

Gwasanaeth  
**Mabwysiadu**  
Gogledd Cymru



North Wales  
**Adoption**  
Service

ANNUAL REPORT AND QUALITY OF CARE REVIEW  
APRIL 2018 - MARCH 2019

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**North Wales Adoption Service - Adoption Agency Annual Report  
and Quality of Care Review  
April 2018 – March 2019**

## **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 ninth year of activity. We continue to work with our colleagues in the National 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 sub groups which include:

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

- This sub group was attended by the recruitment officer up until she left the service in August 2018. Unfortunately NWAS has been unable to recruit a Welsh speaking candidate for this position and it is now necessary to advertise the post for Welsh desirable. Given the need to change the Job Description via the Job Evaluation Process re advertising the position will be delayed.
- The National Adoption Service has contracted “Cowshed” to undertake recruitment activities across Wales which ran a national radio campaign for one month around the National Adoption Week.

## **2. Performance Framework – attended by Mandy Humphries NWAS Manager**

- A review of the information data collection was undertaken. The introduction of new PI’s will be introduced in 2018-19 and will entail the setting up of new reports and amendments to the CHARMS system in order to collate the information required.
- NAS provides regular updates on the Performance to the Advisory group and Partnership Board members. Accessing information regarding adoption support assessments undertaken by the LA’s continue to be problematic but it is envisaged that will be improve considerably once this service is available in-house..

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

- Further to the research undertaken by IPC Oxford Brookes In July 2017 required for the development of the NAS business case for developing adoption support across Wales, NAS succeeded in gaining considerable grant funding made available to the regional adoption services for 2019-20.
- NWAS’ application for funding for the development of an in-house adoption support team has been accepted and it is anticipated will be in place during the 2019-20 financial year.

## **4. Policy Group – recently attended by Mandy Humphries**

- Recent meetings have been concentrating on the new regulations regarding the Stage 1 & Stage Adoption Process

### 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 some Flintshire social workers who are 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– Support Groups, Fun Days and Newsletters.
- Development and management of joint adoption panels
- Partner of Parent Adoptions
- Adoptions with a Foreign Element

#### ADOPTERS - Under Assessment (as of April 2019)

	Conwy	Denbigh	Flint	Gwyn	Wrexham	Ynys Mon	Other	Total 18/19	Total 17/18
Adopters Currently Under Assessment	4	4	4	1	2	3	0	18	16
Foster Carers wishing to adopt under	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	3	2
Partner of Parent Under Assessment	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	4	7
Total No: of Assessments	4	7	5	1	5	3	0	25	25

#### ADOPTERS - Available/On hold for Potential Links (as of 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2019)

	Conwy	Denbigh	Flint	Gwyn	Wrexham	Ynys	Other NWAS	Other Agency	Total
Available	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	3
On hold for potential matches	3	2	2	1	0	0	1	4	13

Of the 3 families available, one has expressed an interest for a female child only aged 0-3 years and continues to wait for an appropriate match. The remaining two families are open to either gender 0-2 or a sibling group of two 0-3 years.

There are currently 13 families on hold for potential links these include 2 families for sibling groups of 2 and 11 for single children. 9 families are via NWAS all for single children (2 foster carers approved to adopt child in placement); 4 families are from other agencies matched with 2 sibling groups of two and two single children.

	Conw	Denb	Flint	Gwyn	Wrex	Ynys Mon	Other	Total
Adopters – waiting or allocated for initial visit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Partner of Parent allocated/waiting for Initial	1	4	1	1	1	1	0	<b>9</b>
Adopters – waiting/invited for training waiting medicals and DBS	4	2	2	1	4	0	0	<b>13</b>
Partner of Parent checks in progress/application not yet filed	3	1	5	5	5	2	0	<b>21</b>

All initial visits due for general adoption enquiries have been undertaken and approved for training. There are 9 Partner of Parents enquiries allocated for initial visits at this stage.

Of the 13 families waiting for training 9 will be attending pre approval training in May 4 have declined previous offers of training but will be attending future training events.

21 Partner of Parent applications have been received which would suggest that they will be filing applications into court. Given the strict timescales on filing these assessments this will impact on the capacity of the current resources to undertake general adoption assessments required for the increasing number of children on the waiting list. 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 April 2019)

	Conw	Denb	Flint	Gwyn	Wrex	Ynys	Other	Total
Children On Hold for potential matches or matched but not placed	6	1	3	3	5	3	0	<b>21</b>
Children - no identified match at present	4	7	1	2	7	1	0	<b>22</b>
Total No: of Families Required	4	6	1	2	6	1		<b>20</b>

Of the 21 children with a potential matches 10 are with NWS adopters, 4 are with LA foster carers being assessed by NWS and 7 are with adopters from other agencies (3 (1 sibling group of 2) with Conwy children, one sibling group of 2 for Denbighshire and 2 single children for Wrexham).

Of the 22 children with no identified match at present there are 2 sibling groups of 2 and 18 single children. 9 were referred in the last quarter. Two children are older than 5 years, two of the children are between 3 and 4 years; seven are between 2 and 3 years; five are under 2 years and six are under 12 months.

