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North Wales
Adoption
Service

ANNUAL REPORT AND QUALITY OF CARE REVIEW

APRIL 2012 – MARCH 2013

North Wales Adoption Service

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North Wales Adoption Service
Adoption Agency Annual Report and Quality of Care Review
April 2012 – March 2013

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.

The North Wales Adoption Service has now concluded its final year of the original three year Partnership Agreement. All six local authorities, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Wrexham and Ynys Môn have agreed to extend the current arrangements for a further 12 months. Meanwhile a review of the service is being undertaken by a consultant from the Institute of Public Care, Oxford Brookes University; with the intention of developing a 3 to 5 year plan for the service. The general feedback from the initial review is positive, reflecting the success of the partnership to date. In addition, areas for development have been identified and will be dealt with in the proposed plan. Issues include, the development of adoption support services for adoptive families and their children; improving timescales for assessments and placing of children; office accommodation and Human Resources issues regarding staff secondments.

The manager of the service has been a member of the Welsh Governments Expert Advisory Group on Adoption attending all meetings in Cardiff during 2012/13. The group was set up to oversee, coordinate and deliver improvement of services and outcomes in adoption services across Wales. It included the consideration of the model for a National Adoption Service proposed by ADSS and WLGA. This model was endorsed by the group and was to be presented to the Deputy Minister in April 2013.

In light of the Welsh Governments intention to establish a task and finish group to produce a time-framed project plan for the National Adoption Service in Wales, it is acknowledged that this may have an impact on the current activities. As a common format for implementation plans have yet to be devised and agreed; it is deemed essential that the NWAS continues to develop the 3-5 year plan as proposed in the recent review. NWAS is keen to identify and implement any areas of improvement which will benefit all those involved in adoption until decisions are made on the structure, governance, business model and processes and procedures of a National Adoption Service.

The service continuous to be hosted by Wrexham County Borough Council and the main office was relocated from Crown Buildings Wrexham to Lambpit Street, Wrexham in February 2013.

2. Background

The North Wales Adoption Service was established in April 2010 following the introduction of the new legislation relating to adoption in 2005 and subsequent governments initiatives requiring local authorities to work in partnerships to provide more efficient, cost effective and equitable services. The change in legislation and the demands on local authorities to provide additional support services without additional finance and resources, prompted the North Wales local authorities to take the lead in developing a regional service. Having an

already established regional service, NWAS is in an advantageous position to move forward in line with the new government plans for a National Adoption Service, which will involve national, regional and local elements of delivery.

Since the inception of the service the numbers of children being referred for adoptive families has risen in general and more significantly in the last financial year. This has been more significant following the changes in legislation to remove the 'should be adopted' decisions from adoption panels since September 2012. These figures can be viewed in Section 8 Children.

3. Current Position

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

CURRENT SITUATION (figures at end of March 2013)

ADOPTERS

	Conwy	Denbigh	Flint	Gwynedd	Wrexham	Ynys Mon	Other	Total
Adopters Recommended for Approved at panel this financial year	4	5	5	11	12	3	2	42
Adopters Currently Under Assessment	3	5	6	5	4	5	2	30
On hold for potential matches	2	2	4	3	5	1	1	17
Available	1	3	-	3	1	-	-	8
Adopters – checks in progress and waiting allocation	3	-	2	1	2	-	1	9
Partner of Parent Under Assessment		1	3	1	3			8

CHILDREN

	Conwy	Denbigh	Flint	Gwynedd	Wrexham	Ynys Mon	Other	Total
Children Matched at Panel during this financial Year	9	2	6(+ 1 not recommended)	6	12	3	-	38
Children Placed for Adoption as above	7	3	4	10	4	1	1	30
Children On Hold for potential matches	7	4	3	2	3	1	-	20
Children on Waiting list with no identified match at present	5	5	1	8	11	6	-	36

CHILDREN WAITING:

Ref	AGENCY	DOB	SHOBPA	NOTIFIED	PLACEMENT ORDER	COMMENTS
206 207	Gwyn	07/10/2009 10/09/2010	17/03/2011 17/03/2011	14/07/2011 14/07/2011	04/05/2011 04/05/2011	Update via OMG 18/04/2013 – pursuing long term fostering, awaiting official notification
221 222	Wrex	02/01/2008 28/11/2008	04/08/2011 04/08/2011	11/08/2011 11/08/2011	16/01/2012 16/01/2012	Update via OMG 18/04/2013 – potential match identified for 1 f willing to separate. Update 11/04/2013 – Professionals meeting held 19/03/2013 re future plans. Future request to Register 11/03/2013. Outcome to continue to search together and separately. Addendum report from CAMHS requested. LAC review 16/04/2013. Profile sent to Barnardos
314	Ynys	08/09/2009	06/01/2012	26/03/2012	02/03/2012	Update 22/01/2013 – Foster Carers would consider adoption if no family identified in next 12-months. Linking visit due 08/04/2113 to 544
315 316	Ynys	25/04/2007 14/12/2009	13/06/2012 13/06/2012	27/06/2012 27/06/2012	08/08/2012 08/08/2012	
317	Conwy	18/11/2009	23/03/2012	12/04/2012	28/05/2012	Update via OMG 18/04/2013 – withdrawn due to long term fostering, awaiting official notification
318	Conwy	20/04/2007	23/03/2012	12/04/2012	28/05/2012	Update via OMG 18/04/2013 – planning for permanency, need to evidence rationale Update 18/12/2012 – FC considering SGO. Update 22/01/2013 – viability assessment being undertaken

328	Conwy	24/02/2006	23/03/2012	03/05/2012	28/05/2012	Update via OMG 18/04/2013 – potential match identified, with possibility of taking sibling in the longer term if direct contact is successful. Consider professionals meeting.
329	Conwy	04/08/2007	23/03/2012	03/05/2012	28/05/2012	
442	Gwyn	25/04/2011	05/07/2012	24/08/2012	10/07/2012	Link not recommended by panel- another potential link identified
452	Wrex	26/02/2008	02/11/2012	21/09/2012	25/01/2013	Update 11/04/2013 – Profile sent to all LA's. Meeting re placement planned for 07/05/2013. No success to date with the register. Profile sent to Barnardos
591	Wrex	20/06/2008	08/10/2012	11/10/2012	10/10/2012	Update via OMG 18/04/2013 – professionals meeting to be held, it is not believed children are ready for adoption, may need to be withdrawn for additional work to be undertaken with children due to behaviour
592		02/09/2009	08/10/2012	11/10/2012	10/10/2012	
606	Conwy	08/08/2012	12/10/2012	15/10/2012	01/03/2013	Viability Assessment being undertaken
621	Wrex	09/09/2008	02/11/2012	02/11/2012	13/12/12	Update 11/04/2013 – LAC review 05/04/2013 to continue to search for a separate placement. Potential link explore not appropriate. Profile sent to Barnardos
622	Wrex	27/08/2007	02/11/2012	02/11/2012	13/12/12	Update 11/04/2013 – LAC review 05/04/2013 to continue to search for a separate placement. No response from the Register. Profile sent to Barnardos
647	Gwyn	16/10/2010	06/11/2012	22/11/2012	12/11/2012	Update via OMG 18/04/2013 – possible link in the near future
648		13/06/2009	06/11/2012	22/11/2012	12/11/2012	
657	Denb	05/10/2012	25/10/2012	27/11/2012	28/02/2013	Update 11/04/2013 – Birth father no longer contesting, Placement

658		20/01/2012	25/10/2012	27/11/2012	28/02/2013	Order granted
682	Ynys	17/01/2005	05/11/2012	17/12/2012		
683	Ynys	26/03/2007	05/11/2012	17/12/2012		
684	Ynys	15/04/2011	05/11/2012	17/12/2012		
685	Wrex	19/06/2012		21/12/2012		
692	Gwyn	03/05/2012	17/12/2012	03/01/2013	02/01/2013	Update via OMG 18/04/2013 - Potential link identified
693		09/06/2011	17/12/2012	03/01/2013	02/01/2013	
715	Wrex	13/12/2007	04/01/2013	25/01/2013		
716		15/09/2009	04/01/2013	25/01/2013		
740	Wrex	30/12/2011	01/02/2013	04/02/2013		Update via OMG 18/04/2013 – need to establish where siblings are placed
744	Denb	26/03/2011	08/02/2013	27/02/2013		
751	Flint	26/05/2012	04/01/2013	07/03/2013	25/02/2013	Awaiting links
753	Denb	30/08/2008	07/01/2013	06/03/2013	28/02/2013	
758	Denb	02/08/2012	11/01/2013	18/03/2013	04/02/2013	
763	Gwyn	02/07/2012	21/02/2013	25/03/2013		

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.

In 2012-13, in line with the requirements contained in the Local Authority Adoption Service and Miscellaneous Amendments (Wales) Regulations 2003, the manager, has undertaken regular training and has achieved the Post Graduate Certificate with merit in Managing Practice Quality in Social Care. One Deputy Manager is currently studying for this Certificate and a second Deputy Manager is undertaking the ILM Managers' course.

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. The staffing situation is as follows:

Main Office: Lambpit Street, Wrexham:

Manager:	Mandy Humphries	37 hours
Admin:	Larry Groom	37 hours
	Sarah Picken	28 hours
Social Worker:	Lesley Davies	37 hours
	Helen Kinney	37 hours
Training Officer:	Denise Roberts	32 hours
Recruitment Officer:	Wendy Thomas	37 hours
Contact Coordinator:	Santosh Prihar	25–37 hours weekly (Agency Worker)
Contact – Admin:	Clare Pearce	37 hours
CHARMS IT Admin:	Martin Evans	18.5 hours

Sessional Social Workers: Pat Fairclough
Nicholas Gore
Christine Williams 06/10/11 -November 2012 – now on long term sick
Gina Orbetelli December 2012 now on maternity leave)
Jackie Lloyd – seconded in Flintshire on a part time basis

Office Location: County Hall, Mold

Social Workers:	Bob Proctor	18.5 hours
	Nicola Kernighan	37 hours
	Jackie Lloyd	18.5 hours

Office Location: Bedford Street, Rhyl.

