



## Voice and Influence of Adopters, Children & Young People report Card April 2019 to September 2019

**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 2019 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 their responses:



- *We think that the courses you run are important and insightful;*
- *Family finding side support and every dealing has been great, timely, supportive, genuinely care;*
- *Regular newsletter - good source of info;*
- *Opportunities to meet other (prospective) adopters at training events;*
- *My social worker is amazing. She is accessible and extremely helpful when I need her;*

- *We have always found a listening / no judging ear. Supportive when we need it most and encouraging;*
- *Supporting adopted children in school;*
- *Empathy, advice, training, experience.*

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

- *You need more staff so parents can be seen in better time frames;*
- *The time it takes to access support;*

- *The timescales for post adoption support..;*
- *Reducing waiting times for support;*
- *Timescales are excessively long and unnecessary.*

## OAWY Fun Days!



OAWY held its first Fun Day in June 2019 and it's second in October 2019. This was in response to prospective adopters getting a better understanding of the children waiting for adoption in the region. The Fun Day is a chance for adopters (OAWY & external) to meet some of the children who are waiting to be adopted, allowing them to interact with the children in an enjoyable environment. The children who attended these events were those who would typically wait longer to be adopted. There is careful preparation for these events with children, their foster carers and adopters.

The June event resulted in 2 matches (1 internal and 1 external) and 16 expressions of interest have been received following the October event. Here are some of the comments from the adopters who attended:

- *Really great experience. Well worth it;*
- *It was so useful to meet the children and their carers, it was invaluable;*
- *...it was great to talk to the foster carers about the children and to meet the children..;*
- *I had a fantastic time, thank you very much;*
- *Thank you. It was a really nice event, I enjoyed it;*
- *We loved the day. Thank you;*
- *Very friendly atmosphere made welcome.*

## Profiling Events

Profiling events continue to be a success in raising the profile of children waiting for adoption. 3 have been delivered by OAWY so far this year and have resulted in 3 matches to date:

- April event – 2 matches (2 children)
- July event – 1 match (1 child);
- September event - 1 is progressing for a sibling group of 2 and there



Here is some of the positive feedback from those who attended the events:

- *It's very nice to have event where we can put our interest in;*
- *The staff are very welcoming and helpful;*
- *Good and compact and easy to talk with social worker;*
- *Good venue, well set out.*

## Adopter Voice

Adopter Voice continue to influence and help us improve the adoption service. Some of the things they have done are:

**adopter**voice  
Creating empowerment and engagement for the adoption community

- Tested the OAWY website for ease of use and content - the website is now live for adopters to access for information, resources, support groups and events;
- Involvement in developing the new assessment framework training;
- Involvement in developing the new multi-disciplinary team model;
- They have recruited adopted children/ young adults for the prep training from a network of adopters;
- Sought new panel members, specifically male or same sex adopters & black and minority adopters currently under represented.
- Being involved in staff events to provide perspectives
- Involvement in recruitment of staff with young people from the adoptees group also involved in recruitment of service manager post.

## Information Events



Adopters have said our paper system for processing applications is slow. We are changing this and now have an electronic sign-in system for those attending information events. This links to an on-line survey that is sent to prospective adopters after the event so we can capture feedback. OAWY have held 14 information events in the first 6 months of 2019/20 with 215 households attending. Here are some of the views of the prospective adopters attending:

- *Brilliant staff;*
- *Loads of great insight and real life clarity on what to expect;*
- *Was really informative but also a relaxed atmosphere which was nice as was a little nervous at first;*
- *It was great to hear from a lady who has her own adopted child;*
- *The staff hit a very good balance of transparent and frank. And also motivational and compelling;*
- *Everyone were really welcoming, gave us very clear information and put at ease with the process as we were slightly nervous;*

- *It was good to hear from someone who had been through the adoption process and become a parent for the first time.*