There are currently 21 families under assessment at present.

3 children have been waiting for a match for over 12 months (1 sibling group of 2)  
7 children have been waiting for a match for between 6-12 months  
11 children have been waiting between 1 and 6 months (1 sibling group of 2)

All children waiting over 3 months were referred to the Welsh Adoption Register and those with additional needs were referred to Link Maker to be considered for potential links across the UK. 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 (East) appointed on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 achieved the Post Graduate Certificate in Managing Practice Quality in Social Care. Stevie Thomas (West) appointed on 16/03/16 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.

### **Vacancies:**

With regard to permanent posts 3 members of staff left the service:

- **Recruitment Officer** – left in August 2018 continues to be vacant
- **Contact co-ordinator** – left in August 2018 – new social worker start date 20/05/2019
- **Social Worker Ynys Mon** – on long term sick leave the left post in January 2019 – continues to be a vacant post.
- **Conwy** – One social worker vacancy from 24/07/17 to new social worker start date 08/05/2018
- **Flintshire** – one social worker on maternity leave from May 2017 returned to work on a part time basis on the 24/05/2018. Part time position filled on the 17/09/2018.

Where vacancies have occurred this leaves only one social worker for each authority to cover assessments and family finding and can have an impact on the service.

- Interviews were undertaken for all new posts and the Safe Recruitment guidelines were adhered to.

Current number of social workers full time equivalent in post is 10.2, plus one part time (32 hours) training officer. The part time (18 hours) contact co-ordinator post is currently vacant.

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:

### **Presentations:-**

- Life Journey Framework Training by Denise Roberts
- North Wales Advocacy Service - Karen Read
- Siblings and Adoption – Reflection on Research and Experience- Lisa Jenkins
- Universal Credit for Families - Helen Kinney
- Consultation Exercise on new Adoption Agencies Regulations
- Adoption Activity Days Briefing by Sue Osbourne, WAR/ Krista Hardy, Coram
- NAS Post Approval Training Framework - Kathy s'Jacob, AFA Cymru
- Best Practice Guide for Initial Enquiries for Adopters' and recent research carried out by Dr Sarah Meaking.
- National Guidelines for Adoption Register Wales



## Staffing List

Authority/Of fice Base	Position	Name	Hours
Host Authority Main Office: Lampbit Street, Wrexham:  Wrexham and Flintshire Social Workers	Manager:	Mandy Humphries	30 hours
	Admin:	Larry Groom Sarah Picken	37 hours now 30 hours 28 hours
	Social Worker:	Lesley Davies Shirley Vinney Helen Kinney	Retired 30/10/2018 Start date: 16/10/2018 37 hrs 37 hours
	Training Officer:	Denise Roberts	32 hours
	Recruitment Officer:	Vacancy	37 hours since August 2018
	Contact Coordinator: Contact Admin:	Vacancy  Clare Pearce	22 hours weekly since August 2018 30 hours weekly
	Social Workers:	Nicola Kernighan Samantha Humphreys Lesley Davies	37 hours 21 hours 24/05/2018  21 hours from 17/09/2018
	Sessional Social Worker	Pat Fairclough	
	CHARMS IT Admin:	Jon Allen	Left the service March 2018
Rhyl Denbighshire	Social Workers	Tracy Roberts Kathryn Edwards	37 hours 37 hours
Glan-y-Don, Conwy	Deputy Manager East:	Trish Welsh	37 hours
	Social Workers:	Lisa Jenkins Vacant post Marjorie Davis	37 hours 24/07/17 – 08/05/2018 37 hours from 08/05/2018
	Sessional Worker	Morwenna Berry	
	Admin	Susan Abbott	18.5 hours
County Offices, Ynys Môn	Social Workers	Vacant post Carolyn Jones	37 hours 37 hours
Penrallt, Gwynedd	Deputy Manager West	Stevie Thomas	37 hours
	Social Worker	Sara Williams	37 hours
	Admin	Manon Roberts	18.5 hours

**Vacant Posts** – Social work vacancies totalled 13 months over the year plus the vacant recruitment officer post. Combined with a high level of sickness and delay in recruitment this did have an impact on resources given that NWAS only has two social workers available in each authority (except Gwynedd which has one) to cover all aspects of assessments, family finding and the requirement to undertake the initial visits usually part of the recruitment officer's role.

**Staff Sickness:** There has been an increase in total days sickness during this financial year. 241 days sickness leave were taken by a total of nine members of staff. The increase accounts for one staff member on long term sickness leave for over 12 months and one other member of staff due to planned operations accounting for a total of 204 of the 241 days.