Social Workers:	Tracy Roberts	37 hours
	Polly Edwards	37 hours (vacant as from the 31 st March)

Office Location: Glan-y-Don, Conwy

Deputy Manager East:	Trish Welsh	37 hours
Social Workers:	Beverley Herrington	37 hours
	Barbara Jones	18.5 hours
	Marilyn Owen	15 hours

Office Location: County Offices, Llangefni, Ynys Môn

Social Workers:	Lydia Murphy	37 hours
	Carolyn Jones	37 hours

Office Location: Caernarfon

Deputy Manager West:	Heather Pearson	37 hours
Admin:	June Owen	18.5 hours
Social Worker:	Sue Adams	37 hours
Sessional Workers:	Nia O'Marah	
	Jenny McGugan	
	Sian Peacock start date post March 2013	

Staff Sickness:

4 staff had 1 day of sick

5 staff had 2 days off sick

3 staff had 3 days off sick

1 member of staff had a total of 3 months off sick – this had a significant effect on the availability of staff in Denbighshire for assessment and family finding and other staff caseloads. This member of staff will also be leaving the service for another post at the end of April and the LA is actively seeking to fill this post initially via internal secondments and more recently external recruitment.

Staff development and training – see training section 8.

Student placements – A 20 day student placement was supported by Tracy Roberts in Denbighshire.

Questionnaires were sent to all staff members in March and the responses were as follows:

- 96% were able to access the Statement of Purpose and Policies and Procedures (these have now been made available to all staff on the CHARMS online system.
- 75% had access to the National Minimum Standards for Adoption (some responses were from the administrators who may not require access to these on a regular basis)
- 86% felt supported by the management team
- 96% were clear about the lines of accountability and reporting mechanisms
- 78% felt there was effective communication between management and staff
- 67% received regular supervision (12 social workers) other staff includes admin. Supervision responsibilities have now been revised as many social workers were not

receiving copies of supervision as these were being held on the IT system. This has now been amended and supervision sessions are recorded on case files.

- 78% receive appraisals regularly
- 75% agreed they had access to training
- 54% have received training in Child Protection in the last 3 years – all other relevant staff have been requested to ensure they attend this training which is available through their own LA's
- 80% felt the standard of care offered to children and families was good. Adoption Support highlighted as a need in some areas this may be resolved in part via the Safe Base programme to start in 2013.

Some staff continue to feel isolated and many comments have been made regarding a review of the location of team members. This will be considered in the review and in the 3-5 year plan being undertaken at present.

5. Adoption Panel Membership / Advisors and Training

The previous six adoption panels have now been amalgamated into three joint panels covering the following areas:

Flintshire/Wrexham – established since September 2012

Conwy/Denbighshire – established in January 2012

Gwynedd/Ynys Môn – established November 2013

All panels are held on a monthly basis and emergency panels have been organised where the capacity has exceeded individual panels and cases need to be presented. This is particularly important in the matching of children with adopters in order to prevent delay in introductions and placements. 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, elected members, social workers and legal advisers with each local authority being represented appropriately. (see below for detailed information on all 3 panel membership).

Changes to membership, number, recruitment issues.

The Flintshire/Wrexham panel has had two changes in membership over the past year. One elected member from Flintshire resigned and a new elected member from Flintshire was appointed in November 2012. The NWAS social worker resigned from the adoption panel due to moving to part-time employment and was replaced with a social worker with significant adoption experience from the Flintshire Family Placement Team. Opportunities

to observe the panel, an induction session with the panel adviser and reading materials were provided on both occasions.

There have been no changes in membership of the Conwy/Denbighshire panel or the newly established Gwynedd/Ynys Môn panel. A joint induction session was provided by Gwynedd and Ynys Môn for the members of the new panel which was also attended by the Chairs as representatives from the other joint panels who shared their experience to date.

Panel members training:

The following training has been offered to panel members over the past twelve months:

- The Pathway to Adoption (Flintshire & Wrexham Panel members)
- Education and Attachment
- Facing up to Facebook
- Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

A total of 8 panel members have taken the opportunity to attend these courses over the past 12 months.

A two day training courses 'An overview of Themes and Processes relating to Adoption' has been organised and will be presented to all panel members in April 2013.

Verbal feedback from members who have attended the courses has been positive and they have taken the opportunity to encourage other panel members to attend when given the opportunity.

Panel Member appraisals (numbers undertaken/issues arising/ actions taken or to be taken)

Flintshire/Wrexham – Panel members appraisal have been undertaken, 2 are outstanding due to cancellations due to sickness and annual leave but have been re-arranged to be undertaken by the end of April 2013. In order to ensure continuous improvement and quality, panel members are requested to provide written comments on all cases presented to panel each month, comments from annual appraisals and an annual survey is undertaken with panel members, social work professionals and adopters who have attended panel. These comments have been collated and any issues requiring attention have been acted on as follows:

During previous appraisals several panel members from the Flintshire and Wrexham joint panel identified the need for some basic information on the legal process for children leading up to the point of the 'should be adopted decision', in order to understand the

issues that arise in the process and lead to delay for some children. Two child care team managers were invited to a panel meeting to provide information on their role from the point of referral to the 'should be adopted' stage. This was later followed up with a training session from the NWAS training officer, namely "*The Pathway to Adoption*" which was well received by panel members and noted in subsequent reviews.

Issues regarding the lack of attendance and difficulties in undertaking a review by a panel member was also raised and resolved by the Head of Service. No other issues were identified during the appraisal process, the majority of members stating that the minor difficulties arising at the inception of new joint panels were now resolved and panels were working well.

Quality Assurance issues

Panel members have yet to experience the matching of children whose 'should be adopted' decision 'has been removed from panel since the change in legislation in September 2013. Concerns have been raised that the information provided to panel previously will now not be available in such depth at matching consideration. Panel members feel that the panels have lost an element of their ability to quality assure the documentation and information provided in CARA's at this initial stage. To date there is not enough evidence to support that this will have any detrimental effect on matching and further consultation will be undertaken on this issue in the coming months.

An issue that has been raised in recent CSSIW inspections is the quality of the adoption support plans. Discussion has taken place in OMG and in the review of the service being undertaken at present. It is envisaged that further training for child care social workers will be identified as a requirement in the action plan. Proposals for a working group to look at these issues with managers from NWAS and the child care teams will be discussed at the next OMG meeting attended by Child Care managers.

Panel members

Flintshire/Wrexham Joint Adoption Panel Membership and advisors

	Name	Panel Role	Term of Office	End Date First Term	Date of Appraisal
	Members				
1	David Beard	Panel Chair	27/09/2010	26/09/15	04/13
2	Dr Ewoud Bos	Medical Advisor – Flintshire	27/09/2010	N/A	12/02/2013
3	Dr Anil Ninan	Medical Advisor – Wrexham	27/09/2010	N/A	06/12/2012
4	Paula Spencer	Independent Member Adopter	27/09/2010	26/09/15	05/12/2012
5	Denise Nicholls	Independent Member Adoptee	27/09/2010	26/09/15	Cancelled on 2 occasions health reasons to be re-arranged
6	Denise Preece	Independent Member	27/09/2010	26/09/15	13/12/2012
7	Linda Vickery	Independent Member	27/09/2010	26/09/15	Re-arranged 22/04/13
8	Councillor Cindy Hinds	Elected Member – Flintshire	12/11/2012	12/10/2017	n/a
9	Councillor Lloyd Kenyon	Elected Member – Wrexham	27/09/2010	26/09/15	05/12/12
10	Hazel Reid	Social Worker - Flintshire	23/07/2012	23/06/2017	13/12/2012
11	Julie Canovan	Social Worker - Wrexham	27/09/2010	Mid 2013	06/12/2012
	Advisors – Formal				
	Glenda Jones (Wrex) Beth Evans (Flint) Sally Shenton (Flint) Jenny (Flint)	Legal Advisors		n/a	
	Mandy Humphries	Panel Advisor and co-ordinator		n/a	
	Administrator				
	Sarah Picken	Panel Administrator		n/a	

Conwy/ Denbighshire Joint Adoption Membership and advisors

	Name	Panel Role	Term of Office	End Date	Date of Appraisal
Members					
1	Sue Roberts	Panel Chair	27/01/2012	26/01/2017	11/2012
2	Dr Sue Roberts	Medical Advisor - Denbighshire	27/01/2012	N/A	11/2012
3	Dr Lindsay Groves	Medical Advisor - Conwy	27/01/2012	N/A	11/2012
4	Kate Dyke	Independent Member Adopter	27/01/2012	26/01/2017	11/2012
5	Gaynor Lanyon	Independent Member Birth mother	27/01/2012	26/01/2017	11/2012
6	Rod Bowden	Independent Member	27/01/2012	26/01/2017	11/2012
7	Jaqui Doll	Independent Member - Education	27/01/2012	26/01/2017	02/2013
8	Cllr Chamberlain Jones	Elected Member - Denbighshire	27/01/2012	26/01/2017	11/2012
9	Cllr Carlisle	Elected Member - Conwy	27/01/2012	26/01/2017	arranged for - 24/05/2013
10	Sarah Halley	Social Worker - Denbighshire	27/01/2012	26/01/2017	11/2012
11	Ian Turner	Social Worker - Conwy	27/01/2012	26/01/2017	11/2012
Advisors – Formal					
	Wayne Cooper / Ceri Williams / Heidi Roberts	Legal Advisor	n/a		
	Trish Welsh	Panel Advisor and co-ordinator	n/a		
Administrator					
	Wendy Roberts	Panel Administrator	n/a		

