

Appendix 1



Voice and Influence of Adopters, Children & Young People report Card April 2019 to March 2020

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?

Prospective adopters wanted more opportunities for adopter led matching

Profiling Events

The Profiling events give prospective adopters information about children waiting for adoption in the region.

OAWY have delivered 5 events this year which have resulted in 8 matches so far:

- April event; 2 matches (2 children);
- July event; 1 match (1 child);
- Sept' event; 2 matches (2 children);
- Nov' event; 1 match (2 children);



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

- *Very friendly and welcoming staff;*
- *Informative and questions answered;*
- *Welcoming and fully explained;*
- *Very approachable and professional.*

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 and October events resulted in 4 matches for 4 children (2 internal and 2 external) and 27 expressions of interest overall. 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..;*
- *Thank you. It was a really nice event, I enjoyed it;*
- *We loved the day. Thank you;*
- *Very friendly atmosphere made welcome.*

A further event had been scheduled for March but this had to be postponed. Due to the success of the first 2 events more will be scheduled when it is safe to do so.



10 Out of 15 Adopteens Youth Council members are from West Yorkshire. Here is some of the work Adopteens have completed or been involved in this year:

- Youth council session held in January – ARC adoption came to discuss their digital life story work and gather young people’s views. Also completed work around the One Adoption (OA) questions on letterbox, life story and contact;
- Activity day has been held – a photography workshop based at the Hepworth. Great workshop, positive feedback;
- A young person presented at the OA conference on Contact at end of February;
- Have been running a series of song writing workshops in association with Sea glass collective. 7 members of Adopteens have attended these workshops – a series of 3 workshops with a gig at the end of it where musicians will perform some of the songs that the young people have written;
- 2 x Young people sat on interview panel for Service delivery manager.

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.

Adopter Voice

Adopter Voice continue to influence and help us improve the adoption service. Here are some highlights:

adoptervoice

Creating empowerment and engagement for the adoption community

- A Facebook group for adopters in Yorkshire and Humber is in place with 530 members. Over 200 of these members are from West Yorkshire. This fantastic online community helps adopters to support each other and they offer views and opinions from questions posed about practice and to test ideas with.
- Adopter feedback is influencing changes to contact, life story work and introductions within OAWY;
- There are now 25 peer mentors supporting over 70 families.



Early Permanence Placement (EPP)

This training provides an overview of the process that identifies children where EPP may be in their interests. It also provides an opportunity for prospective adopters to increase their understanding of the role of EPP carers in order to inform their decision making.



Here are some comments from those who have attended this training:

- *We had brief understanding of what EPP was going in however we have a clear understating now that we have done the session;*
- *Great training. Very honest and realistic;*
- *We were pretty sure we wanted to do EPP but the training confirmed we definitely do;*
- *The key learning for me was being able to listen to and ask questions to someone who has gone through the process and ask her opinions and thoughts;*
- *A great experience and being able to ask questions in an open environment was just what we needed.*

Connected by Adoption

Connected by Adoption is an informal, one day training event that offers relatives and close friends of those adopting the opportunity to ask questions, feel involved and to speak with others in a similar situation. The main reasons parents adopt are discussed, myths dispelled and a there is discussion of the changes in the adoption process over the years. We also look at how connected people can learn about embracing a child's identity when they join an adoptive family, and how to help a child feel securely embedded into their new family.



Here are some comments from those who have attended:

- With little prior knowledge of the formal adoption process, the information was very useful and informative. It certainly gave us a very good introduction to how we can assist to help a successful adoption;*
- I feel much more enabled to provide support on a practical and emotional level;*
- Knowledge gained will, we feel, be of great benefit.*

Birth Parent – Twilight Session

Adopted teenagers talk 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:

- *It's really eye-opening to hear about things from the birth parents' point of view;*
- *I really enjoyed this session, it was good to hear stories from the other side!*
- *The session really cemented the benefits for contact. Helps to see the wider perspective and aids in being able to feel empathy for birth parents. An extremely valuable session;*
- *It helped me to ensure I am patient and sympathetic towards birth parents no matter how hostile they might appear. I wished I could give them a hug;*
- *It was nice to hear the other side of adoption, I can honestly say I hadn't thought of it from the side of the birth parents;*
- *It was nice to hear the stories of the birth parents. It must be so hard for them and for them to sit there and tell people their story and their feelings was amazing.*