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To: Cllr Carol Ellis (Chair)

Councillors: Mike Allport, Marion Bateman, Andy Dunbobbin, Gladys Healey, Cindy Hinds, Andrew Holgate, Kevin Hughes, Rita Johnson, Mike Lowe, Dave Mackie, Hilary McGill, Martin White, Ian Smith and David Wisinger

29 September 2017

Dear Councillor

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee which will be held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 5th October, 2017 in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold CH7 6NA to consider the following items

A G E N D A

1 APOLOGIES

Purpose: To receive any apologies.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

Purpose: To receive any Declarations and advise Members accordingly.

3 MINUTES (Pages 3 - 8)

Purpose: To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2017.

4 FINANCIAL FORECAST AND STAGE ONE OF THE BUDGET 2018/19 (Pages 9 - 28)

Report of Corporate Finance Manager, Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Social Services) - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, Cabinet Member for Social Services

Purpose: To provide the Committee with the current financial forecast position for 2018/19 and consult on the Stage 1 Council Fund Revenue budget proposals for 2018/19.

5 **NATIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE AND NORTH WALES ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORTS 2016-2017** (Pages 29 - 108)

Report of Chief Officer (Social Services) - Cabinet Member for Social Services

Purpose: To enable Members to review progress of the National Adoption Service and Regional Adoption Service.

6 **CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY** (Pages 109 - 116)

Report of Chief Officer (Social Services) - Cabinet Member for Social Services

Purpose: To scrutinise and endorse proposed actions to develop a new Corporate Parenting Strategy.

7 **CARE SECTOR UPDATE TO INCLUDE TOP UP FEES AND INVEST TO SAVE CARE SECTOR SUPPORT** (Pages 117 - 130)

Report of Chief Officer (Social Services) - Cabinet Member for Social Services

Purpose: To provide Members with an update on the current position.

8 **ROTA VISITS**

Purpose: To receive a verbal report from Members of the Committee.

9 **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME** (Pages 131 - 136)

Report of Social and Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator

Purpose: To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Yours sincerely



Robert Robins
Democratic Services Manager

Agenda Item 3

SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE **20 JULY 2017**

Minutes of the meeting of the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Thursday, 20 July 2017

PRESENT: Councillor Carol Ellis (Chair)

Councillors: Mike Allport, Marion Bateman, Andy Dunbobbin, Gladys Healey, Cindy Hinds, Andrew Holgate, Kevin Hughes, Rita Johnson, Mike Lowe, Dave Mackie, Martin White, Ian Smith, and David Wisinger

APOLOGIES: Councillor Hilary McGuill

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Patrick Heesom

CONTRIBUTORS:

Councillor Christine Jones, Cabinet Member for Social Services, Chief Officer (Social Services), Senior Manager Children and Workforce, Senior Manager Safeguarding and Commissioning, Senior Manager Integrated Services, Planning and Development Officer, and Complaints Officer (Social Services)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Social & Health Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

7. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 June 2017 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

8. VARIATION IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

Following a suggestion by the Chair, a change in the order of business was agreed to bring forward agenda item 9 – Young Carers.

9. YOUNG CARERS

The Chief Officer (Social Services) introduced a report to inform of the changes to Young Carers Services and outline the strategy moving forward. He invited Chisty Hoskings, Planning and Development Officer, to present the report.

The Planning and Development Officer provided background information and referred to the contractual agreement with Barnardos Cymru to provide Young Carers Services. She explained that the Authority had worked closely with Barnardos Cymru and young carers to redesign parts of the service to ensure it was aligned to the needs of young carers, the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and was able to achieve financial saving targets set by the Authority with limited impact to service delivery. The Planning and Development Officer explained that the report provided an overview of the work undertaken and an update on the progress and outcomes achieved.

The Planning and Development Officer reported on the main considerations as detailed in the report and informed that the new service delivery had been designed around the Flintshire five pathways to well-being for Young Carers. She also reported on the service delivery during 2016/17, core outcomes achieved, service challenges, and work going forward for 2017/18.

During discussion Officers responded to Members questions around the Service challenges and commented on the year on year cuts to funding and the subsequent changes in Service provision to achieve best outcomes with reduced resources. The Planning and Development Officer also referred to the work undertaken to raise awareness of young carers and their needs through schools and children's services, and the collaborative work undertaken with other bodies and the wider community.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the service redesign, progress and outcomes be noted;
- (b) That the Committee writes to the Senior Manager Safeguarding and Commissioning, to raise concerns around further funding implications; and
- (c) That the Committee requests a progress update on the funding implications and challenges at a future meeting.

10. IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2016/17 OUTTURN REPORT

The Chief Officer (Social Services) introduced the regular update report to consider progress towards the delivery of the impacts set out in the 2016/17 Improvement Plan, focussing on the areas of under-performance relevant to the Committee at the end of year.

The Chief Officer advised that the report was a positive report with 100% of agreed actions being assessed as making good progress and 82% likely to achieve the desired outcome. In addition 66% of the performance indicators met or exceeded target for the year. Risks were being successfully managed with the majority being assessed as moderate or minor.

The Chief Officer reported on the main considerations, as detailed in the report, and referred to the monitoring of activities, performance and risks. He also reported on progress against the risks identified in the Plan which were detailed in the appendix to the report.

Councillor Dave Mackie complimented the Chief Officer and his team on the format and detail of the report which he said was informative and helpful. He referred to the performance indicator on the number of care homes which were a 'Service of Concern' and pointed out that the target was incorrect. Officers agreed that this figure would be corrected.

RESOLVED:

That the Improvement Plan 2016/17 outturn report be noted.

11. COUNCIL (IMPROVEMENT) PLAN 2017-23

The Chief Officer (Social Services) introduced the report to consider the targets and milestones document, the Council (Improvement) Plan 2017-23 and provide feedback to Cabinet prior to adoption by the County Council for final publication.

The Chief Officer provided background information and reported on the draft Council (Improvement) Plan 2017-23 which was appended to the report. He advised that the super-structure of the Plan remained the same as previous plans and now comprised of six priorities and relevant sub priorities. The six priorities took a long term view of the Authority's projects and ambitions over the next five years.

Councillor Andy Dunbobbinn commented that the draft Council (improvement) Plan did not include reference to the Future Generations (Wales) Act. The Cabinet Member referred to pages 41 and 44 of the draft plan which included references to the Act.

The Chief Officer referred to the proposed "How we Measure" document which was attached as appendix 2 to the report and distributed copies of the proposed amendments to the document. He reported on each of the proposed amendments and asked Members to provide any additional comments or amendments.

Councillor Ian Smith asked that a glossary of the abbreviations/terms used in a report be included at the back of the relevant report.

Councillor Marion Bateman asked that the video on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) be shared with the Committee at a future date.

RESOLVED

That the Committee supports the targets and milestones in the Measures and Milestones document (appendix 2) and the Council (Improvement) Plan 2017-

23 and informs the cabinet, prior to adoption by the County Council for final publication.

12. CSSIW PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SOCIAL SERVICES

The Chief Officer (Social Services) introduced the report and advised that the annual letter from the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) related to the period April 2016 to March 2017. The letter sets out the areas of progress and development from Flintshire Social Services for the year 2016/17 and provides feedback on annual engagement themes, comments on progress arising from CSSIW inspections, and describes CSSIW plans for future inspection, engagement and review.

The Chief Officer reported that the letter was positive and that the Council had made sustained progress in meeting the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. He said there was also positive comments regarding the development of the Information, Advice and Assistance Service in Adult Services and the Early Help Hub in Children's Services. The letter also commented on other positive service developments. The CSSIW's focus themes for last year were carers and adult safeguarding and implementation of the new safeguarding thresholds and guidance would continue as a priority into next year.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

13. FLINTSHIRE EARLY HELP HUB

The Senior Manager Children and Workforce introduced a report to update on new multi-agency arrangements for early intervention to address adverse childhood experiences. He provided background information and outlined the key aim of the Early Help Hub (EH Hub) which was to provide the greatest level of knowledge and analysis of intelligence and information across the multiagency partnership to ensure all children, young people, and families had access to advice and information about relevant early support to build coping skills and address any problems before they became entrenched. For families which are at greater risk of escalating problems, access to appropriate multidisciplinary interventions was a priority. The Senior Manager explained that the EH Hub did not replace the high quality early intervention support which already takes place across Flintshire and support from the EH Hub was targeted to families with 2 or more Adverse Childhood Experiences.

The Senior Manager advised that the Hub commenced with a "soft launch" on 30 June 2017 and responds to existing referrals from partner agencies. A full launch will take place during Autumn 2017 following wider information seminars. It was intended that a self-evaluation exercise with external partners will take place in 12 months to assess outcomes.

In response to the questions raised, the Senior Manager explained that the service would be available for all of Flintshire. He also responded to the further questions around support relating to child protection and safeguarding matters.

Members expressed their appreciation to the Senior Manager and his team for the hard work and commitment undertaken to establish the EH Hub.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee welcomed the development of the EH Hub and endorsed the proposals; and
- (b) That an update on progress be provided to the Committee at a future meeting,

14. COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

The Complaints Officer for Social Services presented the annual report on the Social Services Complaints and Compliments Procedure 2016-17. He advised that feedback in the form of compliments and complaints from service users, their family or carers can highlight where services are working well or where services need changing.

The Complaints Officer reported on the key considerations, and referred to the overview of complaints in Adult Social Services and Children's Social Services, as detailed in the report, and the lessons learnt. The Complaints Officer explained that a summary of the complaints and investigations across service areas was appended to the report.

The Complaints Officer also advised that Adult Social Services had received 168 compliments during the year and Children's Social Services had received 53 compliments. A summary of the compliments received across both service areas was attached as appendix 5 to the report.

Councillor Andy Dunbobbin pointed out that the summary of complaints and compliments related mainly to females. The Complaints Officer agreed to provide non gender specific language within the summary documents in future and provide a gender breakdown within future reports.

RESOLVED:

That the annual report on the Social Services Complaints and Compliments Procedure 2016-17 be noted.

15. ROTA VISITS

The Facilitator informed the Committee that training sessions on Rota Visits and Dementia Friendly Training would be held on 12 and 19 September 2017.

16. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Social & Health Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme for consideration. She advised that it had been agreed that an additional meeting of the Committee would be held during September 2017, to discuss items with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB). Members would be notified of the date in due course.

The Facilitator referred to the Social Services White Paper which had been emailed to the Committee. The Chief Officer asked that responses be sent to the Senior Manager Safeguarding and Commissioning, by end of August 2017.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be agreed subject to the above amendment
- (b) That Members responses to the Social Services White Paper which had been emailed to the Committee be sent to the Senior Manager Safeguarding and Commissioning, by end of August 2017.

17. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press or the public in attendance.
(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.55 pm)

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Chairman



SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday, 5 th October 2017
Report Subject	Financial Forecast and Stage One of the Budget 2018/19
Cabinet Member	Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance Cabinet Member for Social Services
Report Author	Corporate Finance Manager, Chief Executive and Chief Officer (Social Services)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out the current financial forecast for 2018/19. The forecast position shows a projected “gap” of £11.7m prior to any modelling for an increase in Council Tax.

The Council favours a staged approach to planning and approving the annual Council Fund budget.

In a series of member workshops over the summer details of the forecast were shared and a range of solutions to how the annual budget could be balanced were shared, based on the well-established strategy set out within the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Latterly the budget options within each of the service portfolios were shared.

The emergent options for the Social Services portfolio are set out within this report. The financial pressures facing the portfolio are also set out.

The timeline for the budget setting process is also set out within the report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the Committee reviews and comments on the portfolio budget options.
2	That the Committee reviews and comments on the portfolio financial pressures.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY FORECAST 2018/19												
1.01	<p>The Council has set a cycle of reviewing its Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) on an annual basis.</p> <p>The report to Cabinet in July gave the first detailed overview of the financial forecast for 2018/19.</p>												
1.02	<p>The Financial Forecast</p> <p>The financial forecast has been revised to take into account decisions made as part of the 2017/18 budget, and updated with the latest information on pressures from service portfolios. The key variable within the forecast will be the eventual local government financial settlement for 2018/19. A settlement at or similar to the 2017/18 financial baseline is used as the basis for calculating the forecast. No modelling has been included for raised Council Tax levels at this stage. The Provisional Local Government Settlement for Wales is due to be announced on 10 October.</p>												
1.03	The revised forecast for 2018/19 is shown in Table 1 below.												
1.04	<p>Table 1: Financial Forecast 2016/17-2018/19</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th><u>Expenditure</u></th> <th>2018/19 £m</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>National Pressures</td> <td>1.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Local Pressures</td> <td>6.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Inflation</td> <td>2.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Workforce Pressures</td> <td><u>1.3</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Projected Gap</td> <td>11.7</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>This table groups the pressures into National, Local, Inflation and Workforce pressures and further details which are specific to the Social Services portfolio are included in section 1.06.</p>	<u>Expenditure</u>	2018/19 £m	National Pressures	1.0	Local Pressures	6.5	Inflation	2.9	Workforce Pressures	<u>1.3</u>	Projected Gap	11.7
<u>Expenditure</u>	2018/19 £m												
National Pressures	1.0												
Local Pressures	6.5												
Inflation	2.9												
Workforce Pressures	<u>1.3</u>												
Projected Gap	11.7												
1.05	<p>Emerging Pressures</p> <p>The previous Cabinet report also set out a number of emerging pressures and positive budget variations, which will impact on the 2018/19 budget.</p> <p>One area of risk specific to Social Care is the volatility and high costs of Out of County Placements. The additional costs pressure in this area of service is forecast to be in the region of £0.200m to £0.700m. Detailed work on case analysis is ongoing.</p>												

1.06

Specific Portfolio Pressures

Pressures included 18/19

Social Care	£m
Transition to Adulthood	0.700
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	0.300
Supporting People (SP) reduction in Funding	0.387
Social Care Fee Increase	2.021
Flint Extra Care	0.420
Total Social Care Pressures	3.828

- Transition to adulthood - £0.700m which is an estimate based on support for known new service users moving through from Children’s to Adult services.
- Autism Spectrum disorder (ASD) - £0.300m pressure as a result of the change in eligibility due to the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales)
- Supporting People - £0.387m pressure as a result in the change in eligibility criteria of the Supporting People grant which supports direct care to individuals across various services
- Independent Sector Fee increase - £2.021m which is based on a potential increase in fees to support the sector which provides both domiciliary and residential support for Flintshire residents.
- Flint Extra Care - £0.420m for the revenue cost of the new Extra Care facility which is due to open early 2018.

1.07

Inflation

The current forecast includes projections for increases in inflation:

- Pay – includes an increase of 1% on current budgets. Any increase above the 1% which might be negotiated at a national level would have a significant impact on the forecast funding “gap”;
- Price inflation – included on a critical service need only basis with £0.170m set aside for specific pressures;
- Food –includes an increase of 5% on current budgets due to latest indications from our suppliers;
- Fuel –includes an increase of 5% on current budgets to reflect recent increases and current forecasts; and
- Energy – includes increases in energy which range from 2% for fuel oil, to 11% for electricity, to 16% for street lighting. Gas is forecast to increase by 30%.

Inflation provision is held centrally initially and allocated out according to need. The position on inflation remains unpredictable in the current economic and political climate, and is therefore kept under review.

1.08

Further Risks Identified relating to the Portfolio

Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales): some of the impacts of the Act have already been identified in 1.07 above. Others are difficult to quantify at

	this stage and are being kept under close review.
1.09	Ongoing Integrated Care Fund (ICF): continued availability of funds is a risk that needs to be monitored throughout the year. The Council has been allocated £1.261m of ICF funding in 2017/18.
1.10	<p>Operating Model Efficiencies – Social Care</p> <p>The portfolio options for savings and efficiencies which are risk assessed as either 'green' or 'amber' are set out below.</p> <p>Details of these options are included in Appendix 1. This appendix should be read alongside the assessment of service resilience which is included at Appendix 2.</p> <p>There options total £0.450m:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Disability Services – Efficiency of £0.140m (£0.030m for direct payments and £0.110m for staffing). 2. Business Support – Efficiency of £0.030m from additional income from assessors and £0.060m efficiency from workforce in the service. 3. Domiciliary Care charging – An increase in the charging cap from £70 to £80 per week for individuals receiving domiciliary care and other non-residential care will provide additional income in the region of £0.220m.

2.00	BUDGET PROCESS AND TIMELINE 2018-19
2.01	Stage One service portfolio proposals are being presented throughout October for review.
2.02	The Provisional Settlement for Local Government in Wales is due to be announced on 10 October 2017. The Final Settlement is expected later in the calendar year and will follow the Chancellor of the Exchequer's budget statement which is due to be made on 22 November.
2.03	Stage Two (secondary options) will be considered between December and February, with Stage Three (budget finalisation and approval) taking place in February and March 2018.
2.04	Council meetings have been diarised in December, January, February and March.

3.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
3.01	The resource implications of setting the annual budget are significant. The Medium Term Financial Strategy will continue to carry many risks. Careful risk assessment in planning and decision-making will continue to be a central feature of planning.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
4.01	Consultation with Group Leaders, Overview and Scrutiny Committees, external partners, external advisors and representative bodies, and eventually the communities of Flintshire will follow. The strategic approach advocated for the MTFs builds on the current approach which had majority member and public support in planning the previous two annual budgets.

5.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
5.01	All parts of the financial forecast, and all budget solutions, are risk assessed stage by stage. An overall risk assessment and risk management statement will be produced both for the revised MTFs and the draft annual budget for 2018/19.

6.00	APPENDICES
6.01	Appendix 1 – Social Services Operating Model. Appendix 2 – Social Services Resilience Statement.

7.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
7.01	None. Contact Officers: Colin Everett and Gary Ferguson Telephone: 01352 702101 E-mail: gary.ferguson@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS): a written strategy which gives a forecast of the financial resources which will be available to a Council for a given period, and sets out plans for how best to deploy those resources to meet its priorities, duties and obligations. Revenue Support Grant: the annual amount of money the Council receives from Welsh Government to fund what it does alongside the Council Tax and other income the Council raises locally. Councils can decide how to use this grant across services although their freedom to allocate according to local choice can be limited by guidelines set by Government. Specific Grants: An award of funding from a grant provider (e.g. Welsh Government) which must be used for a pre-defined purpose.

Office of Budget Responsibility: created in 2010 to provide independent and authoritative analysis of the UK public finances.

Institute of Fiscal Studies: formed in 1969 and established as an independent research institute with the principal aim of informing public debate on economics in order to promote the development of effective fiscal policy.

Independent Commission on Local Government Finance in Wales: established to examine how local government funding can be made more sustainable with a view to providing specific recommendations for improvement and reform.