**STAFF SURVEY** – *Sent to 17 Members of Social Work Staff, Responses 8*

- 100% of staff who responded to the NWAS staff survey:
  - knew where to access relevant adoption documents i.e adoption minimum standards, Regulations and Statement of Purpose
  - received dated and signed copies of supervision
  - received child protection training in the last 36 months
  - rated the quality of care provided to adopters and children as good or excellent
- Between 75% and 85%
  - Were able to access NWAS Policies and Procedures
  - Felt supported in their role by the management team
  - Have regular supervision and appraisals
  - Access to support, advice and training
- Training undertaken in the last 12 months:
  - Criminal Injuries compensation
  - Assessing and analysing risk
  - New Welsh Adoption Register
  - Working with Attachment
  - Education Masterclass
  - Transgender Awareness Training
  - Data Protection
  - S98 /Access to Records
  - Safeguarding
  - Assessing Emotional Resilience
  - WG Consultation Adoption Agency Regulations
  - DDP 2 Theraplay Diploma in Therapeutic Parenting

Suggestions for development and improvement of the service:

- Development for playgroup support group given the increase in very young children being placed and Adoption Support Group for older children – **Adoption UK will be taking over the role of the After Adoption “Talk Adoption” group and it is anticipated that this service will be introduced in North Wales this and supported financially via the WG grant**
- Consistent service provided to all across all areas
- Consistency in regards to timescales / informing birth parents – **legal advice via NAS has been sought and a process agreed across Wales.**
- Consistency/ in informing adopters of subsequent siblings **(new policy in agreement with Partnership Board will be required)**
- Staff Training: - more adoption specific training opportunities
- Adoption Support Groups:- groups available in all regions – **this is currently being developed**
- Establishment of post adoption support within the service – **new WG Grant agreed will see a significant development of therapeutic support in house for families in this financial year**

**RESPONSES FROM CHILD CARE SOCIAL WORKERS AND INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS (IRO'S) INVOLVED WITH ADOPTION VIA NWAS –**

100% understood the role of NWAS and felt that there is open and honest communication between colleagues. 66% viewed their experience of working with NWAS in seeking placements as excellent or good, where any difficulties raised were addressed and support provided in presenting and attending adoption panels.

33.3% rated the support provided by NWAS to adopters was excellent and 33% satisfactory. One commented that the aftercare support package was limited.

**NWAS agree with this statement in relation to therapeutic support as the resources have not been available in-house. However with the recent WG grant it is anticipated that this will improve considerably.**

66% of colleagues attended the Moving Children on Training which included foster carers, their support social workers and child care social workers – one social worker stated that the delivery was excellent however felt that the content was levelled at foster carers. **The aim of the training is to ensure all parties involved with moving children on are working to the same principles.**

Other comments:

- Lack of adopters in NWAS is problematic
- My experiences of NWAS as a child care social worker have been really positive and I have successfully placed over 13 children in the last 3 years of adoption.

## **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 panel members have been attending the Joint Panel Business 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.

Recruitment for new members for the Central List needs to be undertaken in the near future as previous Central list members have become full time members as other members' tenures have reached their quota.

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

Wrexham and Flintshire Joint Panel will have been established for ten years in April 2020. During the last 12 months the panel has had a number of changes/challenges to deal with. These have included the unexpected resignation of the chair with the subsequent uncertainties this created, the retirement of the Wrexham legal advisor who had been involved with the joint panel since the beginning and also the retirement of the Wrexham ADM. Despite these changes panel members have continued to show great commitment to the panel task and have dealt with several complex cases. The advice of both medical advisors has been particularly appreciated in a number of these cases. My appointment as chair in February this year has brought a greater degree of certainty but we are still in a period of adjustment, and although all individual reviews have been completed we hope to have a group review in the near future to look at progress and developments. The pending retirement of Mandy Humphries, who has been our panel advisor since the panel was formed, will be a great loss to panel who greatly value her knowledge and experience. It is still unclear who will be taking on either the role of panel advisor or Wrexham ADM and panel hope these roles will be clarified soon. Panel currently has one independent member vacancy and one independent member will have completed her full term in April 2020.

### **Reflections from the Chair of Conwy and Denbighshire Joint Adoption Panel (Waiting Report)**

Attendance was good throughout 2018/2019 and there was never cause to cancel a meeting due to be not being quorate. One member took pre-arranged leave of absence during this

period for personal reasons. All Independent Members achieved over 90% with some reaching 100% attendance. The Panel, Legal and Medical Advisers were represented at every Panel. Panel members were unanimous in thinking that NWAS Development Days are extremely useful and provided a good opportunity to network across the North Wales region.

During the annual reviews held in 2018 Panel Members were positive how members had worked together during the year and how they managed differing view points when a consensus could not be reached. Everyone agreed that the two new members brought valuable knowledge and experience to the discussion of cases. There continued to be positive and constructive feedback about the performance of the Chair, the Panel Adviser and the Legal and Medical Advisers. All members agreed that the documentation presented to them by NWAS social workers is now of a high standard and the Matching Report format is very informative. There remains a good cross section of both professional and personal experience among Panel members including social workers, those who have fostered or adopted or have experience of being adopted and a birth parent that gave a child up for adoption.

**Sue Roberts (Chair)**

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

Gwynedd and Anglesey Adoption Panel continue to be held 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month with panel being held in Gwynedd October to March and Anglesey April to September. Nine panel meetings were held from April 2018 to March 2019. Three panels was cancelled as there were no cases to be presented. All panel members achieved over 90% attendance with Gwynedd & Anglesey panel being quorate and no meetings had to be postponed or cancelled.