## Virtual Reality

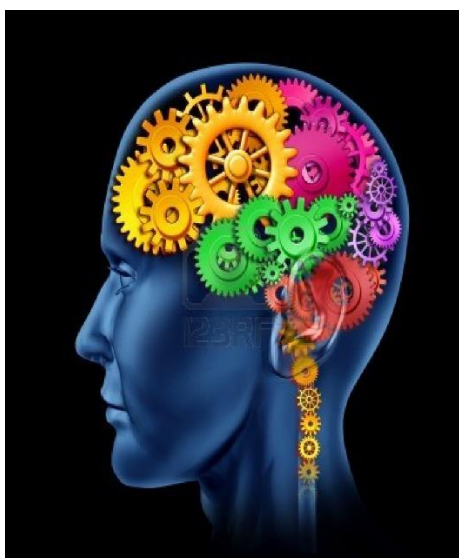
The use of Virtual Reality (VR) being embedded in to adopter preparation training has been very successful. We have purchased an additional headsets which now means they can be routinely used within individual assessment sessions to support preparation to adopt and are being rolled to be used in family finding and adoption support over the next year. Here are some prospective adopters thoughts regarding VR:



- *Very powerful. Very sophisticated;*
- *The last VR video stuck with me and I learnt there is more to this than what I originally thought;*
- *Great experience;*
- *Very thought provoking..;*
- *This opened my eyes to what looked after children could have been through.*



## Brain Based Parenting – Twilight Session



This workshop provides an opportunity to examine the impact of abuse and neglect on children's brain development and explore parenting strategies that best support repair and healthy brain development. The content of the session covers:

- How brains develop pre-birth and in infancy;
- The stress response system (fight, flight, freeze);
- Facing the realities of children's experiences;
- Shame;
- Distressed behaviour;
- The principles of therapeutic parenting.

Here are some of the comments received from those adoptive parents attending:

- *We found the course very interesting and has given us a good understanding of how the brain works and what tools we could use to aid us in been adoptive parents;*
- *It was an excellent session. Very well delivered. The complex and scientific information was presented in clear, creative and informal manner;*
- *The staff were very welcoming & clearly knew what they were talking about when it comes to brain based parenting;*
- *Very useful, informative session.*

## **Birth Parent – Twilight Session**

Adopted teenagers have talked about the importance of identity and lifelong relationships & birth families and adoptive families are key in helping children develop a coherent sense of identity, usually through contact arrangements and being open with children about their history. Many adoptive families have misconceptions about birth parents and therefore we have introduced workshops in preparation training, delivered by birth parents talking about their experiences of contact. The introduction of this has been very powerful for adopters and has helped dispel myths about birth parents.



Here are some comments from the adopters who have attended:

- *Contact with birth parents can make such a valuable difference to their lives but also for the child and to adoptive parents. In a very positive way;*
- *The session certainly humanised the idea of birth parents and have an understanding of the kinds of things they have gone through in order for children to be taken from their care;*
- *I felt the ladies were incredibly brave! It made me appreciate how much they rely on the letterbox contact even if they don't feel in a position to reply straight away;*
- *Mixed emotions. Understand from birth parents side now;*
- *I thought that the experience was very powerful;*
- *It's a very powerful experience and I feel it is highly useful for all adopters to meet birth parents and humanise the people whose circumstances mean they lose their children into care.*



# ADOPTTEENS

## FORMERLY KNOWN AS AT-ID

### Adopteens Timeline Animation

<https://youtu.be/ZA-5DCCK-8E>

This animation completed by young people in the Adopteens group as they reflect on important stages in their lives, sharing their thoughts and feelings about the various support they have received providing important messages for professionals and parents and carers. This is a useful learning tool for anyone professionally and/or personally linked to adoption and has been shared with corporate parenting boards and at conferences. Please share widely.

## Best ideas - what next?

### Website Redesign

Over the next few months we will be working with our website developer to redesign the One Adoption website in order to make it more up to date, accessible and user friendly.



### Siblings training

We are developing a specific days training programme for adopters to consider siblings to enable more children to live together locally with adopters who feel well supported to meet the needs of two or more children moving in together.