Welsh Local Government Association: the representative body for unitary councils, fire and rescue authorities and national parks authorities in Wales.



Operating Models and Projected Efficiencies 2018/19 and onwards

Social Services Summary

2018-19 Projected Efficiencies – Ranked by Risk

Risk	Efficiencies
Green - Moderate	£405k
Amber - Medium	£45k
TOTAL POTENTIAL SAVINGS	450K



Operating Models and Projected Efficiencies 2018/19 and onwards

PORTOLIO	SOCIAL SERVICES								
Service Area / Function	Statutory Status	Operating Model:	Level of Service	Commercial Opportunities	Savings potential / Income generation / - description	Range of Efficiencies 2018/19 and Organisational Change support (if required)	Estimated Efficiency 2018/19	Financial Confidence Grading	Risk Rating
	* Mandatory * Council Discretion * Historical	* Council * Collaborative * Commissioned * Cease	*Reduce *Protect *Develop *National Resolution		2018-19	Minimum £ Maximum £	£	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Confidence in delivery
Mental Health Services	Mandatory	Council / Collaborative	Protect	Possible Opportunities	None				
Disability Services	Mandatory	Council / Commission	Protect/ Develop	None	Review current contract with external agency to deliver Employment Support Services for Service Users who receive Direct Payments. Bring service in-house and make efficiencies.	£30,000	£30,000	H	
					Relates to reduction in 3 posts.	£110,000	£110,000	H	
Older People's Services	Mandatory	Council / Collaborative / Commissioned	Protect/ Develop	None	None				
Reablement Services	Mandatory	Council / Collaborative	Develop	None	None				
Children/Adult First Contact Services	Mandatory	Council / Collaborative	Protect	None	None				
Safeguarding	Mandatory	Council / Collaborative	Protect	None	None				



Operating Models and Projected Efficiencies 2018/19 and onwards

PORTOLIO	SOCIAL SERVICES								
Service Area / Function	Statutory Status	Operating Model:	Level of Service	Commercial Opportunities	Savings potential / Income generation / - description 2018-19	Range of Efficiencies 2018/19 and Organisational Change support (if required)	Estimated Efficiency 2018/19 £	Financial Confidence Grading	Risk Rating Confidence in delivery
Children's Fieldwork Services	Mandatory	Council / Collaborative	Protect/ Develop	None	None	Minimum £ Maximum £		Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	
Children's Resources	Mandatory	Council / Collaborative / Commissioned	Protect/ Develop	None	None				
Early Years & Family Support Services	Mandatory	Council / Collaborative / Commissioned	Develop	None	None				
Commissioning, Planning, Wellbeing, Complaints and Performance	Mandatory	Council / Collaborative	Develop	None	None				
Workforce Development	Mandatory	Council	Protect	None	Additional income from QCF assessors through annual sub-contracting contract with Coleg Cambria. The contract is renewed every 12 months and if	£30,000	£30,000	M	



Operating Models and Projected Efficiencies 2018/19 and onwards

PORTOLIO	SOCIAL SERVICES								
Service Area / Function	Statutory Status	Operating Model:	Level of Service	Commercial Opportunities	Savings potential / Income generation / - description	Range of Efficiencies 2018/19 and Organisational Change support (if required)	Estimated Efficiency 2018/19	Financial Confidence Grading	Risk Rating
	* Mandatory * Council Discretion * Historical	* Council * Collaborative * Commissioned * Cease	*Reduce *Protect *Develop *National Resolution		2018-19	Minimum £ Maximum £	£	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Confidence in delivery
Page 10 Business Support and Management					renewed the income will be given as a corporate efficiency.				
	Mandatory	Council	Protect	None	<u>Staffing</u> Reduction in 2 posts (1x Grade G 0.8 FTE ; 1x Grade G 0.4 FTE)	£45,000	£45,000	M	
					<u>Accommodation</u> Rationalisation of Rented accommodation under consideration.	£15,000	£15,000	M	
Additional cross-cutting efficiencies	Mandatory	Collaborative / Commissioned	Protect	None	Anticipated increase in domiciliary care charging ceiling will deliver £0.220m.	£220,000	£220,000	H	



Resilience Statements 2017 - 2019

Portfolio Social Services

Summary of Portfolio Budgeted Efficiencies

Current value of service, financial year 2017/2018 budget £62.945m	Cost reduction over the last five years £8.023 m Percentage of budget = 13%
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Context – What has been achieved so far

Mental Health Services seen cost reduction of £0.195m through a service restructure.

Disability Services redesigned and the recommissioned as part of a wholesale service restructure. Use of Direct Payments increased and overall cost reduction of £3.992m in the last 5 years.

Older People’s Services and Reablement redesigned to deliver day services through a progression model and Memory Café’s, resulting in efficiency savings in Day Services. Cost reduction of £1.451m.

Adult/Children’s First Contact included within Older People’s Services and Children’s Fieldwork.

Demand on Safeguarding Service increasing. Service redesign being worked through to improve demand management, but no efficiency savings have been identified. Service has also passed on £0.025m budget to Legal Services to cover legal costs of additional DoLS Applications.

Children’s Fieldwork made a cost reduction of £1.079m over past 5 years. Demand continues to increase and a restructure and creation of the Early Help Hub is working to manage that demand.

Children’s Resources - demand for Foster Placements and Out of County Placements has been increasing. No cost efficiencies identified in this service but work being undertaken to manage demand.

Early Years & Family Support Services fully grant funded.

Commissioning, Planning, Wellbeing, Complaints and Performance - No efficiencies identified in these services, work undertaken to manage increased demand.

Workforce Development cost efficiency of £0.113m over past 5 years through service restructure.

Business Support and Management admin review and complete with Social Services efficiency of £1.118m and the Corporate review of fees and charges produced additional £0.050m in Deputyship Services.

Resilience Statements 2017 - 2019

External Validation / Benchmarking of the service provision

Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) Performance Review of Flintshire County Council (June 2017):

“There has been sustained progress in meeting the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the local authority has aligned its review of its own performance within the context of the national outcomes framework.”

“Information, advice and assistance arrangements continue to evolve and there is a clear sense of direction, however, a more integrated gateway for the public will necessitate a single point of access that also incorporates health matters – this will require greater commitment from Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board for it to reach its full potential.”

“Proposals for the development of the early help hub in children’s services are promising, and reflect an ambition to rebalance resources to build resilience at an early stage, when preventative work care have a greater chance of delivering successful well-being outcomes.”

“The transformation of learning disability services has continue with the development of alternative delivery models that will enable people to better access new skills that secure greater independence.”

“Safeguarding systems have been restructured with the aim of providing a more consistent response, with increased emphasis upon cross-learning with children’s services. Systems are largely responsive and contract monitoring services remain a key element in the early identification of adults at risk. However, safeguarding thresholds are inconsistently applied, and sometimes there is not enough urgency in risk mitigation. The local authority is addressing these issues and is establishing more robust systems that will better monitor the effectiveness of practice and subsequent outcomes.”

“The inspection of children’s services in 2015 has been subject to a structured series of progress review meetings that have tracked and evaluated action by the local authority to address recommendations. Good progress has been made so far and the implementation of the early help hub will be reviewed in due course as a continuation of this process.”

Current Performance Level / Value for Money Considerations / Unit Cost

Flintshire County Council is a relatively low spender per head for Social Services in Wales.

Resilience Statements 2017 - 2019

Service	Current Operating Model	Preferred Operating Model	Mandatory (M) or Discretionary (D)	Current VFM Assessment	2017/18 Resilience levels	2018/19 Resilience levels if Green and Amber options are taken	WORKING NOTES Resilience level statement a) Service scale and quality b) Capability c) Service sustainability
Mental Health Services	Council / Collaborative	Council / Collaborative	M			N/C	a) Service scale and quality Mandatory Community Mental Health services are delivered jointly with BCUHB, as part of the Mental Health Measure 2014, there is an expectation that robust Preventative Services are in place. b) Capability The service is at maximum capacity with demand predicted to increase. There may be possible commercial opportunities available within the services. c) Service sustainability To sustain some of the discretionary early intervention and recovery services, there may be an opportunity to create further social enterprises (as with Double Click in 2016).

Resilience Statements 2017 - 2019

<p>Disability Services</p>	<p>Council / Commission</p>	<p>Council / Commission</p>	<p>M</p>				<p>a) Service scale and quality The service has reached an optimal operating model following the ADM of in-house Day Services and Work Opportunities and the outsourcing of in-house Supported Living Houses.</p> <p>b) Capability The services are able to deliver the efficiencies described in the Efficiency Tracker, however, there is no further scope to make efficiencies at this point in time.</p> <p>c) Service sustainability There is little scope for further efficiencies in this service.</p>
<p>Older People's Services</p>	<p>Council / Collaborative / Commissioned</p>	<p>Council / Collaborative / Commissioned</p>	<p>M</p>			<p>N/C</p>	<p>a) Services scale and quality These are mandatory services providing Care Home and Home Care services to Older People, together with reablement, equipment and preventative services.</p> <p>b) Capability Limited opportunity to make further efficiencies, however the Corporate review of fees and charges has identified an increase in the fees for Residential Meals which has been implemented.</p> <p>c) Service sustainability</p>

Resilience Statements 2017 - 2019

							A full Residential Care review was completed in 2015 and highlighted significant increases in demand for Residential Care (and indirectly Domiciliary Care) over the next 5 to 15 years, with an extra 207 council funded beds required by 2030.
Reablement Services	Council / Collaborative	Council / Collaborative	M			N/C	<p>a) Services scale and quality Service is integral to managing demand within Older People's Services.</p> <p>b) Capability Due to demand highlighted above, there is limited scope to reduce the service.</p> <p>c) Service sustainability Work is underway to improve Health Occupational Therapy Assessments and reduce their need for 2 staff to undertake moving and handling tasks in the community.</p>
Childrens/Adults First Contact Services	Council / Collaborative	Council / Collaborative	M			N/C	<p>a) Services scale and quality Providing first contact services within Adults and Children's Services.</p> <p>b) Capability These are both mandatory requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and as a result there is limited scope to reduce the services, which</p>

Resilience Statements 2017 - 2019

							<p>have only recently been put in place.</p> <p>c) Service sustainability The Single Point of Access within Adult Services is currently being reviewed to increase Opening Hours. The Early Help Hub in Children's Services is currently in a 'soft launch' stage with full launch in October 2017.</p>
Safeguarding	Council / Collaborative	Council / Collaborative	M			N/C	<p>a) Services scale and quality Delivering the safeguarding of vulnerable adults and children.</p> <p>b) Capability There is limited scope for cost reductions as the demand for Safeguarding services for both Children and Adults is increasing in Flintshire, and across Wales.</p> <p>c) Service sustainability A restructure of the service will help to manage demand more effectively and this is in progress.</p>
Children's Fieldwork Services	Council / Collaborative	Council / Collaborative	M			N/C	<p>a) Services scale and quality This is a mandatory service offering prevention, intervention and if necessary Child Protection services.</p> <p>b) Capability Demand has been steadily increasing over the past 5</p>

Resilience Statements 2017 - 2019

							<p>years making efficiencies difficult.</p> <p>c) Service sustainability To manage demand within existing resources the Early Help Hub has been created. This provides help and support to families who do not meet the criteria for support under the Child Protection Procedures, but who are in need of support to prevent them from reaching that stage.</p>
Children's Resources	Council / Collaborative / Commissioned	Council / Collaborative/ Commissioned	M			N/C	<p>a) Services scale and quality This is a mandatory service providing Foster Care and Adoption Services.</p> <p>b) Capability There is a growing demand on services in particular a need for mother a child placements as directed by the Courts. These are often only found Out of County, putting increased demands on resources as costs are high.</p> <p>c) Service sustainability Whilst the services are mandatory, we are reviewing the efficiency of our Out of County placements by utilising a joint Social Services and Education "Invest to Save" post to streamline the process. This</p>

Resilience Statements 2017 - 2019

							work is underway.
Early Years & Family Support Services	Council / Collaborative / Commissioned	Council / Collaborative / Commissioned	M	G	A	A	<p>a) Services scale and quality The service is fully grant funded and a mandatory provision.</p> <p>b) Capability Demand on the service is increasing.</p> <p>c) Service sustainability A review of the budget is underway to improve demand management.</p>
Commissioning, Planning, Wellbeing, Complaints and Performance	Council / Collaborative	Council / Collaborative	M			N/C	<p>a) Services scale and quality The service provides contracts and contract monitoring services to Social Services. It is a key team supporting the independent sector.</p> <p>b) Capability Demand on the service is increasing as more services are outsourced, e.g. current Day Services and Work Opportunities ADM.</p> <p>c) Service sustainability If outsourcing of services continues, work will need to be undertaken to manage demand and resources within existing levels.</p>
Workforce Development	Council / Collaborative	Council / Collaborative	M			N/C	<p>a) Services scale and quality Delivery of qualifications and training to the whole social care workforce in Flintshire</p>

Resilience Statements 2017 - 2019

							<p>(including the Independent Sector, Service Users, Carers and 3rd / Vol Sectors).</p> <p>b) Capability The service has seen a reduction in funding and resources of over 40% in the past 5 years.</p> <p>c) Service sustainability The service is totally grant funded (inc. a 30% match funding element) and no longer received additional funding from the Authority.</p>
Business Support and Management	Council	Council	M	G	A	A	<p>a) Services scale and quality Admin, Financial Assessment, Deputyship, IT and Back-office Services are delivered through this service. It has made efficiency savings of 34% of its budget in the past 5 years.</p> <p>b) Capability There are further efficiencies which could be made within the service, including further staff reductions. Once complete there will be minimal opportunity for further reductions.</p> <p>c) Service sustainability The reductions in staffing proposed will see further efficiencies, the service has recently been restructured and this has maximised</p>

Resilience Statements 2017 - 2019

							savings.
Additional cross-cutting efficiencies	Council / Commissioned	Council / Commissioned	M				<p>a) Service scale and quality Welsh Government has issued a written statement to confirm that the charging ceiling for Domiciliary Care will be increased.</p> <p>b) Capability The cap has been increased £10 p.w. in 2017/18 (up to £70).</p> <p>c) Service sustainability It is anticipated the cap will continue to rise by £10 per annum until a new cap of £100 p.w. is reached. For 2018/19, this is anticipated to bring in additional income of £220k.</p>



SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday, 5 th October 2017
Report Subject	National Adoption Service and North Wales Adoption Service Annual Reports 2016-2017.
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Social Services
Report Author	Chief Officer Social Services
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report covers the National and Regional Adoption activities for the years 2016-2017.

The reports set out the work undertaken, challenges and future objectives for 2017-2018.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the annual report for the National Adoption Service is reviewed and noted.
2	That the annual report for the North Wales Adoption Service is reviewed and noted.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	SERVICE OVERVIEW
1.01	Both reports cover the annual year for 2016/2017.
1.02	The National Adoption Service was established in 2015 with the aim of establishing national standards, targets and performance outcomes.
1.03	The North Wales Adoption Service was formed in 2010 with the aim of creating a regional provision to amalgamate shared resources, utilise the cross county border workforce and ensure consistency of service to all involved in adoption.
1.04	Both annual reports confirm the diverse nature of work in relation to adoption and note the strengths and challenges both at regional and local level.
1.05	<p>Both regionally and nationally the common risks can be identified as the following –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Insufficient range of adopters who can care for older children, children with complex needs and sibling groups.▪ That children with these identifiable characteristics remain in the care system.▪ That there is insufficient post adoption services across the social, education and mental health services.▪ There remains the challenge of budget allocation and resource provision to meet these levels of demands and deficits.
1.06	<p>In seeking to mitigate these risks we are –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Seeking to recruit, select, assess and offer extensive post-adoption support to potential adopters who are able to meet and respond to the level of need reported.▪ That children receive pre and post extensive adoption support to assist in responding to the daily challenges of family life and the complexities of addressing their life-long needs.▪ That universal and specialised services are fully engaged in responding to the needs of these children and these services are responsive and flexible to changing levels of needs.▪ That both national and regional budget resources are efficiently used to meet and respond to these level of needs.
2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The Welsh Government continues to financially support the National Adoption Service via an annual grant. Funding for the North Wales Adoption Service is made up by the six local councils.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	<p>The National Adoption Service seek to engage with those involved in adoption and their 'strategy for engaging' (referenced on page 20) clearly demonstrates that consultation to assist and shape national targets and objectives are embedded into the practice, policy and service.</p> <p>The North Wales Adoption Service as referenced on page 41 report on a range of consultation exercises and responses from those involved in adoption.</p>

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	The main report sets out the key risks and our response

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	<p>Appendix 1 - National Adoption Service Annual Report 2016/2017. Appendix 2 - North Wales Adoption Service Annual Report 2016/2017.</p>

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>None.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Neil Ayling, Chief Officer Telephone: E-mail: neil.a.ayling@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>National Adoption Service – established in 2015 to establish a range of national targets, performance and objectives across Wales.</p> <p>North Wales Adoption Service – established in 2010 to create a regional approach to the use of resources, staffing and recruitment.</p> <p>Post Adoption Support – services and support to those who have been involved in adoption as a life-long commitment reinforced by appropriate statutory and legal frameworks.</p>

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Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu
Cenedlaethol

National
Adoption
Service

Achieving More Together /
Cyflawni Mwy Gyda'n Gilydd



Western Bay
ADOPTION SERVICE
GWASANAETH MABWYSIADU
Bae'r Gorrlewin

adoptionuk
ar gyfer pob teulu sy'n mabwysiadu
for every adoptive family



AFA CYMRU
association for fostering and adoption
cymdeithas ar gyfer maethu a mabwysiadu



Vale, Valleys
and Cardiff
Adoption | **Mabwysiadu**
yn y Ffyr, y Cymoedd
a Chaerdydd



Mabwysiadu
Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru
Adoption
Mid & West Wales



**Credwch
mewn plant
Believe in
children**
Barnardo's
Cymru



South East Wales Adoption Service
Achieving More Together
Gwasanaeth Mabwysiadu Deddfyrain Cymru
Cyflawni Mwy Gyda'n Gilydd!



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu
North Wales
Adoption
Service
Gogledd Cymru



Cymdeithas Plant Dewi Sant | **St David's Children Society**

Independent Chair Foreword

The Annual Report provides a welcome opportunity to reflect on another successful year and review our achievements as well as looking forward to future challenges. The progress made by the National Adoption Service continues to deliver a positive response to the needs of children, young people and adopters. The report reflects well on all those involved in adoption across Wales whilst acknowledging there is more to be done.

Understanding the adoption business in Wales is supported by a system of performance monitoring and management. This remains a crucial priority and provides a context of what is being completed well and where further focus is required.

