

Gwasanaeth  
**Mabwysiadu**  
Gogledd Cymru



North Wales  
**Adoption**  
Service

ANNUAL REPORT AND QUALITY OF CARE REVIEW  
APRIL 2016 - MARCH 2017

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# **North Wales Adoption Service - Adoption Agency Annual Report and Quality of Care Review April 2016 – March 2017**

## **1. Introduction**

The Adoption Service (Wales) Regulations 2007, Regulation 22, require all adoption agencies to complete a review of the quality of the service and for this to be completed on an annual basis.

This is set out below.

### **Review of Quality of Service**

- (1) The local authority must make suitable arrangements to establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and improving the quality of adoption services provided by the local authority.
- (2) The system established under paragraph (1) must make provision by the local authority for:-
  - (a) the quality of service to be reviewed at least annually; and
  - (b) the local authority to obtain the views of:-
    - (i) adoptive and natural parents and children being adopted;
    - (ii) any person receiving services from the local authority or their representatives in relation to adoption;
    - (iii) staff employed by the local authority; and
    - (iv) any local authority,on the quality of care provided, as part of any review undertaken.
- (3) Following a review of the quality of care, the local authority must within 28 working days prepare a report of that review and make a copy of the available report in an appropriate format when requested by —
  - (a) the National Assembly;
  - (b) service users;
  - (c) representatives of service users;
  - (d) staff employed by the local authority.

## **2. Background**

The North Wales Adoption Service (NWAS) has completed its seventh year of activity. We continue to work with our colleagues in the Nation Adoption Service and regional adoption services in South Wales to improve the services for children and adults involved in adoption in Wales.

NWAS representatives continue their involvement with the four sub groups which include:

**1. Media & Marketing – attended by Wendy Thomas Recruitment Officer NWAS**

- The focus has been on an evaluation of the local and nation recruitment activity, reflection on the National Adoption Week of 2016 and preparation for the National Adoption Week of 2017. The group also consider the needs of the children waiting on the National Register to inform the recruitment requirements on a regular basis.

**2. Performance Framework – attended by Mandy Humphries NWAS Manager/Jon Allen**

- The number of performance indicators continues to increase to include further details on placements and adoption support. Due to the structure of the North Wales Adoption Service and the data collection systems of the local authorities some of the latter information is difficult to collate accurately across the region. Several authorities are currently involved in preparing to transfer to the new IT system WCCIS and are therefore not in a position to update current systems to include this information.
- Due to a variety of information data collection systems across Wales it is still essential that ongoing discussion is undertaken to ensure that data collection is equitable and reflects more accurate comparisons across the regions.

**3. Adoption Support – attended by Stevie Thomas**

- The focus has been on developing a Framework for Adoption Support across Wales and NWAS has been involved in ensuring that NAS has had the opportunity to consult with all stakeholders

**4. Common Policies – attended by Hayley Ennis Social worker Ynys Mon and Tracy Roberts NWAS:**

- The focus has been on developing a common 'Enquiry to Approval' process. Work on the enquiry to approval process is on hold as advice from WG was that any move to staged process would require changes to regulations. We await further developments on this issue. Related to this subject, an additional performance indicator has been introduced for 2017-18 to measure the timescale from formal assessment to approval as part of performance measurements.

A common process needs to be agreed in order for the data collection and performance indicators to be comparable across all five regional services.

### 3. Current Position

The service continues to be hosted by Wrexham County Borough Council and the main office is located in Lambpit Street, Wrexham. Staff seconded to the service continue to be based in their own local authorities except for Flintshire social workers who are now located in the Wrexham office.

The North Wales Adoption Service in partnership with the six local authorities is responsible for providing the following services:

- Recruitment, Training, Assessment and Supporting prospective and approved adopters
- Matching children to adopters
- S98 Access to records, Search and Intermediary Services for adopted adults and their relatives
- Birth Parent counselling
- Adoption Support
- Development and management of joint adoption panels
- Partner of Parent Adoptions
- Adoptions with a Foreign Element

#### **ADOPTERS - Under Assessment (as of April 2017)**

	Conwy	Denbigh	Flint	Gwyn	Wrexham	Ynys Mon	Other	Total
Adopters Currently Under Assessment	1	3	2	5	2	3	1	17
Foster Carers wishing to adopt under	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	4
Partner of Parent Under Assessment	2	1	1	2	0	0	0	6
Total No: of Assessments	4	5	4	7	2	4	1	27

Of the 17 general adoption assessments being undertaken 3 of these are second time adopters and two are adoptions with a foreign element.

#### **ADOPTERS - Available/On hold for Potential Links (as of April 2017)**

	Conwy	Denbigh	Flint	Gwyn	Wrexham	Ynys	Other NWAS	Other Agency	Total
Available	1	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	5
On hold for potential matches	1	3	3	1	3	3	1	1	16

Of the 5 families available, two who have expressed an interest in a female child over the age of 2-3 years continue to wait for an appropriate match. The remaining three families are waiting for a very young child, one is a recent re-approval and the other two have been offered several potential links but these have been refused by the child care social workers. Issues regarding their refusals have been discussed with the families and additional work is being undertaken to update their information.

There are currently 16 families on hold for potential links these includes 5 families for sibling groups of 2 and 11 for single children. 15 families are via NWAS, 1 family from another agency has been matched with a sibling group of 2.

	Conw	Denb	Flint	Gwyn	Wrex	Ynys Mon	Other	Total
Adopters – allocated for initial visit	0	0	1	3	0	1	0	5
Adopters – waiting approval for training medicals and DBS'	1	0	0	2	2	0	0	5
Partner of Parent checks in progress/application not yet filed	1	2	4	1	3	3	0	14

5 adoption applications were waiting for initial visits 2 of these were for Partner of Parent and 3 general adoptions that were offered earlier appointments but were unable to accept due to personal commitments.

The Partner of Parent cases will not be allocated for assessment until prospective adopters inform us that they are ready to file their papers in court.

#### **CHILDREN (as of 5<sup>th</sup> April 2017)**

	Conw	Denb	Flint	Gwyn	Wrex	Ynys Mon	Other	Total
Children On Hold for potential matches	5	3	1	4	0	5	0	18
Children - no identified match at present	4	4	1	1	2	1	0	13
Total No: of Families Required	2	2	1	1	2	1	0	9

Of the 13 children with no identified match at present there is 1 sibling group of 3 (a possible link from another agency is being followed up at present) 2 sibling groups of 2 and 6 single children. 4 of the children are over 5 years of age, 3 are between 2 and 3 years and 5 are under 2 years.

The majority of these children were referred to the service during the third quarter (7) and fourth quarter (4) of this financial year and the majority already placed on the Welsh

Adoption Register and Adoption Link. Where potential links have been identified, none proceeded to placements due to the needs of the specific children.

#### 4. Staffing

##### Registered Manager

The registered manager of the Adoption Service is Mandy Humphries who was appointed in June 2009 and has been manager of the service since April 2010. Qualifications include B.ED; Diploma in Social Work; Diploma in Disability; ILM Level 3; Post Graduate Certificate in Managing Practice Quality in Social Care.

Both deputy managers are qualified social workers and have undertaken management training Trish Welsh (Deputy Manager East) achieved the Post Graduate Certificate in Managing Practice Quality in Social Care. Stevie Thomas (Deputy Manager West) has Level 5 ILM qualification.

The service consists of staff members directly employed by the host authority and staff seconded to the service from the remaining five local authorities. Additional sessional workers are employed via Wrexham County Council and based across North Wales.

##### Leavers:

With regard to permanent posts 2 members of staff left the service:

- **Conwy** – Both social worker vacancies from 08/07/16 and 29/07/16 until 04/01/17 Interviews were undertaken for all new posts and the Safe Recruitment guidelines were adhered to.

Current number of social workers full time equivalent is 11, plus one part time (32 hours) training officer and a part time (18 hours) contact co-ordinator.

Current number of sessional workers available for assessments stands at 2.

Team meetings continue to be held on a monthly basis at Bedford Street, Rhyl. Operational issues are discussed and training/development/discussion issues are undertaken in the afternoon. To date these sessions have included:

- “An overview of Signs of safety in Child Protection” presented by Colin Tucker
- “Life Story Literature Review”
- Wales Adoption Register – Singeta Kalhan-Gregory, Project Manager WAR
- “Service User Events” - Martina McCrossan, Policy and Practice Officer, NAS
- Parents Protect – Helen Kinney and Samantha Humphreys
- The Role of Smell in Adoptive Parents’ and Children’s Behaviours – Carolyn Jones
- Assessing BMI – Carolyn Jones
- Trans-racial Placements – Tesni Roberts
- “Developing Emotional Intelligence & Resilience” Neil Thompson Lecture @ Glyndwr University

- WRAP– presentation by Samantha Humphreys

### **Additional Staff Development and Training**

Training undertaken by staff in the last 12-months included:-

- Cultural awareness in safeguarding children
- Helping to resolve conflict (mediation skills)
- Social Services and Well Being Act:
  - Introduction and general functions
  - Safeguarding children
  - Assessing and meeting needs
- IAC assessment training
- Looked after children
- Wellness recovery action planning
- S47 training / Joint Safeguarding Awareness
- I Trent system input information
- Managing the PDR process
- North Wales Adoption Workshop Moving children on to adoption - Good Practice
- protecting information level 1
- Signs of Safety
- Developing Emotional Competence - Neil Thompson
- Therapeutic Parenting, Problem Solving Strategies - Sarah Dillon
- Attachment, Trauma and Neuroscience / FASD via NWAS
- “Change & Motivation” (Half day)
- Feeling valued, Supported & Feeling Equipped Flintshire Children’s Services Event
- S47 Investigation Training, Module 1/ Module 2 / Module 4
- Adult Attachments (Jane Jones-Denbighshire Therapeutic Service)
- Supporting the mental health of LAC
- Attachment awareness in education
- DDP training and Therapeutic parenting - strategies
- On line Lectures 28<sup>th</sup> April, 5<sup>th</sup> May, 12<sup>th</sup> May, 26<sup>th</sup> May
- LAC Education
- Mental Health Young minds
- Yellow Kite Training - Attachment
- Family Finding Training
- Therapeutic Parenting Training
- Portfolio Training (Student)
- Cultural Awareness and Welsh Language Courses
- Consultation Additional Learning needs Bill
- Motivational Interviewing.



## Staffing List

Authority/Office Base	Position	Name	Hours
Host Authority Main Office: Lambpit Street, Wrexham:  Wrexham and Flintshire Social Workers	Manager:	Mandy Humphries	37 hours
	Admin:	Larry Groom Sarah Picken	37 hours 28 hours
	Social Worker:	Lesley Davies Helen Kinney	37 hours 37 hours
	Training Officer:	Denise Roberts	32 hours
	Recruitment Officer:	Wendy Thomas	37 hours
	Contact Coordinator:	Frances Williams Clare Pearce	22 hours weekly
	Contact Admin:		
	Social Workers:	Nicola Kernighan Samantha Humphreys	37 hours 37 hours
	Sessional Social Worker	Pat Fairclough	
	CHARMS IT Admin:	Jon Allen	18.5 hours
Rhyl Denbighshire	Social Workers	Tracy Roberts Hazel Davies	37 hours 37 hours (from 15/10/15)
Glan-y-Don, Conwy	Deputy Manager East:	Trish Welsh	37 hours
	Social Workers:	Sian Peacock Donna Thomas Greta Jones Lisa Jenkins	Left the service 08/07/16 Left the service 29/07/16 37 hours as from 04/01/17 37 hours as from 04/01/17
	Sessional Worker	Morwenna Berry	
County Offices, Ynys Môn	Social Workers	Lydia Murphy Carolyn Jones	37 hours 37 hours
Penrallt, Gwynedd	Deputy Manager West	Stevie Thomas	37 hours (since 16/03/16)
	Social Worker	Sara Williams	37 hours
	Admin	Manon Roberts	18.5 hours

**Staff Sickness:** There has been a decrease of 50% in total days sickness during this financial year. 29 days sickness leave were taken by a total of eleven members of staff with the majority only having taken 1 or 2 days off.