Gwynedd are still to appoint a new elected member of the council to represent Gwynedd on the panel.

Panel group appraisal focused on common themes that often come up in panel discussion. The appraisal also reflected on Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Child Practice Review and any lessons learnt as a group. Panel members considered having the opportunity to consider child practice case reviews as a group to be of value. Panel member's value combining panel business meetings across the region as it was felt that panel members could learn from how other Panels operated.

*Stevie Thomas – Gwynedd & Ynys Mon Panel Advisor*

**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**

A Joint Panel Business and Training Day was provided on the 20<sup>th</sup> November 2017. There were 49 attendees which included panel members, central list members, child care social workers, adoption social workers and some Heads of Children's Services from across the region. The day included updates of NWAS and NAS activity and legal updates presented by Jenny Dalzell legal adviser from Flintshire County Council. This highlighted the opportunities that birth parents are legally entitled to oppose orders and the issues being raised for adopters during the process. A presentation on the Life Journey Framework was also provided by the NWAS training officer which highlighted the responsibility of the adoption panels in identifying what Life Journey work has been undertaken with children presented for matches. A NWAS adopter and current panel member also provided a presentation on the process from an adopter's point of view.

### **Responses to Quality Assurance Questionnaires from Panel Members**

**Regarding Panel Activity** – Circulated to Panel members responses received; Conwy & Denbighshire 35.5%; Flintshire & Wrexham 35.5%; Gwynedd & Ynys Mon 29%

97% stated they always or mostly received the required documentation from the Adoption Service in a timely manner –one commented that this has improved since becoming electronic.

100% felt appropriately advised by the Panel Advisors as to their responsibilities in the decision-making process and that the knowledge and experience of the adoption staff required to attend Panel to support applications, matching and review of adopters was excellent or good.

93% feel able to express their view to the Adoption Team on improvements / developments of the Adoption Panel and/or Service,

Views on the quality of documentation presented to the Adoption Panel:-

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory
CAR	35.4%	58.1%	6.5%
PAR	25.8%	67.7%	6.5%
Matching	41.9%	51.6%	6.5%
Support Plan	12.9%	71.0%	16.1%

Responses stating that CAR/PAR and Matching reports as being excellent to good were similar or slightly improved from last year and an improvement in the Support plans from 57% to 83.9 % rating excellent or good.

#### Additional Comments from Panel Members

- **PAR assessments:** comments were generally positive and complimentary regarding the quality: Concise easy to read clear not too much “story”, Good analysis, The assessment focused on very relevant information i.e. loss in such a way that made the overall assessment a very high standard.
  - **Matching Report:** - matching proforma helpful; gave a detailed description of the child, birth parent and adopters and the expectations of the couple in supporting the child.
  - **CAR/B** – some issues regarding the need for updating the document and ensuring the information is accurate
- General:**
- Some documents need to be summarised/more concise
  - Frustration regarding the move to paperless panels
  - Feel the panel functions well/well run and efficient panel

#### Feedback of Joint Panels Business Day Training on Transgender Awareness held on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2018

*40 attendees; 35 Responses received*

83% felt that the course achieved its stated aims 94% felt the course was valuable and that their confidence and skills had improved as a result of the training.

Comments on the day in general and the training provided:

- More handouts needed – (handouts were sent out to all participants after the training)
- Excellent day especially the training
- Excellent presentation
- Request for a follow up course addressing issues for adoption

## **6. Adoption Panel Activity**

Each Joint Panel plans to conduct a monthly panel and all dates are planned in advance. Both Flintshire/Wrexham and Conwy/Denbighshire Panels ran on twelve occasions and Gwynedd/Ynys Mon on 9 during this period. Availability of members on the Central List continuous to be a valuable resource preventing cancellation of any panels due to quoracy.

### Panel Activity April 2018–March 2019

Panels	Flint/Wrex	Conw/Denb	Gwyn/Ynys	TOTAL 2019	TOTAL 2018
Adoption Assessments	7	5	6	18	26
Should Be Adopted	3	0	0	3	0
Matching (no: of children)	11 (14 children)	15 (17 children)	7 (7 children)	33 (38)	32 (42)
Deferred	3	0	2	5	4
Deregistered	0	0	0		0
Review	0	2	0	2	8
Total	24	22	15	61	70

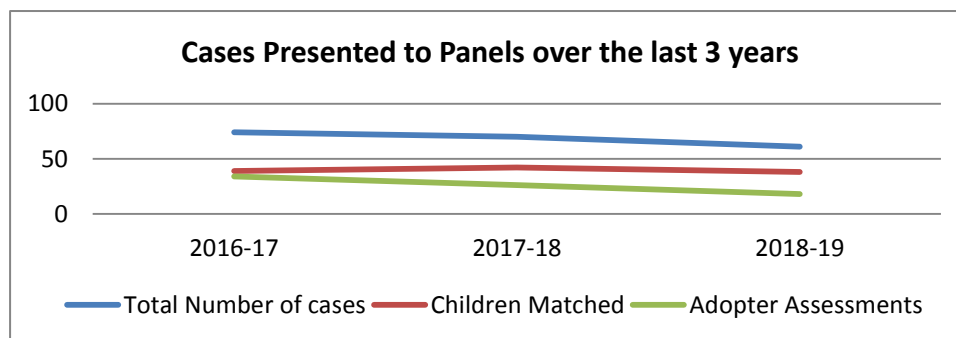
A total of 38 children were recommended for matches at panels compared to 42 last year. This year has seen another decrease in the number of adopters being presented to panel for approval from 26 in 2017-18 to 18. 3 families returned to be approved for a second/third child.