The combination of legislative requirements, local government and voluntary adoption agencies working collaboratively and collectively continues to be a force for change. Collaboration is undoubtedly complex and requires commitment to change by everyone who has responsibility to deliver relevant and dynamic adoption services. Achieving consistent high performing delivery can be challenging and rewarding.

Engagement and listening to adopters, adopted children and young people has reinforced key messages from research. Dynamic support through universal, targeted and specialist intervention remains an important priority. This year has delivered The Adoption Support Framework which provides an opportunity to make a real difference to the lives of children and parents. The task in 2017–18 is to secure resources and intervention across services that is dynamic and responds positively and proactively to the needs of adopters, children and young people.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank staff across all agencies involved in their respective roles and responsibilities to improve the adoption experience whilst acknowledging the significant and important contribution adopters and children have made in providing clarity about their experiences and how services could and should continue the journey of change.

Philip T. Hodgson

Phil Hodgson

Independent Chair, National Adoption Service
Advisory Group



Director of Operations Introduction

I'm very pleased to provide this report which outlines the further progress and successes for the National Adoption Service (NAS) in 2016–17. We can rightly be proud of having achieved an enormous amount and doing many things well.

I am particularly proud of the work we have done with adopted children, young people and their parents to ensure the changes we make are what they want and need. Additionally we have made significant improvements to performance albeit that these are beginning to prove challenging to extend.

There is, however, still some way to travel to meet the aspirations of those involved in the early design of NAS and the duties set out in legislation. The significant development agenda that we have, reflecting the original National Assembly for Wales's Inquiry and research findings, is going to take a number of years to achieve; it is just 2.5 years since NAS was established.

The National Assembly for Wales Fourth Assembly Legacy report 2016 notes that the Children, Young People and Education Committee follow-up inquiry into adoption report outlined that.

"whilst much progress had been made by the National Adoption Service, especially in respect of the earlier stages of the adoption process, there was still much work to be done to make sure that families got the help they needed once the adoption had taken place".

This is a fair analysis.

We have made good impact on the strategic and policy agenda which has been essential to put NAS in a position to meet the aims and aspirations. Making changes to how services are provided is a major task with many strands to it; staff and agencies across Wales are working hard to do this.

We have identified a number of challenges linked to collaborative working, the changing context within which we work and the inability to direct resources. Alongside being realistic about timeframes and the challenging context, these need to be tackled as we continue to focus on improving services which is, of course, the most important thing.



Suzanne Griffiths
Director of Operations



Background

This is the 3rd annual report of the National Adoption Service for Wales.

The National Adoption Service was launched in November 2014. It is an umbrella that brings together local, regional and national organisations and activities:

Locally, each local authority:

- continues to provide services to all looked after children.
- identifies and works with children for whom adoption is an appropriate plan.

Local authorities still provide post-adoption support themselves in two regions.

Regionally, local authorities work together in five collaboratives. Every region:

- places children for adoption.
- recruits and assesses adopters.
- offers counselling to birth parents.
- offers advice to adopted adults.
- Links with voluntary adoption agencies, health and education.
- has a Regional Board to oversee its work.

All five regions provide some post adoption support services. Three regions undertake the assessments for requests for support.

Nationally, we have:

- the Central Team led by a Director of Operations. The team is hosted by the City of Cardiff Council on behalf of all local authorities. The central team provides national direction, development and co-ordination.
- the Wales Adoption Register (managed by the Central Team).
- the Strategic Voluntary Adoption Partnership set up by:
 - Barnardo's Cymru
 - St David's Children's Society
 - Association for Fostering and Adoption in Wales
 - Adoption UK
 - After Adoption
- a Governance Board and an Advisory Group to oversee the work of the National Adoption Service.

Together, our role is to work towards the National Adoption Service vision:

- Increase the range of adoptive homes available to meet the needs of children for whom adoption is the plan.
- Make sure placements are made in a timely way, including placements for children with additional needs and siblings who are being placed together.



- Make sure prospective and approved adopters receive good quality, timely assessment and support.
- Implement our Framework for Adoption Support which aims to provide:
 - better access to advice, information and some services to all
 - better access to more targeted and specialist support for children and families who need ongoing support
- Improve adoption services overall across Wales.

Key Facts 2016–17

Total adoptions in Wales

About 4,500: adopted children are living in Wales (under the age of 18)

About 3,000: adoptive families

Adoption Activity this Year

Over 900: worked with children who had a plan for adoption or where a plan was being considered

Over 300: children joined adoptive families

86% matches arranged through Regional Services

Over 230: adopters approved

Support this Year

Over 500: children and families getting adoption support services

Over 3,100: letterbox contact arrangements

Over 989: birth parents offered counselling

Over 380: birth parents accepting counselling



The Wales Adoption Register

The Wales Adoption Register was launched in 2014. It became part of the National Adoption Service during 2015.

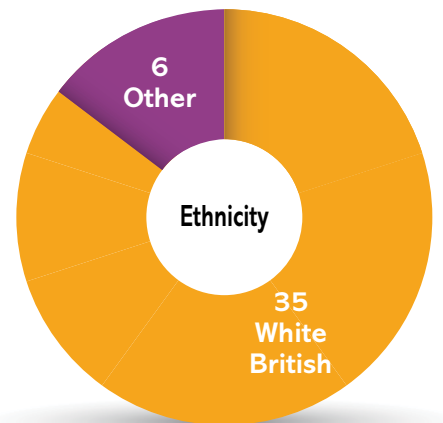
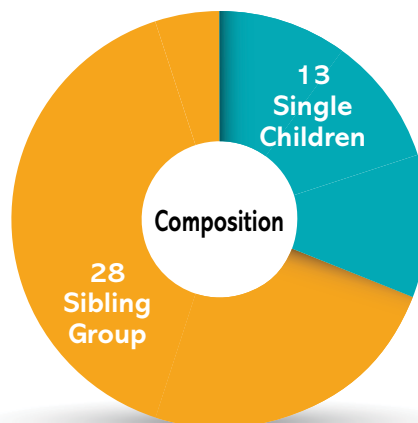
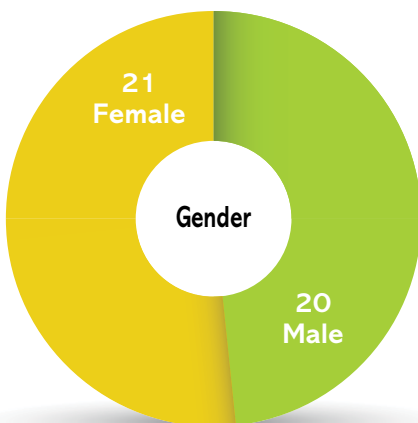
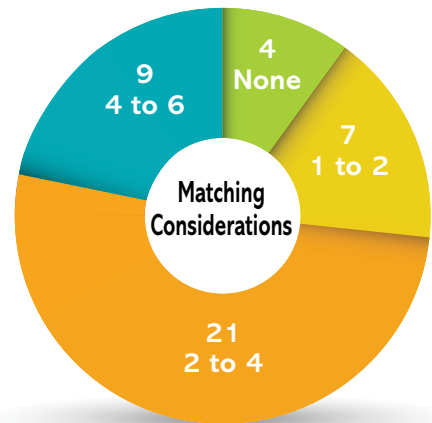
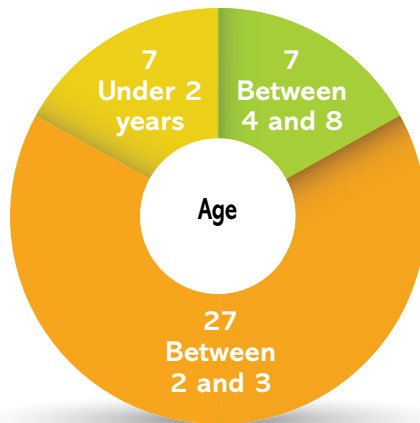
Key facts:

- The Register helps match children with adopters throughout Wales.
- All Regions and Voluntary Adoption Agencies use the Register.
- If a child or adopter has not been matched within three months, they must be referred to the Register.

We also use the Register to:

- bring professionals together to make matches between children and adopters.
- hold days for adopters to find out about children on the Register. In November, 50 adopters attended an exchange day, and eight children were matched because of the event.
- hold Adoption Activity Days where adopters and children waiting for adoption can meet each other in a supported, safe, fun environment. The first day was in March 2017, supported by colleagues from Coram BAAF.

In 2016–17, the Wales Adoption Register was involved in 41 (14%) of adoption matches.



Have we achieved what we put in our 2016-17 plan?

Our 2016-17 plan had two main priorities:

- **Priority 1.** Improve adoption support
- **Priority 2.** Develop a new database to keep in touch with adopters and be the new Wales Adoption Register

We also gave ourselves three challenges:

- **Challenge 1.** Place children more effectively.
- **Challenge 2.** Increase the range of adoptive homes available to meet the needs of children for whom adoption is the plan
- **Challenge 3.** Make sure the National Adoption Service is well run



PRIORITY 1

Improve adoption support

What we said	What we did
Draw up a plan with children, young people and adopters to develop adoption support services across Wales.	<p>The Adoption Support Framework has been agreed by the National Adoption Service's Advisory Group and Governance Board. It has gone to all the Regional Management Boards.</p> <p>In October 2016, the Welsh Government gave us a grant to agree a business plan for the Framework. We asked the Institute of Public Care to develop the plan for us. Since January 2017, members of the advisory group, our voluntary adoption agency partners and adopters have all been involved in this project.</p> <p>We have started collecting data about adoption support. Now we have a baseline, so next year we can know if adoption support has improved.</p>

What we said	What we did
<p>Make it easier for adopters to get the support and services they need by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> making sure each local authority Information Advice and Assistance, Service gives useful information about adoption support, and directs people to the right service if they need specialist adoption advice or an assessment for support. developing a plan for the Regions to do adoption support assessments. making other services 'adoption aware'. 	<p>We have put more advice and more about support and training on our website. Some Regions have done this on their websites too.</p> <p>DEWIS is an all-Wales online source of information about social care. We have added our own information to DEWIS. Our central team advised DEWIS about online information for children.</p> <p>South East Wales Region is piloting doing adoption support assessments rather than each local authority doing their own. We want all regions to do this in the future.</p> <p>We are working with the Welsh Local Government Association to get Education more involved.</p> <p>We have made links with the Welsh Government 'Positive Parenting' strategy. Regions and Voluntary Adoption Agencies will be able to use 'Positive Parenting' resources to support adopters.</p> <p>All Regions and the Voluntary Adoption Agencies are working to improve adoption support, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mid and West Wales and Western Bay worked together to offer adoptive parents 'Parenting Our Children' training. Adoption UK used their grant to run the training. South East Wales is doing even more with the Health Board's psychology service. All staff get four days training and are part of a reflective practice group. The new TalkAdoption group for Western Bay has been very successful. The monthly meetings have helped young people to speak about their adoption stories and be heard by us and others. North Wales has a new support group, and continues its contract with After Adoption for some services and training.
<p>Lobby to make sure Wales has the right laws and policies for developing adoption support.</p>	<p>Section 8 and 9 of the Adoption and Children Bill in England are going to be extended to Wales. This means courts will have to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> think about the lifelong needs of adopted children. consider adoptive parents as their children's primary attachment figure in contested adoption hearings. <p>We are represented on the Welsh Government Ministerial Advisory Group for Improving Outcomes for Children. Adoption support is now a priority in its plan.</p> <p>We have talked with the Welsh Government about its Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Bill. We have helped adopters and adopted children and young people to take part in the consultation.</p> <p>We have advised the Welsh Government about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> making the Adoption Support regulations fit with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. changes to regulations so the process for approving adopters can be streamlined.

What we said	What we did
<p>Use feedback from children, young people and adopters to help make education services more 'adoption aware'.</p> <p>Develop a detailed plan to go alongside the Welsh Government strategy 'Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales'.</p>	<p>The Welsh Government has a group looking at the education for looked after children and adopted children. We are part of this group, and have written an adoption plan to go alongside their 'Raising the ambitions' strategy.</p> <p>Adoption UK take the lead on working with education services for us.</p> <p>We regularly meet with Welsh Government Looked After Children Education staff.</p> <p>We publicise 'Getting it right for every child: a schools' guide to working with adopted children and their families'. The guide was written for Welsh Government by Adoption UK.</p> <p>Each local authority area has a Looked After Children Education co-ordinator. Regions have good links with them.</p> <p>North Wales Region and Mid & West Wales education consortia developed attachment training in schools. This training is increasingly used across Wales.</p> <p>The North Wales Region training officer has run training for head teachers.</p> <p>A member of Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Region has delivered similar training to schools.</p> <p>Adoption UK have delivered INSET training to more than 400 education participants across Wales this year.</p>
<p>Use feedback from children, young people and adopters to influence how CAMHS improve access to services for adopted children and their families, including neuro-developmental services.</p>	<p>The Regions and CAMHS have talked about formalising links. The aim is to make advice and access to services clearer for adoptive families.</p> <p>We had hoped to develop a joint leaflet, but CAMHS is already developing a leaflet. We will promote the leaflet when it is completed.</p> <p>In the future, adoptive parents, children and young people will be able to take part in CAMHS service user consultations.</p>
<p>Implement a common policy for the payment of financial support.</p>	<p>We are still working on this. It should happen from 1 April 2018.</p>

What we said	What we did
<p>Work with children, young people and adopters to develop a strategy to improve life story work for adopted children in Wales.</p>	<p>This work is funded by our Welsh Government grant. It is progressing well.</p> <p>The group running the project includes adopters, regional adoption staff, voluntary agencies and childcare social workers. The group gets advice from children and young people via 'TalkAdoption'.</p> <p>We have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • held a workshop of adopted children and young people led by 'TalkAdoption'. • finalised a framework for life journey work and a toolkit. • identified children with whom to try out the new toolkit. • collected good practice examples. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in Mid & West Wales Region, life journey materials are required before a child goes to the matching panel. Adoption staff are working with childcare teams across the region to help this to happen well. Western Bay is working towards this too. - in North Wales Region, a pilot group is ready to test the framework. Their Training Officer is developing a local training framework for it.

Other work to improve adoption support

Adopter's guide to adoption:

This is something adopters wanted. We developed the guide with the AFA Cymru lawyer and Cardiff University Law School.

Knowledge Transfer Partnership:

St David's Children Society and Cardiff University secured funding to take research knowledge and try to put it into practice. This could help transform how services are delivered.

Stats on adoption support

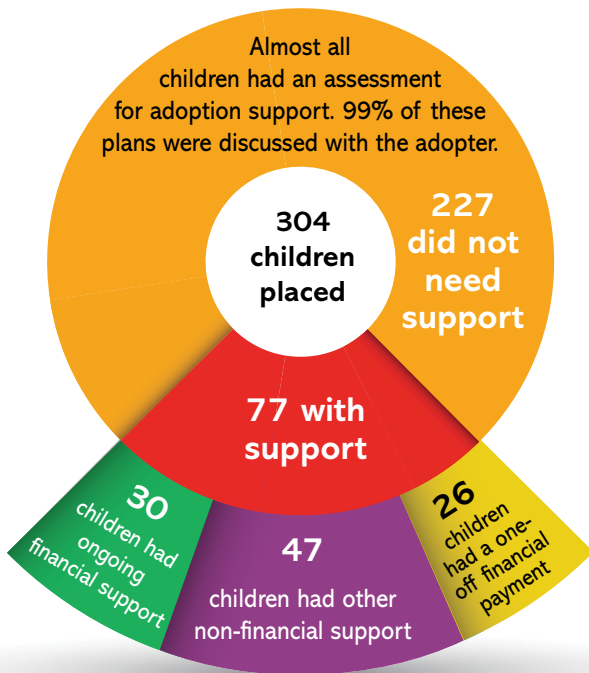
Adoption support for children placed during 2016–17

More than 500 children received adoption support services this year and there were more than 3,100 letterbox contact arrangements in place. We know support can mean many things, including financial support, practical or therapeutic services; some children will need support to help them understand why they have been adopted, and some parents need help to manage some difficult emotions and behaviours. Our data now tells us the level of support being made available to children who were newly placed this year, as well as other new requests for help that were received.



This is the picture for children placed this year

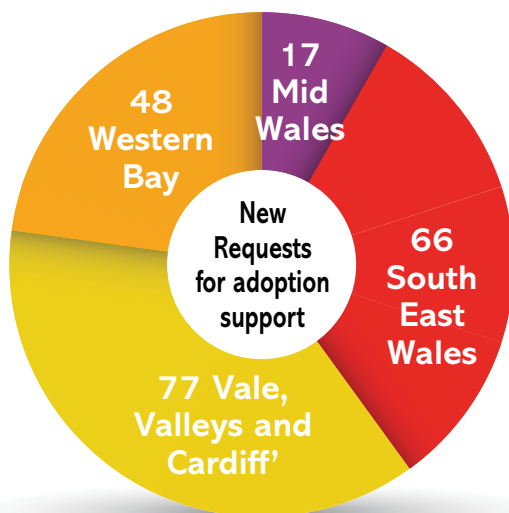
Percentage of children getting support ranged from 10% to 38% across the Regions.



This adds up to more than 77 because some children received more than one type of support.

208 new requests for adoption support for children placed before April 2016

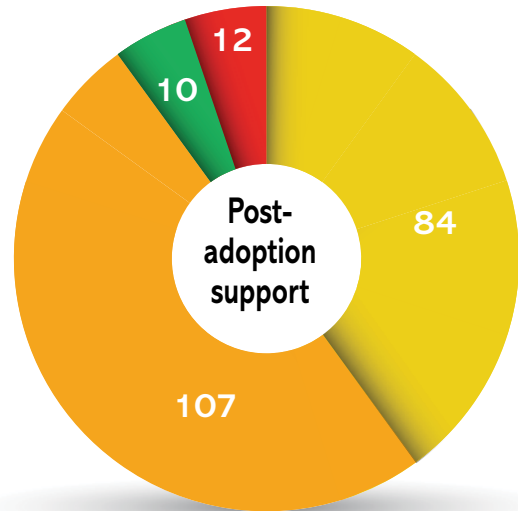
As well as the above, this is new demand this year.



We do not have information about North Wales.