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**STAFF SURVEY**      Sent to 19 Members of Staff Responses 16

1. 93.75% knew how to access the adoption statement of purpose and the policies and procedures for the Adoption Service.
2. 100% had access to a copy of the National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Services for Wales 2007 and the Adoption Service (Wales) Regulations 2007 to support you in your work?
3. 87.5% feel supported in their role by the Management Team.  
Comments: - *Not always; managers are always available to support me in my role; most of the time, yes. There are times when I have received conflicting messages between managers on the same subject*
4. 100% state they have clear lines of accountability and reporting within the adoption service.
5. 87.5% feel there is effective communication between Management and staff,  
Comments: *Not always with certain issues; We have regular Team Meetings and can always contact managers outside of this forum. Managers communicate regularly through e-mail also; This could be improved. Staff can be made to feel small and under-minded in Team Meetings.*
6. 68.75% stated they receive supervision, if so how regularly.  
Comments: *Monthly - 6 weekly; mainly caseload led; supervision is actively encouraged and engaged in. It is well planned and structured and time allowed for reflection;*
7. 93.75% stated they receive an appraisal, regularly.  
Comments: *Every six months I do not believe the system used is effective, it is time consuming; Annually; annually and it is also reviewed*
8. 93.75% stated they have access to sources of advice (including from other professionals) and counselling.  
Comments: *No counselling; Some aspect of the team are in same building, get more colleague support; Through own Authority; From other team members; Advice from legal etc when required. Not sure what is meant in this instance about counselling*
9. 71.43% have access to the necessary amount of training to support their continued registration with the Care Council.  
Comments: *Always supportive of any training requests; Variable dependant on where the training is ie often in Cardiff so costs does come into it; general training through the LA is available and accessed however it is not specialised or specific enough for my role. Having said this when I have identified relevant training I have been given permission and the funding to attend; Training opportunities through NNAS is very limited; There is no or very limited training available through LA which is relevant to role; Much training however, seems to address the same level of issues*

10. 75% had received training in child protection within the last 3 years. One other was due to attend training shortly. All staff members are able to access child protection training via their own local authority and are advised that this should be updated at least every 3 years.
11. Training undertaken in the last 12- months. (See page 8 under staff training)
12. 68.75% feel the Adoption Service's premises are fit for purpose. 18.75% Don't Know.  
*Comments: Agile working is more themed now, so no; as best they can be given staff are spread over six authorities as their base*
13. 50% rated the standard and the quality of care provided by the Adoption Service to both looked after children and their carers as excellent; 37.5% Good and 12.5% Satisfactory.  
*Comment - There are occasions when family finding is slow however I believe this is due to CCSW not providing up to date information on the children that delays the process; There is also inconsistency across the service of whether information should be anonymised despite guidance; Post adoption support needs to improve - not so hard for adopters to gain support following adoption order*
14. Suggestions on improvements that could be made to areas of the Adoption Service:
  - *More post adoption support needed for adoptive families.*
  - *Life Story Work Training;*  
*Staff training should become the responsibility of the training officer within the service with each local authority putting money into the service for staff training, then we can access suitable training for all staff members and also offer this to child care social workers at a potential cost which can be used then to utilise more suitable training.*
  - *It would be advantageous if support for adopters could come directly from within NWAS. To achieve this we would require specialist workers who are DDP practitioners who also had the capability to practice Theraplay. Staff training LA's should be providing more specific training to meet the needs of the team i.e. DDP, Theraplay, adult attachment, assessing adult attachment using the AAI, assessing children's attachments.*
  - *resources from WAG to be provided to the national service / local teams to develop the support to families locally*
  - *A support group for birth siblings who remain in the care system may be of benefit.*

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## **RESPONSES FROM CHILD CARE SOCIAL WORKERS INVOLVED WITH ADOPTION VIA NWAS**

### **CHILDCARE SOCIAL WORKERS** *Sent to 36 Childcare Social Workers and IRO's Responses 2*

1. 100% stated they understand the role of the Adoption Service?
2. 100% stated they felt there is open and honest communication between themselves and the Adoption Team?
3. 100% viewed their experiences where they have worked alongside the Adoption Team in seeking adoptive placements for children as good?
  - *Comment - I have always felt able to raise concerns and when appropriate they have been acted upon*

4. 50% viewed the support provided by the Service - during the matching process, in presenting paperwork to Panel and attendance at the Joint Adoption Panel as good. 50% not applicable.
6. View of the quality of care provided by adopters approved by the North Wales Adoption Service? If relevant please state suggestions for improvement – 100% Good.

## **5. Adoption Panel Membership / Advisors and Training**

NWAS continues to be responsible for 3 Joint Adoption Panels which run each month across the region: Flintshire/Wrexham, Conwy/Denbighshire and Gwynedd/Ynys Môn

All panels are held on a monthly basis 3 emergency panels were required in Flintshire/Wrexham and one additional panel held in Gwynedd/Ynys Môn panel during this period. All panels have held Business Panel days and appraisals for panel members have been undertaken by the three joint panels. All adoption panels are appropriately resourced with independent members from a good cross section of the community including, adopted adults, adopters, birth parent, foster carers, CAMHS professionals, voluntary agency representatives as well as the statutory required members i.e. medical advisers, social workers and legal advisers with each local authority being represented appropriately. Due to some panel members retiring several of the members previously on the Central List have now been recruited as permanent members. This prompted another advertisement for new members with a closing date of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. Interviews will be arranged in April/May 2017.

### **Reflections from the Chair of the Wrexham and Flintshire Joint Adoption Panel Report**

The Wrexham and Flintshire panel continues to work well and there have not been any significant issues that needed to be dealt with over the last year. There has been the need for an emergency panel meeting and during the yearly review of panel members they all commented on how well members work together, and how any recommendations and comments are always substantiated and referenced to assessment documents. There have been a few significant changes in personal within the members of the panel, and I am pleased that they have integrated well into the overall running and decision making process of the panel. This is further evidenced by the high levels of attendance across the board with all panel members. The panel has also approved several observers to the panel from a variety of different back grounds.

The panel members commended, on how much they enjoyed and gained knowledge from the joint panel business and training day. I am pleased that this is something that is to be further developed over the next year.

The quality of the Social Work assessments continue to improve and this is something that makes the work of the chair far simpler and clearer. There is also evidence of continued improvement in practice within the preparation of papers for the panel, with comments made about the improvement of financial information within portfolios been taken up by Social Workers.

Panel Advisor has been extremely supportive and very professional within her role and has been able to assist within the effective running of the meetings. Also as chair I have very much appreciated the high quality minutes which are taken and drafted promptly before all meetings with the Approved Decision Makers.

*Emyr Owen - Independent Adoption Panel Chair*

### **Reflections from the Chair of the Conwy and Denbighshire Joint Adoption Panel**

There were eleven panel meetings from April 2016 to March 2017 and two business meetings. Two members failed to achieve the required 75% attendance at panel meetings and this matter was addressed with them in confidence. The majority of members achieved over 90% attendance. Only one panel member failed to attend both business meetings. The Panel, Legal and Medical Advisers were always represented at every Panel. The Conwy & DCC Joint Panel was always quorate and no meetings had to be postponed or cancelled during the year.

The overall functioning of the panel is good, with high levels of panel member engagement. During the annual reviews held in 2016 Panel Members were generally positive about the progress made throughout the year. There had been times when complex cases had challenged Panel members but any issues arising from these were fully addressed and explored with the group as a whole during business meetings and with individual members in confidential meetings. There continues to be positive and constructive feedback about the performance of the Chair, the Panel Adviser and the Legal and Medical Advisers.

There is a wide range of both professional and personal experiences among Panel Members which helps to enrich discussion and strengthen the group's ability to scrutinize the proposals put before them and ensures that assessments have been thorough, fair, open and transparent. All members agreed that the documentation presented to them by NWAS social workers has improved and is now of a high standard.

Panel members were unanimous in thinking that the NWAS Development Day held in July 2016 and the training about the Social Services and Wellbeing Act had been excellent and that further updates on the implementation of the Act would be useful. The value of sharing training with other Panel members across North Wales and with childcare and adoption social workers was agreed unanimously as it was felt that Panel members could learn from how other Panels operated. It has since been agreed that the three Joint Panels across the region would hold combined business meetings in 2017. A number of members expressed an interest in observing another Joint Adoption Panel in North Wales. One member asked about observing in court while two members, including one of the Local Authority Representatives, were interested in shadowing a childcare social worker.

The Panel currently has the capacity to recruit additional members and we are working with the North Wales Adoption Service on a recruitment campaign to fill these vacancies and also

recruit additional members to the Central List. It is envisaged that the Panel will be back up to full membership within the three months.

*Sue Roberts (Independent Adoption Panel Chair)*

### **Reflections from the Panel Advisor of the Gwynedd & Ynys Mon Joint Adoption Panel**

Gwynedd and Anglesey Adoption Panel continue to be held 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month. We have moved forward with identifying a suitable venue to host the adoption panel in Anglesey with the adoption panel now being held at County Council Business Centre in Llangefni. Panel members continue to be supportive of moving forward to being a paperless panel. Gwynedd and Anglesey are in the process of reviewing the resources required for panel to go paperless and the cost of this for both authorities.

Overall panel members continue to be satisfied with the performance of their colleagues and agreed that there is a wide range of experience and knowledge within the panel.

Panel members need to continue to keep focused on the task in hand and discussions need to be within the role and remit of the panel. The overall functioning of the panel is good, with high levels of panel member engagement. Apart from 1 panel member all Panel members have had their annual review, with development opportunities discussed with each member.

5 Of Gwynedd and Anglesey panel members attended the joint panel training provided on the 11<sup>th</sup> July 2016. Of the 5 panel members that attended training they were able to identify the different approach and practice across north wales adoption panels and the need to have consistency. Panel members would also appreciate feedback on successful adoption placements and the percentage of adoption breakdowns

Manon Roberts has taken over from Glesni Williams as panel minute taker. Gwyneth Hughes was appointed as independent panel member in March 2017. They have integrated well into the panel, and have begun to make significant positive contributions.

*Stevie Thomas – Gwynedd & Ynys Mon Panel Advisor*

### **Joint Panel Working Group**

The Joint Panel Working Group continues to meet on a quarterly basis in order to discuss any new legislation and other issues regarding panel processes. This year the group has concentrated on panel paperwork, training needs and the introduction of amalgamation of Joint Panel Business Days. Work will be undertaken in 2017-18 on the updating and improved foster carers report, the matching report and review paperwork. Vacancies for new panel members including Central List were advertised with a closing date of end of March. Interviews will be conducted in April/May 2017.

**For detailed list of Panel members, Tenure of office and Appraisal dates see Appendix 1.**

Panel Members are familiar with the requirement to attend a minimum of 75% of panel meetings.

### Joint Panel Training

Joint Panel Training Day was provided on the 11<sup>th</sup> July 2016. Emyr Owen facilitated training on the Social Services and Well Being Act for panel members which was well received. The afternoon session included discussion and group work regarding the difference in practices in panels and how these could be standardised. A total of 27 panel members attended the training.

Emyr Owen also provided a session on 'Motivation to Change' to members of the Flintshire and Wrexham Joint Adoption Panel. This was provided in response to assessing social workers' questioning discussions in panels regarding adopters' health, financial and DBS issues. The session highlighted the need for panel members to seek evidence on adopters' ability to change in the PAR assessment rather than focus on the negatives of past issues.

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### Responses to Quality Assurance Questionnaires and panel members comment sheets regarding Panel Activity:

*Sent to 37 Panel Members Responses 11*

1. Responses received from Panel members from Joint Panels:

Flintshire & Wrexham 18.18%; Conwy & Denbighshire 45.45%; Gwynedd & Ynys Mon 36.36%

2. **Do you receive the required documentation from the adoption service in a timely manner?**

Always 63.64%      Mostly 36.36%

Comments:

*Documentation has sometimes arrived a few days before meeting. Extra documentation has been needed; The Panel pack arrives approx. 2 weeks before Panel which gives me time to review and peruse specific points. The pack is comprehensive, but sometimes the same points are raised again in the pack; Panel pack is always full and complete.*

3. **What is your view of the quality of documentation presented to panel in relation to the adoption service?**

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory
CAR	36.36%	45.45%	18.18%
PAR	45.45%	45.45%	9.09%
Matching	54.55%	36.36%	9.09%
Support Plan	18.18%	72.73%	9.09%

Comments –

*The CAR/B at times seems like a copy and paste with basic inaccuracies (such as sibling names or DOB). This document sometimes appears to be aimed at evidence used for court to obtain placement orders rather than being mindful that this is a record that the child will have access to in the future and also the information which determines whether adoptive parents wish to proceed with the link.*

**Issue raised:** Any issues raised regarding the quality of the CAR/B are discussed with the ADM so that these can be addressed by the line managers. Some concerns have been raised about the format of the CAR/B and this has been raised with the National Adoption Service.

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### Comments on Panel Members Monthly Quality Sheets

- Matching Report – *many concerns raised in initial Panel, no clear audit trail/reports to evidence how all outstanding actions/concerns have been addressed* – **Issue Raised: Case was deferred by panel for further information to be provided and discussed with ADM.**
- PAR – *I thought this was a very good report*
- PAR – *comprehensive, concise and clear*
- PAR – *very comprehensive and informative*
- Matching Report – *factual, informative*

## **6. Adoption Panel Activity**

Each Joint Panel plans to conduct a monthly panel and all dates are planned in advance. 3 additional panels were required in Flintshire/Wrexham and one additional panel in Gwynedd/Ynys Mon. Where additional panels have been required over the past twelve months members have been contacted to ascertain their availability. This has not proven to be an issue over the past as panel members have been extremely accommodating to ensure quoracy and the availability of members on the Central List is also a valuable resource.