**An additional 5 adopters assessments were completed via the Annexe A route making a total of 23 adopters approved.**

**Flintshire/Wrexham Adoption Panel** - 1 approval and 2 should be adopted decisions deferred due to requests for further information by legal adviser and panel members.

**Gwynedd/Ynys Adoption Panel** – 1 approval and one match deferred due to requests for further information.

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



Graph 6.1

The graph shows a slight decrease in the number of children presented to all 3 joint panels for matching (42:42:38) but a significant decrease of adoption assessments (34:26:18). Despite the decrease in number of families coming forward, vacancies in the team including social worker and the crucial role of the recruitment officer NWS has succeeded in placing 38 children only a slight decrease on the previous year. However, given the increasing number of children referred at the end of the financial year this has increased the number of children waiting for adopters, creating pressure on resources to seek adoptive placements outside the NWS area. This



scenario is not restricted to North Wales as NAS has reported a similar trend across Wales and an increasing number of children waiting on the adoption register..

On a more positive note the number of prospective adopters attending pre approval training in the last few months has increased significantly in comparison to the limited number attending courses over the last financial year.

**Number of Joint Panels held by year.**

Joint Panels	Flint/Wrex		Conw/Denb		Gwyn/Ynys	
	2017-2018	2018-2019	2017-2018	2018-2019	2017-2018	2018-2019
Year						
Number of Panels held	11	12	10	12	10	9
Panels cancelled due to quoracy issues	0	1	0	0	0	0
Panels cancelled for other reasons	2 No cases	0	2 No cases	0	2 No cases	2 No cases

**RESPONSES TO QUALITY ASSURANCE QUESTIONNAIRES FROM ADOPTERS ATTENDING N WAS PANELS**

As in previous years general comments from adopters were that attending panel had been a positive experience despite being very nervous and that panel members had made them feel at ease. Adopters commented that supporting social workers and the child’s representatives communicated with them to an excellent standard and had prepared them for the experience.

Additional comments included:

- would of liked a chance to thank the whole Panel
- Very well run Panel. Panel Chair was very reassuring through the whole process. Adoption Social Worker was extremely supportive
- I appreciated being given the opportunity to ask the Panel any questions/make any comments to them (I didn’t!) but as a prospective adopter, it felt important to me that I had ‘a voice’ at the Panel
- Positive experience
- I felt I had a very positive experience of attending the Adoption Panel and had great support from my Social Worker, and was explained the Panel process clearly by the Panel Chair

- We appreciated that some of the Panel Members remembered us from our first application –Shows they are invested and interested in the process

Other issues raised which need to be considered in future:

- Where panel approval/matching decision were deferred this caused a level of anxiety to some adopters ( however second experience was referred to as being more positive)
- Delay in ADM decision – possible due to annual leave **could this be delegated in these circumstances**
- Pre panel waiting room – **need to ensure that this is appropriate and private where necessary**

## 7. Advertising and Marketing

### Activity undertaken by Recruitment Officer within each Local Authority April 2018– March 2019

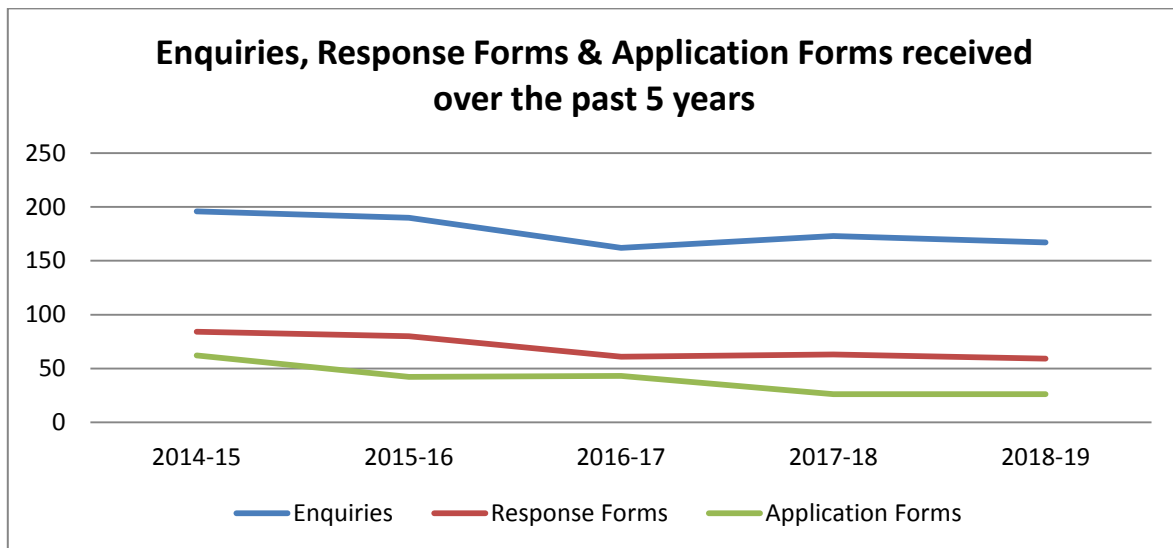
LA	Conw	Denb	Flint	Gwyn	Wrex	Ynys Môn	Other/ NWAS	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Enquires	26	24	42	19	37	12	7	167	173	162
Response Forms	11	12	11	5	12	5	3	59	63	61
Initial Visits Undertaken	9	12	13	4	11	4	2	55	53	62
Application Forms	4	6	7	2	3	3	1	26	26	43