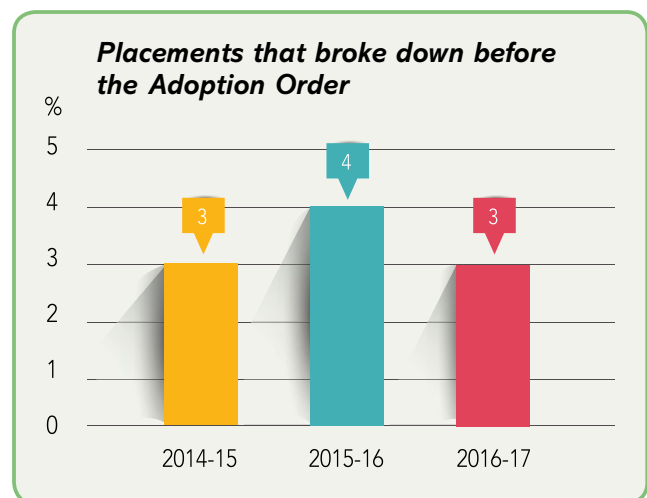
All 208 children had an assessment for post-adoption support.

84 of the requests are still in progress, as only 124 have been completed. The outcomes of the 124 totals 129 as some children will have more than one service.



- 84 assessment in progress at end of year.
- 107 had non-financial support (eg access to therapy and practical help)
- 10 had one-off financial support
- 12 had ongoing financial support

Placement breakdowns



Timely support is critical for keeping this low.

Timely support also makes sure the adoption works well for the child and the whole family.

Our voluntary adoption agency partners provide valuable support.

Cymdeithas Plant Dewi Sant



St David's Children Society

Credwch
mewn plant
Believe in
children



Barnardo's
Cymru

Support
for adoptive
families

Helplines and Training

adoptionuk

ar gyfer pob teulu sy'n mabwysiadu
for every adoptive family

after
adoption

AFA CYMRU
association for fostering and adoption
cymdeithas ar gyfer maethu a mabwysiadu

357
enquiries by phone
and email, from
professionals and
members of the
public

450+
professionals and
adoptive parents given
training, including in
non-violent resistance

Other Support

adoptionuk

ar gyfer pob teulu sy'n mabwysiadu
for every adoptive family

after
adoption

TalkAdoption
groups – 90 adopted
children and young
people in SE and SW
Wales meeting in four
groups

Adoption
support groups –
243 attendances in
31 meetings

1:1 support
from a non-violent
resistance
practitioner for 55
adoptive parents of
70 children

1:1 support
for 200 adults
who had been
adopted, birth
parents or other
birth relatives
supported

Research about adoption support

The Wales Adoption Study aims to understand more about the support needs of adoptive families in the first three years of an adoptive placement. The research will provide the evidence we need to improve adoption support.

The research team is led by Dr Katherine Shelton, School of Psychology, Cardiff University. Links to publications are on her university webpage and include:

- Doughty, J., Meakings, S. and Shelton, K.H. (in press, 2017). The legal and administrative processes in adoption: Views and experiences of newly formed adoptive families. *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law*.
- Anthony, R., Meakings, S., Doughty, J., Ottaway, H., Holland, S., & Shelton, K.H. (2016). Factors affecting adoption in Wales: Predictors of variation in time between entry to care and adoptive placement. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 67, 184-190.
- Meakings, S., Coffey, A. J. and Shelton, K.H. (2016). A study examining the concerns, support needs and experiences of newly formed adoptive families. *Journal of Health Visiting*, 4(11), 2-9.
- Meakings, S., Coffey, A. and Shelton, K.H. (in review, 2017). The influence of adoption on sibling relationships: experiences and support needs of newly formed adoptive families. *British Journal of Social Work*.

We will use the evidence already available from the study to plan and improve adoption support. For example, the evidence tells us:

- Nearly half (47%) of the children in the Wales Adoption Study had experienced four or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) before they were placed for adoption. We know these early experiences have serious implications for later life.
- Adoption support should become the norm, whatever the age of the child or background of the adopters.
- Adoptive parents need to know they are entitled to extra help in the first few months.
- Adoptive parents need to know they are welcome to ask for help later.
- Everyone needs support to manage the changing relationships when a child joins a family, including:
 - siblings who are placed together
 - siblings placed apart
 - children joining the family
 - children already part of the family
 - previous foster carers
- Some children have adjustment problems. They and their families may need specialised support.
- Everyone needs to understand the legal processes involved in adoption, and many will need support for this.

PRIORITY 2

Develop a new database for the Wales Adoption Register

This database will have two functions:

- to keep in touch with adopters
- to become the Wales Adoption Register

What we said	What we did
Look at the review of the Wales Adoption Register and database project. Do what the review recommended.	<p>We have worked with the Welsh Government to make sure any new system will meet our needs.</p> <p>We will continue to work with the Welsh Government to procure this system during 2017-2018.</p>

CHALLENGE 1

Place children more effectively

What we said	What we did
Pilot 'Foster to Adopt'.	<p>We worked with AFA Cymru to develop practice guidance for local authorities.</p> <p>Use of the scheme was too low for a pilot. We were told this was due to legal difficulties. The Welsh Government is looking at changing the laws and guidance to make it easier.</p>
Make sure our best practice guide for family finding is being used.	<p>We ran workshops in all five Regions. Staff from Regions and local authorities came to the workshops.</p> <p>Some Regions focused on improving systems for tracking and monitoring family finding.</p> <p>Vale, Valleys and Cardiff now produce a monthly report of placements made and children still waiting. This helps family finding work for children still waiting.</p> <p>This year we used an Adoption Activity day to support matching for the first time. This has been very successful. The event identified many potential links that are being explored.</p>
Find opportunities to participate in discussions with the courts/ judiciary about the role of adoption within the family courts.	<p>The Central team keeps the Lead Judges informed about developments in Wales. At the request of the Lead Welsh Language Judge, we promoted the use of bilingual applications.</p>

Other work to place children more effectively

Western Bay developed a Transition/Moving on programme. The programme aims to improve how practitioners and foster carers work with children who are being placed for adoption. The Region has 'transition champions'. Their approach is being rolled out across the local authorities, in that area. We are encouraging other regions to take a similar approach.

Western Bay re-looked at how they make adoption order applications. The aim is to have a process that does not allow adoption decisions to drift.

Stats on placing children more effectively

Fewer children (304) were placed for adoption in Wales during 2016–17.

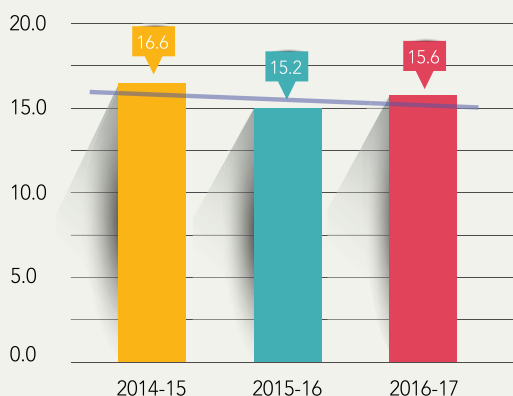
This is because the number of placement orders dropped by 38% between 2013 and 2015.

The number of placement orders has started to rise (up by 15% in 2016–17) so we expect more children will be placed for adoption next year.

Children are facing fewer delays now than they were before the National Adoption Service was formed. However, we still have not achieved the timescales we want:

- Average time for a child from going into the care system to being placed for adoption is now 15.6 months (still above the 13 months we want to achieve).
- Average time from a placement order to being placed for adoption is 8.2 months.

Average in months it has taken from the date of most recently looked after to date of placement for adoption



Our Regions are doing better at placing sibling groups and children with complex needs. It still takes longer than average for these children to be placed for adoption. Reasons for this include:

- complexity of the child's needs.
- difficulty of finding adopters to take siblings.
- links that do not proceed.
- legal challenges, sometimes after the placement order has been granted.

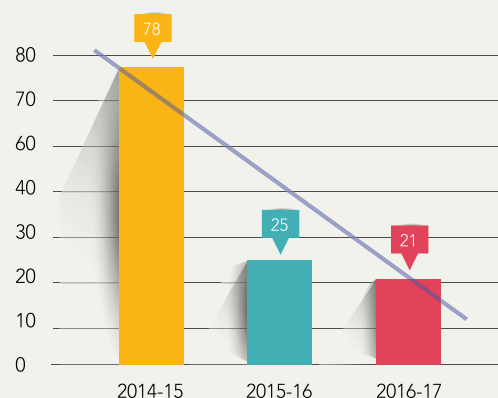
Fewer children have their plan changed from adoption to an alternative way to provide them with a permanent home. This has dropped from 78 children in 2014–15 to only 21 in 2016–17. This means we have met the target we set ourselves.

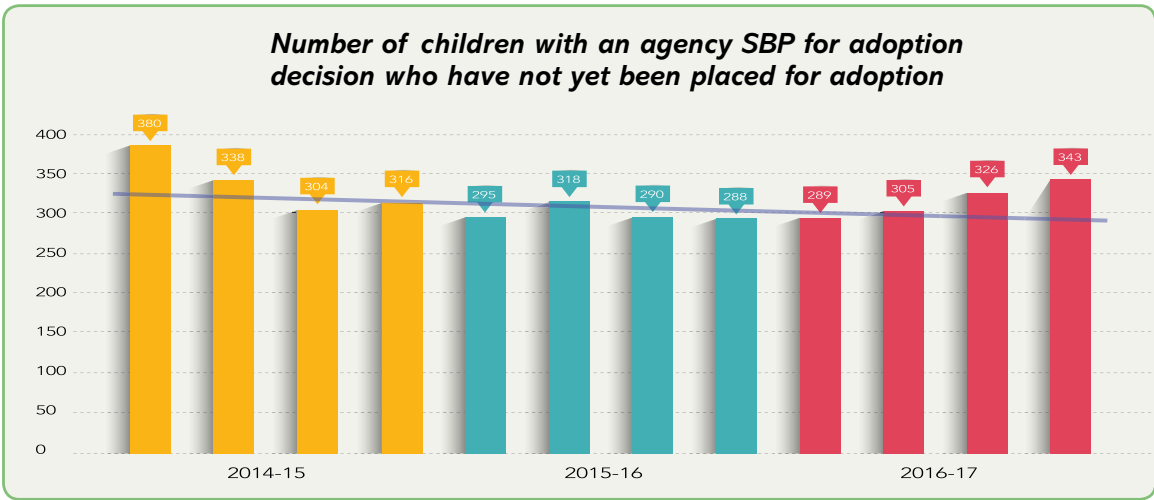
However, at the end of the year:

- the number of children where the plan is for adoption had risen.
- 80% of these have a placement order.
- there are more children on the Wales Adoption register unlikely to be matched with the adopters who are currently available.

This is still better than the position before the National Adoption Service was created, but we hoped to see the numbers reducing further.

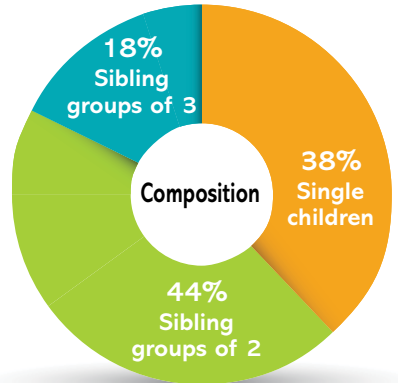
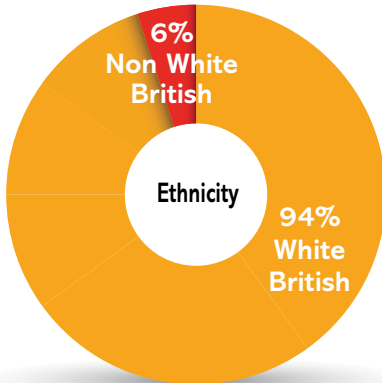
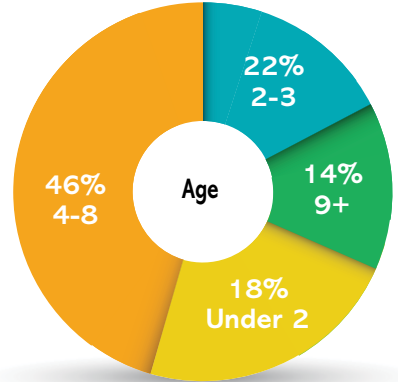
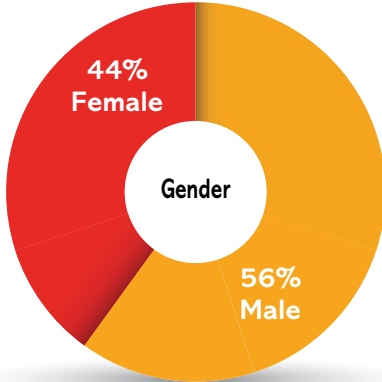
Number of children with a placement order who have a permanence plan changed from adoption at a LAC review





Children waiting on the Wales Adoption Register at 31 March 2017

This has been accompanied by a rise in the number of children on the Wales Adoption Register at the end of the year.



- About half of the children could not be matched with what adopters could offer.
- There were more sibling groups of three.
- There were fewer sibling groups of two.
- More children with additional needs were waiting, whatever their age, except for children aged between two and four.

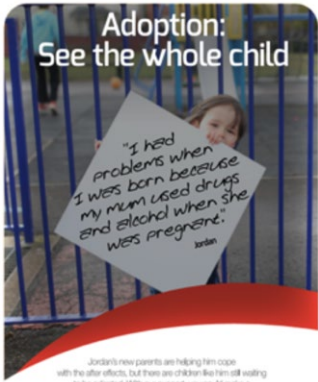
There were 68 adopters available, but unable to be matched with these children.

The needs of these children will continue to drive our recruitment strategy.

We are piloting Link-maker for children who cannot be matched in their region or through the Wales Adoption Register.

CHALLENGE 2

Recruit the adopters who can meet the needs of the children available

What we said	What we did
<p>Roll out the revised strategy for targeted recruitment.</p>  <p>Adoption: See the whole child</p> <p>"I had problems when I was born because my mum used drugs and alcohol when she was pregnant." Jordan</p> <p>Jordan's new parents are helping him cope with the after effects, but there are others like him still waiting to be adopted. With our support, you could make a difference to a child like Jordan. Contact us.</p> <p>Welsh Adoption Service www.adoptcymru.com #SeeTheWholeChild</p>	<p>We used information about children waiting to be matched to target recruitment towards suitable adopters.</p> <p>We launched a campaign with a suite of marketing materials, '#SeeTheWholeChild', in July 2016.</p> <p>There is an all Wales 'script', so prospective adopters get a realistic picture of the needs of children waiting for adoption from the start.</p> <p>Enquiries from prospective adopters for harder to place children are dealt with first.</p> <p>Two Regions said prospective adopters are better informed.</p> <p>We reviewed the campaign and planned more recruitment activities for 2017–18.</p> <p>Our Voluntary Adoption Agency partners worked on a specialist recruitment scheme. This is being developed further after discussions with the Regions.</p>
<p>Finalise and use a two-stage recruitment model for prospective adopters in Wales.</p>	<p>The Welsh Government has advised our proposals will require a change of law.</p>
<p>Consider how we support and work with adopters who are waiting placements.</p>	<p>Fewer adopters are waiting for placements.</p> <p>There is still a mismatch between adopters who are waiting and children who need to be adopted.</p> <p>The Regions and Voluntary Adoption Agencies actively supported waiting adopters to understand the needs of children who need or are likely to need to be adopted.</p>

Stats on recruiting the right adopters

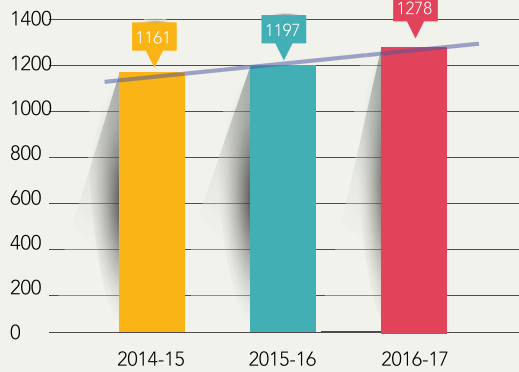
Initial enquiries

The number of initial enquiries is still going up. This year there were 1,278 initial enquiries.

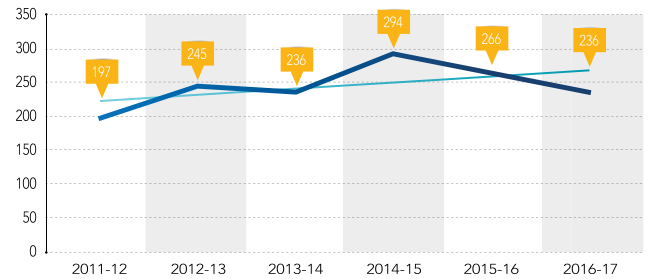
99% of initial enquiries get a response within five working days.

A high proportion of enquiries are from people wanting to adopt very young children and/or single children but these children are a lower proportion of those waiting for placements.

Number of initial enquiries

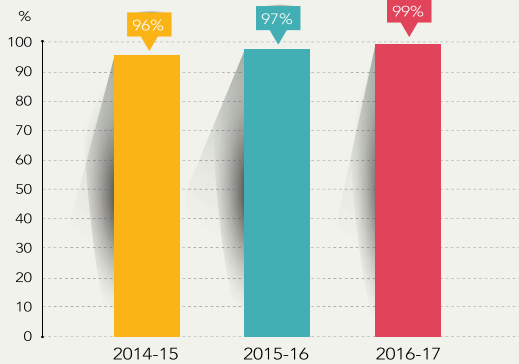


Adopters approved



Adjusted from the number previously published

% of initial enquiries which received a response within five working days

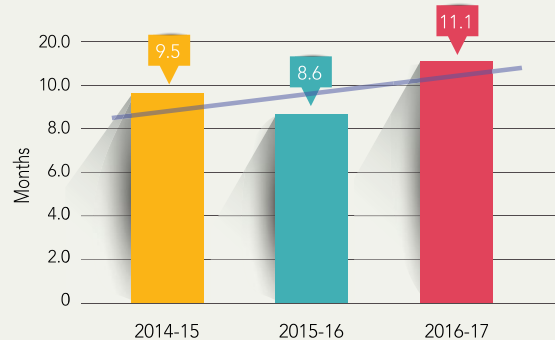


Time frame

The time from initial enquiry to approval has lengthened to 11.1 months (was 8.6 months in 2015-16). This was more about adopters' preferences than the process itself.

On average, adopters took five months from their initial enquiry before making a formal application to adopt.