### **Panel Activity April 2016–March 2017**

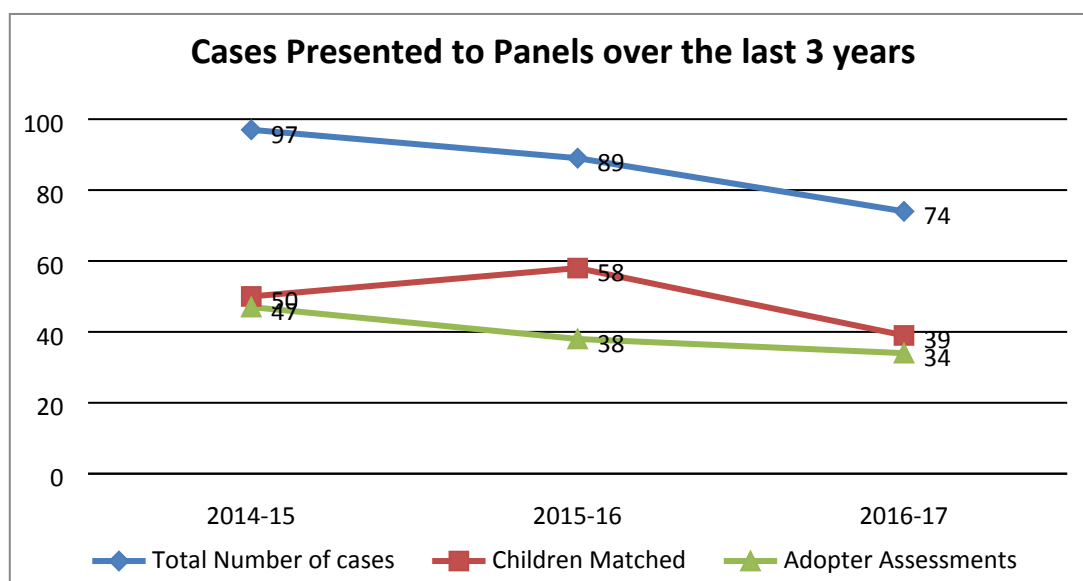
<b>Panels</b>	<b>Flint/Wrex</b>	<b>Conw/Denb</b>	<b>Gwyn/Ynys</b>	<b>Total</b>
Adoption Assessments	16	9	9 (1 FE)	34
Should Be Adopted	1	0	0	1
Matching (no: children)	11(13)	14(15)	11(11)	36(39)
Deferred	2	0	0	2
Deregistered	0	0	0	0
Review	0	1	0	1
Total	30	24	20	74

**Flintshire/Wrexham Adoption Panel** - 1 Should Be Placed for Adoption and 1 matching case and case deferred due to issues on the adoption support plan and re-presented at later panels. One adopter returned re-assessed as a single adopter.

**Gwynedd/Ynys Adoption Panel** – One match was not approved by ADM and child re-presented for another match at a later panel.

This year has seen a decrease in the number of adopters being presented to panel for approval from 38 in 2015-16 to 34. The number of children presented to all panels for matching decreased from 58 to 39 (one child matched did not proceed to placement as adopters from another agency decided not to proceed and another match was not approved by the ADM but child was matched at a later stage.

### No: of Assessments and Matches Presented to Joint Panels over the last 3 Years.



Graph 6.1

The graph shows a decrease in the number of children presented to all 3 joint panels for matching (50:58:39) and a decrease of adoption assessments (47:38:34). The increase in family finding activity this year has had some impact on assessments due to the limit on resources in each local authority as has the vacant posts in Conwy. In addition a number of adopters have been counselled out or have been on hold for various reasons during various stages of the process.

### Number of Joint Panels held by year.

Joint Panels	Flintshire/Wrexham			Conwy/Denbighshire			Gwynedd/Ynys Môn		
Year	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Number of Panels held	15	12	13	12	14	11	10	9	12
Panels cancelled due to quoracy issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Panels cancelled for other reasons	0	0	0	2	1	1 No cases	1	2	1 No cases

### Responses to Quality Assurance Questionnaires to Adopters attending NWA panels:

#### Selection of responses from adopters attending Panel (Prospective Adopters and Matching):-

- *It was very helpful to listen to the experiences of both adopter and adoptee on the Panel*
- *When we first started our adoption experience the thought of going to Panel was very scary, but you all made us feel very relaxed and comfortable. I would tell any prospective adopters not to worry and enjoy the experience*

- *We found it a good experience. The Panel and Chair made us feel very at ease*
- *Some Panel Members looked a bit stern, which makes you feel like they won't approve the adoption*
- *A delay of 45-minutes, Panel Members stuck in traffic, one member failed to turn up but had our portfolio of work disappointed but it all turned out ok in the end*
- *I feel that the time I had to speak did not seem enough. There were areas I hadn't discussed and some questions I feel I answered vaguely, however my Social Worker and Chairperson were very supportive afterwards. **Issue Raised: Panel advisers and Chairs to ensure that adopters have the opportunity to ask questions if they require. In general most adopters either have questions prepared or none at all. It is acknowledged that prospective adopters do find attendance at panel quite daunting and can get very nervous.***
- *Our Social Worker made us feel comfortable and the Chair at Panel also made us feel at ease*
- *The day went very smoothly, both my husband and I are confident people and didn't feel we had anything to worry about, they will make the right decision*
- *Can't fault it. Not going to mark down due to nerves on our part – it did seem a while before we were collected, but due to process must be followed*
- *Very intimidating process. Feel the decision maker should be given video footage of the panel before making a decision about adopters as find it hard to understand a decision as important as that can be done off paper. As in Point 1 you encourage the adopters to be there – so should the decision maker but anonymously if needed.*  
**Issue Raised: Members of the panel are specified by legislation and do not include the attendance of the ADM.**
- *We found the process really comfortable and the panel made us feel at ease. It was a positive experience for us*

## 7. Advertising and Marketing

### Activity undertaken by Recruitment Officer within each Local Authority April 2016– March 2017

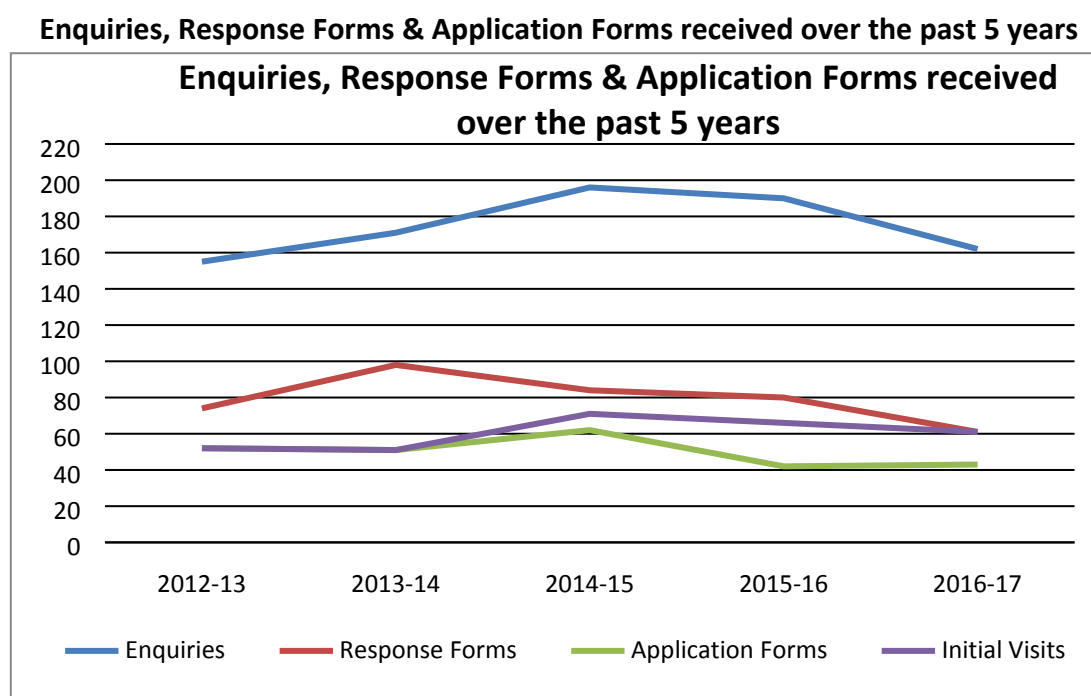
LA	Conw	Denb	Flint	Gwyn	Wrex	Ynys Môn	Other/ ONWAS	Total 16-17	Total 15-16
Enquires	25	21	35	21	37	21	2	<b>162</b>	190
Response Forms	8	11	8	11	13	8	2	<b>61</b>	80
Initial Visits Undertaken	11	11	9	11	14	5	1	<b>62</b>	66
Application Forms Received	6	4	11	4	9	8	1	<b>43</b>	42

The decrease in the amount of enquiries and response forms has continued into this financial year, however, initial visits and number of application forms has remained fairly stable. Due to financial constraints on the budget the majority of recruitment events have been through online information and twitter feeds. Due to significant costs only free advertisements were accessed via local radio channels and none were placed in the local

newspapers, this may have impacted on the drop in number of enquiries received by the service.

The highest number of enquiries and response forms derived from Wrexham. However, the highest number of application forms received came from Denbighshire.

The data has been analysed and findings show that 28 (17%) were still at enquiry stage and awaiting response; of the 73 (45%) that did not proceed 37 (22%) did not respond despite follow up and 36 (22%) were appropriately withdrawn by the adopters themselves or the service. Reasons for withdrawing included, those still considering IVF, not ready emotionally, moving house or renovating property and counselled out due to concerns regarding medical reasons and further checks.

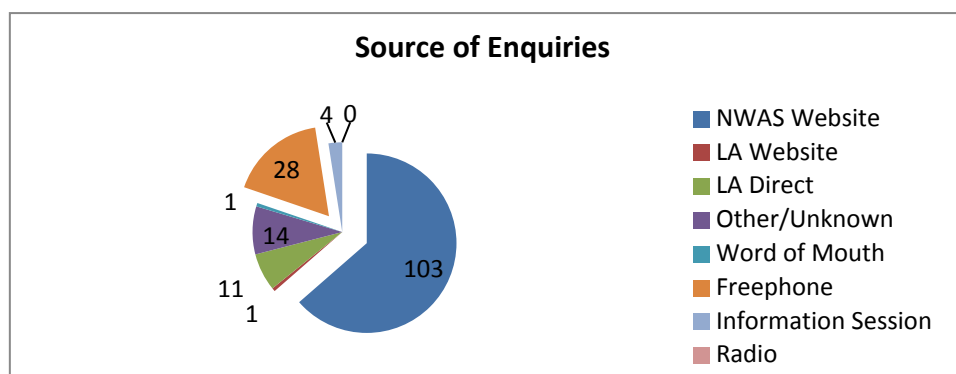


Graph 7.1

#### General Enquiries and Marketing Source

Marketing Source	NWAS Website	LA Website	LA Direct	Other / Unknown	Word of Mouth	Freephone	Information Session	Radio	Total
<b>Total</b>	103	1	11	14	1	28	4	0	162

#### Marketing Source for all enquiries between April 2016 – March 2017



Graph 7.2

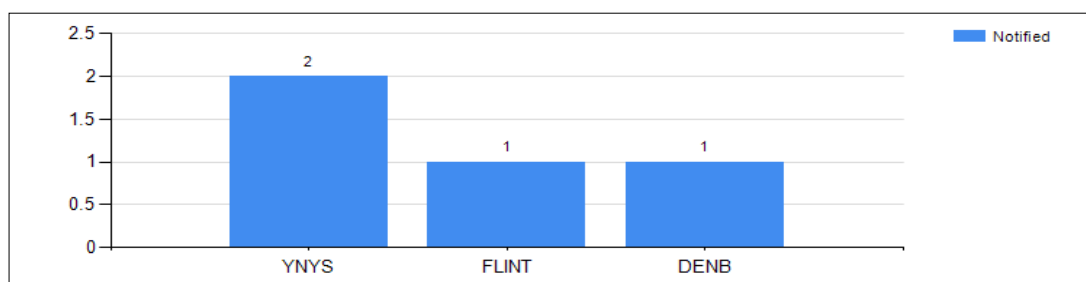
80% of all enquiries are received via the NNAS website and Freephone service, (64% and 17% respectively). The website continues to be the main source of enquiries.

**Performance Indicator** - All enquiries are responded to within 5 working days the majority with 24 hours.

### National Adoption Week 17<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> of October 2016

Total number of enquiries to the office between 17<sup>th</sup> -23<sup>rd</sup> of October 2016 = 4

\*3 from the NNAS Website and 1 through Word of Mouth



Total number of enquiries from each information session 17<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> of October 2016 = 11

Venue	Date	Enquiries
Wrexham Library	17/10/2016	3
The Ramada Hotel, Wrexham	17/10/2016	2
Mold Library	18/10/2016	2
The Springfield Hotel, Holywell	18/10/2016	0
Caernarfon Library	19/10/2016	1
The Anglesey Arms,	19/10/2016	1
Rhyl Library	20/10/2016	0
Venue Cymru, Llandudno	20/10/2016	2

Free advertising for the week –

- Heart FM News / NNAS Website / New Family Social Website /LA Websites /Twitter
- Family Information Service Facebook page (Gwynedd, Wrexham, Flintshire)

### Total costs/enquiries for National Adoption Week Events –

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Total Cost</b>	£6,720.72	£6,370.35	£3049.28	£2812.52	£766.05

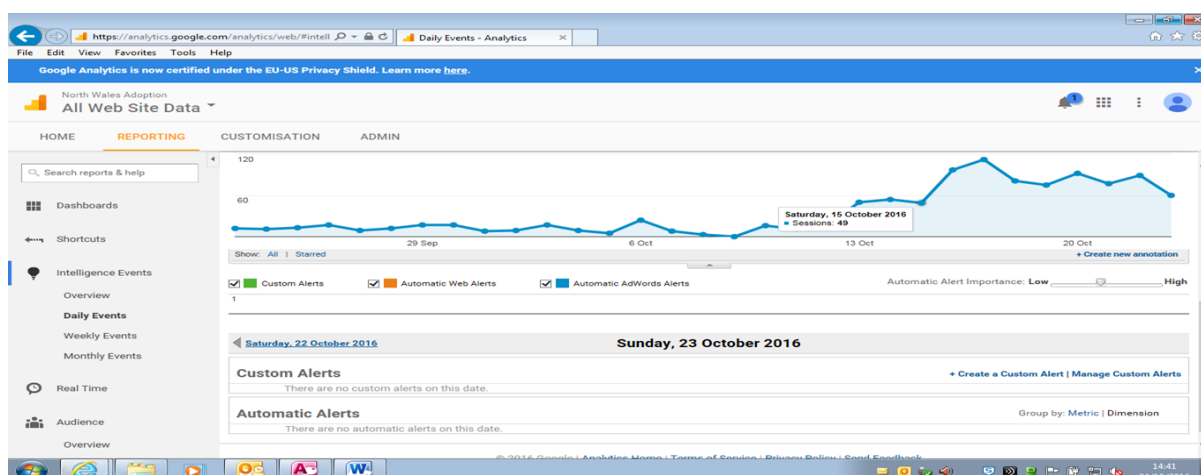
<b>Total No: of enquiries</b>	12	25	19	11	15
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From the information gathered regarding recruitment activity for the National Adoption Week over the last 5 years it is becoming evident that the more effective form of advertising has been from Google ad words, social media and some local radio interviews and adverts.