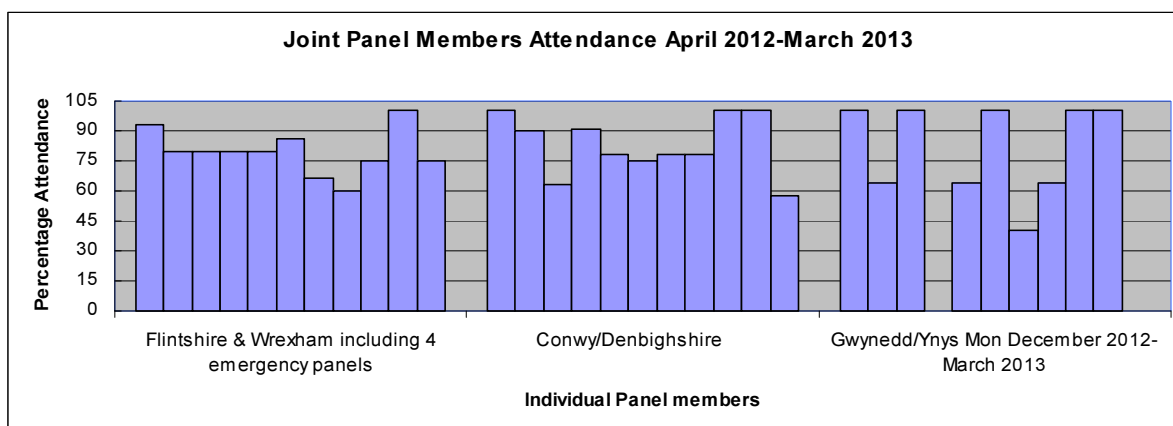
Gwynedd/Ynys Môn Joint Adoption Membership and advisors

	Name	Panel Role	Term of Office	End Date	Date of Appraisal
Members					
1	Non Davies	Panel Chair Independent BAAF	21/12/12	20/12/17	Due Dec 2013
2	Dr Teyrnon Powell	Medical Advisor	21/12/12	20/12/17	“
3	John Peach	Independent Member	21/12/12	20/12/17	“
4	Vernon Rowlands	Independent Member Education Advisor	21/12/12	20/12/17	“
5	Melanie Jones	Independent Member Social Worker – Barnardos	21/12/12	20/12/17	“
6	Trish Girling	Independent Member CAMHS	21/12/12	20/12/17	“
7	Dylan Jones	Elected Member Ynys Môn	21/12/12	20/12/17	“
8	Mandy Williams-Davies	Elected Member Gwynedd	21/12/12	20/12/17	“
9	Sharon Williams-Carter	Social Worker – Gwynedd	21/12/12	20/12/17	“
10	Carolyn Jones	Social Worker – Ynys Môn	21/12/12	20/12/17	“
11	Vacant Position				
Advisors – Formal					
	Sarah Lloyd Evans	Legal Advisor Gwynedd			
	Rhys Hughes	Legal Advisor Ynys Môn			
	Heather Pearson	Panel Advisor and co-ordinator			
Administrator					
	Glesni Williams	Panel Minute Taker	N/A		
	June Owen	Panel Administrator			
Panel Advisors – Specific					
	Dr Janet Horne	Medical Advisor - Ynys Môn	N/A		

Attendance rates of Panel members 2012-2013

Panel Members are familiar with the requirement to attend a minimum of 75% of panel meetings. The chart demonstrates that in most cases this has been achieved, or exceeded in 2012/13.

Panel Members Attendance rates 2012-2013



Panel Members Attendance rates 2012-2013

Flintshire & Wrexham Joint Panel:

In addition to the 11 regular panel meetings for the Flintshire and Wrexham Joint Panel an additional 4 emergency panels were organised due to the number of cases to be heard and in order to prevent any delay for approval of adopters and matching. One panel in December was cancelled as there were no cases to be heard. Two new members have joined this panel during the past year following the resignation of an elected member and social worker. Both attended a panel for observation and attended an induction with the panel adviser.

Conwy & Denbighshire Joint Panel:

No additional panels were required during this period and none were cancelled. The date of one panel meeting was re-arranged to accommodate annual leave.

Gwynedd and Ynys Môn:

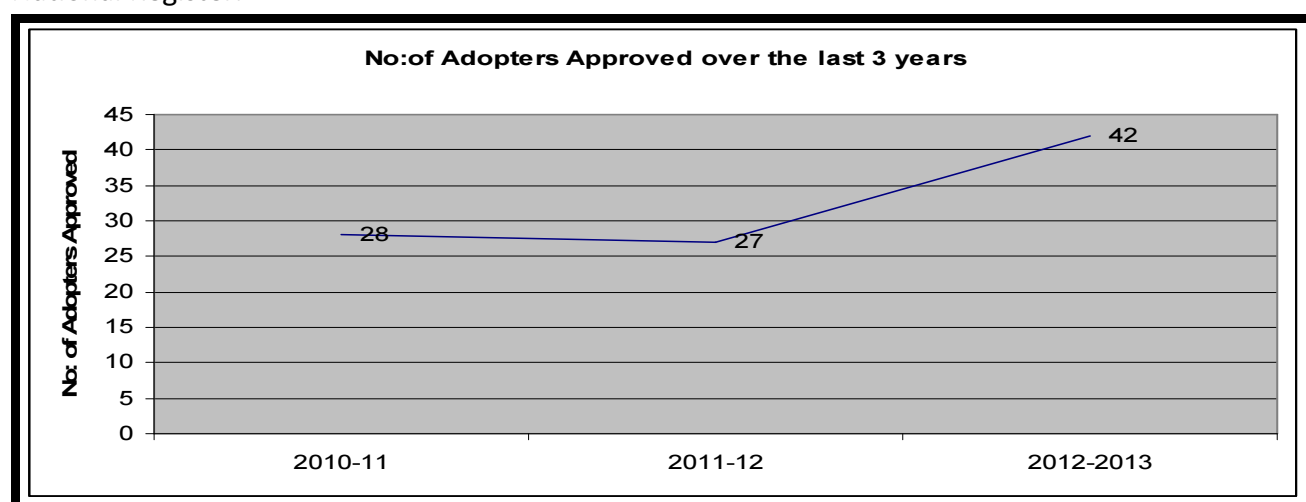
Five panels meetings have been held since the inception of the new joint panel. The first panel did not consider any cases as the only case to be presented was withdrawn requiring additional work to be completed by the child care social worker. One panel date was re-arranged to accommodate work commitments of the presenting social worker. Further recruitment of independent panel members will be required this year in order to fulfil the full complement of panel members.

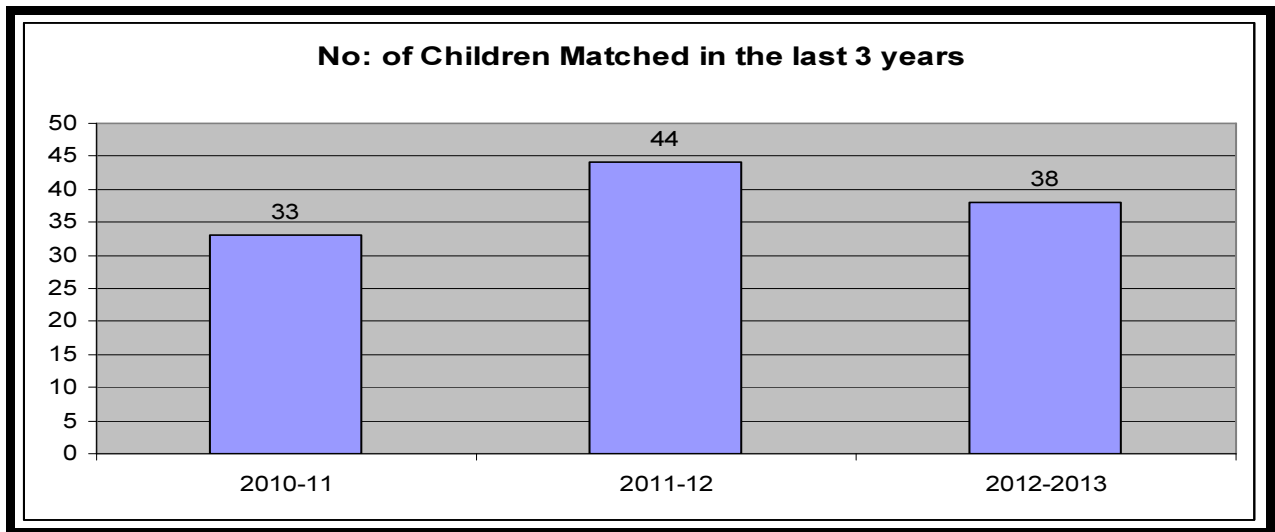
Each Joint Panel plans to conduct a monthly panel and all dates are planned in advance. Where additional panels have been required panels over the past twelve months members have been contacted to ascertain their availability. This has not proven to be an issue over the past as panel members have been extremely accommodating to ensure quoracy.

Panel Activity April 2012 –March 2013

Panels	Flintshire / Wrexham	Conwy / Denbighshire	Gwynedd (01/04/2012 – 18/10/2012)	Ynys Môn (01/04/2012 – 18/10/2012)	Gwynedd / Ynys Môn	Total
Adoption Assessments	17	10	8	2	5	42
Should Be Adopted	8	6	4	0	0	18
Matching	18	11	3	1	5	38
Total	43	37	15	3	10	108

The following graph shows a 64% increase in the number of adopters approved at panel over the past year. This has been achieved by the availability of a full complement of staff and additional sessional workers being employed to undertake assessments. A number of sessional workers are unavailable for further assessments due to health issues and maternity leave. Additional recruitment of sessional workers or full time staff will be required if this level is to be sustained or improved. Added to this is the increasing number of children being referred for family finding and the lack of placements available via the National Register.





There has been a slight decrease in the number of children matched at panel this year. However, the figures for 2011 -12 include 9 sibling groups as opposed to 4 /5 sibling groups in 2010-11 and 2012-13 accounting for the increase in number placed. The actual numbers of placements were 29, 35 and 32 over the past 3 years.

Number of Panels held by year.