Average time for adopters to progress from initial enquiry to agency decision to approve



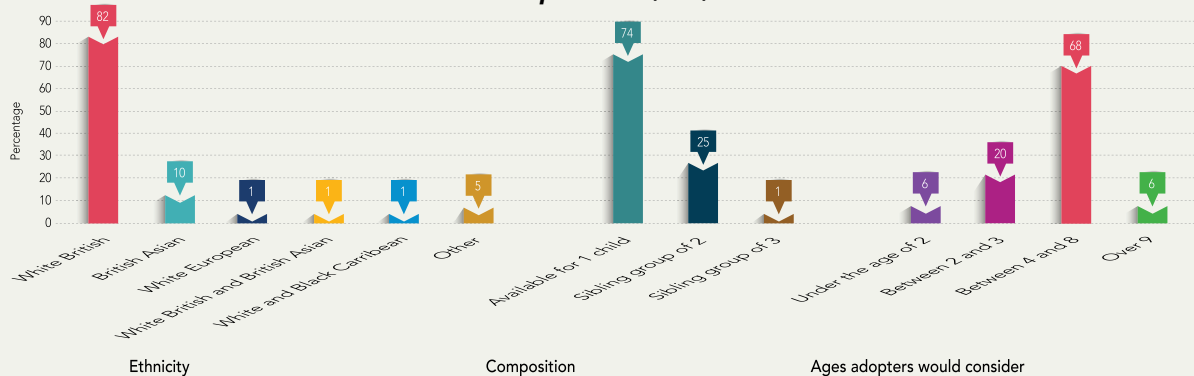
Approvals

Fewer adopters were approved in 2016-17. This was because we were targeting recruitment to children's needs and aiming to reduce the number of adopters waiting.

At the end of the year:

- 68 adopters were available on the Wales Adoption Register
- only 26% of adopters would consider sibling groups
- more adopters were willing to consider older children. However most older children are part of a sibling group.


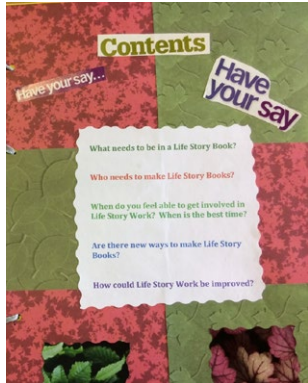
Available adopters 31/03/17 in %




CHALLENGE 3

Make sure the National Adoption Service is well run

What we said	What we did
<p>Continue to collect data about adoption and the work of the National Adoption Service.</p> <p>Work towards targets we have set ourselves.</p>	<p>We produced a booklet explaining how to collect the data we need, to make sure it is collected the same way across Wales.</p> <p>Every three months, we produced a Wales report from the data.</p> <p>Twice a year, we produced Regional reports.</p> <p>The reports were used nationally and regionally to check how we are doing.</p> <p>We asked people to start collecting data about adoption support services. This annual report is the first to have data about adoption support.</p> <p>Regions are improving their own systems to collect data. Some regions could not give us all the data we ask for.</p> <p>We worked with Voluntary Adoption Agencies on ways to collect data about their adoption support work.</p>
<p>Develop a National Adoption Services workforce strategy for 2017–18 onwards. We will do this with the Regions and training managers.</p>	<p>We consulted with the Regions, and have written an initial paper.</p> <p>This makes it clear what training and development is needed for all staff involved in adoption-related work, whatever organisation they work for.</p> <p>We held a really successful conference in March, 'Improving Outcomes in Adoption – Moving on and managing relationships'. There were over 120 delegates. It was funded from our Welsh Government grant aid. We talked with professionals and adopters about supporting children during transitions, especially from foster care to adoption.</p> <p>Presentations included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an adoptive father speaking of his experiences • Lynne Cudmore on 'keeping the child in mind' during transitions • Dr Ruth Sellers on the influence of family relationships <p>A birth parent was involved in a workshop. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive.</p> <p>The Mid & West Wales Region held a very successful and well attended conference in January 2017, 'Permanency planning – Achieving the best outcomes for adopted children and their families'. It was aimed at adopters and professionals. The conference included perspectives from an adopter, children and young people as well as workshops on topics such as positive play, life story work, attachment and adoption support.</p>

What we said	What we did
<p>Continue to work with Welsh Government and Social Care Wales to influence the development of a workforce that are 'permanence/adoption aware'.</p>	<p>We established links with the Chief Executive of Social Care Wales and their Director of Workforce and Improvement.</p> <p>We are part of the Ministerial 'Improving Outcomes' group.</p> <p>These give us a chance to influence workforce development and engage with the review of social work training.</p>
<p>Work with Welsh Government to develop a positive response to the recent National Assembly for Wales 'Follow-up Inquiry into Adoption Services in Wales'.</p>	<p>Our Governance Board agreed our response in September.</p> <p>With the Welsh Government we will work through the recommendations.</p>
<p>Secure a suitable Central Team budget.</p>	<p>This was secured for 2017–18 onwards. Our core costs will be met.</p> <p>'Budgets in all Regions' are under pressure. Some have been frozen or reduced. This will have implications for the National Adoption Service's work.</p>
<p>Update and use the strategy for engaging with adopters, children and young people and other adults who use adoption services.</p> 	<p>We developed an engagement strategy to fit with our workplan for 2016–17.</p> <p>North Wales Region and South East Wales Region set up family fun days with opportunities during the day to consult adopters on national and regional issues.</p> <p>Over 100 families attended, and both we and adopters found the days useful and fun.</p> <p>This was the first time the North Wales Region has organised an event like this, and they plan to hold a similar event in 2017–18.</p> <p>The family fun days gave positive feedback:</p> <p><i>'our social worker 'excellent'- we know we can pick up the phone any time. Training preparation sessions were excellent.</i></p> <p><i>Training and preparation was excellent</i></p> <p><i>Adoption support group – excellent friendship and advice forum for both parents and children'.</i></p> 

What we said	What we did
	<p>The family fun days also gave us challenges to focus on for 2017–18:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>'The quality of life story work</i> <i>Talking to adopted children about their siblings</i> <i>More support at court stages</i> <i>Better post adoption support</i> <i>Need to sort out Fostering for Adoption so subsequent children can be placed more quickly</i> <i>Education – raising awareness of needs of adopted children'.</i> <p>We began to work with children, young people and adopters using 'co-production'. We used this for the life journey work and in developing a response to the Additional Learning Needs Bill.</p> <p>This approach was well supported. The views of children and young people have been fed in via TalkAdoption.</p> <p>We used some of our grant funding to develop young people's web pages and a young person's app. We aim to 'go live' in 2017–18.</p> <p>We are encouraged that engagement is becoming the norm in the Regions. Western Bay and Mid & West Wales started focus groups to develop services.</p> 

Compliments and Complaints

Compliments

Four Regions told us about compliments. They reported 77 compliments from:

- professionals.
- birth relatives.
- adopters.

Compliments included:

- the quality of support through the application process.
- good experiences with the adoption panel.
- courts praising the quality of work.

The South East Wales Region report compliments about their new arrangements for assessing post adoption support.

Complaints

People applying to adopt are given information about how to complain. Other people who use adoption services also have information about how to complain.

In 2016–17, ten complaints were reported to Regions. The Central team helped respond to a few of these. Nine complaints were dealt with at the informal or stage one level. One complaint went to the Independent Review Mechanism.

Issues included:

- decisions about whether an application could continue.
- disagreeing with decisions.
- delays.
- adoption support services.

Finance

Budgets for the Regions and the Central team

This is the first year we have information about the Regional and Central team budgets.

Regional and central team budgets for 2016–17

Mid Wales	North Wales	South East Wales	Vale, Valleys and Cardiff	Western Bay	Central Team	Totals
£915,495	£1,494,042	£1,345,940	£1,270,330	£2,847,800	£272,000	£8,145,607

Some of the difference between Regions can be explained by:

- Not all Regions provide the same functions. For example:
 - Western Bay's budget is higher because they manage the staffing, adoption support and interagency fee budgets for the local authorities.

- Vale, Valleys and Cardiff, South East Wales and Western Bay assess adoption support needs and provide more services directly.

- Not all Regions have the same workload. The workload is higher in Vale Valleys and Cardiff, Western Bay and South East Wales.

Across Wales, budgets are under pressure. Some Regions are having their services reviewed and all may have less budget in the future.

Voluntary Adoption Agency budgets

Three of the Voluntary Adoption Agencies shared two Welsh Government Third Sector grants, totalling £350,000.

AFA Cymru (Association for Fostering and Adoption) has funding to support the whole sector.

Most of the adoption grant aid is for:

- recruiting and assessing adopters.
- matching and placing children.
- adoption support.

We work with the Voluntary Adoption Agencies to make sure grants they get help achieve the National Adoption Service priorities.

Welsh Government development grant

We explained to Welsh Government why we needed extra money for the Framework for Adoption Support. The Welsh Government gave a grant of £90,000.

The following pieces of work were supported from that £90,000 grant. Without the grant, none of this work would have been possible.

Development grant spending



Our priorities for 2017-18

Our core work is to:

- Increase the range of adoptive homes available to meet the needs of children for whom adoption is the plan.
- support both children and adults who are affected by the lifelong implications of adoption.

We will continue with our core work.

We will continue to do most of our work through the National Adoption Service regions and Voluntary Adoption Agencies.

Our vision for the future is outlined in the introduction.

It will take time and commitment from everyone to achieve this vision.

We have two priorities for 2017-18.

Priority 1: Keep improving adoption support

We will:

- make the case for extra money to fund improvements to adoption support.
- use the new framework for life journey work.
- keep working with health and education so adopted children and their families get the right support.

Priority 2: Place children well

We will:

- concentrate on recruiting adopters for the children who are likely to need to be adopted.
- aim to improve all the processes.

Making this happen

To make this happen, we will need to:

- work to change laws and policies, where that is needed.
- continue to use coproduction as one of our ways for working with service users, and develop how their views inform our governance arrangements.
- make sure we have the right arrangements in place to oversee the National Adoption Service.
- encourage everyone whose work affects adoptive families, potential adopters and looked after children to know more and have more skills about permanence and adoption.
- aim for ongoing improvement overall.



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu
Gogledd Cymru



North Wales
Adoption
Service

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

North Wales Adoption Service
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APPENDIX 1 - Panel Membership

APPENDIX 2 - Training Evaluations

APPENDIX 3 – Consultation Responses from Adopters

APPENDIX 4 – Responses from Adopters NAS/NWAS Consultation Event

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 5th 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 28th April, 5th May, 12th May, 26th 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.

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 NAWAS 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.*

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 31st 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 2nd 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 11th 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 11th 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.

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.

Furthermore, updates don't often flow, and can at times be confusing, and although some are excellent, others can seem impersonal. At times birth parents background is lacking such as substance misuse /alcohol issues which occurred during pregnancy (which were mentioned in adoption medical but not in PAR), or another example is parents background if they have been abused themselves or experiences a traumatic childhood as this is information that could help the child make sense of why they could not parent, this is often in the 'should be placed minutes' but no mention in the CAR.

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.

4. **Do you feel appropriately advised by the Panel Advisors as to your responsibilities in the decision making process?** Yes 100%

Comments: *The Panel advisor is very knowledgeable and able to answer queries and issues raised by panel.*

5. **Generally what is your view of the quality of care being offered to Children and Young People based on the documentation you receive?**

Excellent 63.64% Good 36.36%

Comments:

On paper the care of young Children appears to be good, despite the high workload of social workers The PAR is of particularly high standard, and support plans are very robust and you can see that the child's needs have been fully considered in the matching process.

6. **What is your view of the knowledge and experience of the adoption staff required to attend panel to support applications, matching and reviews of adopters?**

Excellent 72.73% Good 27.27%

Comment: *I can clearly see that the adoption workers are very knowledgeable and provide a very high standard of work. They are thorough with their assessments*

7. **Do you feel able to express your views to the adoption team on improvements/developments of the adoption panel and or service?**

Yes 100% Always

Comment - *At present, panel members are each asked individually for their views within the meeting allowing everyone time to contribute. There is also opportunity to raise views within the appraisal process, but it must be said, the Chair and Panel Advisor are open to suggestions throughout the year, they are very approachable, knowledgeable and it's clear to see their experience is an asset to the service*

8. **If you have attended any training provided by NWAS over the past year please comment on the quality of the training you received.**

Excellent 55.56% Good 44.44%

Comment - *I think we learn and develop more by case experience than by 'academic study' of topics, though that also has an important place. I think working examples of the topic being taught might suit the teaching-meeting format*

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

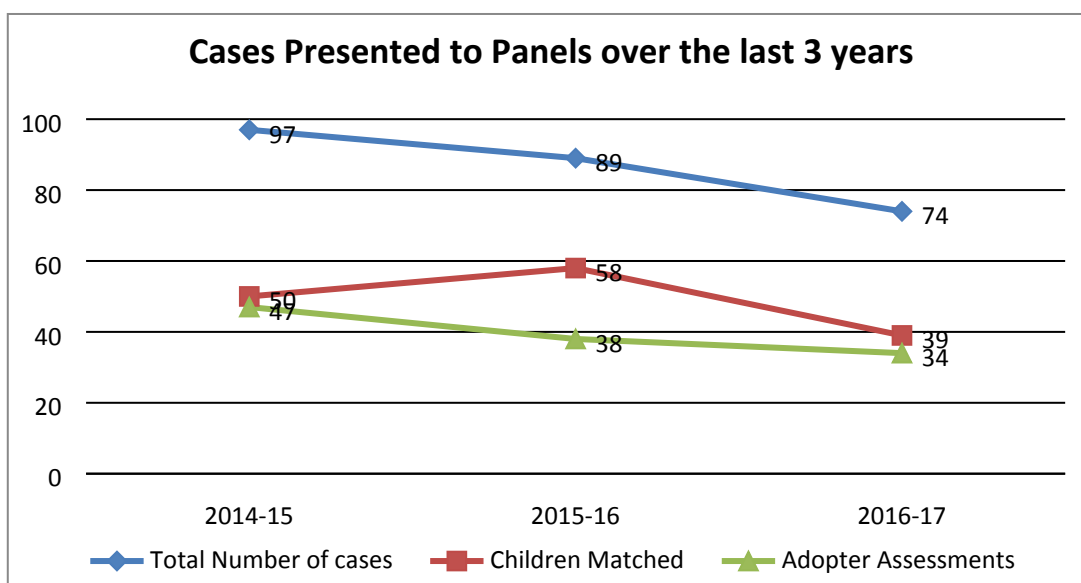
Panels	Flint/Wrex	Conw/Denb	Gwyn/Ynys	Total
Adoption Assessments	16	9	9 (1 FE)	34
Should Be Adopted	1	0	0	1
Matching (no: children)	11(13)	14(15)	11(11)	36(39)
Deferred	2	0	0	2
Deregistered	0	0	0	0
Review	0	1	0	1
Total	30	24	20	74

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		
	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 NAWAS 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

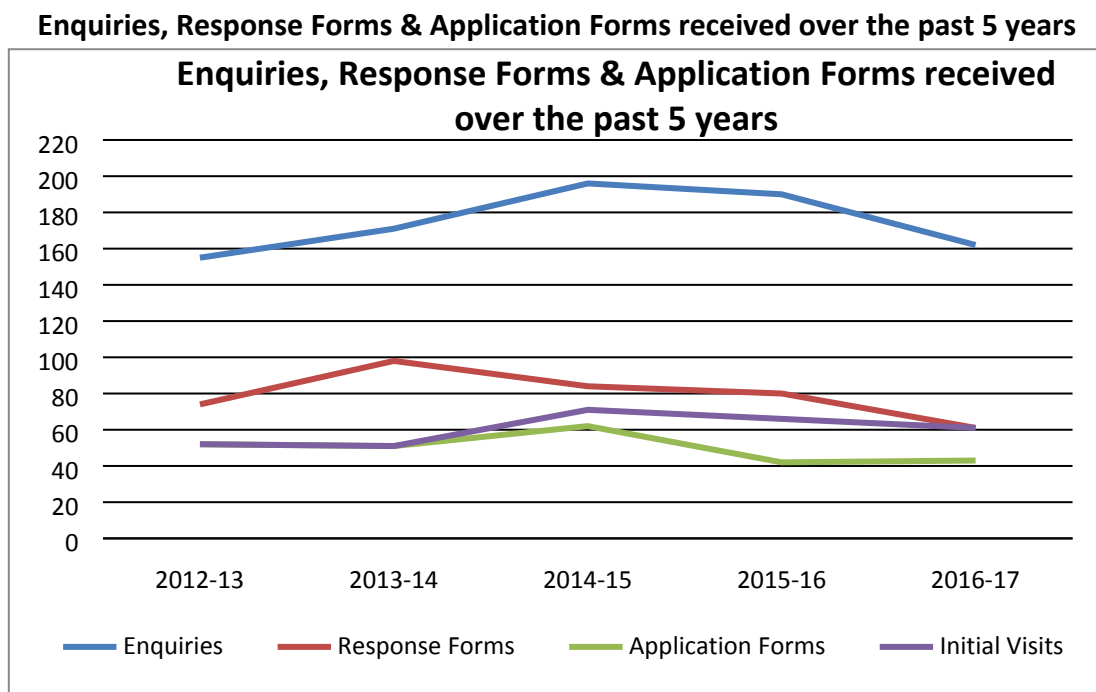
LA	Conw	Denb	Flint	Gwyn	Wrex	Ynys Môn	Other/ ONWAS	Total 16-17	Total 15-16
Enquires	25	21	35	21	37	21	2	162	190
Response Forms	8	11	8	11	13	8	2	61	80
Initial Visits Undertaken	11	11	9	11	14	5	1	62	66
Application Forms Received	6	4	11	4	9	8	1	43	42

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.

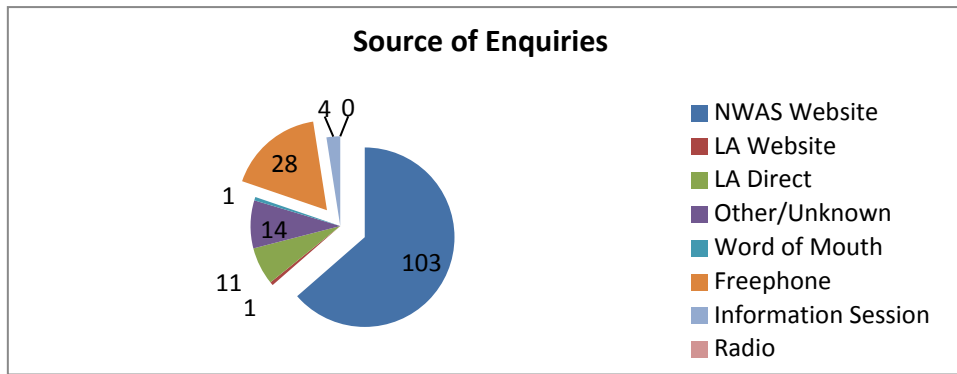


Graph 7.1

General Enquiries and Marketing Source

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

Marketing Source for all enquiries between April 2016 – March 2017



Graph 7.2

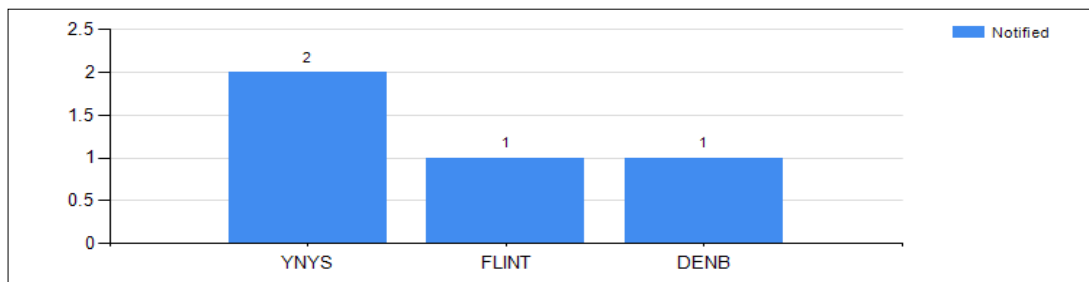
80% of all enquiries are received via the NWAS website and Freephone service, (64% and 17% respectively). The website continues to be the main source of enquiries.