### Summary of the week

- Out of the 15 enquiries 2 proceeded to full assessment.
- There was an increase of visitors to the NWS Website using Google Add Words. Which directed all visitors to the NWS website and events page.
- The Google Add Words campaign started on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October. The graph below shows an increase of visitors to The NWS website at its peak on Monday the 17<sup>th</sup> of October 2016.

The summary of the National Adoption Service evaluation of the #SeeTheWholeChild campaign and ongoing recruitment states that compared to other services in Wales one voluntary agency and NWS have the most **ongoing** awareness raising with NWS having a dedicated recruitment approach with planned activity.



### Recruitment Activity April 2016 – March 2017

- Attend the NAS Marketing & Media sub group meeting in May
- Attend a meeting with First 4 Adoption regarding National Adoption Week 2016
- NWS Information sent to – Diversity Event, Social Service Conference, North Wales Pride.
- Information table Holyhead Library
- Adoption & Fostering information event, Wrexham
- Arrange activities for NWS Fun Day, September
- Information stall at North Wales Pride - WT couldn't attend Anglesey Fostering team were able to display our packs & pop up banners.
- Information stall at a Family Fun Day – Llanerch y Medd
- Attended a Sub Group Meeting X2 – Llandrindod Wells
- Information stall at a Family Fun Day – Menai Bridge
- Information stall at the Anglesey Show
- Information stall at a family fun day – Gwalchmai
- Meeting with Heart FM regarding advertising for National Adoption Week
- Helping with arrangements for the NWS Family Fun Day/Consultation
- Arrange advertising , arrange and book venues for National Adoption Week

- Information table at Ysbyty Gwynedd
- National Adoption Week – 11 Enquiries from 8 information sessions
- LGBT Meeting with the North Wales Police
- Adoption Exchange Day – Cardiff –
- Meeting with Anglesey Fostering Service re: sharing stall at National Eisteddfod & Sioe Mon
- Attended a marketing & media subgroup meeting in Cardiff
- Booked stall for the National Eisteddfod. Shared costs with Anglesey Fostering Service.
- Attended an LGBT community meeting
- Information event at a community event organised by Rainbow Biz
- Organised and attended an information event for LGBT Adoption & Fostering Week 2017
- Meeting with Heart FM regarding future advertising
- Radio interview with Calon FM to discuss adoption and the need for adopters.
- On-going twitter posts
- Arranged advertisement for an independent panel member for the central list on the NWAS website and other local authority websites.

#### **Advertising:**

- NWAS Website and NWAS Twitter Account/ On-going poster & leaflet drop
- HEART FM/MON FM/CALON FM / Daily Post – newspaper & on-line
- LA Websites / New Family Social Website

#### **Recruitment meetings with other organisations:**

- NAS Media & Marketing sub groups;
- North Wales Police LGBT Community Meeting
- Wrexham Community Church

#### **Partner of Parent Activity (undertaken by Recruitment Officer)**

	Conwy	Denb	Flint	Gwyn	Wrex	Ynys Môn	Total 2016-17	Total 2015-16
Partner of Parent Enquiries	8	15	22	17	24	10	<b>96</b>	64
Initial Visits Undertaken	5	5	9	4	9	2	<b>76</b>	
Partner of Parent Adoption Orders Granted	1	0	2	1	5	0	<b>9</b>	18

This year has seen another significant increase (30% - from 64 to 96) of Partner of Parent enquiries the majority deriving from the Flintshire and Wrexham areas. Fortunately given our resources only a small number proceed to application. However this does impact on the resources and entails additional work by administrator and recruitment officer who undertook 76 initial visits during this period.

## **8. Training**

### NWS Adopter's Training Activity April 2016 – March 2017

Month	Course	Invited	Attended
April	Preparing to Adopt	18	12
	FASD	30	13
May	Friends and Relatives supporting Adopters	30	20
	Regional Support Group	80+	<i>27 confirmed 15 attended.</i>
	Preparing to adopt	14	10
	Attachment, Trauma and Neuroscience	30	12
June	Education and Attachment	100+	12
	Attachment, Trauma and Neuroscience	25+	14
July	Preparing to adopt	20+	14
	Regional support group	80+	19
Aug	Preparing to Adopt	12	5
	FASD	40+	23
Sep	Friends and Relatives supporting Adopters	30+	21
	Attachment, Trauma and Neuroscience	30+	19
Nov	Support Group		
	Preparing to Adopt	15	11
	Education & attachment		Cancelled – facilitator sick
	Moving children on to adoption	13	11
Dec	Preparing to Adopt		Cancelled due to numbers
Jan	Moving children on to adoption	12	12 a
	Attachment, Trauma and Neuroscience	22	20
	Preparing to adopt	16	14
	Friends and Relatives supporting Adopters	30+	16
	FASD	25+	21
Mar	Support group	80+	16
	Adult attachment	20	15
	FASD – education	20	11
	Preparing to Adopt	16	10
	Attachment, Trauma & FASD	14	11

The NWS Training Officer continues to offer a comprehensive training programme including the adoption pre-approval course, Attachment, Trauma, Neuroscience and an introduction to therapeutic parenting, FASD awareness & strategies for parenting and the Friends and relatives supporting adopters training.



NWAS will be piloting a new parenting programme in the summer of 2017 written by Kim Golding called *"Foundations for Attachment"*. This training resource is a six-session programme to help parents and carers nurture attachments with their child. It is designed specifically for those caring for children whose capacity to emotionally connect has been compromised as a result of attachment problems, trauma, and loss or separation. Informed by attachment theory and Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP), it consists of three core modules:

- \* Understanding Challenges of Parenting
- \* Therapeutic Parenting
- \* Looking After Self

Should the pilot, which will be run initially in the Gwynedd area be successful it will be rolled out across North Wales during 2017/18.

Given one of the national adoption services priorities is to develop a framework for life story work for adopted children, the Training Officer is part of a pilot scheme to raise awareness of this important work especially with those people who are involved with the children when they were looked after by the local authority. She is currently delivering workshops to Foster carers, Support workers & young people drug and alcohol teams about attachment, trauma and FASD. Once this is completed she will then offer training on Life Story Work and Life Story Books

A total of 76 adopters have attended the Pre-approval training over the past year. The pilot undertaken following the critical analysis of the NWAS process from enquiry to approval has been successful in reducing the timescales for assessments. 8 courses were planned throughout the year and only 1 had to be cancelled due to low numbers. It was agreed that courses would be cancelled if less than 10 applicants were available to attend.

Feedback on all training providing continues to be extremely positive including new courses recently delivered to support workers and foster carers in Wrexham related to the Pilot being undertaken on life story work.

**For detailed feedback and full evaluations received on all training course see Appendix 2**

**No: Children Referred /Matched/Placed/Adopted in Each Authority  
April 2016-March2017**

	Conw	Denbs	Flint	Gwyn	Wrex	Ynys	Other	Total
Number of children referred	13	12	11	7	4	11	–	58/55
Number of children recommended for match at panel	3	12	9	6	4	5	–	39/58
Number of children placed for adoption	4	11	12	6	4	7		44/56
Number of children adopted	7	13	11	5	16	8	1	61/55

**Placement of Children with other agencies outside NWS**

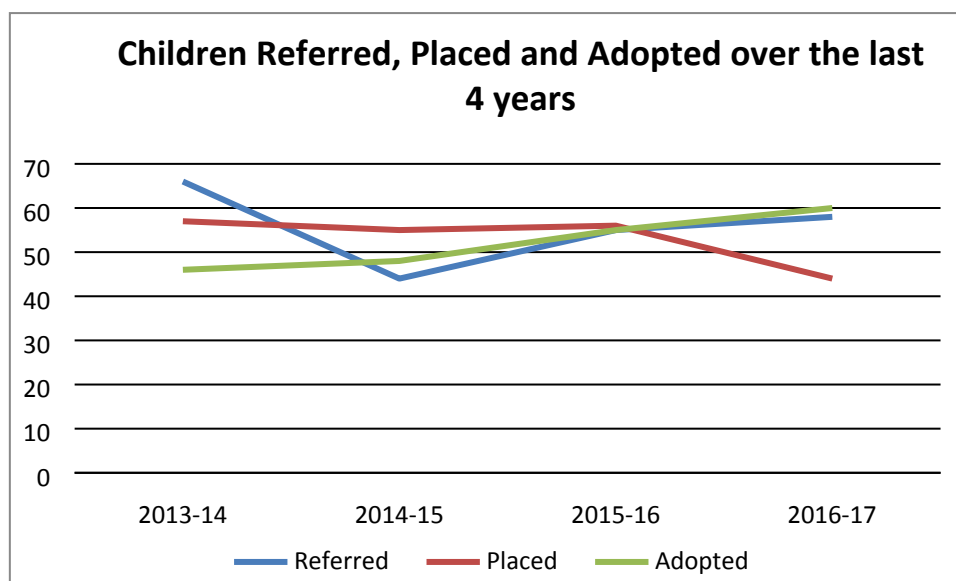
Of the 44 children placed this year, 36 were single placements and 4 sibling groups of 2. 6 children (1 sibling groups of two and 4 single child) were placed with families not approved by NWS.

Of the 5 placements identified outside of NWS one sibling group of two and a single child were matched via the Wales Adoption Register, another came via the Exchange Day and two via Adoption Link. Three of these children had significant disabilities and special needs and another child needed to be placed outside of the North Wales area.

32 single children were placed with NWS adopters; 6 of these were the child's foster carers and 3 sibling groups were placed with NWS adopters one of these was the children's foster carers.

1 notification was received regarding a sibling group of three children placed by another agency with adopters from a voluntary agency in North Wales.

**Number of Children Referred/Placed and Adopted between April 2013 and March 2017**



Graph 9.1

This year has seen a slight increase in the total number of children referred to the service compared to last year from 55 to 58. The number of children placed has decreased by 19% from 56 to 44. The number of children adopted has risen by approximately 10% from 55 to 60 (61 to include child placed from another agency with NWS adopters) which is the once again the highest number recorded in relation to previous years.

In addition to the 60 children adopted from the 'looked after' system, 9 children were adopted via Partner of Parent applications making a total of 69 adoption orders granted in North Wales between April 2016 and March 2017.

#### **No: of Children Referred, Withdrawn and Reason for Withdrawal over the Past 3 years**

Year	Total Referred	Total Withdrawn	Reasons for Withdrawal				
			SGO	Kinship Care	Long Term Fostering	Returned to birth parent	No Placement Order Granted
<b>2014-15</b>	44	2	0	1	0	1	0
<b>2015-16</b>	55	2	0	1	0	1	0
<b>2016-17</b>	58	9	0	0	6	0	3

One sibling group of two children and 4 single children were withdrawn and placed in long term foster care. One sibling group of three children were not granted a placement order at the final hearing.

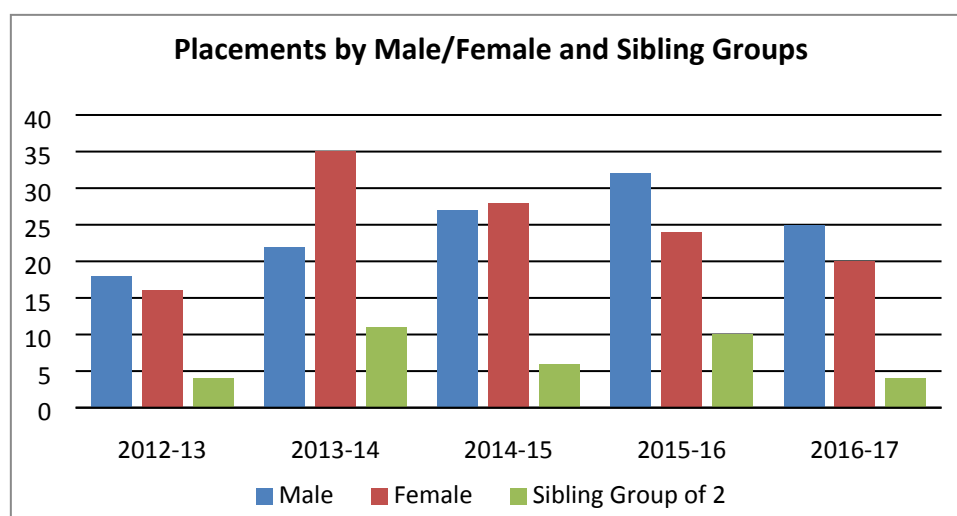
## Current Situation of Children Referred April 2016 –March 2017

Year	Total	Current Situation						
	Referred	Available	On Hold for Link	Matched or Placed	Adopted	Waiting PO	On Hold /Agency	Withdrawn
<b>2016-17</b>	<b>58</b>	12	18	19	1	5	0	3

Of the 58 children referred to the service this year 12 children did not have an identified link at the end of March 2017. One match of a single child did not proceed to placement but a new family was identified via NWS. In addition 1 child who had been notified to the service pre April 2016 was still waiting for placements although had been on hold for family finding due to intensive therapeutic support being provided.