Joint Panels	Flintshire / Wrexham (as from Sept 2010)			Conwy / Denbighshire (as from January 2012)			Gwynedd / Ynys Môn (as from December 2012)		
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Number of Panels held			15	-		12	-	-	5
Number of Panels cancelled due to lack of quoracy	0	0	0	-	0	0	-	-	0
Number of Panels cancelled for other reasons			1 (No cases to be heard)	-		0	-	-	0

All panel dates for 2013/2014 have been confirmed and all panel members are aware of the panel dates for the coming year well in advance. Despite the increase in number of children referred for matching it is not anticipated that additional panels will be required at this present time, additional panel space for cases has been made available due to the removal of the should be adopted decisions from the joint panel.

NWAS was able to achieve the amalgamation of the six LA panels into three joint panels by November 2012. As NWAS is now responsible for the co-ordination and management of all three joint panels NWAS proposes to set up a working group to consider the organisational and procedural aspects of these panels in order to ensure equity across the region. This will be undertaken, following a settling in period for the Gwynedd and Ynys Môn Joint Panel. It is anticipated that this will also be highlighted and timetabled in the proposed 3 – 5 year plan currently being drawn up.

In light of the current proposals by the Welsh Government for speeding up the assessment process and the development of the new PAR the Joint Panel Working Group will be considering and agreeing standard paperwork that will be presented to panels in future. NWAS has been involved in piloting the new PAR which will be introduced in April 2013. Joint Panel training for panel members on the new PAR will be required by mid 2013.

Joint training for all 3 adoption panels has been organised for the 29th and 30th April 2013 which will be providing panel members with an overview of all aspects of the pre approval training provided to prospective adopters via the NWAS training officer. This will also be the

first opportunity for all panel members to meet together to begin to build up relationships and share experiences and issues arising in panel business across the region.

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

44% of panel members felt they received documentation in a timely manner and 56% most of the time. The Conwy and Denbighshire panel paperwork is compiled and sent out from different venues. This can cause difficulties for the advisor and paperwork is sometimes sent out at different intervals. The consistency in organisation and administration of all panels is an issue that will need to be addressed in the proposed plan and in the Joint Panel Working Group.

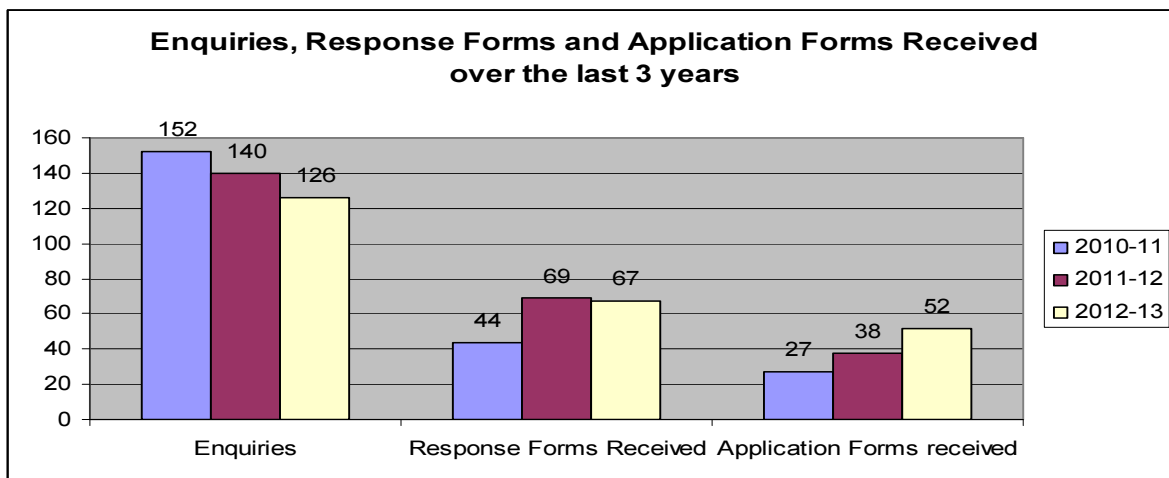
The quality of reports presented to panel are deemed to be good (63%) or excellent (25%) with significant improvement in the last year, particularly in analysis and some deemed to be useful as examples of good practice. The new PAR and an agreed format for the CARA's are now beginning to come through to the individual panels and should provide further consistency in paperwork. In the last year NWS social workers have been provided with additional training on the PAR, including an emphasis on analysis and they have been provided with a Tool Kit for use in assessments. The quality of some reports continues to be dependent on the reporting skills of individual adoption and child care social workers. Additional training and support for adoption social workers is currently being sought and addressed. 94% felt that the knowledge and experience of the adoption staff was excellent or good. 87% felt able to express their views on improvements/developments of the panel to the adoption team, one suggestion was joint training with other panels. This is already being addressed in the training plan for 2013-14 and awaits approval from Heads of Service and all panel members have been requested to attend the joint panel training in April.

Responses from prospective adopters attending panel indicate that most felt that their experience of attending panel was positive rating the experience 8 /9 out of 10. Some were provided with written information regarding the process of panel and information on panel members. All panel administrators will need to ensure that these information leaflets are sent to all prospective adopters due to attend panel. The information for the Gwynedd and Ynys Môn joint panel is currently being translated. All attendees felt supported by their social workers and comments were made that panel chairs from all three panels made them feel comfortable and put them at ease. One couple suggested it may be helpful if they were informed of the question prior to going into panel and given time to consider due to them being so nervous. The only issue to arise was that one couple were kept waiting a long time and found this stressful. This issue is sometimes inevitable if a difficult case has been

presented prior to their appointment, however, panels need to be aware of the anxiety this is likely to cause prospective adopters. Should this become an issue timescales between cases may need to be considered. Issue to be raised at the proposed Joint Working Group.

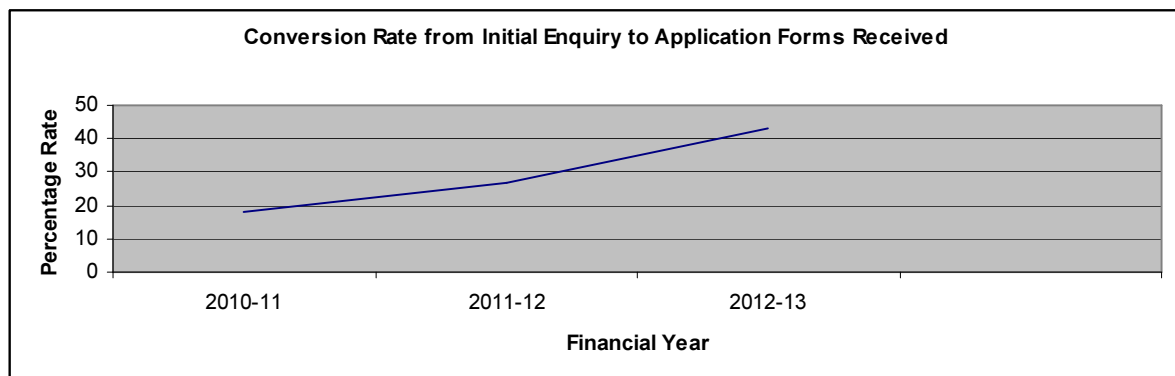
7. Advertising and Marketing

NWAS employs a Recruitment Officer to undertake specific recruitment activities for prospective adopters. The following graph highlights the conversation rates between specific events in the recruitment process.



The graph identifies a decrease in the number of general enquiries over the last 3 years, however, the conversion rate to response forms improved significantly in the second year of the service and remained fairly static in the third year. The conversion rate from response to application forms being received following training has risen from 61% in Year 1 to 78% in Year 3.

Conversion rates from initial enquiries to application forms being received have also shown a steady increase over the last 3 years as follows:



Marketing Source for all enquiries between April 2013 – March 2013

Marketing Source	April-June	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan- March	Total Enquiries
NWAS Website	12	16	9	26	63
LA Direct	6	8	9	17	40
LA Website	5	3	1	1	10
Other	1	1	2	5	9
Foster Carers	4	3	0	0	7
Word of Mouth	2	2	1	2	7
Freephone	0	0	3	2	5
Newspaper	1	0	1	2	4
Nation Adoption Week	1	0	3	0	4
Radio	0	0	1	1	2
Total for each quarter	32	33	30	56	151

A significant increase in enquiries in the last quarter of 2012-13 is recorded. Although not identified as coming in via National Adoption week in November it is likely that the publicity during this week did prompt further enquiries for the following months. Adopters often take note of publicity and follow this up on websites via the internet. The most often used source of enquiry is the NWAS website which has been updated in the past year. The Recruitment officer has spent considerable time liaising with the IT department and investigating the potential of Google and Facebook. As a key source for enquirers it would be judicious to invest further and continue to improve the NWAS website in future. Issues around access need to be resolved in order to ensure NWAS is able to update the information for adopters e.g. forthcoming training courses, recruitment events and adopters stories on a regular basis.

Activity undertaken by Recruitment Officer within each Local Authority April 2012– March 2013 (Figures updated end of April 2013)

LA	Conwy	Denbighshire	Flintshire	Gwynedd	Wrexham	Ynys Môn	Other	Total
Enquires	23	27	32	15	33	11	5	146
Response Forms	11	8	17	9	14	6	6	71
Initial Visits Undertaken	9	9	17	10	13	4	4	66
Application Forms received	6	9	8	10	10	5	4	52

The majority of initial visits are undertaken by the recruitment officer and local authority checks are undertaken prior to the visit in the interest of health and safety and in order to be aware of any issues that may be relevant. Due to the delay in receiving confirmation from LA's the process has now been revised and more recently initial checks are being requested via e-mail. It is envisaged that the timescales between the receipt of response forms and the initial visit will improve in 2013.