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

National Adoption Week 17th – 23rd of October 2016

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

*3 from the NWAS Website and 1 through Word of Mouth



Total number of enquiries from each information session 17th – 23rd 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 / NWAS 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
Total Cost	£6,720.72	£6,370.35	£3049.28	£2812.52	£766.05

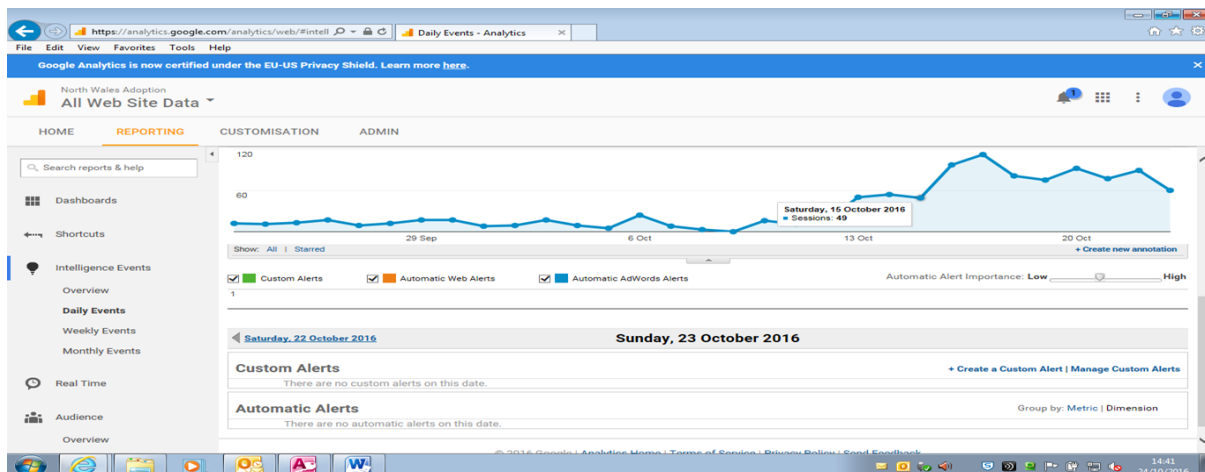
Total No: of enquiries	12	25	19	11	15
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From the information gathered regarding recruitment activity for the National Adoption Week over the last 5 years it is becoming evident that the more effective form of advertising has been from Google ad words, 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 NWAS Website using Google Add Words. Which directed all visitors to the NWAS website and events page.
- The Google Add Words campaign started on the 15th of October. The graph below shows an increase of visitors to The NWAS website at its peak on Monday the 17th 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 NWAS have the most **ongoing** awareness raising with NWAS 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
- NWAS Information sent to – Diversity Event, Social Service Conference, North Wales Pride.
- Information table Holyhead Library
- Adoption & Fostering information event, Wrexham
- Arrange activities for NWAS 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 NWAS 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	96	64
Initial Visits Undertaken	5	5	9	4	9	2	76	
Partner of Parent Adoption Orders Granted	1	0	2	1	5	0	9	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

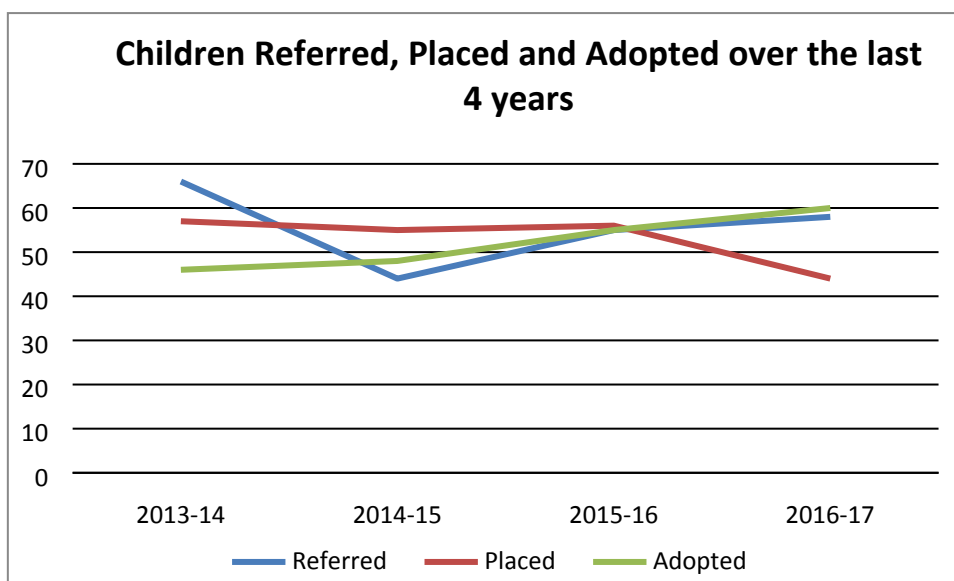
Of the 44 children placed this year, 36 were single placements and 4 sibling groups of 2. 6 children (1 sibling groups of two and 4 single child) were placed with families not approved by NWS.

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 NWAS 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
2014-15	44	2	0	1	0	1	0
2015-16	55	2	0	1	0	1	0
2016-17	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.

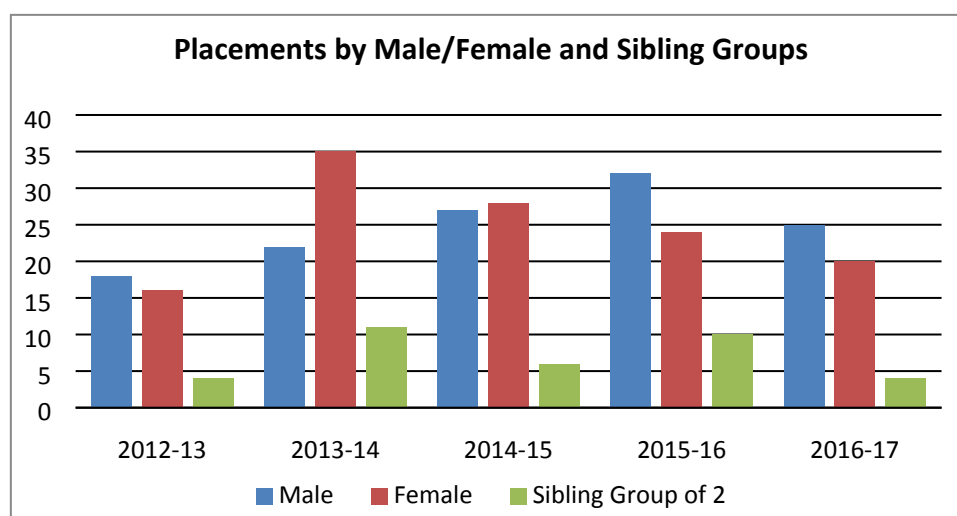
Current Situation of Children Referred April 2016 –March 2017

Year	Total	Current Situation						
		Referred	Available	On Hold for Link	Matched or Placed	Adopted	Waiting PO	On Hold /Agency
2016-17	58	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.

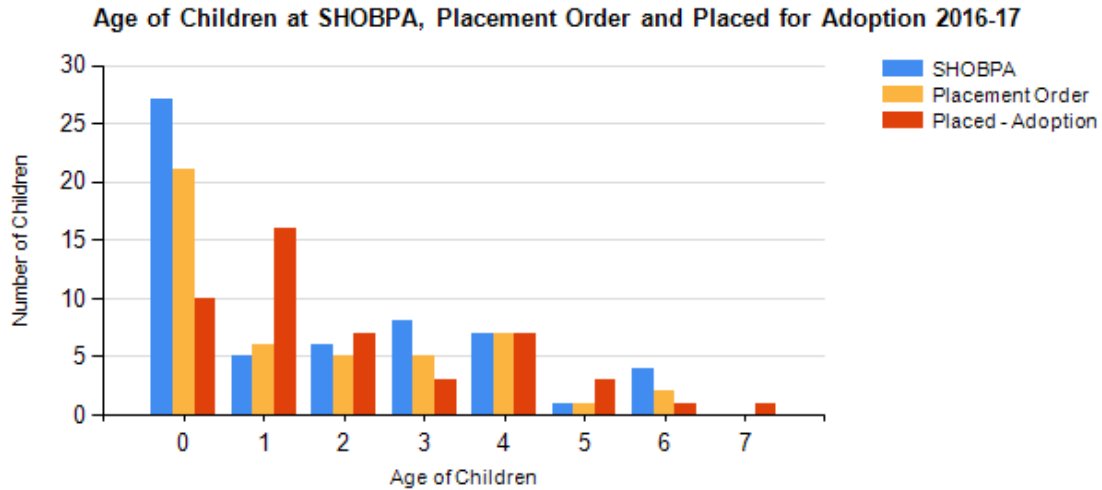
Gender Comparison of Children Placed for Adoption/Children Placed with other agency adopters

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

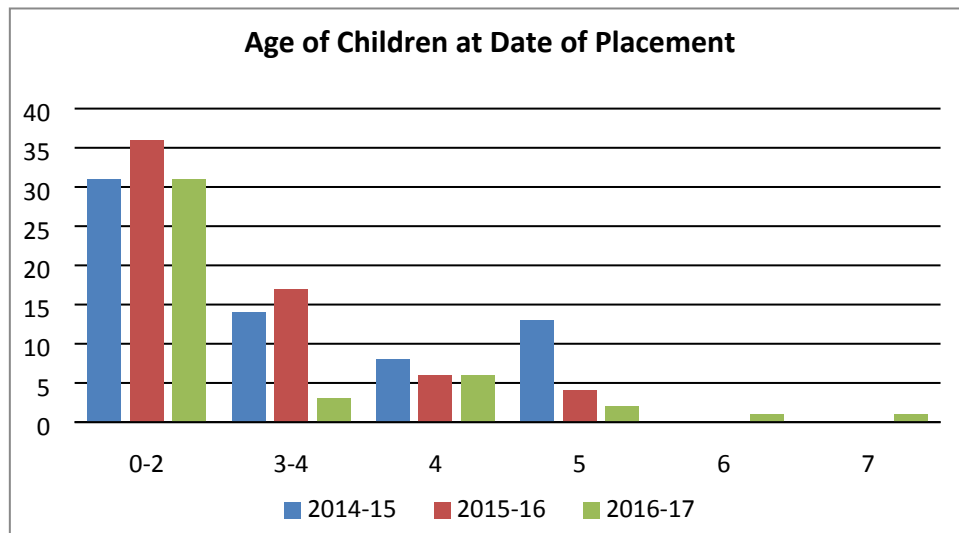
There is no significant difference in the total number of referrals for boys and girls over the past 5 years. Adopters who wish to adopt a child of specify gender tend to want a female child and this is the reason why several of the adopters continue to wait for children over a longer period of time 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 2nd 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.

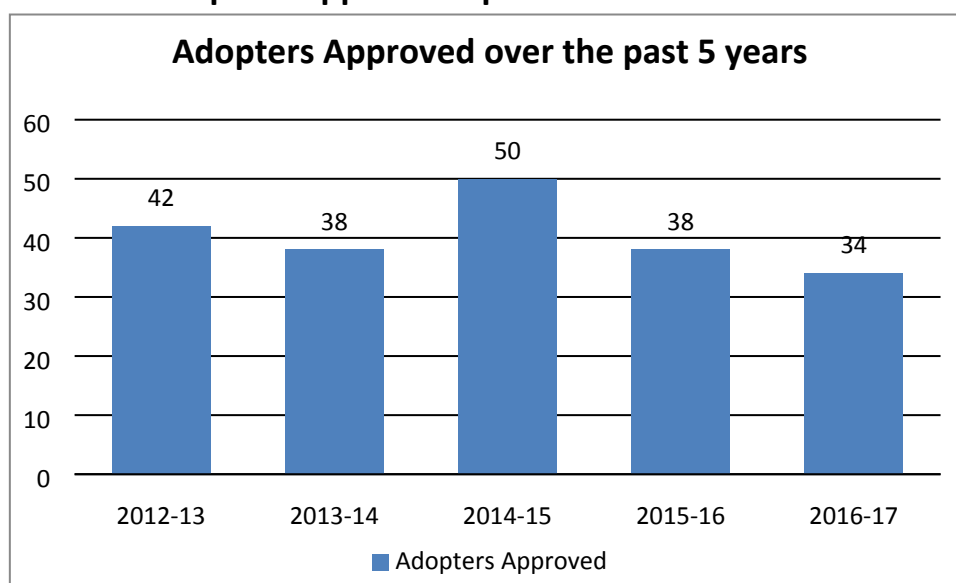
10. Adopters

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	162
Response Forms	8	11	8	11	13	8	2	61
Initial Visits Undertaken	11	11	9	11	14	5	1	62
Application Forms Received	6	4	11	4	9	8	1	43
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.

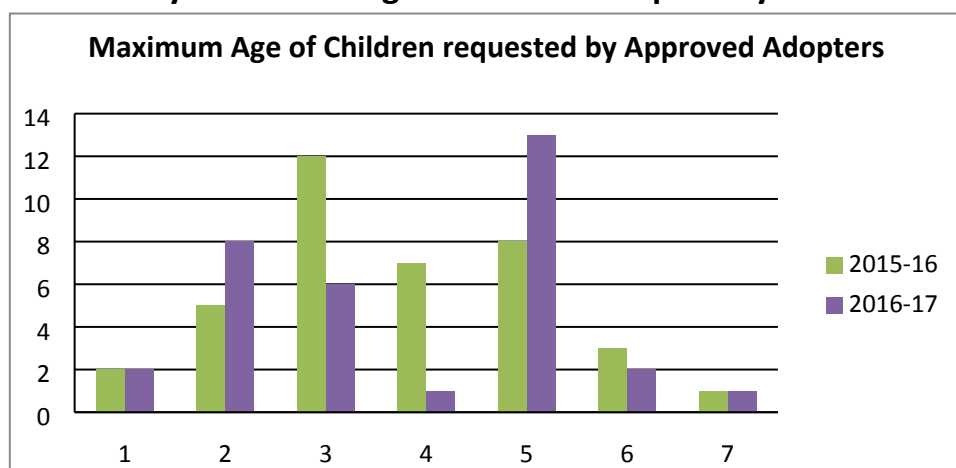
Adopters Approved April 2012 – March 2017



Graph 10.1

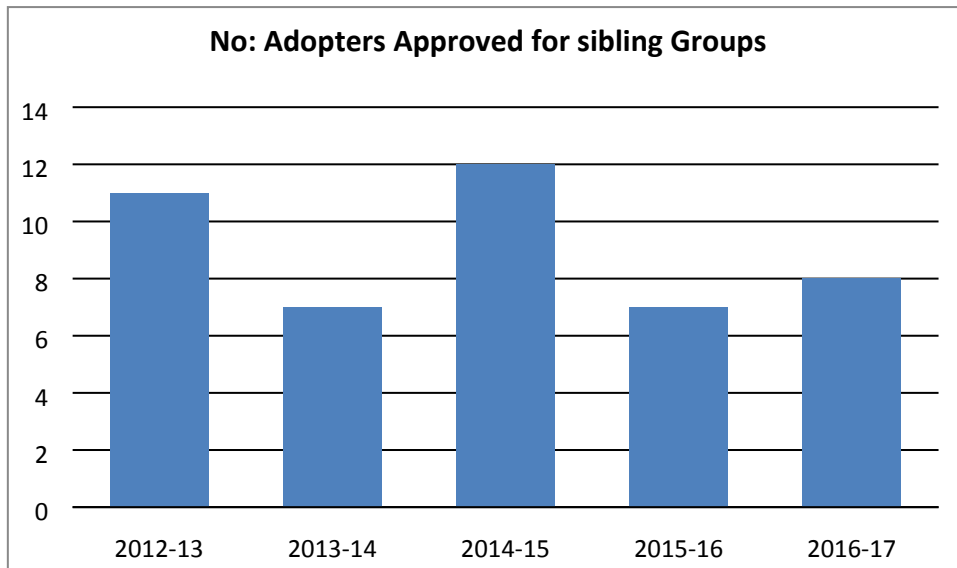
The number of families approved this year is slightly less (4) than in the previous year. The two vacancies running concurrently over 6 months in the Conwy area did have some impact on assessments as there was considerable high activity related to adoption orders being granted, the highest number since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

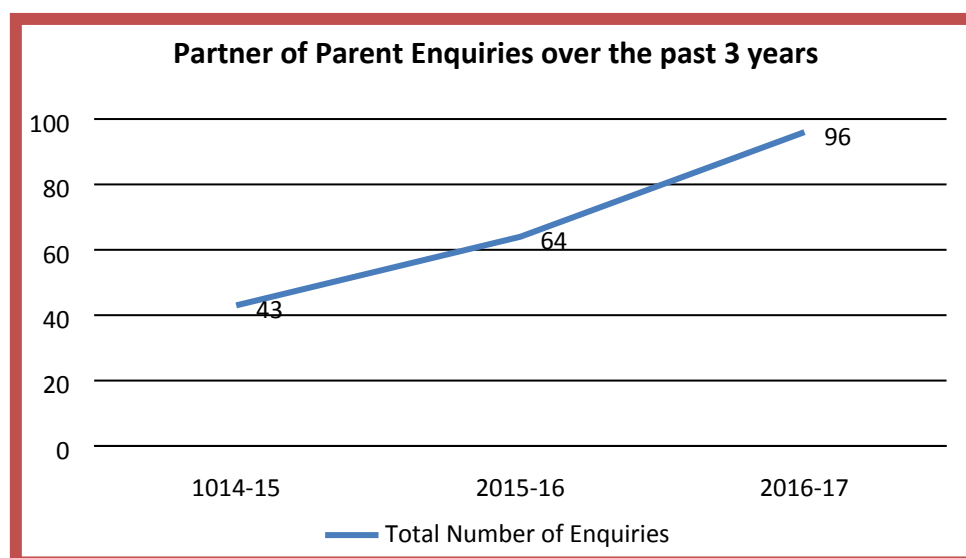
There have been no disruptions of children placed via NWAS during this financial year. We are aware that 3 historical placements have disrupted in one of the agencies but no further disruptions have been reported to NWAS from other agencies.