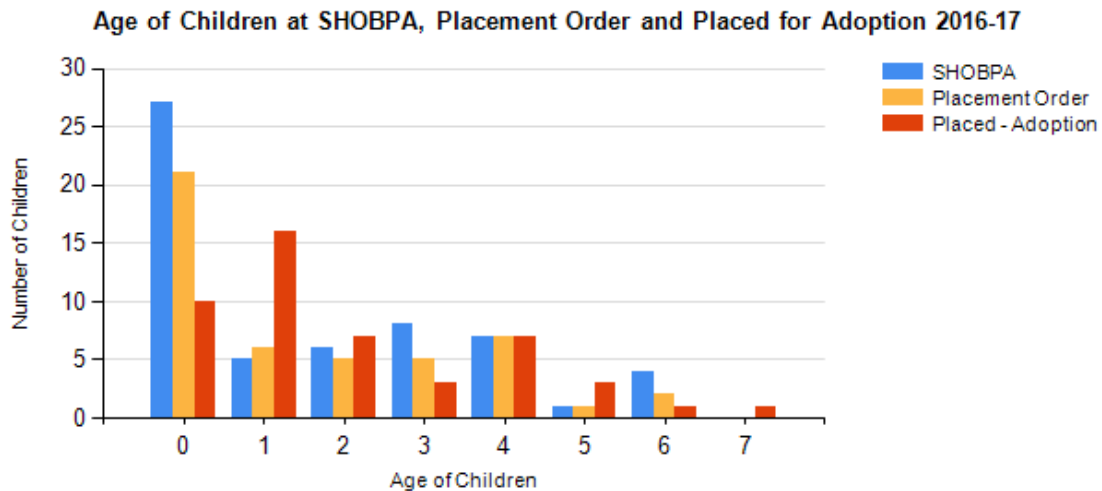
## Gender Comparison of Children Placed for Adoption/Children Placed with other agency adopters

2014-15 placed 27 boys 28 girls (55) (4 placements (6 children) outside NWS)  
 2015-16 placed 32 boys 24 girls (56) (6 placements (9 children) outside NWS)  
 2016-17 placed 25 boys 20 girls (44) (5 placements (7 children) outside NWS)



Graph 9.2

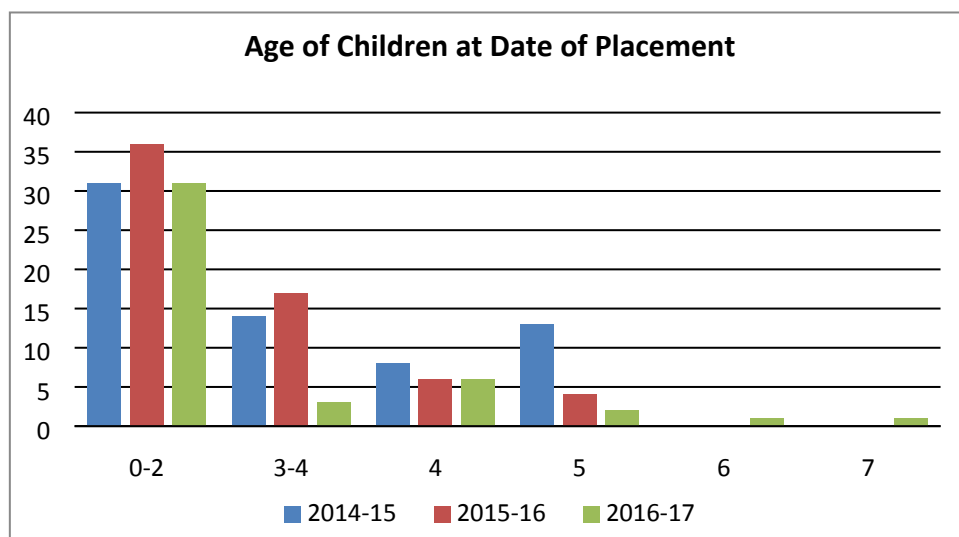
There is no significant difference in the total number of referrals for boys and girls over the past 5 years. Adopters who wish to adopt a child of specify gender tend to want a female child and this is the reason why several of the adopters continue to wait for children over a longer period of time than most.



Graph 9.3

Compared to last year the number of children granted a Placement Order under the age of 12 months has decreased however the number of children under the age of 12 months has increased at the time of their 'should be adopted' decisions. This would suggest that the impact of appeals on placement orders is having some impact on the timescales for children. In addition more children between the ages of 4 and 6 years were granted placement orders.

NWAS has succeeded in placing the majority of children prior to their 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday.



Graph 9.4

The age of the majority of children being placed for adoption over the past 3 years continues to be between 0-2 years. 70% of children placed this year were aged between 0 - 2 years. 9 children were placed under the age of 1. This year also saw 4 children between the ages of 5 and 7 years being placed with families.

### Number of Children Adopted by Former Foster Carers or Outside of NWAS Region

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Number of children adopted	36	46	48	55	60
Number of children adopted by former foster carers.	2	4	10	8	7
Number of children adopted by Adopters from other agencies	4	4	0	7	9

85% of children adopted in the last year were adopted by adopters approved by NWAS and 72% of these were general adopters.

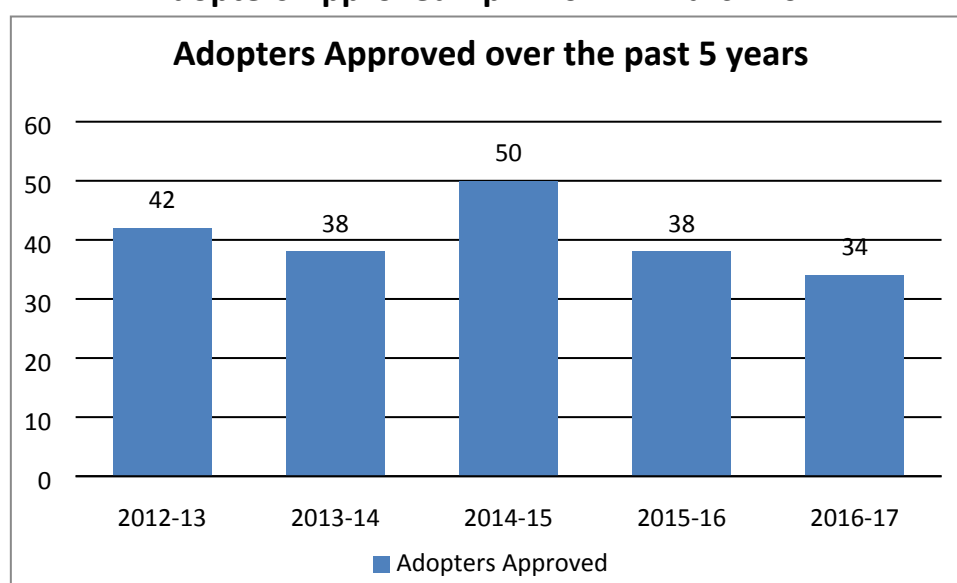
## 10. Adopters

### Adopters Activity 01/04/16 to 31/03/17

LA	Conw	Denb	Flint	Gwyn	Wrex	Ynys Môn	Other/ ONWAS	Total
Enquires	25	21	35	21	37	21	2	<b>162</b>
Response Forms	8	11	8	11	13	8	2	<b>61</b>
Initial Visits Undertaken	11	11	9	11	14	5	1	<b>62</b>
Application Forms Received	6	4	11	4	9	8	1	<b>43</b>
Adoption Assessments Completed	5	6	10	3	4	5	1	34
Adoption Foreign Element Enquiries	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-

Given the significant drop in application forms from enquiry stage an analysis of the reasons for this was undertaken. Of the cases closed in this financial year 37 did not return a response form after 1 month or after a follow up telephone call or letter; 26 were counselled out for various reasons, such as, no spare room, smoking and wanting a young child, medical, DBS and LA checks concerns, house renovations or sales and still undertaking IVF treatment. 10 chose not to proceed as they did not feel ready at the time following initial visits and (2) after pre approval training. Some have delayed their applications until further notice and currently there are 28 still at the enquiry stage and waiting their response to information sent.

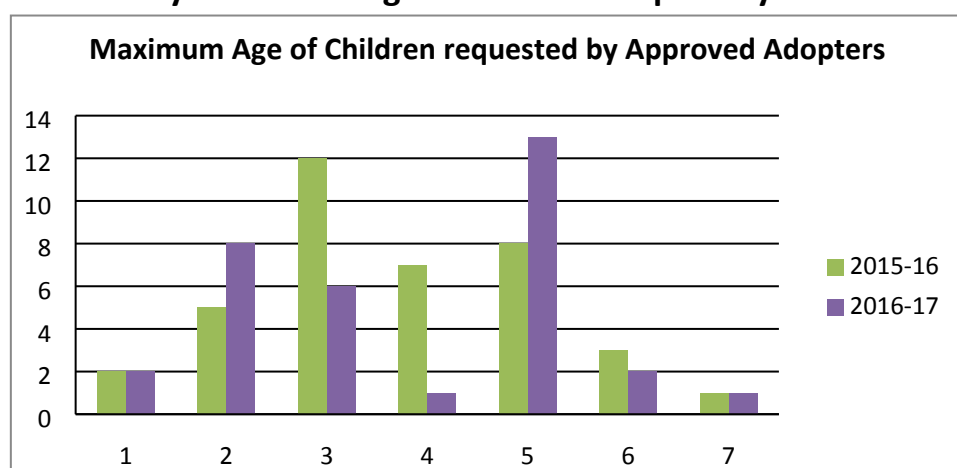
### Adopters Approved April 2012 – March 2017



Graph 10.1

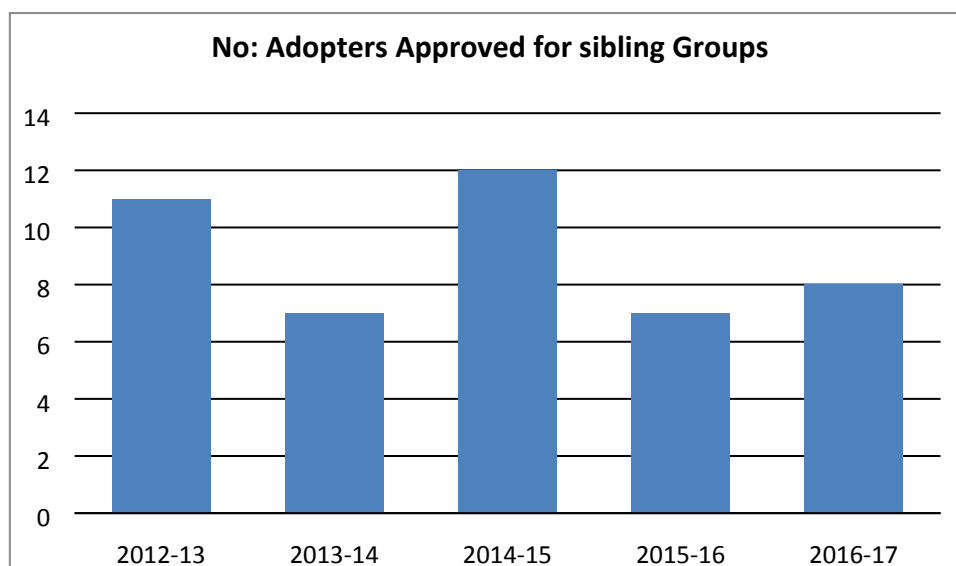
The number of families approved this year is slightly less (4) than in the previous year. The two vacancies running concurrently over 6 months in the Conwy area did have some impact on assessments as there was considerable high activity related to adoption orders being granted, the highest number since NWAS was established.

### Number of Placements Offered by Approved Adopters by Maximum Age of Child in the past 2 years



Graph 10.2

The majority of adopters continue to have a preference for a child under the age of 5 years and many of those stating 0-5 years usually have a preference for a child under school age in order to maximise the opportunity to develop attachments during their adoption leave. Only one couple adopter would consider the placement of a child up to 7 years old.



Graph 10.3

The number of prospective adopters willing to consider a sibling group of two children was 8, although some do have a limited age group, this number of families would be acceptable given that NWAS had 4 sibling groups of two referred during the year. Several of the sibling groups have had older children and two of the groups had specific requirements in relation to behaviour issues and therapeutic input. The availability of adoption support is essential for those willing to consider sibling groups with additional needs in order to ensure placement stability. This is an area being considered by the National Adoption Service at present and it is hoped that the availability of support will be more readily available across Wales in the near future.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Responses to Quality Assurance Questionnaires from Adopters with Child/Children Placed over the Past Year See Appendix 3.**

## 11. Disruption

### Number of disruptions compared to the number of placements (NWAS placements)

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
No: of placement disruptions	1 (3 children)	1 (2 children)	1 (1 children)	4 (4 single children)	0
No: children placed in same period	30	57	55	56	44

There have been no disruptions of children placed via NWAS during this financial year. We are aware that 3 historical placements have disrupted in one of the agencies but no further disruptions have been reported to NWAS from other agencies.

