



Voice and Influence of Children, Young People and Adopters Report Card April 2018 to September 2018

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?

The One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY) Annual Adopter Survey

An on-line survey was sent to all OAWY adopters to gather their views on the service we provide. We asked adopters to tell us what we do well, here are some of the responses:



- *Staff are well informed and knowledgeable and caring;*
- *Social workers respond promptly. Feel they genuinely care;*
- *Single adopters support group is excellent;*
- *Great communication, support and training opportunities;*
- *Friendly, knowledgeable staff who do their utmost for you. Good communication also;*
- *We feel very lucky to have such fantastic support from our adoption support worker - it has made an immeasurable difference to our family life;*
- *Excellent social workers - they know our family well & work hard to get the support we need;*
- *Post adoption support excellent;*
- *Post adoption social worker has been excellent in supporting us to deal with school issues.*

We also asked adopters what we need to improve on. One of the main themes picked up was around delays, see comments below:

- *The main thing is the time it takes to access support;*
- *Timeliness of adoption support assessments to access asf when families in need;*
- *Getting support to those families who are in crisis much more quickly...;*
- *The wait for support is just too long leaving you feeling like there is no solution to your child and your families issues..;*
- *Timeliness of match funding requests when families in need;*
- *Response times and ASF process.*

A review of the survey responses will be undertaken and an action plan developed to improve areas of concern.

Peer Mentoring Scheme

OAWY has partnered with The Cornerstone Partnership to provide a Peer Mentoring Scheme to all OAWY prospective and experienced adopters. We know how challenging and, at times, stressful the process of adopting and being an adoptive parent can be. Our mentoring scheme relies on volunteer mentors who have the experience and desire to help others through what is often a challenging time.



What is the Cornerstone mentoring programme?

The aim of the Cornerstone peer mentoring programme for prospective and experienced adopters is to:

- provide emotional support and encouragement for families;
- sign-post to local support;
- share experiences and successes of parenting adopted children as they deal with transitions, contact issues, challenging behaviours etc.

What have we done so far?

The peer mentoring scheme is progressing really well. We now have 24 trained peer mentors, 20 of which are actively mentoring families. 26 families in total are now supported through peer mentoring provision (9 prospective adopters and 17 from adopters post adoption). Training is planned for a further 6 peer mentors

Recruitment

adoptervoice

Members of Adopter Voice are invited to support us with the recruitment of staff and often feature on the interview panel. Recently a new adoption panel chair and 2 adoption support social workers have been recruited.



Adopteens Project (Formally AT-ID) is a project that was designed by adopted teenagers who wanted to meet and connect with other adoptees. It offers a safe space both online and offline as members can access our website, interact via an online chat forum, and meet face to face at our activity days. There is also the Adopteens Project youth council for those members who want to get more involved.

At these meetings they talk about adoption, sharing views and experiences to improve others understanding of adoption. The project runs across Yorkshire and Humber and is for any teenagers aged 11+ However, we are not completely strict on this age range and if there is a need we will try to accommodate.

The online chat forum is a safe platform for teenagers to start to get to know each other, and seek support, reassurance and advice from each other or the project workers if needed. It is a specially designed site and access is strictly for adopted teenagers. Project workers will make contact with the parents of the teenager looking to join, to ensure that the registration is genuine and we are open and honest with members that we monitor site regularly to make sure it is a safe, fun place.

“Our daughter has only recently got involved and hasn’t been able to get along to that many events. However, she seems to have really found it helpful at a time in her life when social friendships are particularly hard for her. I think she has benefitted from realising there are other children who have been adopted and maybe experiencing similar issues to her.”

As a parent, I feel relieved that she has an outlet that she can find her own identity as an adopted teenager, one that doesn't involve the parents, something that is her own space, but one that I know the workers understand the world of adopted kids"

Why young people access the Adopteens project:

- *"...to feel better about being adopted";*
- *"...because I want to be able to talk to other adopted people about how they deal with similar problems to what I've faced. It can also teach me how I could deal with other problems if they arise";*
- *"...to find more people who were adopted so I wouldn't feel alone or isolated".*



Stimulating creative projects for adopted children and young people

Working in partnership with  **One**
Adoption

Earlier this year Kelly Amoss, an adoptive parent set-up Seaglass Collective, an initiative that delivers stimulating arts projects specifically designed for adopted children. Kelly has been working in arts management for 17 years and is an adoptive parent of three children, as well as an adoption mentor for Barnardo's.