29 prospective adoptive families attended our pre approval training April 2018 – March 2019 and 26 applications were received. This figure is consistent with last year's figures.

The number of enquiries, response forms and initial visits undertaken for general adopters remain fairly stable; however, there has been a significant decrease in the number of applications received over the past two years, a trend seen across Wales. Once again this decrease in potential adopters will have a significant impact on the availability of families in North Wales for the increasing number of children without potential links identified. This will continue to have an impact on timescales and a financial impact on the LA's should adopters outside of the service be required.

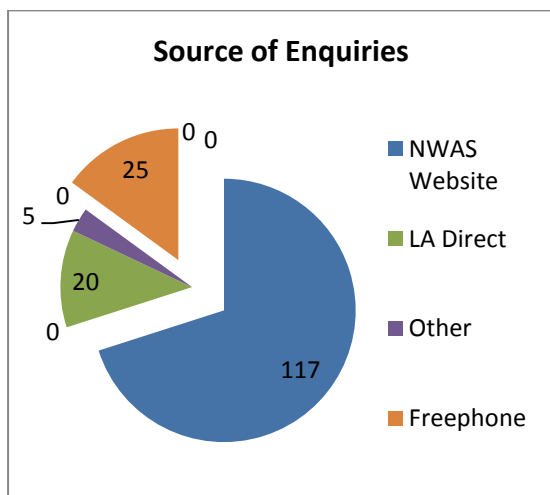
The data has been analysed and findings show that the reasons remain the same for withdrawing i.e. those still considering IVF, not ready emotionally, moving house or

renovating property and counselled out due to concerns regarding medical reasons and further checks.



Graph 7.1

### Marketing Source for General Enquiries between April 2018 – March 2019



A total of 167 enquiries were received this year slightly less than the 173 last year.

85% of all enquiries are received via the NWAS website and Freephone service, (70% and 15% respectively).

The website continues to be the main source of enquiries.

Graph 7.2

**Performance Indicator – 98% of all enquiries are responded to within 5 working days the majority within 24 hours.**

### Recruitment Activity April 2018– March 2019

(undertaken by the Recruitment Officer prior to leaving her post in August 2018.

### Information Packs distribution and Information Stalls

- Caernarfon Food Festival - 14 packs given out
- St David's Day Parade in Wrexham – couple of packs given out
- Ty Pawb – Easter Monday – 2 promising potential adopters and 4 additional packs taken.
- Facebook & Twitter Campaign – good response in terms of likes and shares hopefully will develop into applications.
- Update of Children's Book.
- Attend NAS Media & Marketing Subgroup meeting
- Information stall at the Anglesey Agricultural Show

Since the post of the recruitment officer has been vacant recruitment has been limited, however, staff members and manager have undertaken the following activities:

- Advert in the Wrexham Football Family Information brochure – unfortunately this brochure was cancelled by the company and NWAS are currently seeking a refund of the cost.
- Advert on the back of cinema tickets to be distributed across North Wales cinemas when the film about adoption 'Instant Family' was showing across the region.
- Stall at the LBGT group in Rhyl

### Partner of Parent Activity (Generally undertaken by the Recruitment Officer)






















Partner of Parent	Conwy	Denb	Flint	Gwyn	Wrex	Ynys Môn	Total 2018-19	Total 2017-18
Enquiries	14	15	12	10	27	8	<b>86</b>	<b>85</b>
Initial Visits Undertaken	6	3	5	1	7	2	<b>24</b>	<b>35</b>
Adoption Orders Granted	4	1	1	4	1	1	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>

The number of Partner of Parent enquiries continues to be significant and has had an impact on resources as social workers have been undertaking the initial visits since the recruitment officer's post became vacant in August 2018. The Wrexham area has had the highest number of enquiries. The number of applications leading

to assessments and adoption orders remains the same as last year with a total of 12 assessments resulting in 12 adoption orders.