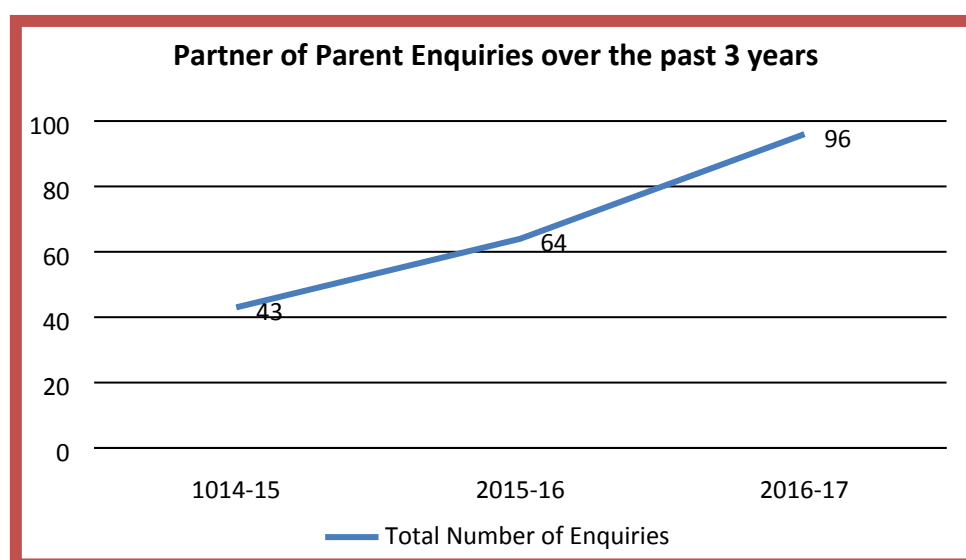


## 12. Non Agency Adoption Activity

### Partner of Parent Activity April 2016-March 2017

	Conwy	Denb	Flint	Gwyn	Wrex	Ynys Môn	Total 2016-17	Total 2015-16
Partner of Parent Enquiries	8	15	22	17	24	10	96	64
Partner of Parent Initial Visits	5	5	9	4	9	2	76	18
Partner of Parent checks in progress /Waiting Allocation	1	2	4	2	3	3	15	14
Partner of Parent Currently Under Assessment	2	1	1	2	-	-	6	3
Partner of Parent Adoption Orders Granted	1	0	2	1	5	0	9	10
No of children adopted via Partner of Parent applications	1	0	2	1	5	0	9	15

There has been yet another significant increase in enquiries regarding Partner of Parent adoptions this year with an additional 30% increase on last year.



Graph 12.1

These enquiries involve initial visits and checks being undertaken even if the applicants do not proceed to filing their application in court. This continues to have a significant impact on the recruitment officer and administrative resources.

### **13. Management information and development work**

- A review of the service is due to be undertaken by Jane Moore in 2017.
- A draft All Wales Policy regarding financial support has been discussed in the National Adoption Service Advisory Group meeting. The policy states that the DfE means tested model should be used to calculate the amount to be paid. This model was agreed by all LA's when NWAS was first established.
- The National Adoption Service have also produced guidance on the Family Finding process and are working on a good practice guide for the 'Enquiry to Approval' processes.
- NWAS continues to provide information and data for the National Adoption Service in relation to performance indicators. NAS reports that timescales for children and adopters in Wales have improved. Additional performance measures have been introduced which relate to services provided by the local authorities' e.g. historical disruptions, adoption support assessments and provision. Collating this information has proven to be problematic for NWAS.
- NWAS has attended sessions related to adoption on the new Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) which is currently being introduced to some authorities in South Wales. It is envisaged that the North Wales Authorities will be changing to this system in the future.
- NAS has obtained grant aid from the Welsh Government to support the mapping and business planning element of a National Adoption Support Framework. The Institute of Public Care (IPC) at Oxford Brookes University will be undertaking this work with the central team and NAS regions. NWAS has been involved in organising events for IPC to consult with stakeholders.
- The NWAS manager and Training Officer are involved with the NAS Lifestory Work sub group and a framework is currently being developed. A Tool Kit for adopters and professionals is also being developed and should be available by the end of March in order to be used for the proposed pilot projects. NWAS will be supporting a pilot project in North Wales which will involve the collation of life story materials by foster carers and support workers involved with children and families at the early stages of care irrespective of their permanency plan. Training on Attachment, FASD and Life Story work will be provided to all involved in the pilot.

## 14. Legal Issues

The NWAS manager attended the CSSIW Provider Event in Builth Wells on the 13<sup>th</sup> June 2016. The event provided information on the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016. The Implementation timetable includes:

- Workforce Regulation – April 2017
- Service Regulation and Inspection – April 2018 with full implementation by April 2019.

Issues regarding adoption had not been considered in detail in the Act at this stage. NWAS has received and completed the new self-evaluation forms for inspections across the regional services.

### Meetings with Judge Gareth Jones

The NWAS team and legal representatives from Wrexham, Flintshire and Denbighshire met with His Honour Judge Gareth Jones on the 12<sup>th</sup> September 2016 and discussed the Annexe A's, application forms and appeals. The courts are aware of the increasing number of birth parents opposing the placement orders and adoption orders and given leave to appeal. This has significant emotional impact on all parties concerned as well as delays for some children. Recent case law relating to these issues has been shared with social workers and panel members.

The Judge was complimentary of the service stating that adoptions had increased significantly since NWAS had been set up.

The NWAS manager and Wrexham legal representative had an additional meeting with Judge Gareth Jones on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2017 to discuss the sharing of Annexe A information with all parties in Partner of Parent Adoptions and the impact on applicants. The issue was resolved and agreed that where necessary social workers would provide a letter with the Annexe A requesting the redacting of certain information which is was felt inappropriate to share with certain parties.

## 15. Adoption Support

### 15.1 Individual Adoption Support

Referrals for Adoption Support for adopted children are referred to the relevant local authority Duty and Assessment Teams for initial assessment and referred or signposted to appropriate services. A total of 9 referrals were received by NWAS, NWAS social workers, provided general support and supported adopters in referring several to the local authority or CAMHS for assessment. Where appropriate NWAS offered places on training and invited to the support groups. 4 of the cases involved issues with education and 5 were requesting therapeutic support. One adopter was referred to the local authority for respite.

### 15.2 Adoption Support Groups in North Wales

The NWAS Adoption Support Group which was started in March 2016 is held on a quarterly basis and has been well attended to date. The adopters are taking the lead in organising the meetings supported by the training officer in booking venues and sending out invites. The

training officer also took the opportunity to share the current research “the children were fine” with the adopters in order to keep them up to date with adoption issues and consult on their thoughts regarding NWAS’ timescales and process of introductions and how plans for contact with foster carers should be introduced more robustly into the processes. Mark Molloy was also given the opportunity to meet with the group to consult on Adoption Support issues as a scoping exercise on behalf of the National Adoption Service.

NWAS Support Groups include:

- NWAS Support Group available to all adopters across North Wales
- Flintshire/Wrexham Adoption Support Group run by adopters
- Ti a Fi Group for pre-school adopted children is organised by NWAS staff in Ynys Mon and Gwynedd. This group needs to be developed further as children outgrow the age group.
- Support Group post Safe Base Parenting programme run via After Adoption contract funded by NWAS
- Birth parents support Groups run via After Adoption contract funded by NWAS

#### **Birth Parent Support Group:**

The Birth Ties Group run by After Adoption and funded by NWAS is based in Denbighshire and met on 7 occasions last year and the new group to be started in Wrexham was held once. The venue for the Wrexham group needs to be changed in order to encourage more birth parents to attend.

**Numbers attending the group to date:**

Quarter 1		Quarter 2		Quarter 3		Quarter 4	
April	4	September	3	November	7	February	5
May	5			December	9		
June	5						
June (Wrexham)	1						
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>16</b>		<b>5</b>

#### **15.3 Parenting Programme – Safe Base**

NWAS continued to work in Partnership with After Adoption to provide the Safe Base Programme for approved adopters with children in placement in 2016 -2017. However, we were unable to fill the courses made available and a decision was made to cancel the first programme and a second programme took place in March 2017. The evaluation and responses regarding the course from the adopters who attended is still being collated by After Adoption. Verbal feedback by some who have attended has been positive to date.

Due to the difficulties in filling the courses and the financial implication to the local authorities an agreement has been made to substitute the course with other services from

After Adoption. The options include the set-up of a children support group, various therapeutic interventions or training for social work staff. A decision will need to be made as the service chosen needs to be accessed before the end of June 2017.

No: of Adopters who have Attended the Safe Base Programmes to date:

		Invited	Attended
2013-14	Sept 2013/Jan 2014	26	16
2014-15	July 2014/March 2015	26	17
2015-16	July 2015/March 2016	23	15 (2 attended outside NWAS area)
2016-17	Sept 2017/March 2017	Cancelled 9	

NWAS' Training Officer will be piloting a parenting programme in house to replace the Safe Base course which we envisage will offer adopters more flexibility in access to the bespoke parenting programme.

#### **15.4 Letterbox Contact and Direct Contact – Support to adopted children, birth and adopted families.**

Post Adoption letterbox contact has continued to increase with many new referrals over the past twelve months, but it is also pleasing to see that some inactive cases have now become active.

Facebook continues to be problematic with birth relatives looking for children and children looking for birth relatives. Our role has then been to liaise with both parties and to discourage any form of contact through social media and to go through ourselves. Unfortunately during the past year we have been informed about the death of four birth parents and adopters have been notified. We have also tried to obtain as much information for the child's file relating to the death and obtain an order of the funeral service where possible for future reference. Home and office visits are still conducted to provide support with letter writing. This is usually accessed by birth parents.

We have changed our process for receiving referrals for post adoption contact and we are now requesting referrals once the Adoption Order has been granted as opposed to when the child is placed. This is due to the difficulties we experienced last year with cases being contested. Changes were brought in from January 2017.

Despite our input the Wrexham Birth Parent Support Group has not developed as expected as the venue was deemed inappropriate. We are currently considering running this group via NWAS in the forthcoming year should this not develop via After Adoption.

Report provided by Frances Williams – Contact Co-ordinator

#### Active agreements:

	Conw	Denb	Flint	Gwyn	Wrex	Ynys Mon	Other	Total
2012-13	71	78	35	33	53	24	-	294
2013-14	82	136	41	53	77	43	-	432
2014-15	102	152	45	61	107	56	-	523
2015-16	115	165	71	78	130	63	2	624
2016-17	100	189	82	88	145	68	2	674

The number of contact agreements managed annually has increased by approximately 60% since 2014 and is beginning to impact on resources. Wrexham did agree to provide additional hours for the contact co-ordinator for a short period in order to ensure all arrangements were up to date.

The contact co-ordinator dealt with 45 office visits and 17 home visits were undertaken to support birth parents and adopters with arrangements for contact.

#### Total Number of contacts

	Conw	Denb	Flint	Gwyn	Wrex	Ynys Mon	Other	Total
2015-16	163	252	95	109	191	88	2	900
2016-17	143	286	108	122	202	93	2	956

#### 15.5 Birth Record Referrals – Access to files, Counselling and Intermediary Service.

#### Birth record Referrals received and transferred to After Adoption 2016-17 and previous 2 years

	2016/17			2015/16			2014/15		
	Birth Parent Counselling	Section 98 Pre 75	Section 98 Post 75	Birth Parent Counselling	Section 98 Pre 75	Section 98 Post 75	Birth Parent Counselling	Section 98 Pre 75	Section 98 Post 75
Ynys Mon	2	6	2	3	6	1	0	6	1
Gwynedd	1	8	0	1	7	6	4	12	3
Conwy	3	3	3	6	5	1	2	17	3
Denbighshire	5	5	5	1	9	7	2	7	2
Flintshire	2	8	3	4	8	5	1	16	4
Wrexham	6	6	3	6	5	2	12	12	4
Other	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	19	37	16	22	40	22	21	70	17
Total Referrals for	72 (plus 9 S98 Cases on Waiting			84			108		

After Adoption	List to c/f 2017/18)		
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NWAS received a total of 81 cases for this service this year, similar to those referred in the previous year. 72 referrals were transferred to After Adoption to undertake this work, unfortunately After Adoption did not accept any further referrals and NWAS was left with a waiting list of 9 a situation that has not occurred over the past few years. This has led to in depth discussions with After Adoption regarding the number of hours allocated to each case and further discussion on changes to the existing contract. NWAS has requested the following criteria to be included in the current contract specification in order to evaluate the service as the contract will need to be reviewed in 2018

- 1 – A copy of the introductory letter which must be sent to new applicants within 2 weeks of making initial contact, is to be provided to the Purchaser each time.
- 2 – If a service user does not engage with the Provider after 3 attempts at making contact, the Purchaser will be advised in order to make a decision on whether or not to continue with the application.
- 3 - All Access to Records cases are to be referred as S98 Access to Records. The Purchaser will confirm which cases are to progress to the intermediary stage.
- 4 - Reference to the partnership with the North Wales Adoption Service is to be made on all forms of communication, via any media, to the public. This is to include television, radio, Brochures/leaflets, posters, etc
- 5 - The following monitoring information is to be provided on a monthly basis:
  - the number of closures during the month
  - the total number of hours used during the month
  - updated narratives

\*\*\*\*\*

#### **Response to Quality of Care Questionnaire to cases closed by After Adoption once work has been completed:**

Of the 8 responses received:

- all felt they were greeted appropriately and informed about the transfer to After Adoption when contacting NWAS for the service (1 person failed to answer the question).  
Negative comment – I've never been offered help
- 5 people stated they would rate the service as excellent and 1 very good (1 person failed to answer the question).