Research suggests that adopted children often do well in non-core subjects such as the arts, and yet due to their early life experience can struggle to engage with mainstream activities such as drama or music classes. Seaglass Collective brings together Kelly's arts and adoption experience to deliver projects where adopted children can take part within an understanding and supportive environment. Here they can build their self-esteem, creativity, communication, imagination, sense of play and confidence. Seaglass Collective help to remove anxiety by providing lots of information in advance, such as photos of course leaders and venues, and parents are welcome to stay in the workshop space if this helps their child.

The fantastic team of experienced professional artists are all trained by Barnardo's in adoption. The artists will go on to perform the work created by the young people as part of one of their own gigs, giving the young people the opportunity to see their work on a professional stage!

Profiling Events

3 OAWY profiling events have been held in the first 2 quarters of 2018/19. They have resulted in 7 children being matched so far. Approved and stage 2 adopters from OAWY and other agencies across the North of England were invited. The next profiling event will be held in November with plans for 4 more profiling events to be held in 2019.

Feedback from those who've attended has been positive, see comments below:

- *We are leaving with a couple of interests so it's been very good. Let's hope we achieve our dream of a family!*
- *It's been a positive outcome...;*
- *It was a really good event and I enjoyed it;*
- *The event was excellent the family finders and all staff were amazing;*
- *Lovely welcome as a single person;*
- *All extremely informative, really good to have a social worker with me;*
- *Lots of opportunity for discussion and questions.*



Foundations for Attachment

Written by Kim S. Golding: Foundations for Attachment 8 week course is a programme to help adopters to nurture attachments with their child. The course is aimed at adoptive families who are experiencing difficulties due to their child's early life experiences.

This course has been delivered twice so far during 2018/19 by OAWY with one further planned for January 2019. Feedback from the programme has been very positive, see comments from adopters below:

- *"Very thought provoking, made complete sense, made me better understand what was happening for my child"*
- *"Greater understanding and new ways of parenting"*
- *"The theory and putting into practice is helping me to be less stressed"*
- *"Excellent to be part of a mutually supportive group and to embed knowledge"*
- *"I think this has really helped me and my family so much"*
- *"Aggression and violence from children becoming critical. Now feel empowered to change my own response in a more positive way"*
- *"Thank you - I'll miss it!"*

Best ideas - what next?

Transforming lives through immersive Virtual Reality



Imagine if we could see a child's world through their eyes.... imagine what we would learn? That is now possible through Cornerstone's ground-breaking virtual reality (VR). Through their immersive films we can open up worlds never seen before. That of a child in the care system. What they have been through, how this affected them and, more importantly, how the parent, adopter, social worker and teacher can see things from the child's perspective. Cornerstone is using ground-breaking VR and immersive technology in an innovative approach to adoption support.

The films have been filmed in 360 to give the full immersive experience and allow parents and carers to understand the impact of trauma and attachment from the child's perspective. They are shown with VR equipment so the viewer gets the chance to really enter the world of the child.



The films give adopters – pre and post placement – a visual way to understanding the impact of attachment and trauma, form part of the therapeutic parenting training run with DDP and demonstrate the powerful effect PACE parenting can have on a child and the positive impact that will bring to the whole family.

OAWY now have 12 VR headsets which will initially be used as part of the adopter preparation training.

STAY AND PLAY RE-LAUNCH

After many years of running two successful Stay and Play groups at Pool and Barwick areas of Leeds and after feedback from adoptive parents we have found a fantastic new, modern venue in Roundhay which is a more central location for all our families and we think will really appeal to all of you!



The first Stay and Play at this venue will begin on **Thursday 4th October 2018**. The sessions begin at **10.00am until 11.30am** and will be held every two weeks. This is a shift from Church Halls to an activity based Children's Centre which includes opportunities for messy play as well as other interactive experiences. We will end with a sing a long at 11.20am. The usual tea, coffee, biscuits and fruit will be on offer.

The group is for parents with pre-school aged children and we're looking forward to welcoming old and new families to the sessions!