## 8. Training

### NWAS Adopter's Training Activity April 2018 – March 2019

	Course	Invited	Attended	Evaluation
Apr May	Preparing to adopt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support Group</li> <li>Braveheart - Education</li> <li>FASD</li> </ul>	14 250+ 30 100+	<b>8</b> <b>20</b> <b>20</b> <b>15</b>	   Evaluation form      Evaluation Brave      Evaluation form preparing to adopt mHeart form May 2018 FASD May 2018.doc
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Foundations for attachment</li> <li>Healing children through therapeutic parenting</li> <li>Friends and relatives supporting adopters</li> </ul>	14 33 44	<b>12</b> <b>29</b> <b>38</b>	   Evaluation form      evaluation healing      Evaluation Form foundations for attacchildren through ther:relatives and friends i
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moving children on to adoption- Ynys</li> <li>Preparing to adopt</li> <li>Support group</li> <li>Assessing emotional capacity</li> <li>Peer mentoring scheme x 3</li> </ul>	30 11 30	<b>15</b> <b>11</b> <b>8</b> <b>30</b>	   evaluation form      Evaluation form      assessing emotional moving children on to preparing to adopt Ju capacity Evaluation r
Sept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparing to adopt</li> <li>Fun day</li> <li>Parenting Our Children x 2</li> </ul>	12 300+	10 64 families 114 adults 98 children	 Evaluation form preparing to adopt Se
Oct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parenting Our Children x 2</li> <li>Lifestory work and telling difficult stories</li> <li>FASD</li> <li>Internet Safety</li> <li>Stop it Now Wales</li> </ul>	15 15 150+	<b>14</b> <b>15</b> <b>10</b>	 Evaluation form FASD October 2018.c
Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parenting Our Children</li> <li>Foundations for attachment</li> <li>Friends and relatives supporting adopters</li> <li>Business Panel Day – Life Journey Work Framework</li> <li>Support group – Colwyn Bay</li> <li>Support group – Wrex/Flint</li> <li>Preparing to Adopt</li> <li>Parenting our children</li> </ul>	100+ 22 22	12 <b>25</b> <b>48</b> <b>14</b> <b>10</b> <b>20</b> <b>20</b>	   Evaluation form      Evaluation Form      POC N Wales foundations for attacrelatives and friends iAutumn 2018 END OF  Evaluation form preparing to adopt Nc
Dec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moving children on to adoption – Conwy</li> <li>Moving children on to adoption – Flintshire/Wrexham</li> </ul>	100+ 100+	<b>15</b> <b>14</b>	  Evaluation moving      Evaluation moving children on December children on December
Jan	Preparing to adopt	10	<b>6</b>	 Evaluation form preparing to adopt Ja
Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Foundations for attachment</li> <li>Friends and relatives supporting adopters</li> </ul>	36	33	  Evaluation form      Evaluation Form foundations for attacrelatives and friends i
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support group – Colwyn Bay</li> <li>Support group – Wrexham/Flintshire</li> <li>Preparing to adopt</li> </ul>	100+ 100+ 16	<b>16</b> <b>13</b> <b>10</b>	 Evaluation form preparing to adopt M:

A total of **65** adopters have attended the Pre-approval training over the past year compared to 62 last year. **96** people attended the Friends and Relatives Supporting Adopters course. Feedback on all training provided via NWAS continues to be extremely positive.

The NWAS Training Officer continues to facilitate a comprehensive training programme in addition to the pre-approval course and has also co-ordinated external training in collaboration with various voluntary organisations i.e.

- Parenting our children ( adoption uk)
- Healing children through therapeutic parenting ( NATP)
- Brave Heart – working with schools with attachment in mind – Adoptive parents
- Internet safety – Stop it now Wales
- Collaborated with Adoption UK training Officer in developing the preapproval training framework that NAS are implementing.

## **New Developments**

**Peer Mentoring /Buddy Scheme:** the Training Officer has developed the new support service which has been well supported by our approved adopters, 24 of whom came forward to offer support to other adopters and completed the training organised by the training officer.

The governance of the scheme is managed by the training officer, mentors are supervised every six weeks and there are already 18 active links in place. The scheme has been well received by new adopters coming forward and those who require some support with placements.

**Support Group** in addition to the regional support group held in Old Colwyn the training officer has also worked on introducing more local support groups, the Wrexham Flintshire Group has been established and adopters have already met on two occasions. The Gwynedd/Ynys Group was delayed due to difficulties in identifying a suitable venue but will be in operation before the summer of 2019-20.

**Annual Fun Day 2018** – held on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2018, was organised and co-ordinated by the training officer. 64 families (98 adults and 114 children) attended. A very successful day with good feedback from adopters..

**Life Story Framework – New training module** – incorporating the NAS and NWAS framework the training officer has written and delivered a new module of training on '*Life Story Work and Telling Difficult Stories*' as well as presenting the information to Panel members on the Business Panel Day in May 2018.

Personal Training: The training officer has completed and passed the following therapeutic training courses:

- Level 2 Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy ( DDP)
- Level 2 Theraplay
- Unit 1-4 – Diploma in Therapeutic Parenting.