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 13th 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 12th September 2016 and discussed the Annex 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 1st March 2017 to discuss the sharing of Annex 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 Annex A requesting the redacting of certain information which is 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						
Total	15		3		16		5

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: 3rd 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 Teyrnon 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		

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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 Evaluation Form relatives and friends Evaluation Form relatives and friends
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 th , 25 th 9 th , 10 th	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

How would you describe the response and service received from the North Wales Adoption Service at the point of your first enquiry?	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>	
How would you rate the information pack provided and subsequent initial visit?	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>	
How would you rate the Pre-Approval Training - Preparing to Adopt?	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>	
Have you attended any further adoption training, please state training attended and how you would rate it?	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>	
What was your experience of the assessment process and your relationship with the assessing social worker?-	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 themselves just to argue with us.</i></p>	

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

What was your experience of the matching process?-	Very Good 50% Good 40% Fair 20%
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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.

We had a few matches but our training sessions and social worker helped us decide quite quickly

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).**

It's a daunting yet exciting prospect. I had total support.

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.

Were you given sufficient information about the child in order to make an informed decision as to whether or not to proceed with the match?	Yes 90% No 10%
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Very detailed care :-)/ We were able to decide based on the information given and were left without any doubt that we should proceed 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.

Were you supported appropriately throughout the introduction process?	Yes 90% No 10%
--	----------------

Yes absolutely! I felt able to ring at any point (and I did) My social worker from NWAS was brilliant

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.

Yes by both my social worker and the foster mum. Both have been fantastic

Was the length of the introductions and timescale for the child moving in to your home were appropriate?	Yes 77.78% No 22.22%
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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.

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.

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.

Have you been provided with appropriate levels of support following placement?	Yes 90% No 10%
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Was there adequate consultation in regard to contact arrangements?	Yes 80% No 20%
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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.

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

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

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.

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.

If your contact agreement is active, have you had sufficient information and support to fully engage in this process?

Yes 80% No 20%

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.

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.

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.

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.

What additional training/support would be of benefit to you as parents and your child/ren?

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).

Assistance/guidance/examples in writing the first settling later – already available see above.

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.

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.

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.

Overall, how would you rate the service you received from the North Wales Adoption Service? Comment - Excellent!

Very Good 50% Good 50%

Do you attend any of the Adoption Support Groups?

Yes 60% No 40%

If no, are you interested in attending a group in your area?

Yes 25% No 75%

What are your thoughts about a support group for adopted children?

I think it's a great idea, especially when they are older and need to speak to others who understand how they feel.

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.

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.

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 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

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 NWAS 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
- NWAS – 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

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SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday, 5 th October 2017
Report Subject	Corporate Parenting Strategy
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Social Services
Report Author	Chief Officer Social Services
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Corporate Parenting is the term used to describe the collective responsibility of the Council towards looked after children and care leavers. Corporate Parenting is founded on the principle that we have the same aspirations, and wish to provide the same kind of care, that any good parent would provide for their own children.

The report outlines the ongoing work that is being undertaken to form a new Corporate Parenting Strategy within the context of the Social Services and Well-Being Act and national developments relating to Corporate Parenting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Members scrutinise and endorse proposed actions to develop a new Corporate Parenting Strategy
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	BACKGROUND
1.01	Children in the care of a local authority are often referred to as Looked After Children. They are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. No child or young person is the same, they enter the care system for a variety of reasons and at different points in their lives. These can range from family breakdown, abuse or neglect, to voluntary arrangements to support children and young people's welfare whilst work is undertaken to rebuild relationships or parenting capacity.
1.02	As a Corporate Parent our role is to offer 'authoritative parenting' which recognises that children and young people want to be listened to, to be loved, to be supported, to be helped, to be respected, to be safe and to be given boundaries.
1.03	Throughout the year the number of looked after children fluctuates with children entering, and leaving, the 'looked after' system. We currently have 220 looked after children in Flintshire.

2.00	PROGRESS IN DEVELOPING FLINTSHIRE'S CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY.
2.01	On 24 March 2016 Scrutiny Committee endorsed the development of refreshed Corporate Parenting Strategy which sets out Flintshire's commitment to looked after children and care leavers.
2.02	The need to develop effective and meaningful approaches to Corporate Parenting has been recognised at a national level. This is welcomed as it provides an opportunity to ensure that we can learn from, and shape good practice. In developing our local approach to Corporate Parenting we have been mindful of national developments to ensure that we are consistent and ambitious in our undertaking for Flintshire children.
2.03	As part of the work programme for the National Fostering Framework (NFF) it was agreed that best practice in corporate parenting across Councils and other public services would be reviewed in 2016/17, with a view to improving outcomes for children and increase the resilience of foster carer placements. Voices from Care and AFA Cymru were commissioned to co-design and host 3 regional events on Corporate Parenting. In addition two young people's residential events were held for young people looked after and care leavers. This work fed into a National Corporate Parenting Event held in March 2017. The event brought project findings together and provided an opportunity to hear from innovative projects across Wales. The national event was chaired by Flintshire.
2.04	Locally, we have taken the findings and themes arising from these events and brought these together with the information already given to us by looked after children, and care leavers, through our Participation Group

	and Children's Services Forum. This information has helped shape a set of statements which we intend to use to help open discussions with looked after children and care leavers in Flintshire. We will use the statements to explore what is important to them and what they would like to see in a Corporate Parenting Strategy.
2.05	Our proposal is that we produce a brief and informative Corporate Parenting Strategy that centres on what is important to children and young people in our care. An Action Plan will be created to set out in further detail how Flintshire will deliver our Corporate commitments.
2.06	Drawing on the national, and local work, it is proposed that the Strategy will set out Flintshire's Corporate commitments under the following themes (these are the statements referred to above):
2.07	<p><u>Home</u> To provide looked after children with good quality, stable placements where they feel safe, value and cared for by excellent carers. Flintshire will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to ensure that looked after children are able to sustain the family and personal relationships most important to them, where appropriate. • Give children the opportunity to become involved and become a part of the local community. <p>As part of commitment to ensure that children and young people have stable, loving places to live we will set out in our action plan how we will support young people aged 14-18. This age group can often present with very challenging circumstances and can result in a number of different placements in short succession. We also set out how we will enhance our accommodation offer to care leavers.</p>
2.08	<p><u>Education and learning</u> Looked after children will have the best possible educational outcomes and have opportunities to fulfil their potential.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the stability of the educational setting is paramount for looked after children, a new school environment can be intimidating. Flintshire will work to strengthen understanding between social services staff and educational settings to best support looked after children in their educational placements. • Looked after children have the right to aspire to receive further education and training just as any other child. Financial support and information will be available to support children to achieve these goals. • Ensuring that 100% attendance to education is encouraged and supported at all times, by both staff and carers. • Ensuring that you people have the skills needed for independent living as they move to adulthood
2.09	<p><u>Health and well-being.</u> To improve the health outcomes of looked after children in Flintshire and to</p>

	<p>provide them with appropriate health care and advice. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking care of children’s physical, mental health and emotional well-being • Ensuring all looked after children have a clear and central voice in how their health needs are met. <p>We know that looked after children share many of the same health risks and problems as their peers, but they frequently enter care with poorer health due to the impact of poverty, abuse and neglect. National research also suggests that looked after children are more likely to have mental health problems. As part of the underpinning action plan we will work with CAMHS to set out their plans and commitments to supporting looked after children and care leavers.</p>
2.10	<p><u>Leisure</u></p> <p>Supporting and encouraging looked after children to enjoy a wide experience of leisure, cultural, sport and social activity to fulfil their potential.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give looked after children information on ways to engage in the local community and become involved. • To provide ample opportunities to play. • Enable looked after children to become involved in local sport and leisure activities. • Create a friendly environment to support them to form and develop strong social relationships.
2.11	<p><u>Employment Opportunities</u></p> <p>We will provide opportunities to help looked after children and care leavers develop the skills and experience to pursue employment. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering apprenticeships within the Council and within the business that we work with • Offering work experience and ‘taster’ sessions for young people • Providing support to ensure that young people are ‘work ready’ including building their confidence and self esteem <p>These commitments are important in ensuring that we attend to the social and economic well-being of our looked after children, which includes taking measures to ensure that they do not live in poverty</p>
2.12	<p><u>The Next 12 Months</u></p> <p>Over the next 12 months, it is Flintshire’s ambition to complete a number of tasks to develop, and deliver our, Corporate Parenting Strategy. The key tasks ahead are to:</p>
2.13	<p><u>Produce a Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan</u></p> <p>This strategy will be created in conjunction with the views of the looked after population as well as Elected Members. The strategy will be in place for at least the next 5 years to ensure consistency and giving a manageable timeframe to make a positive difference for looked after children and care leavers. It will also serve to further recognise the</p>

	responsibility that elected members and Flintshire staff have in supporting looked after children.
2.14	<u>Develop a strategy for the engagement and participation of the looked after population</u> This strategy will be closely linked to the Corporate Parenting Strategy and will lay the foundations for Flintshire's aims to engage with the looked after population.
2.15	<u>Review of existing Participation Forums</u> It is paramount that the voice of the children is at the heart of what we do, and we need to continuously ensure that we listen to, hear, and act on what children and young people are telling us.
2.16	Flintshire has a well-established Participation Forum that provides an important opportunity for looked after children and care leavers to meet together, to share experiences, and speak out with a group voice about their care and aspirations.
2.17	A review of the Participation Forums will take place to ensure that we are working in a way that meets the needs of children and young people, and that our approach provides a range of ways that are effective in enabling a voice for all looked after children.
2.18	<u>Review of the Children's Services Forum</u> Flintshire has a well-established Children's Services Forum, with strong links to the Participation Forums. A review of the Children's Services Forum will complement the review of Participation Forums as the two approaches are inter-dependent. This approach will ensure that the Children's Services Forum is well placed to maintain its effectiveness in listening to the experiences and views of looked after children and holding agencies accountable for their responsibilities, commitments and approaches in supporting looked after children and care leavers.
2.19	<u>Appoint New Participation Officer</u> Flintshire is in the process of recruiting a new Participation Officer who can enthusiastically engage with, and act as a bridging professional between the Children's Services Forum and the Participation Group. This role will be essential in supporting our children to have a clear voice in how they are supported in Flintshire. The Officer will have a central role in reviewing the existing participation Forums and supporting in the formulation of the Engagement Strategy.
2.20	<u>Review of Pride of Flintshire</u> Pride of Flintshire is a highlight in the calendar for Flintshire's looked after population. The event has proven to be a great success for Flintshire in recognising the achievements of looked after children in Flintshire and their carers. It is vital that this event continues to be adaptable and is able to evolve to continue reflecting the desires of the looked after population and how they wish to be recognised.
2.21	<u>Links with services</u> Greater links with Statutory and Third Sector Partners is vital for involving

	looked after children in community based initiatives. This will ensure that looked after children have a number of opportunities to become a part of their local community. These links can be built up through the participation officer as well as being the responsibility of the corporate parent to advocate for looked after children's rights to engage in leisure and community activities.
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	Corporate Parenting is a core responsibility of everybody who works for the Local Authority. Delivering the commitments contained within the report are within existing human and financial resources.
2.02	Some resources will be required as part of the consultation process, these may include stationery equipment as well as access to Council meeting rooms.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED
3.01	The statements that have been developed to initiate consultation on the Corporate Parenting Strategy have been developed on from the themes that have emerged from national work and engagement on Corporate Parenting and the issues that local children have raised.
3.02	Consultation and engagement in developing these statements into a Corporate Parenting Strategy, with an underpinning action plan, will take place with looked after children, care leavers and key partners who support this population including Education and Health.
3.03	The Children's Services Forum will have a specific role in overseeing the development of the Strategy and the delivery of the commitments, and actions, that are made.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	There are no specific risks arising from this report and subsequent actions.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>None.</p> <p>Contact Office: Neil Ayling Telephone: 01352 702500 E-mail: Neil.J.Ayling@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>Care Leaver: Any adult who spent time in care as a child (i.e. under the age of 18). This care would have been approved by the state through a court order or on a voluntary basis. Such care could be in foster care, residential care (mainly children’s homes) or other arrangements outside the immediate or extended family. The care could have been provided directly by the state (mainly through local authority social services departments) or by voluntary or private sector organisations. It also includes a wide range of accommodation. For example, it would include secure units, approved schools, industrial schools and other institutions that have a more punitive element than mainstream foster or residential care.</p> <p>National Fostering Framework (NFF): The National Fostering Framework is a collaborative framework aimed at ensuring greater service quality, more consistency of outcomes, greater transparency about performance, increased collaboration and co-operation by all key stakeholders. This includes economies of scale where appropriate and better links to evaluation and research. There is no intention of creating a national fostering service, managed by any one sector or organisation. The approach is to maximise and enhance All-Wales, Regional and local approaches to Fostering. It is about sharing and developing the best Fostering service for Wales.</p> <p>Voices from Care: Voices from Care are a charity who support and promote the views and experiences of those who are or have been looked after in Wales.</p> <p>AFA Cymru: The Association for Fostering and Adoption Cymru (AFA Cymru) is a Welsh charity working to improve outcomes for children and young people in all types of permanency arrangements – rehabilitation, kinship care, Special Guardianship, fostering and adoption.</p> <p>Neglect: Neglect means a failure to meet a person’s basic physical, emotional, social or psychological needs, which is likely to result in an impairment of the person’s well-being (for example, an impairment of the person’s health).</p> <p>Permanence: Achieving ‘permanence’ will be a key consideration from the time a child becomes looked after. Permanence includes emotional permanence</p>

(attachment), physical permanence (stability), and legal permanence (who has parental responsibility for the child). Together these give a child a sense of security, continuity, commitment and identity.

Wellbeing:

The following areas embody the notion of wellbeing:

- Physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Protection from abuse and neglect
- Education, training and recreation
- Family and personal relationships
- Involvement in the local community
- Securing rights and entitlements
- Social and economic well-being, including not living in poverty.
- Living in suitable accommodation.



SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 5 th October, 2017
Report Subject	Care Sector update to include top up fees and Invest to Save Care Sector Support
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Social Services
Report Author	Chief Officer for Social Services
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines the changes taking place within the care sector in Wales and England, and the challenges we are facing in Flintshire including the increase in third party top up fees charged by independent sector providers.

The report explores the role Flintshire is playing in cultivating a collaborative approach to finding creative solutions to these challenges with Welsh Government and key partners.

The report incorporates the work undertaken to research best practices and the proposals to support the sector in the short, medium and long term.

This report is written with the intent of being a platform to develop solutions with providers, partners and the Welsh Government to maintain market stability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	The Committee accept the report and recognise the immediate and longer-term challenges faced in Flintshire.
2	The Committee supports the short, medium and long-term initiatives to support the care sector in Flintshire.
3	The Committee supports the need for national reform in the funding of the social care sector in Wales, and endorses the position to continue to engage with Welsh Government to develop solutions as a matter of urgency.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	THE STRATEGIC REVIEW OF THE INDEPENDENT CARE SECTOR IN FLINTSHIRE AND THE CURRENT SITUATION IN RELATION TO THIRD PARTY TOP-UP FEES
1.01	Social Services are delivered within a context of rapidly changing social and demographic trends which are increasing demand on the service at a time of unprecedented budget pressures.
1.02	The whole sector is experiencing challenges and this is particularly apparent in the independent provider market where providers of domiciliary, residential and nursing care for older people in particular, are finding the current market challenging.
1.03	One of the symptoms of this change in the market is the increased prevalence of Third Party Top-Up Fees within the independent care home sector. The fees north Wales's local authorities pay for their funded beds, in residential and nursing care, are reviewed annually through a regional fee setting group. This group identifies a fair price for care using industry standard models and makes adjustments for the north Wales market. This work is the basis of the rate Flintshire pays for care beds paid for by the authority. However, some homes may choose to ask family to contribute to a top-up fee for their relatives and this is known as a 3 rd Party Top-Up Fee. Please note: this does not apply to individuals who fund their own care – known as 'self-funders'.
1.04	In Flintshire we are aware of 11 care home providers who charge top up fees and these range in price from £16.50 per week to £60.00 per week, depending on the home.
1.05	The care sector market in Wales and across the UK remains fragile and the Flintshire Residential Care Review, published in 2016, identified that Flintshire's older population (+80) is predicted to rise by 23% between 2015 and 2020 with the number of older people with significant health and social care needs predicted to rise by 22% during the same period.
1.06	In response to that report, and as part of the local authority's commitment to support the local sector, Flintshire County Council agreed to fund a 12 month Planning and Development Officer post to investigate the key factors influencing the fragility of the sector and to create a plan of work to address these factors.
1.07	As part of this work, research has been undertaken into the potential growth of the independent sector over the coming 5 years and the predicted demand on beds. By 2022 it is predicted that Flintshire will have a shortfall of 102 Residential EMI beds. (This figure takes into account additional beds gained from Extra Care developments.)
1.08	A significant piece of the work undertaken by the dedicated Invest to Save development work has been to research good practice models of care across the UK and wider.