Recruitment Activities April – June 2012

- Radio interview on Radio Cymru to discuss the current situation on adoption in North Wales. – No Cost
- LGBT meeting; recruiting prospective adopters – No cost
- NWAS Website live on all Authorities Website – No cost
- Discussion with Jason Kendrick regarding advertisement in empty shop properties in the Conwy area. – No cost to date
- Awareness Campaign at Broughton Retail Park, Flintshire – No cost
- Awareness Campaign at Bangor Cathedral during a family fun day – No cost
- Community Routes Meeting; sharing information with other organisations and asking for their support in distributing posters & leaflets to the communities. – No cost
- Eisteddfod yr Urdd in Gwynedd
- Securing advertising slots for National Adoption Week on Real Radio.
- On going preparation work for the children under 5, story book .

-
- On going work with NWAS website; liaising with adopters who wish to share their adoption journey and displaying it on the website for others to read.
 - Advertising in the Daily Post and NWAS website for a child with significant health needs – unfortunately this was unsuccessful in identifying adopters – care plan amended to long term foster care
 - Assist in arranging NWAS profile evening for approved adopters in North Wales
 - Advertising campaign on Real Radio from the 01/09/2012 – 31/11/2012
 - Attend the National Register exchange day in Cardiff to profile harder to place children in North Wales; open to adopters all over the UK
 - Arrange venues & advertisement material for National Adoption Week 2012
 - Liaise with 'Google Add Words' to arrange easier access to prospective adopters to access information of our website through Google search.
 - Liaise with IT to discuss advertising using 'Facebook' & Twitter in a safe environment
 - Arrange and invite adopters & team members to join National Adoption Week walk.
 - Liaised with 'After Adoption' regarding activities during National Adoption Week.
 - Liaise with Wrexham Fostering team to share advertising space at the ten-pin bowling venue in Wrexham
 - Attended a seminar on the new CRB procedures
 - On going preparation work for the children under 5, story book.
 - On going work with NWAS website; liaising with adopters who wish to share their adoption journey and displaying it on the website for others to read.
 - National Adoption Week walk – no cost
 - 'After Adoption' attended a National Adoption Week information session
 - Advertising at the ten-pin bowling venue in Wrexham
 - On going poster & leaflet drop to various organisation/businesses
 - Advertising in Christmas pantomime programmes, Rhyl & Venue Cymru
 - National Adoption Week information sessions:
 - 5th of November – Penmaenuchaf Hall, Dolgellau, Gwynedd.
 - 6th of November – Victoria Hotel, Llangefni, Ynys Mon
 - 7th of November – Interchange, Old Colwyn, Conwy
 - 8th of November – Ruthin Conservative Club, Denbighshire.
 - 9th of November – Wynnstay Hotel, Wrexham
 - 10th of November – Broughton Retail Park, Flintshire
 - 14th of November – Lion Quays, Oswestry
 - Meeting with CBS Outdoor regarding advertising on various train stations across North Wales
 - Liaising with Royal Mail for mail a drop across North Wales
 - Contacted Tesco advertising to arrange information stalls in various Tesco's across North Wales.
 - Liaised with Real radio for costing around advertising
 - Adoption information taken to various doctors surgeries, libraries & Family Information Centre in Llandudno, Conwy, Nefyn, Botwnnog, Abersoch, Pwllheli, Caernarfon





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- Information stall at the St David's day market in Wrexham
 - Advertising for LGBT Adoption & Fostering week
 - Arranged/attended an information session to support LGBT Adoption & Fostering week in Wrexham.
 - Attended an information session in Manchester to support LGBT Adoption & Fostering week
 - Information stall arranged for the Eisteddfod Genedlaethol
 - Liaised with Anglesey County Council, Gethin Jones, press officer/public relations to arrange information stall at the Anglesey show.
 - Liaised with Wrexham IT to update NWAS website.
 - Liaised with Wrexham IT regarding Google Add words.





This year NWAS has targeted its recruitment for older children and sibling groups. Recent research indicates that same sex couples offer a valuable resource and make successful parents for adopted children. Specific attempts have been made to liaise and make contact with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) groups in the area as a potential resource for prospective adopters. In direct response to this there has been an increase in the number of same sex couples coming forward to adopt, many of whom are willing to consider sibling groups and older children. A specific leaflet is currently being designed to highlight that NWAS welcomes applications from this particular group to encourage more same sex couples to come forward.



NWAS organised a profile evenings for the more difficult to place children in North Wales and was successful in identifying links for three children. In addition NWAS attended the National Adoption Register Profile day in Cardiff, no additional links were identified at this event.




8. Training



NWAS Training Activity Report April 2012 – March 2013



Month	Date	Course	Invited	Attended	Total Attendees	Venue Costs	Cost Per Delegate	Total Cost	Evaluation
April	19 th , 20 th , 26 th & 27 th	Preparing to Adopt	30	22 prospective adopters	22	£1456.00	£16.54 per day	£1456.00	 evaluation report
May	15 th	PAR Assessment & Analysis	20	19 NWAS Social Workers	19	£70.00	£3.68	£70.00	 evaluation report
May	30 th	Safe Caring/Let's Get Started	22	17 prospective adopters	17	£75.00	£4.41	£75.00	
June	14th, 5th, 21st, 2nd	Preparing to Adopt	30	22 prospective adopters	22	£814.48	£9.25	£814.48	 evaluation form
June	28th and 29th	Moving children on - Good Practice	Not known	4 child care social workers 2 family placement SW	12	Venue costs absorbed by CCBC		£00.00	 evaluation form



		Pilot for Conwy foster carers and family placement social workers		6 foster carers					
July	2 nd	Adopting Again!	4	4 (2 nd time) adopters	4	£85.00	£21.25	£85.00	 evaluation form
July	6 th	PAR Assessments 'One Step Beyond'	19	19 NWAS SW's & Recruitment Officer	19	£154.50 – £400.00 – trainer costs	£29.18	£554.50	 evaluati
July	16 th	Education and attachment	80+	38 adopters 2 panel members	40	£115.00 – venue costs £350.00 – trainer costs	£11.62	£465.00	 evaluation form
July	18 th	Safe Caring/Let's Get Started	20	16 prospective adopters	16	£102.00 – venue costs	£6.37	£102.00	
Sept	6 th , 7 th & 13 th , 14 th	Preparing to Adopt	21	19 prospective adopters	19	£1070.88 – venue costs	£14.09	£1070.88	 evaluation form



Sept	20 th & 21 st	Moving children on - Good Practice	12	3 Fostering SWs 2 CCSW 5 Foster carers	10	Venue costs absorbed by CCBC		£0.00	 evaluation form
Oct	5 th	Attachment and Trauma For prospective adopters	30+	19 prospective adopters	19	£154.50 – venue costs £400.00 – trainer costs	£29.18	£554.50	 evaluation form
Oct	15 th	Safe Caring/Let's Get Started	14	14 prospective adopter	14	£90.00 – venue costs £00.00 – trainer costs	£6.42	£90.00	

Oct	25 th	Facing up to Facebook – social networking and contact	80+ 18 confirmed participants	9 adopters 1 CCSW 3 Adoption social workers 2 panel member 1 recruitment officer	16	£446 – venue and accommodation for trainers costs £683.45 – trainer costs	£70.59	£1129.45 ex vat	 evaluation form
Oct	26 th	Facing up to Facebook – social networking and contact	80+ 20 confirmed participants	9 adopters 6 adoption social workers 1 CCSW	16	£154.50 – venue costs £683.45 – trainer costs	£52.37	£837.95	 evaluation form
Nov	12 th	FASD	80+ 49 confirmed participants	14 CCSW 16 Adopters 2 Panel Members 6 Support Workers 1 Reviewing Officer	39	£90.00 Venue costs £433.50 - Trainer costs	£13.42	£523.50	 evaluation form

Nov	28 th	Attachment and Trauma for adopters with children placed.	90+ 12 confirmed attendees 11 attended 1 apology	8 Adopters 3 Prospective Adopters	11	£154.50 – venue costs £400.00 – trainer costs	£50.40	£554.50	 evaluation
Dec	10 th	Education and attachment	80+ 31 confirmed 4 apologies 9 no shows 18 attended	9 Adopters 7 prospective Adopters 2 Panel Members	18	£75.00 – venue costs £350.00 – Trainer Costs	£23.61	£425.00	 Evaluation
Dec	6 th , 7 th & 13 th , 14 th	Preparing to Adopt		<u>CANCELLED DUE TO LACK OF NUMBERS</u>					

Jan	17 th , 21 st and 22 nd	Preparing to Adopt	22 20 attended	20 Prospective Adopters	20	£975.00 – venue costs	£16.25	£975.00	 evaluation
Feb	18 th	Safe Caring/Let's Get Started	12 attended			Venue Costs: £75.00	£6.25	£75.00	
Feb	20 th & 21 st	Developmental Re- parenting for Professionals	40+ 31 confirmed 2 apologies 29 attended	17 LA social workers (3 Conwy, 4 Wrexham, 2 Denbighshire, 1 Gwynedd, 3 Ynys Mon, 4 Flintshire) 12 NWAS Adoption social workers	29	Venue Costs: £ 325.00 Trainer costs: Wrexham CBC absorbed these	£5.60	£325.00	 evaluation

Feb	22 nd	Developmental Re-parenting for Adopters	100+ 29 confirmed 7 apologies 1 no show	21 Adopters	21	Venue Costs: £ 162.50 Trainer costs: Wrexham CBC absorbed these	£7.73	£162.50	 evaluation
Feb	25 th and 26 th	Facilitating Contact for professionals	40+ 27 confirmed 5 apologies 4 no show	11 LA social workers (6 Flintshire, 1 Gwynedd, 3 Wrexham, 1 Conwy,) 7 NWAS Adoption Social Workers.	18	Venue Costs: £ 325.00 Trainer costs: Wrexham CBC absorbed these	£9.02	£325.00	 evaluation

March	1 st	2 nd time adopters training	8 invited 6 confirmed 4 attended 2 apologies	4 adopters	4	Venue Costs: £136.32	£34.08	£136.32	 evaluation
March	13 th , 14 th 21 st and 22 nd	Preparing to Adopt	24 invited 2 apologies	12 adopters full 4 days 2 adopters – 3 days 8 adopters– 2 days	22	Venue Costs: £ 926.00	£10.52	£ 926. 00	 evaluation