#### **Comments:-**

- I think the service I received was brilliant so not sure how you would improve
- The service satisfied my requirements. I was more involved due to GRO and newness of Law. I only had contact with *worker* but due to the change in the Law got the impression it was a team effort to get the information required as quickly as possible.
- Excellent and delightful

- I can't rate the service as I've never been offered any support, counselling or anything. I have never met anyone from the Team. **(Case researched – did not engage, re-referred in August and in October had not contacted since)**

## 16. Development of Adoption Service

A full review of the North Wales Adoption Service is due to commence in April 2017. This will need to consider the financial contributions in order to sustain and develop the service further. One of the key issues and challenges for the service has been the availability and accessibility of adoption support services, a key area which requires significant development in order to sustain some of the challenging adoption placements.

NWAS will continue to work in liaison with the National Adoption Service in order to develop and agreed framework for adoption support in order to provide equity for adoptive families across the country. It is anticipated that given the funding provided to the voluntary agencies to develop adoption support services that a more accessible support service will be available to all adopters and children in Wales.

- NWAS awaits the decision by Welsh Government regarding an agreed process from 'Enquiry to Approval' for adopters and may need to consider amending the current process.
- Unfortunately the plan to provide a parenting programme in partnership with Glyndwr University proved to be unrealistic. However, NWAS has accessed an alternative programme and will be delivering this in-house parenting for adopters as from summer 2017 which will provide more flexibility than the Safe Base service provided over the past few years. It is envisaged that all adopters will be required to attend this training once children are placed within the family.
- NWAS would also be keen to develop the birth parent support groups, a support group for adopted children and more local groups for adopters. However, this will require additional resources.
- Due to demand following the successful event in 2016 a NWAS Fun Day will also be provided in September 2017 and arrangements are already in place for this event.

The day to day challenges remain as follows:

- Increase the number of adopters being approved and particularly encourage those to consider sibling groups, older children and those with disability.
- Continue to improve timescales for both adopters and children
- Supporting adopters through the adoption order stage given the number of birth parents who are now appealing the orders.

## 17. Policies and Procedures



Policies and Procedures for the National Service are being considered in the sub group organised by the National Adoption Service. NWAS awaits further information from the group with regard to any changes in policy and procedures agreed by the Advisory Group and Governance Board. NWAS has updated the Statement of Purpose which is available on the NWAS website and the Panel Policies and Procedures have been updated to include information on the Central List.

## **18. CSSIW**

No inspections on the adoption services across North Wales were undertaken in the last financial year. A revised self- evaluation form has been devised by CSSIW which is more appropriate for collecting data on the regional collaboratives and this was completed in March 2016.

## **19. Consultations**

All feedback on the quality of the services provided by NWAS is collated following consultation exercises, via questionnaire undertaken with the following stakeholders:

- Staff members (annual questionnaire)
- LA Child Care Social Workers
- Panel Members (annual questionnaire and monthly comment sheet provided for each case presented to panel).
- Adopters attending Panel
- Adopters who have had a child placed within the stated period (April 2014 – March 2015).
- Attendees for all training events provided by NWAS ( See Training Section)
- Adoptees, birth parents and relatives of adoptees accessing the After Adoption services contracted by NWAS.

Consultations regarding any issues with the service and suggestions for improvements have been discussed at the Adopters Support Group and Christmas Gathering.

NWAS also arranged a Fun Day for adopters and children in September 2016 which was a great success and gave the National Adoption Service the opportunity to consult with adopters. Adopters were asked to score out of 10 how well supported they have felt at the various stages of the different stages. The responses were as follows – a more detailed report and further comments are included in Appendix 4.

- Assessment – 10, 10, 10, 8, 10, 8, 10, 8, 6, 10 (average 9)
- Matching and panel – 10, 10, 10, 8, 10, 10, 10, 9, 10, 10 (average 9.7)

- After children placed awaiting Adoption Order – 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 8, 10 (average 9.8)
- Post Order, first 3 years – 1, 10, 10, 10, 7, 9 (average 7.8%)
- More than 3 years Post Order – 6

## 20. Compliments, comments, complaints and representations

### Complaints

No formal complaints were received by NWAS during 2016-17. Two issues were raised but were dealt with immediately by the service, one being from an adopter regarding the assessment and the second regarding a child social work decision around a matching issue.

### Compliments:

A total of 17 specific compliments were received by NWAS over the past year. These do not include compliments included in the questionnaires or evaluation feedback on training events.

#### Selection of Compliments

- *We are so lucky to have you supporting us right from the start. We have so much to be thankful for, but of course we are most thankful for our beautiful daughter. Thanks for being such a huge part of our lives*
- *Our adoption journey had a very happy ending this week in Court and we are absolutely delighted with the official confirmation of the adoption. The process of adoption has very much been an emotional roller-coaster for us over the last two years. .... I feel very strongly that it was not for Social Worker's professionalism and thoroughness in our case, our journey would have been far more difficult..... provided my family with excellent support and communication throughout the process. We will always be extremely appreciative of the outstanding work our Social Worker has done for us over the last eighteen months*
- *Thank you doesn't come close to what I really want to say to you. We made a wish, and you made it come true! Thank you for the hours and hours you have spent on 'us'. Thank you for being there, for taking your phone home when you've been on holiday and at weekends in case we need you. Your support has been AMAZING! Thank you for the advice, tips and random chats. Thanks to your hard work I have two perfect children and will never forget the massive part you played in that. From the bottom of my heart, thank you.*
- *Thank you! We're both over the moon! Thank you also for all your support to date, we really appreciate it!*
- *As we have our Celebration Day on Thursday we wish to pass on our sincere gratitude to yourself and all the people we have met from NWAS for all the guidance and support. It has been an absolute pleasure to meet with you all.*
- *It is with regret that we will be discontinuing the adoption process. Our circumstances have changed which means we will be moving back to ..... We will continue adoption once we have settled again. We want to thank you for all the training you have given us. It was most definitely an eye opener. You are a super trainer and kept our interest throughout. We wish you continued success with future courses.*
- *We wanted to say thank you so much for your support and guidance over the last 12-months. Thank you for making the process enjoyable and straight-forward and for the much needed reassurance along the way. ....and others for their wisdom and input. We really appreciate everything you have done with great appreciation and humongous thanks.*
- *Thank you for all your help and support, we could not of asked for a better person to get us through these difficult times. You have helped to make our family complete and we'll never forget that.*
- *Good times, fun times, tough times and family times all become memories*

- *Thanks once again for all your support. Your whole team have been AMAZING, thanks is just a word that can never truly express our deep gratitude. We have been overwhelmed. We are delighted that things have gone so smoothly.*
- *Thank you for everything you have done for us over the last 2-years, you have made dreams come true and we can never thank you enough!*

## 21. Reporting Mechanisms to Senior Management, Scrutiny & Members

Quarterly reports and the annual report on service activity are provided to the Partnership Board. The manager also presents these reports to Panel members and other professionals involved in panel business days throughout the year. Service managers in each authority present the reports to their respective Scrutiny Committees and Executive Boards.

Performance Indicators are reported to the National Adoption Central Team on a quarterly basis and this information is collated and shared with the Advisory Group and Governance Board of the National Adoption Service. It has been agreed that these should be presented at the Partnership Board meetings and any issues raised with the data collated by the will dealt with within the region.

## 22. Conclusion

In line with the national trend there has been a decrease in the number of adopters being approved and children placed in this financial year, however there was an increase in the number of adoption orders being granted, the highest figure in NWAS since its inception in 2010.

Enquiries regarding Partner of Parent adoptions have doubled since 2014-15 which has had a significant impact on the workload of the recruitment officer and administrative staff. NWAS would support the possibility of introducing a charging policy for these private law applications as seen in legislation for adoptions with a foreign element.

Performance measures reported by the National Service will be discussed in future Partnership Board meetings on a regular basis and it is expected that members will agree on approaches to improve timescales where necessary. In addition a full review of the service is being undertaken and recommendations from this review may lead to further developments of the service.






















This report will fulfil the requirements of Regulation 22 but could also be used for distribution to senior managers, cabinet, scrutiny etc. Circulation of this report will be determined by each local authority area.

Date completed: 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2017

Author: Mandy Humphries  
Title: Manager North Wales Adoption

**APPENDIX 1 Joint Adoption Panel Membership and Advisors April 2016 – March 2017**

		Flintshire /Wrexham			Conwy/Denbighshire			Gwynedd/Ynys Môn		
	Panel Role	Name	End Date	Appraisal	Name	End Date	Appraisal	Name	End Date	Appraisal
1	Panel Chair	Emyr Owen	24/02/19	07/03/17	Sue Roberts	26/01/2017	23/11/16	Non Davies	20/12/17	
2	Medical Advisor	Dr Ewoud Bos	N/A	03/11/16	Dr Sue Roberts	N/A	21/09/16	Dr Teyrnnon Powell	20/12/17	08/02/17
3	Medical Advisor	Dr Anil Ninan	N/A	03/11/16	Dr Lindsay Groves	N/A	14/10/16	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	Independent Member	Joy Dymant	26/09/20	13/02/17	Kate Dyke	26/01/2017	21/09/16	John Peake	20/12/17	12/04/17
5	Independent Member	Denise Nicholls	26/09/20	27/02/17	Megan Meeke	01/11/2020	08/08/16	Eirian Hughes	11/11/20	08/03/17
6	Independent Member	Lucy Hay	24/01/21	21/11/16	Rod Bowden	26/01/2017	8/08/16	Dewi Rhys Jones	20/12/17	12/4/17
7	Independent Member	Linda Vickery	26/09/20	09/11/16	Jacqui Dôll	26/01/2017	27/09/16	Hazel Liptrot	11/11/20	08/02/17
8	Elected Member	Flintshire - Vacant	N/A	N/A	Cllr Jeanette Chamberlain Jones	26/01/2017	21/09/16	Cllr Jeffrey Evans	20/12/17	
9	Elected Member –	Cllr Lloyd Kenyon	26/09/20	03/11/16	Cllr Cheryl Carlisle	26/01/2017	14/10/16	Cllr Anwen Hughes	14/01/20	08/03/17
10	Social Worker	Hazel Reid	23/06/17	02/12/16	Sarah Halley	26/01/2017	21/09/16	Ann Taylor	13/01/21	08/02/17
11	Social Worker	Helen Smith	21/01/18	03/11/16	Helen Fenner	20/02/2020	21/09/16	Nia Hardaker Gwyneth Hughes	09/09/2015 10/01/22	08/02/17 Due 2018
	Legal Advisors	Glenda Jones (Wrex) Beth Evans (Flint) Sally Williams (Flint)			Wayne Cooper ; Ceri Williams (Conw) Heidi Roberts ; Jane Griffiths (Denb)			Rhian Brown (Gwyn) Rhys Hughes (Ynys)		
	Panel Advisor	Mandy Humphries			Trish Welsh			Stevie Thomas		
	Administrator/Minute/ Takers	Sarah Picken			Minute Taker – Wendy Roberts			Manon Roberts		

Month	Date	Course	Evaluation
April May July Aug Nov Dec Jan Mar	07,08,14,15th 19,20,26,27th 01,07,08,30th 11,12,18,19th 03, 04,10,11th Cancelled 19,20,26,27th 16,17,23,24th	Preparing to Adopt	 Evaluation form preparing to adopt A  Evaluation form preparing to adopt A  Evaluation form preparing to adopt M  Evaluation form preparing to adopt J  Evaluation form preparing to adopt N  Evaluation form preparing to adopt ja  Evaluation form preparing to adopt m
April Aug Jan	25th 22nd 31st	FASD	 Evaluation form FASD ~April 2016.doc  Evaluation form FASD ~Aug 2016.doc  Evaluation form FASD january 2017.d
May Sep Jan	8th 18th 22nd	Friends & Relatives supporting Adopters	 Evaluation Form relatives and friends i  Evaluation Form relatives and friends i  Evaluation Form relatives and friends i
May June Sep Jan	23rd 10th 26 16th	Attachment, Trauma and Neuroscience	 Evaluation form attachment trauma a  Evaluation form attachment trauma a  Evaluation form attachment trauma a  Evaluation form attachment trauma a
Mar	27th	Attachment, Trauma & FASD	 Evaluation form attachment trauma, f
June Nov	6th	Education and Attachment	 Evaluation form education and attach
Nov Jan	24 <sup>th</sup> , 25th 9 <sup>th</sup> , 10th	Moving children on to adoption	 evaluation form moving children on to  evaluation form moving children on to
Mar	22nd	Adult attachment	Team to complete feedback for Jane Jones
Mar	20th	FASD – education	Verbal feedback provided by Chris Moore was very positive