1.09	<p>This research has resulted in 3 key workstreams:</p> <p><u>Establishment of a Steering Group</u></p> <p>Attended by representatives from the:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Care Home and Domiciliary Independent Providers b. In-House Care Home and Domiciliary Services c. Flintshire IT Services d. Contract Monitoring and Commissioning e. Workforce Development f. Job Centre Plus g. Flintshire Local Voluntary Council (FLVC)
1.10	<p><u>Delivery of Business Diagnostic Service</u></p> <p>Osterly Associates (an independent business support agency specialising in social and community care) were approached to deliver a business diagnostic service to the independent care home providers. The agency has strong links with Business Wales and is able to assist businesses to obtain additional appropriate support and funding.</p> <p>All 24 independent care homes in Flintshire were offered the free Business Diagnostic Service and 18 took up the offer.</p> <p>The homes engaged in the project met with a qualified business adviser and discussed a series of topics, the outcomes from these discussions were two-fold:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Business Owners/Managers were provided with an insight into their business, its pressure points and actions that could be taken to alleviate these (this information is commercially sensitive and confidential to the business). b. To provide Flintshire County Council with a report (appendix 1) on the key actions required to support the sustainability of these businesses over the coming years. The 5 key actions identified were: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Environment and Energy ii. Procurement and Assets iii. Training iv. Financial Viability v. Recruitment and Retention <p>Each home who participated in the project has also been offered continuous business support from a Business Wales Growth Coach.</p>
1.11	<p><u>Marketing and Recruitment Campaign</u></p> <p>This is a large piece of work, raised as a priority by providers. It includes the development of an Internet Portal attached to the Flintshire County Council website and acting as the hub for local marketing and recruitment campaigns. The portal will also raise the profile of care and an employment of choice and will have a secure area where providers and the local authority can communicate together and share information and resources.</p>

	This work will shape the developing North Wales Workforce Strategy, which is currently in its infancy.
1.12	A short, medium and long-term work programme has now been written (appendix 2) and summarises the findings from the research and the development work currently undertaken.
1.13	A key activity within the work programme is the continued engagement with Welsh Government to develop solutions to the crisis in this sector as a matter of urgency. The support needed by local authorities and independent providers is being highlighted (appendix 3) and it is our intention to work with Welsh Government to ask that they give consideration to the pressing concerns raised.
1.14	It is the intention that the work identified in the work programme is undertaken by the Planning and Development Team within Social Services, working in partnership with key organisations to bring about lasting change within the sector and build sustainability and growth.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The development and implement of the short, medium and long-term initiatives identified will require further work in the Planning and Development team, which will be managed from existing resources.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	This piece of work has sought and received input and feedback from a variety of sources including staff, management and professionals from independent and in-house care homes, BCUHB, Care Forum Wales, CSSIW and Welsh Government and many local authorities and leading agencies across the UK.
3.02	A series of open meetings have been held with both residential and domiciliary providers from the independent sector to discuss the pressures faced by the sector.
3.03	Monthly Steering Group meetings have been held (as detailed above) to prioritise the work of the project and identify the short, medium and long-term initiatives to support the sector.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	The risks of inaction for the care sector in Wales and England is potential critical. By acting responsibly, Flintshire is seeking to mitigate the implications of failures in the sector and protect and ultimately develop the provision.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Osterly Associates Care Home Intervention Report Appendix 2 – Short, Medium and Long-Term Priorities

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Contact Officer: Jane Davies, Senior Manager Safeguarding and Commissioning Telephone: 01352 702503 E-mail: jane.m.davies@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<u>EMI</u> Elderly Mentally Infirm – the care of elderly people who suffer mental ill-health, for example those who suffer from Dementia.
7.02	<u>Flintshire Local Voluntary Council (FLVC)</u> Flintshire Local Voluntary Council is the umbrella and support organisation for over 1200 voluntary and community groups based in Flintshire.

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Business Sustainability

Of

Care Homes

In

Flintshire

September 2017

Osterly-Associates Ltd
Redwither Business Centre
Wrexham
LL139XR

Care Home Intervention

1) Introduction

Osterly Associates is an independent consultancy which was established in 2014 to provide business sustainability support to community based businesses and stakeholders.

It specialises in working with SMEs in groups and sectors that are vulnerable to political change or facing challenges that are outside normal business modelling. Often the businesses in these groups are micro or family run and as such do not access mainstream support.

Osterly Associates operates on a low fee basis by using innovative stakeholder engagements and a network of industry experts to ensure that the highest quality support is available at affordable prices. This ensures that access to its support is inclusive and accessible to all and is delivered in a timely and appropriate way.

Osterly Associates is highly active in providing business support for sports & leisure sectors, community care and youth development organisations and is proactive in building multi agency solutions to community issues by encouraging innovative stakeholder responses.

2) The Project

Flintshire County Council established a Strategic Opportunity Operating Group as part of a long-term strategy to ensure that the county has a robust stock of independent care providers able to meet the projected demand of the immediate future.

Following discussions with Flintshire County Council and Osterly-Associates Ltd it was agreed that contact be made with up to 24 care homes located in Flintshire with a purpose of identifying business issues that affects the long-term sustainability of the business and to offer tangible support to help them address those issues.

3) The Activity

The activity began in June 2017 and concluded in September 2017.

Owners and managers from 18 homes were interviewed by an experienced business adviser and a diagnostic review was completed , 2 homes declined the offer and 4 were unable to schedule an interview in the timescale..

The diagnostic tool to conduct the interviews were designed to structure the interview but allow for a personal conversation so as to ensure that the individual circumstances were accommodated.

Homes were visited by qualified business advisers except for the times where a telephone conversation was deemed more appropriate by the care home. The diagnostic tool led to action points which were measured to ensure that findings were consistent.

4) Findings

The diagnostic tool consisted of a uniform template populated by a number of headings; this allowed the business adviser to conduct the interview as a conversation rather than asking a set number of questions. The adviser was then able to identify action points (or tasks to be addressed to increase the sustainability of the business). The action points were then compared which has led to the following findings;

- a) **General description of business...** We categorised these into two groups; Family or Group owned. This allowed the discussion to identify decision making capability and access to resource.

The group owned care homes were able to provide varying degrees of back of house support and many administrative tasks were conducted on a central basis. This allowed the registered manager to concentrate more on the delivery of care than worrying about the day to viability of the business.

Smaller independent homes were more reliant on the capability of the registered manager and time pressures and work load were more noticeable in these homes.

- b) **Client/Patient Base...** We deliberately asked about the differing factors between private and LA sponsored patients and at no time during this exercise did we notice any discrimination in valuing patients, although because of financial pressures most of the homes are now requesting top up fees from LA sponsored patients. A major observation of the business advisers was the obvious care and innovative methods adopted by the homes to care for the patients. The level of activities with the patients were high, the care assistants were engaged with the patients and communication between the managers and staff appeared to be positive.

- c) **Staff...** Managing staff and recruitment and retention are major issues across the sector but we did notice variations. The availability of local transport has an impact on some of the homes and those on good bus routes were more likely to be able to staff their homes than those off a main bus route. All of the homes interviewed paid at or above the living wage but recognised that this would be difficult in the future as wages increase above the income streams. Group owned homes had central HR services available to them and several of the

family owned homes contracted with external HR agencies such as Peninsula to manage their HR issues. Sickness and absence rates are high in comparison to other industries but it is accepted as one of the negatives of the sector. The most common causes of absence is sickness and diarrhoea. The impact is for a short term need to replace staff and the added costs associated with that plus the reliance on the honesty of the staff member due to the short term nature of the illness. All homes controlled abuse of this by operating statutory sickness policies.

When asked directly about the difficulties of recruiting staff there was a variance in replies. Several homes stated that more should be done to increase the image of the sector and that very often potential recruits were unaware and unprepared for the nature of the job. The variation in replies came when some homes stated that they had difficulty in finding suitable candidates and others stated that they had waiting lists. Others suggested that the NHS "poached" the experienced members of staff and several homes were proud of the fact that majority of their staff had been employed by them for many years. Our conclusion is that the difference is likely to be effected by the size of the home and the way that the home is managed. The fact is that there is a need to attract new entrants into the sector and increases in the living wage will add to the financial pressures on owners in the future.

- d) **Training...** All homes visited were very proud of their training record and acknowledged the value of the Flintshire County Council training vouchers. The homes owned by a group have their own training programmes in place and often used external training providers. They recognise the value of career progression and remarked that this policy often assisted in staff retention rates. Smaller family owned homes found the cost element to be more of a handicap but still recognised the need. There was a willingness for managers to broaden their management skills but stated that time to train was a major barrier in them not proceeding.

- e) **Premises...** Many of the homes we visited were converted Victorian merchant houses or country homes and several had recently expanded the premises. Many are old and difficult to alter. Many of the older buildings are not energy efficient and the ability to meet the new care standards is beginning to take effect. One home interviewed had a genuine concern about the prospect of having to decommission 4 rooms which would reduce their income by £100,000 per annum. Others spoke about the cost of heating the buildings with one example of a monthly oil bill of £1,400. Other businesses have used as much of the outside space as practical thus restricting future growth. Homes that are located in an urban area tended to be restricted for future expansion and in the sample we visited, there seemed little capacity for new growth. However, homes located in more rural Flintshire have significant space, excellent outside space but are less convenient to access.

- f) **Sales and Marketing...** we approached this topic from a purely business prospective. When asked "What is the breakeven figure for the number of patient's resident in the home to make the business viable?" No home could answer this. However, they were fully aware as to whether they were losing money or not. Almost all of the homes were fully occupied and several had waiting lists for rooms. This negated the need to advertise the homes to attract

residents. When asked about the impact of not advertising they did not consider the value of marketing to attract staff or commission services.

- g) Asset Management...** A recent grant from Flintshire County Council for asset purchase has had a significant effect on the sector and was broadly welcomed by all homes. There is a general acceptance that a good standard of assets is an important part of providing a quality service and all homes stated that they regularly review and upgrade assets. A common comment amongst all homes was the wish that an asset library be established where equipment that is expensive to purchase and only used on occasion could be sourced and a rental scheme for larger equipment be considered.
- h) Environmental and Energy...** The most common topic when discussing this section was about the cost of utilities and there was a distinct difference between group owned and privately owned homes. The group owned homes had a central utilities policy and the purchasing decisions were not made by the registered manager, but the privately-owned homes were very conscious of the cost implications. Heating costs were the biggest concern and many of the businesses had signs of being very inefficient. Several homes suggested that they would be interested in a joint procurement project to give themselves a stronger buying power. The value of a robust Waste policy is an area that is becoming more topical and most homes indicated that if we were able to provide support in this area, it would be welcomed.
- i) Finance...** We were unable to study the accounts of any of the homes but we were aware of this from the outset. All of the homes are reporting that the financial viability of the business is getting more challenging. The majority of the homes require a top up to LA sponsored fees and need a proportion of private patients to survive. The impact of the new care standards will add to cost in the short term but the biggest threat to the sector will be the cost of employing suitable staff. The increase in the living wage, a general reduction in unemployment rates, increase in employment and the unknown impact of Brexit suggests that the pool of candidates will get smaller. Profit margins are tight and any increase in interest rates plus increases in other overheads such as business rates, fuel costs and food costs will have an impact on the long term sustainability of the sector.
- j) Compliance...** The new care standards are very much at the forefront of the planning of all of the homes. Each home that we visited had their own needs to address on compliance but they have accepted that the intention of the care standard is for “increasing standards” and they prioritise these issues.
- k) Growth...** Many of the homes have either recently increased their capacity or are intending to increase their capability. As mentioned earlier, there is limited opportunity for some of the homes visited due to restricted outside space and one home is for sale, so there are no

plans for growth. Several of the privately owned homes indicated that they would be prepared to meet a growth adviser in the future

5) Further Activity

The diagnostic exercise has identified 5 key action points.

- i) Environment & Energy
- ii) Procurement & Assets
- iii) Training
- iv) Financial Viability
- v) Recruitment & Retention

Following the identification of the 5 key action points Osterly Associates intends to work with local stakeholders to provide additional support to the social care sector in Flintshire.

In cooperation with Business Wales, Social Care Wales and Flintshire County Council, referrals have been made to the resource and Energy adviser from Business Wales who will contact homes on an individual basis to offer support, including access to Carbon Trust funding to assist in improving the energy efficiency of the buildings. He will also advise on wastage policies.

Each home who participated in this project will be offered continues business support from a Business Wales growth coach who will engage with them on future financial viability issues and help to seek finance and funding should it be required.

The possibility of an asset library will be discussed with Flintshire County Council and followed up.

A meeting will be arranged between Flintshire County Council and Business Wales skills team to identify if there are training opportunities beyond those already offered through the social care training team which homes can access.

A social care conference is planned for 7th February 2018 at Coleg Cambria Deeside. The conference will bring together stakeholders such as Flintshire County Council, DWP, Social Care Wales, Wrexham County Borough Council and will be sponsored by Business Wales. The format will be a conference in the morning and a recruitment event in the afternoon.

All further activity will be cost neutral to Flintshire County Council and further cooperation will be sought to ensure that this initiative is the beginning and not the end of a sustained package of support to the social care sector in Flintshire.

Strategic Opportunities – Care Sector Review

Short, Medium and Long-Term Priorities

Short-Term Priorities

- A letter to Welsh Government updating on the work to be sent.
- Learning from this report to be shared with other Local Authorities.
- Further data is needed on current business models in social care (including social enterprise models such as community interest companies, and third sector ownership). This information is not currently collected. Flintshire County Council to lobby CSSIW and Social Care Wales to collect this data in light of the emphasis put on these through the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.
- The Council to support the development of apprenticeships and placements in independent providers and to lobby Welsh Government to introduce further support for training social care staff given the pressures that may be imposed on the sector through the introduction of new regulations.
- Lobby the Data Unit to collect information across the workforce on EU nationals working in social care and monitor the effects of Brexit.
- Feasibility studies to be undertaken exploring:
 - Micro-care
 - Purchasing Consortiums
 - Assets Library
- The Council to work with the Third Sector Well-being Network to develop opportunities for Third Sector Health and Social Care Services to feedback to the Council on any issues arising and solutions to enable better communication.
- The Council continue to work with the Third Sector Well-being Network and other partners to map and understand the current local use of Social Prescribing models.
- Flintshire County Council to explore extending the provision of Blue Badges to Community Transport Operators.
- Flintshire County Council to give further consideration to the programmes outlined in the report, which will include Purchasing Consortiums, Staff Benefits and Support, Social care Technology, Transport etc.
- Continue to support and promote a local Marketing and Recruitment Campaign

Medium-Term Priorities

- A clear understanding of the complexities of the commissioning arrangements for social care to be developed in partnership with Procurement, so all parties have an understanding of the sector, co-production and person-centred thinking.
- To establish a network or joint training group to develop training opportunities across Local Authorities, the Local Health Board and the Third Sector, reducing duplication and maximising the skills and expertise of all partners.
- The Council to develop a survey for the whole local social care workforce to feed in issues, concerns, solutions and examples of innovative practice.
- To develop and review our local Market Position Statement. Consultation on the regulations related to this are expected in summer 2018 as part of the Phase 3 consultation on the regulations for the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care Act (Wales) 2016.
- To annually review the current state of the residential and domiciliary care markets and to monitor any issues arising with providers over, looking to provide support where we can.
- Flintshire County Council to develop an update report taking in to account changes in legislation, funding and support in 12-18 months.

Long-Term priorities

- Support providers, if appropriate, to consider developing a Local Care Association to include a purchasing consortium and a celebration of the achievements of the sector.



SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 5 October, 2017
Report Subject	Forward Work Programme
Cabinet Member	Not applicable
Report Author	Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview & Scrutiny presents a unique opportunity for Members to determine the Forward Work programme of the Committee of which they are Members. By reviewing and prioritising the Forward Work Programme Members are able to ensure it is Member-led and includes the right issues. A copy of the Forward Work Programme is attached at Appendix 1 for Members' consideration which has been updated following the last meeting.

The Committee is asked to consider, and amend where necessary, the Forward Work Programme for the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

RECOMMENDATION

1	That the Committee considers the draft Forward Work Programme and approve/amend as necessary.
2	That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME
1.01	Items feed into a Committee's Forward Work Programme from a number of sources. Members can suggest topics for review by Overview & Scrutiny Committees, members of the public can suggest topics, items can be referred by the Cabinet for consultation purposes, or by County Council or Chief Officers. Other possible items are identified from the Cabinet Work Programme and the Improvement Plan.
1.02	<p>In identifying topics for future consideration, it is useful for a 'test of significance' to be applied. This can be achieved by asking a range of questions as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Will the review contribute to the Council's priorities and/or objectives?2. Is it an area of major change or risk?3. Are there issues of concern in performance?4. Is there new Government guidance of legislation?5. Is it prompted by the work carried out by Regulators/Internal Audit?
2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	None as a result of this report.
3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	Publication of this report constitutes consultation.
4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	None as a result of this report.
5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Draft Forward Work Programme
6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>None.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Margaret Parry-Jones Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator</p> <p>Telephone: 01352 702427</p> <p>E-mail: margaret.parry-jones@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	Improvement Plan: the document which sets out the annual priorities of the Council. It is a requirement of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to set Improvement Objectives and publish an Improvement Plan.

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CURRENT FWP

Date of meeting	Subject	Purpose of Report	Scrutiny Focus	Responsible / Contact Officer	Submission Deadline
Thursday 16 th November 2017 2.00 pm Corporate Safeguarding session at 2.00 pm meeting to start at 2.30 pm	Older Peoples Strategy & Aging Well Safeguarding - Adults and Children Free Childcare Pilot	To provide Members with an update on the work that is taking place to implement the Strategy for Older People in Wales, with a specific focus on the Ageing Well Plan. To receive a progress report on safeguarding and current issues To provide an update on the developing free childcare offer programme.	Assurance Assurance Information	Chief Officer Social Services Chief Officer Social Services Chief Officer Social Services	
Thursday 14 th December 2017 2.00 pm	Q2 Improvement Plan Monitoring BCUHB	To enable members to fulfil their scrutiny role in relation to performance monitoring for the 2 nd quarter of 2017/18	Performance Monitoring/Assurance	Facilitator	
Thursday 25 th January 2018 10.00 am	Transition		Service Delivery		
Thursday 29 th March	Q3 Improvement Plan Monitoring	To enable members to fulfil their scrutiny role in relation to performance monitoring	Performance monitoring/assurance		

Thursday 10 th May 2018 10.00 am					
Thursday 14 th June 2018 2.00 pm	Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board	To maintain regular meetings and promote partnership working.	Partnership working		
	2017/18 Year End Reporting Improvement Plan Monitoring	To enable members to fulfil their scrutiny role in relation to performance monitoring	Performance monitoring/assurance		

Regular Items

Month	Item	Purpose of Report	Responsible/Contact Officer
January	Safeguarding & Child Protection	To provide Members with statistical information in relation to Child Protection and Safeguarding & Adult Safeguarding	Chief Officer (Social Services)
March	Educational Attainment of Looked After Children	Education officers offered to share the annual educational attainment report with goes to Education & Youth OSC with this Committee.	Chief Officer (Social Services)
March	Corporate Parenting	Report to Social & Health Care and Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny.	Chief Officer (Social Services)
Half-yearly	Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board Update	To maintain 6 monthly meetings – partnership working.	Facilitator
May	Comments, Compliments and Complaints	To consider the Annual Report.	Chief Officer (Social Services)
		To consider the annual statistical information.	Chief Officer (Social Services)