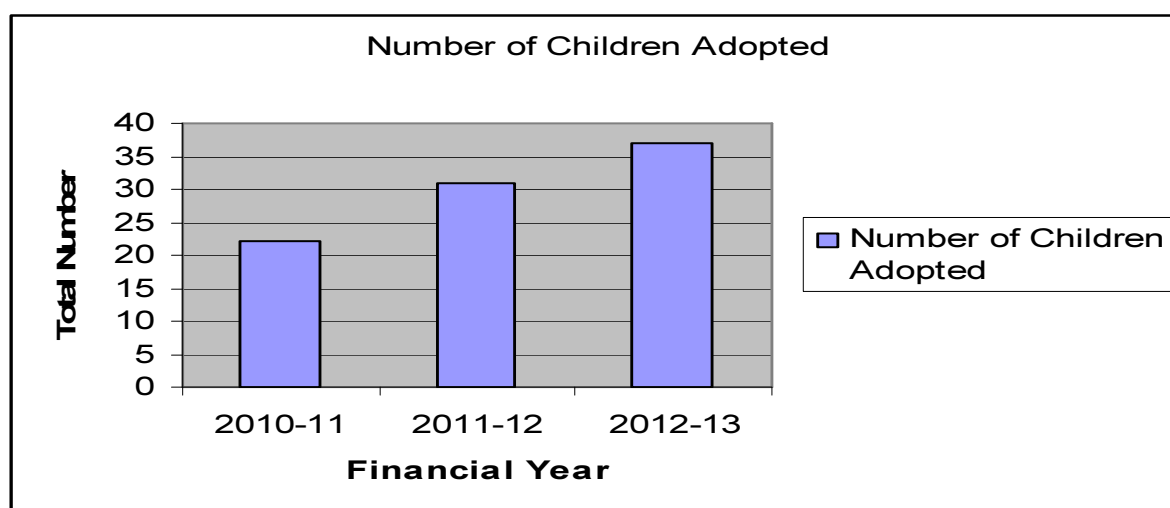
9. Children

Number of Children Referred for Adoption April 2012- March 2013

	Conwy	Denbs	Flint	Gwynedd	Wrexham	Ynys Môn	Other	Total
Number of children referred for adoption	17	13	7	10	17	11	-	75
Number of children matched at panel	9	2	6 (+ 1 match not recommended)	6	12	3	-	38
Number of children placed for adoption	7	3	4	4	10	1	1	30
Number of children adopted	8	8	1	9	7	0	3	36

Number of Children Referred, Matched, Placed and Adopted April 2012- March 2013

Number of children adopted over the past 3 years



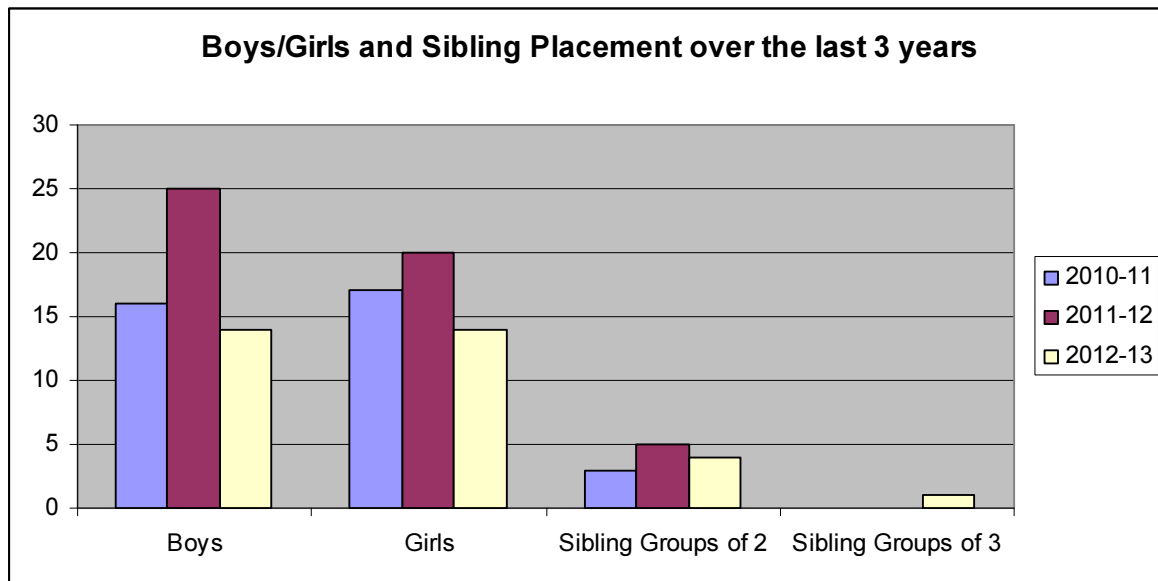
There has been a steady increase in the number of Adoption Orders granted over the past 3 years compatible with the increase in number of children being placed for adoption.

Gender Comparison of Children Placed for Adoption

2010-11 placed 16 boys 17 girls 29 (11 placements outside NWAS)

2011-12 placed 25 boys 20 girls 45 (4 placements outside NWAS)

2012-13 placed 15 boys 15 girls 30 (all placements within NWAS)

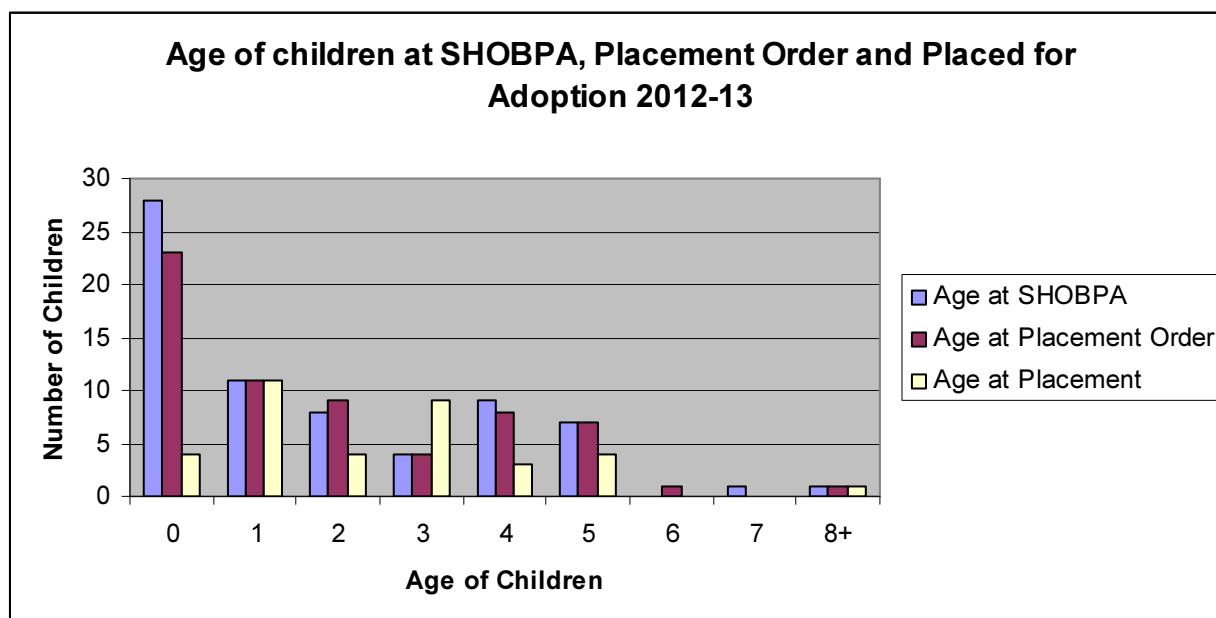


	No: Male children Placed	No: Female children placed	No: Sibling groups of 2 placed	No: of sibling groups of 3 placed
2010-2011	16	17	3	1
2011-2012	25	20	5	0
2012-2013	14	14	4	1 disrupted

Ages of children placed for adoption by year

Year Placed	Age of Children at Placement								
	0-1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8+
2010-2011	4	9	3	2	3	1	-	-	-
Non NWS Placements	-	-	1	1	2	1	1	3	2 aged 9 & 10 years
2011-2012	2	23	3	5	7	2	-	1	-
Non NWS Placements					1	1	1		
2012-2013	2	9	3	8	3	3	-	-	1 aged 15 years
Total Over 3 years	8	41	10	16	15	7	2	3	2

Age of Children at Should Be Adopted', Placement Order and Placed for Adoption 12-13



The graph identifies a significant increase in the number of children under the age of 1 years old being subject to a 'Should be Adopted' decision this year. The number of placement

Order being made at this age is considerably lower and this impacts on the age of actual age on placement. It is likely that the next financial year will show an increase in the number of children under the age of 2 years being placed which can only be viewed as a positive aspect in light of attachment and limiting their time in the LAC system.