### APPENDIX 3 Responses to Quality Assurance Questionnaires to Adopters with Child/Children Placed over the Past Year

<b>How would you describe the response and service received from the North Wales Adoption Service at the point of your first enquiry?</b>	Very Good 70% Good 20%
<p><i>We had someone come out within a couple of days enquiring</i></p> <p><i>On initial enquiry (phone call) we received no response. We chased this up around a month later and the enquiry forms were sent to us.</i></p> <p><i>We were contacted within a week of sending our enquiry to NWAS</i></p>	
<b>How would you rate the information pack provided and subsequent initial visit?</b>	Very Good 60% Good 40%
<p><i>Wendy had all the answers to the questions I had. I had enquired three years earlier and a few things had changed with the process which was all explained.</i></p> <p><i>Wendy was brilliant/ Wendy was very informative and the suggested reading was very helpful/ We felt informed about the adoption process and what it would entail</i></p> <p><i>My social worker has been amazing from day 1. I cannot praise her enough</i></p>	
<b>How would you rate the Pre-Approval Training - Preparing to Adopt?</b>	Very Good 80% Good 20%
<p><i>Excellent! Real food for thought. I love the fact that it didn't romanticise the process at all it was completely realistic and gave the full view warts and all of the process the types of children in the system waiting for homes and the potential life-long issues we as parents may well face. Denise you are an amazing trainer. ... how they would ever replace you</i></p> <p><i>Very informative, most beneficial was meeting the adopters and hearing their experiences</i></p> <p><i>Excellent! Gave us so much information about parenting adopted children and helped us decide what we would and wouldn't be able to cope with. Every element was covered. I was prepared for every worst case scenario</i></p> <p><i>We've been on both the pre-approval training as first time adopters and then the one day course for pre-adopting the second time, and both were very informative and helped us to really think through both adoptions and how it would work for our family. Denise Roberts is a great facilitator of the courses and makes you feel very welcome and answers questions well and allows for discussion to happen</i></p>	
<b>Have you attended any further adoption training, please state training attended and how you would rate it?</b>	Very Good 78% Good 11% Fair 11%
<p><i>We attended the Attachment Training and found this educational as we learnt new techniques and how to try to overcome these moving forwards. We also attended the FASD training and this was such an eye opener, .....this was such an eye opener and feel this (and many aspects of the training) should be shown to all parents, not just those hoping to adopt</i></p>	
<b>What was your experience of the assessment process and your relationship with the assessing social worker?-</b>	Very Good 70% Good 10% Fair 20%
<p><i>I was incredibly lucky to have had a really good professional relationship with my assessing social worker</i></p> <p><i>The assessment process is very intrusive. However it is understandable and somewhat therapeutic almost. We had a Student Social Worker for the assessment process and through the first panel. However she then left, as did the majority of the Conwy Social Workers, we were left feeling in limbo for a while without a Social Worker until we were assigned one from Denbighshire. She had to learn about us quickly and then assisted us with the matching process and currently still assists us.</i></p> <p><i>Our social worker was fantastic and helped us every step of the way. We felt informed and supported throughout the assessment process.</i></p> <p><i>While the support from our social worker was excellent, we valued even more the support from local friends who were also applying to adopt. It was valuable to share the highs and lows of the experience with people who truly understood what we were going through and were experiencing what we were experiencing. Denise offered support group evenings, but these were nearly 2 hours away from us ..... more, local support networks (like ante-natal classes!) could be of benefit</i></p> <p><i>* has been fantastic and supported me every step of the way. She dealt with everything with sensitivity and humour</i></p> <p><i>I found my social worker to contradict herself just to argue with us.</i></p>	

<i>We've had our social worker for both adoptions, and she has been brilliant in the information that she has given us and the way that she has supported us as a family during assessment, linking, matching, and after adoption</i>	
<b>What was your experience of the matching process? -</b>	Very Good 50% Good 40% Fair 20%
<p><i>Very quickly matched. Good support from my social worker during the meeting as I was really nervous! Family finder and child's social worker lovely and I felt able to ask the questions This went well for us. We had a long wait from initially being matched to getting to panel. However we were kept informed and up-to-date of the situation.</i></p> <p><i>We had a few matches but our training sessions and social worker helped us decide quite quickly</i></p> <p><i>Our first link was a nightmare. Deeply unprofessional conduct by the childcare social worker which could easily have resulted in us not continuing in the process. We are not convinced that lessons have been learnt and processes changed in spite of one-to-one dealings with the NWAS Manager at the time of the incident. ....Foster carers were allowed to put themselves forward to adopt after the child had been placed in a link. (This issue of adopters coming forward at the later stages has been raised with all service managers, however, despite the impact on adopters LA's do have the final decision as to whether they should be considered as adopters).</i></p> <p><i>It's a daunting yet exciting prospect. I had total support.</i></p> <p><i>The matching process is always going to be a unique experience that you can never really explain to people unless they go through it. The first time we were linked with a child that didn't go further than the interview stage - which was difficult to deal with, but the second link .... and that experience was amazing. The second time around, as we had the same assessing social worker and we trust her, we just told her to only bring us a profile where she thought there was a very strong possibility of the link progressing forward. So I believe we were in a couple of links where we didn't see the profile, and the profile we finally saw became our second daughter.</i></p>	
<b>Were given sufficient information about the child in order to make an informed decision as to whether or not to proceed with the match?</b>	Yes 90% No 10%
<p><i>Very detailed cara :-) / We were able to decide based on the information given and were left without any doubt that we should proceed</i></p> <p><i>would say that in both cases there was not a lot of information about the children, maybe a paragraph or two about them, but there was a detailed description of the birth parents/family, and the situation that meant that the child was now up for adoption which helped to understand and helped to form our decisions. When the family finder and child's social worker came out to interview us - that was when we received more detailed information about both our children which helped us to get to know who they were a little more.</i></p>	
<b>Were you supported appropriately throughout the introduction process?</b>	Yes 90% No 10%
<p><i>Yes absolutely! I felt able to ring at any point (and I did ....) My social worker from NWAS was brilliant</i></p> <p><i>We were supported fully by our amazing social worker / The Reviewing Officer seemed to regard their job as a paper exercise, rather than tailoring the process to the needs of child.</i></p> <p><i>Yes by both my social worker and the foster mum. Both have been fantastic</i></p>	
<b>Was the length of the introductions and timescale for the child moving in to your home were appropriate?</b>	Yes 77.78% No 22.22%
<p><i>Brought forward to 10 days which we were all happy with as there were no issues. It all went very smoothly with 10 days introductions before the child moved home.</i></p> <p><i>The introduction process was unnecessarily prolonged, particularly regarding the home visit and then nearly a whole day with no contact before the final move. Our time at the accommodation, which was freezing cold, finished before the introduction period ended.</i></p> <p><i>With our first daughter ...the length was right for her situation. With our second daughter, (younger) at introductions...ended up being 11 days long which we felt was quite a long time.</i></p>	
<b>Have you been provided with appropriate levels of support following placement?</b>	Yes 90% No 10%
<b>Was there adequate consultation in regard to contact arrangements?</b>	Yes 80% No 20%
<p><i>Although we are uncertain as to whether contact will take place in the future due to circumstances of birth family. Hopefully we will be informed soon as to what we need to do.</i></p> <p><i>The frequency of contact was outlined in the CARA. Perhaps we should have raised this as it was more frequent to what we had said we were willing to accept in our PAR. We weren't</i></p>	



<p><i>invited to discuss this. At the APP meeting we were asked when during the year we would like this contact to be I was included in all decisions</i></p> <p><i>Pre being approved at panel ..... we were told and explained the contact situation in depth so we knew right from the start what we were taking on in terms of contact.</i></p> <p><b>Contact arrangements are discussed at the matching process and recorded in several documents which are provided to the adopters. Adopters also sign a contract agreement.</b></p>	
<b>If your contact agreement is active, have you had sufficient information and support to fully engage in this process?</b>	Yes 80% No 20%
<p><i>Yes for letterbox but no for the direct with siblings – the issue regarding clarity around direct contact arrangements has been raised by the contact co-ordinator where referrals received have stated –“possible direct contact in the future if deemed appropriate” or “when a child is settled in placement” with no future date or arrangements for review being put in place. Clarity on these arrangements is now requested at matching meetings and APP meetings by the NWAS managers.</i></p> <p><i>Assistance/guidance/examples in writing the first settling later would be helpful –this is provided to all adopters and birth parents prior to the start of contact.</i></p> <p><i>We were told not to write a settling in letter but don't know if we are to write an annual letterbox contact letter – this is usually stated clearly on the adoption support plan and APP documents as well as the contact agreement. Adopters are also provided with the contact details of the co-coordinator in the APP meeting.</i></p> <p><i>We have had great support and information from the person within NWAS who facilitates the letter box contact, and has been great in responding to our emails and questions.</i></p>	
<b>What additional training/support would be of benefit to you as parents and your child/ren?</b>	
<p><i>More on attachment and to be able to access the education and attachment course – all adopters are given opportunity to attend this course (unfortunately the trainer has been unavailable for part of this year due to ill health).</i></p> <p><i>Assistance/guidance/examples in writing the first settling later – already available see above.</i></p> <p><i>Our main concern is dealing with any questions our child may have in the future about the birth family if letterbox contact doesn't take place – NWAS and NAS are currently looking into training for adopters on telling difficult stories and lifestory work.</i></p> <p><i>We would have appreciated some training on how to go straight into parenting a child of that age, rather than just the specifics of parenting an adopted child.</i></p> <p><i>A parenting course would be good. My friend and I also believe that it's great having a support group and a ti a fi group for when you have adopted your child, or when they are placed with you, but feel that a support group for pre adopters would be good with those who have been through the process, as it's a great support to have someone just to talk to. Someone who's been through it and understands, because however much your friends and family are supportive, there are still phrases and things that they don't understand about the process – Safe Base has been made available to adopters up until March 2017 – NWAS will be providing an in house course in the new financial year.</i></p>	
<b>Overall, how would you rate the service you received from the North Wales Adoption Service?</b>	Comment - Excellent! Very Good 50% Good 50%
<b>Do you attend any of the Adoption Support Groups?</b>	Yes 60% No 40%
<b>If no, are you interested in attending a group in your area?</b>	Yes 25% No 75%
<b>What are your thoughts about a support group for adopted children?</b>	
<p><i>I think it's a great idea, especially when they are older and need to speak to others who understand how they feel.</i></p> <p><i>Brilliant idea! I want my daughter to grow up knowing others who are adopted and knowing that she has others to relate to when older who kind of 'get it' from her point of view.</i></p> <p><i>This could be quite beneficial, so they do not feel they are alone and that others have been where they are and survived, I suppose.</i></p> <p><i>While we recognise that adopted children can face additional challenges to birth children, we also think that it's important for them not to be separated out and made to feel different constantly. It just so happens that there are already 3 other children of similar ages to our little one who are being / have been adopted with whom he socialises.</i></p> <p><i>I like the idea of a support group for the children. Our eldest daughter would benefit from a support group, maybe every term or half term - just to meet others and know she's not the</i></p>	

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **National Adoption Service – Responses from Adopters North Wales Adoption Service Engagement Event – 25/09/16**

#### **What have been the positives in your adoption journey so far?**

- Support from NNAS social workers has been amazing
- Training preparation sessions were excellent
- Training & prep social workers – the outcome = family
- Adoption support group (Conwy) – excellent friendship and advice forum for both parents and children
- Our daughter, today & relationship with social worker.

#### **What have been the challenges?**

- Court stage & the emotional side
- Waiting for our daughter to be ours, run up to the court – birth mother opposed adoption
- First 6 months then begins to settle
- Social things e.g interacting with friends children
- Date set backs, getting information

#### **What area of adoption do you feel needs most attention?**

- The support at court stages as this is the most emotionally challenging
- Automatic access to CAMHS for adopted children given needs re attachment etc
- Schools being more ‘adoption aware’ ? nurture groups
- Need more support post adoption, need to stop birth parents opposing adoption earlier
- Length of time from beginning of assessment to the arrival of the bundle of joy needs speeding up
- CAMHS skilled support within CAMHS with knowledge/understanding of adoption needs
- Education pupil premium equivalent in Wales
- Professionals who should be aware of impact of early life trauma are not
- Education – much greater awareness of needs of adopted children
- Trainee teacher curriculum should cover adoption
- NNAS – ongoing support to children & parents throughout childhood – support & skills for parents
- Information sharing

#### **Are there any other points you’d like to make to the National Adoption Service?**

- Any possibility of making it easier & offer more support at court stages
- Fight – lifestory
- Great event
- Although we have had set backs the process is good
- Need to sort out Fostering for adoption so subsequent children can be placed more quickly
- Providing ongoing information/contact (with a choice to opt out) would be good
- Open rest service Whitby
- Court
- Initially a wait, everything brilliant, sws brilliant
- PAS – Denbighshire lack of
- PDC – how's spent? Education transition CAMHS

**Please score out of 10 how well supported you have felt at the various stages of the different stages:**

- Assessment – 10, 10, 10, 8, 10, 8, 10, 8, 6, 10 (average 9)
- Matching and panel – 10, 10, 10, 8, 10, 10, 10, 9, 10, 10 (average 9.7)
- After children placed awaiting Adoption Order – 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 8, 10 (average 9.8)
- Post Order, first 3 years – 1, 10, 10, 10, 7, 9 (average 7.8%)
- More than 3 years Post Order – 6

**The National Adoption Service are seeking to have an agreed pathway for access to CAMHS in Wales. Please tell us your thoughts, ideas about:**

- Excellent idea especially for older adopted children and their parents

**Ensuring CAMHS is 'adoption aware'**

- Brilliant

**Access to CAMHS (what CAMHS offer, where to access, How to access)**

- Yes