help carers to manage the complexities of the contact.

There can be low take up from special guardians re training and difficulties re access – mix of virtual and in-person.

Post order training workshops - could pool resources across region and look at different types of training:

- Ongoing conflict and relationship management
- Impact of abuse neglect and Therapeutic Parenting
- developing skills to foster for connected carers
- Contact issues

- Commission other workshops

Action: OAWY to draft options paper to address these issues

Training for Staff

Discussed how for example workers from different LAs could specialise on certain topics (DDP, NVR, Attachment / Trauma / Resilience) and provide support / training to colleagues from different areas OR provide training to carers across the region.

Discussed the importance to review the practices across the region for example when SWs are providing excellent support before court, but “just disappear” when the court order is granted. There needs to be a change to this. Could this be part of CPD, which is provided on a regional basis? Expectations re post order support – could support be provided for 1 year (inc family time and contact)?

Adoption Support Fund

There is varying capacity in the teams to undertake assessments and apply to the fund. The new quality assurance framework adds more complexity.

OAWY may be able to add value across the region:

- monitoring of contracts through APL
- good admin support

Action Rhian to draft options paper about delivering some assessment/ASF work

Contact

This is a significant identified need for carers. Kirklees already have a specific resource for contact support.

- It would be helpful to have a regional workshop on this, using carers and project workers.

Action: OAWY to look at organising this

Post 18

There has been some feedback from carers re how this legal order can affect the support of children post 18. Issues re access to advice, financial support under Leaving Care Act, support to access further education.

Other Orders

Although the focus of this workshop has been SGO, it is important to keep children in other arrangements in mind.

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