Number of children adopted by former foster carers or Outside of NWAS Region

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Number of children adopted	21	28	36
Number of which were adopted by former foster carers including concurrent planning.	0	1	1
Total No: Children placed Out of NWAS region	11	4	0
Total No: Children Placed with NWAS Adopters from other Agencies	4	4	0

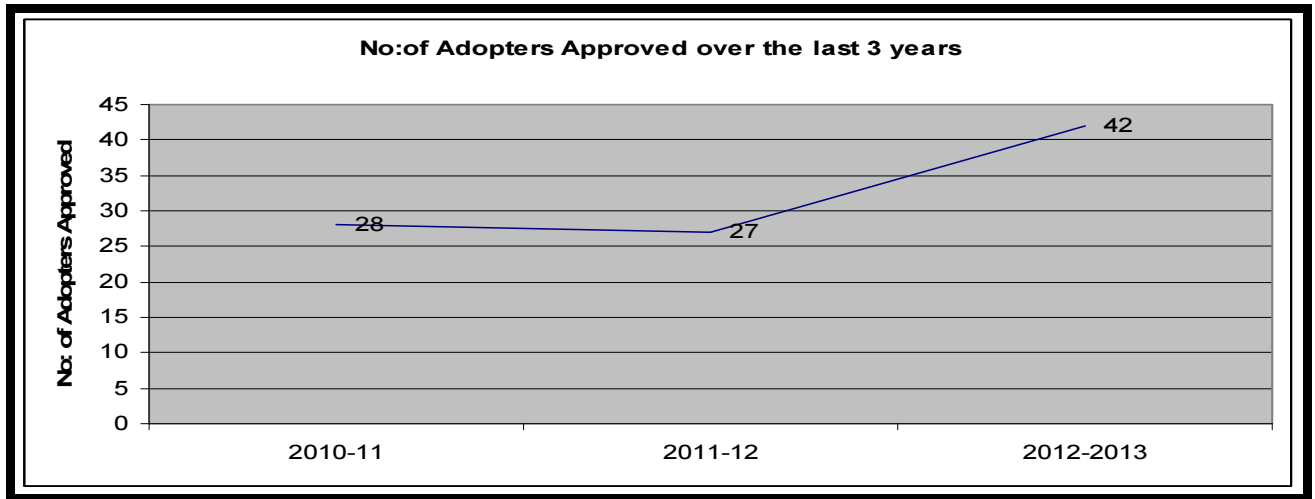
The number of children adopted by former foster carers and out of NWAS region

It has been noted in the latter part of 2012-13 that there is an increase in the number of foster carers coming forward to adopt specific children. These figures are likely to be more evident in the coming financial year once these have been approved and children placed for adoption.

10. Adopters

LA	Conwy	Denbighshire	Flintshire	Gwynedd	Wrexham	Ynys Môn	Other	Total
Enquires	23	27	32	15	33	11	5	146
Response Forms	11	8	17	9	14	6	6	71
Initial Visits Undertaken	9	9	17	10	13	4	4	66
Application Forms received	6	9	8	10	10	5	4	52
Adoption Assessments Completed	4	5	5	11	12	3	2	42
Adoption with a Foreign Element Enquiries	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	3

NWAS has an agreement with Adoption Matters to undertake the initial visits and provide the information regarding Adoption with a Foreign Element. The enquiries are referred directly to Adoption Matters and are provided with all the necessary information. To date no adopters requiring this service have returned to NWAS for Assessment.

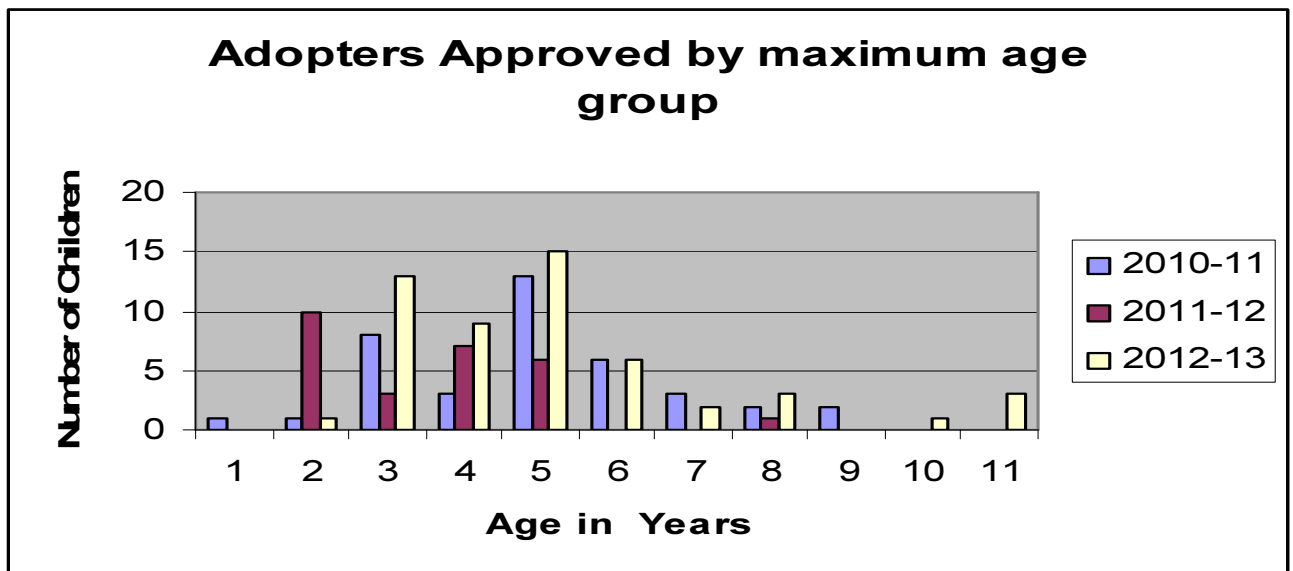


Several children who NWAS are having difficulty in placing have been referred to the adoption register and two children, one with a significant disability were profiled in Be My Parent. Neither of these were successful in identifying adopters for these specific children and several have gone on to be placed within NWAS and others to long term fostering.

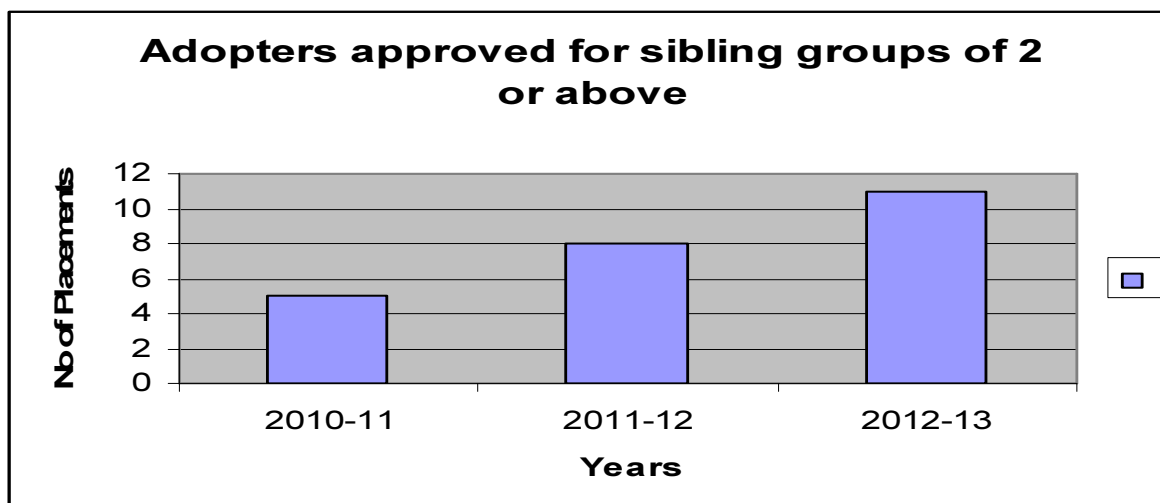
Current referrals for two other children of mixed ethnicity are being pursued via the National Register.

No children from other local authorities were placed with NWAS adopters in 2012-13.

Number of Placements offered by approved adopters by maximum age of children:



The graph shows that an increased number of adopters have been approved for older children over the past year.



This graph shows the increase of adopters approved who are offering sibling group placements in the last two years.

11. Matches

NWAS social workers are responsible for Family Finding and work closely with the child care social workers during this process. All searches are initially undertaken via the CHARMS matching database and families are then considered in more detail in light of the specific needs of each child by the social workers before visits to potential adopters take place. Adopters are given detailed information about the child and have the opportunity to meet with the medical adviser and the foster carers of the child/ren in question. Matching meetings are attended by the child's social worker, NWAS social worker, a social worker who has had no involvement with the case, acting as an independent member and chaired by a NWAS manager. Matching reports are then presented to the adoption panels with CARA's and PAR's involved in the case. NWAS believes that foster carers play a key role in this process and are able to provide adopters with detailed and more personal information about the child they care for and are therefore included as an integral part of the process. All potential matches and information regarding placements made are recorded on the CHARMS IT system.

12. Disruptions

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

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Number of disruptions	0	2 placements (1 single 1 sibling group of 2)	1 placement (sibling group of 3 children)
Number of children placed in same period	22	45	30

There has been one disruption of a sibling group of 3 children during this financial year. A disruption meeting was held and undertaken by an independent social worker. Recommendations and learning points from the report were as follows:

- Increase time for adopters and foster carers to get to know each other
- Support for the adopters and foster carers through this emotional period
- Issues of concern to be reported to supervising social workers
- Foster carer's diaries to be shared during transition
- Ensure professionals share information appropriately
- Communication is essential when a large group of professionals are involved
- Research proves that children who suffer neglect can lead to excessive fear and anxiety
- Use of plain language when discussing child's behaviour
- Attachment based training to be made available to adopters
- Robust support package based on any expert reports accepted by the LA
- Identifying the key worker and decision maker during transition period
- Ensuring that the introduction process is monitored and timescales for moving placement are appropriate.

Some of these issues are being addressed via training on attachment issues. The NWAS manager has requested a meeting with Fostering Team Managers across North Wales to discuss issues for foster carers during this period. Moving on Training has been developed by the NWAS Training Officer for all foster carers and family placement social workers and offered to each authority.

A working group needs to be established to discuss adoption support plans and will be discussed with managers in 2013..

13. Notifications

No notifications during 2012-13

14. Non Agency Adoption Activity

Partner of Parent Activity April 2012-March 2013

	Conwy	Denbighshire	Flintshire	Gwynedd	Wrexham	Ynys Môn	Total
Partner of Parent Enquiries	6	2	6	8	7	4	33
Partner of Parent Initial Visits							23
Partner of Parent Checks in Progress	1	1	1	-	-	-	3
Partner of Parent Waiting Allocation	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Partner of Parent Currently Under Assessment	0	1	3	1	3	-	8
Partner of Parent Adoption Orders Granted							13

15. Management information and development work

Management Information is collated on the CHARMS system which is updated on a regular basis. Updated information is provided on a monthly basis to panel members and operational service managers. The information includes lists of all children currently waiting for placements, potential matches and those approved or placed for adoption in the current year. In addition information on the current situation of adopters is also made available including those under assessment, available, potential links and placements.

Development Issues are discussed at the OMG meeting on a monthly basis, which have included, Safe Base Partnership, Policy amendments and of photographs in Family Finding.

16. Legal issues /Placement Orders/Placements

None identified for NWAS this year

17. Adoption Support

9.1 Individual Adoption Support

Referrals for Adoption Support for adopted children are referred via the relevant local authority Duty and Assessment Teams for initial assessment and referred or signposted to appropriate services. NWAS has a limited amount of resources available to provide adoption support and is very much aware that these services need to be developed in order to provide equity across the region. Some local authorities have their own therapeutic teams and therefore able to provide significant therapeutic assessment and support in a timely manner. In light of the need to develop this service NWAS has now entered into a new partnership agreement with After Adoption to provide the Safe Base parenting programme for NWAS adopters. The Partnership was launched in April 2013 and the first programme will be offered in September 2013 and a second in February 2014. New support groups will be developed once the initial programme has been provided.

Three Adoption Support Groups are available across the region. The groups in Flintshire/Wrexham and Conwy Support Group are run by adopters. The Ti a Fi Group for pre school adopted children is organised by NWAS staff in Ynys Mon. Further development of these groups will need to be considered in the proposed 3-5 year plan as this issue was raised in the latest inspection carried out by CSSIW.

Individual Support provided by NWAS social Workers:

Adoption Support referrals (one off service / advice as well as on-going work)

A total of 16 referrals for individual support were received by NWAS and these families are being supported by NWAS social workers in a variety of ways. The support varies from signposting to appropriate services, referrals to Duty and Assessment teams in relevant LA and individual support via Theraplay, attending meetings and issues regarding contact.

9.2 Letterbox Contact and Direct Contact – Support to adopted children, birth and adopted families.

Current Contact Arrangements in place

	Conwy	Denbighshire	Flintshire	Gwynedd	Wrexham	Ynys Môn	Total
No: of children with contact arrangements in place supported by NWAS	71	78	35	33	53	24	294

All letterbox arrangements are now being co-ordinated through NWAS. NWAS has employed a Contact Co-ordinator who is supported by an administrator. All historical contact arrangements for contact from Conwy, Denbighshire and Ynys Mon have been transferred to NWAS and all new contact arrangements are referred directly to NWAS. Gwynedd are currently in the process of transferring historical cases across and the Flintshire and Wrexham historical cases are still being managed by NWAS social workers – it is anticipated that these will be transferred by July 2013.

All contact arrangements and activities are recorded on the Letterbox CHARMS system and this has proven to be particularly successful. However, work is still being undertaken on developing appropriate reports within the system in order to identify the level and complexity of work required. At present NWAS is able to identify the number of children, adopters and birth families on the system but unable to provide an accurate figure of the contact arrangements for individual children.

The number of contact arrangements increases by between 27 and 42 plus each year depending on placements made with very few being closed due to reaching adulthood.

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

NWAS has had a contract with After Adoption to undertake this work and the numbers referred have been fairly consistent over the past 3 years. All local authorities involved in the Partnership have agreed to extend this contract for a further 12 months and review as the new Partnership Agreement is being produced in light of the proposed 3-5 year plan and decisions of the Welsh Government on the National Adoption Service.

Birth record referrals (access to files) Referrals received and transferred to After Adoption
2012-13

	2012/2013			2011/2012			2010/2011		
	Birth Parent	Section 98	Section 98	Birth Parent	Section 98	Section 98	Birth Parent	Section 98	Section 98
	Counselling	Pre 75	Post 75	Counselling	Pre 75	Post 75	Counselling	Pre 75	Post 75
Ynys Mon	2	5	1	1	3	1	2	4	4
Gwynedd	3	9	2	1	9	6	4	5	2
Conwy	3	7	6	3	12	2	2	5	5
Denbighshire	3	10	1	4	9	6	6	10	6
Flintshire	2	13	5	2	12	4	2	8	4
Wrexham	6	12	4	3	8	3	5	14	10
TOTAL	19	56	19	14	53	22	21	46	31

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

Of the 19 responses received

- 95% of those that answered the question felt that they were greeted appropriately and informed about the transfer to After Adoption when contacting NWAS for the service; additional comments included, staff were very professional and helpful and exceptionally friendly.
- 73% stated they would rate the service as excellent, having had contact within two weeks of referral, face to face meeting with After Adoption staff and information on their files shared in a sensitive and appropriate manner.
- One response felt this was a good service – although every other aspect was positive After Adoption was unable to facilitate contact with relatives.

-
- 3 service users considered the service to be average, these were birth parents who appeared to be expecting a different type of support and unhappy as birth children declined contact. Not a true reflection on the After Adoption service.

18. Development of Adoption Service

NWAS is currently undergoing a review of the service undertaken by a consultant from the Institute of Public Care at Oxford Brookes University and a 3-5 year plan is being proposed. The impact of the proposed National Adoption Service will also have an impact on future plans; however, until these are clarified NWAS will continue under its present partnership agreement which also being revised.

The Partnership with After Adoption to provide the Safe Base Parenting Programme and additional support groups has now been agreed and launched in April 2013.

19. Policies and Procedures

The policy regarding financial support to adopters during the introductions period has been reviewed and revised and agreed across all six authorities providing equity for all adopters across the region. This includes clear guidelines for adopters on their entitlement to financial support during the introductions period, based on the Welsh National Fostering Rates. The policy also includes an agreed list of essential items and rates for mileage claims.

20. CSSIW

NWAS has been inspected twice during this financial year.

Flintshire Inspection May 2012

Recommendations include:

- Panel Minutes to include the reasons for panel panel's recommendation. This has been discussed with panel members and the administrator and these are now included.
- Adopter's applications for the relevant authorities to be taken to the relevant joint panels and legal advice to be sought. NWAS is complying with this at present. However, this issue has been raised during the adoption inquiry and at the Expert Advisory Group meeting in order to highlight the need for legislation changes in line with the Welsh Governments requirement to work on a regional basis.

Good Practice Issues included:

- Statement of Purpose to be made available to stakeholders on the NWAS website - completed
- Failure of panel member to comply with attendance expectation and reviews - new panel members appointed
- Continue communication with LAC social workers and managers on up to date activity – service managers provided with monthly updates and share with relevant team managers.
- Improve structure of Adoption Support Plans – Working Group to be identified 2013.

Conwy Inspection February 2013

No significant or urgent issues for non-compliance to report – Final report due in May 2013.

Potential areas of improvement:

- Further training on analysis for some NWAS assessors – with the introduction of the new PAR training will be required for all staff and panel members. Discussion taking place at present.
- More comprehensive support plans required
- Supervision/management issues – OMG have discussed and NWAS managers have agreed to revise supervision responsibilities. These changes will be put in place as from May 2013.
- Increase provision of support groups - with the introduction of Safe Base new support groups will be available to adopters – locations to be agreed.

21. Consultations

Consultation exercises, via questionnaire are undertaken with the following stakeholders:

- Staff members
- LA social workers
- Panel Members
- Adopters attending Panel
- Adopters who have had a child placed within the stated period
- Attendees for all training events provided by NWAS (See Training Section)

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- Adoptees, birth parents and relatives of adoptees accessing the After Adoption services contracted by NWAS.

Responses are recorded within this report.

22. Compliments, comments, complaints and representations

NWAS has received 5 complaints during this period. Three complaints derived from NWAS informing the applicants that we were unable to continue with their assessments due to various reasons. These were dealt with at Stage one and a further complaint was received from the same person which was escalated to Stage 2. These decisions were discussed and agreed by Head of Service.

One complaint was received regarding comments within the training report which were interpreted inappropriately this was dealt with at Stage 1.

One complaint was received regarding panel's decision not to recommend a match at panel and is currently being dealt with by the appropriate authority.

23. Reporting Mechanisms to Senior Management, Scrutiny & Members

Monthly meetings are held with the operational managers on a monthly basis to discuss day to day operation of the service, OMG members are provided with an update of activity across all six authorities on a monthly basis and quarterly reports are presented to the Heads of Children's Services across the region.

In order to improve communication and liaison with the six child care teams the Child Care Managers are invited to the OMG meeting 3 times per annum. The provision of training to all stakeholders across the region has also aided communication and has begun to cement the regional relationships.

24. Agenda for Change/Future Challenges

This will be dependent on the outcome of the Adoption, Inquiry, The Social Services Bill and the development of the National Adoption Services in Wales, however, NWAS is currently looking at developing its 3-5 year plan. The plan will be based on the final

recommendations of the review currently being carried out by a consultant from the Institute of Public Care at Oxford Brookes University.

25. Conclusion

NWAS continues to develop as a service. As highlighted in this report, the number of adopters recommended for approval at panels over the past 12 months has increased by 64% and the number of children placed with adopters in North Wales has also increased. In the current climate of a national shortage of adopters NWAS continues to have a steady flow of adopters coming forward to adopt. NWAS has seen a slight increase in enquiries from adopters in neighbouring authorities and for single and same sex carers.

With the introduction of the Safe Base Parenting Programme we look forward to being able to offer equity in access to support for all families in North Wales and encourage families to consider children with more complex needs, sibling groups and older children, in the knowledge that this support will be available.

Adoption specific training for all stakeholders is proving to be successful in developing skills across the board and enabling more liaison with colleagues across North Wales. Evaluation of the training programmes provided have generally been very positive and numerous requests are being made by individual authorities to provide further training to child care social workers on the adoption process, including matching, moving children on, contact and life story work.

NWAS is in a good position to further develop its regional service within the proposed model of a National Adoption Service.

This report will fulfil the requirements of Reg 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: 2nd May 2013.

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