Information an experience gained through these courses will be shared with adopters though NWAS training programmes in order to support and provide adopters with the skills to manage challenging situations in their adoption journeys.

**Peer Mentoring /Buddy Scheme:** the Training Officer has developed the new support service which has been well supported by our approved adopters, 24 of whom came forward to offer support to other adopters and completed the training organised by the training officer.

The governance of the scheme is managed by the training officer, mentors are supervised every six weeks and there are already 18 active links in place. The scheme has been well received by new adopters coming forward and those who require some support with placements. Basic information on the areas raised are collated which will inform NWAS of the current issues impacting on NWAS adoptive families and the type of support and training required in the future.

**Peer Mentoring Scheme – Quarterly Report Jan – Mar 2019**

**Number of active Mentors – 18**

**Number of Mentees – 24**

<b>Areas of identified support offered</b>	<b>Number</b>
Assessment issues	<b>8</b>
Attachment difficulties	<b>3</b>
Carer compassion fatigue	<b>1</b>
Controlling behaviour	<b>1</b>
Education issues	<b>1</b>
Introductions	<b>4</b>
LAC reviews	<b>2</b>
Linking process	<b>4</b>
Lying	<b>1</b>
Matching process	<b>4</b>
Panel	<b>3</b>
Professionals – difficult relationships	<b>2</b>
Routine difficulties	<b>1</b>
Settling into placement	<b>3</b>
Sibling rivalry	<b>1</b>
Sleeping & bedtime problems	<b>1</b>
Support groups	<b>4</b>



Support network difficulties	1
Training	2
Other	2
Total	49

Further analysis of these issues will be undertaken as the scheme develops over the new financial year.

## 9. Children

### No: Children Referred /Matched/Placed/Adopted in Each Authority April 2018-March2019

	Conw	Denb	Flint	Gwyn	Wrex	Ynys	Total 18-19	Total 17-18
Number of children referred	16	8	9	3	12	3	51	55
Number of children recommended for match at panel	9	8	5	5	9	3	39	41
Number of children placed for adoption	11	6	6	6	7	3	39	41
Number of children adopted	11	10	5	5	2	2	35	39
26 children placed with NWAS Adopters (2 sibling groups) 13 children with other agencies (1 sibling group)								

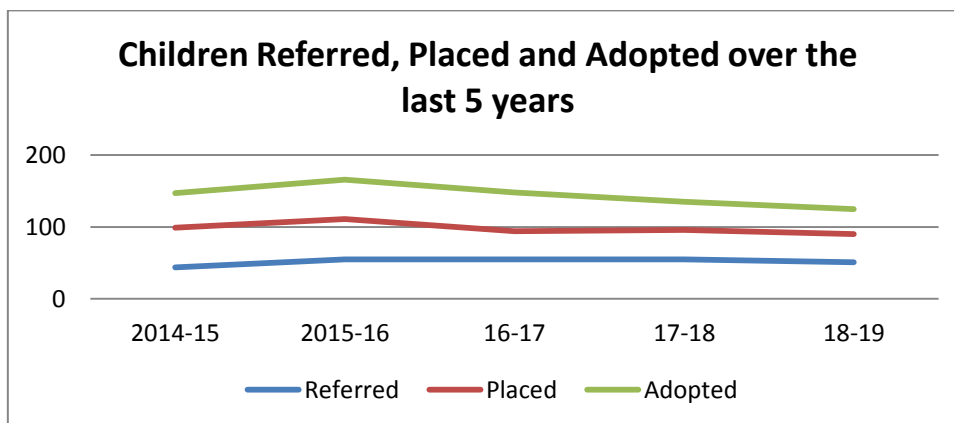
### Placement of Children with other agencies outside NWAS

Of the 39 children placed, 33 were single placements and 6 were in sibling groups of 2.

13 children were placed with families not approved by NWAS 1 sibling group of two and 11 single children. Only one family lived in the North Wales area. Two children were placed with adopters identified via the Wales Adoption Register the other 11 were identified through link maker or following up from advertisements received via emails from voluntary organisation and local authorities.

26 children were placed with NWAS adopters; 1 sibling group and 2 single children were placed for adoption with their current foster carers,

1 notification of placement was received regarding a child placed in the Gwynedd area.



Graph 9.1

This year has seen a slight decrease in the total number of children referred to the service compared to last year from 55 to 51. The number of children placed has decreased from 41 to 39 and adoption orders from 39 to 35.

In addition to the 35 children adopted from the 'looked after' system, 12 children were adopted via Partner of Parent applications making a total of 47 adoption orders granted in North Wales between April 2018 and March 2019.

#### No: of Children Referred, Withdrawn and Reason for Withdrawal over the Past 5 years

Year	Total Referred	Total Withdrawn	Reasons for Withdrawal				
			SGO	Kinship Care	Long Term Fostering	Returned to birth parent	No Placement Orders 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
2017-18	55	2	0	0	2	0	0
2018-19	51	2	0	0	1	1	0

Two single children were withdrawn, one child returned to live with birth family and a second child will be in long term foster care due to significant disability.

#### Current Situation of Children Referred April 2018 –March 2019

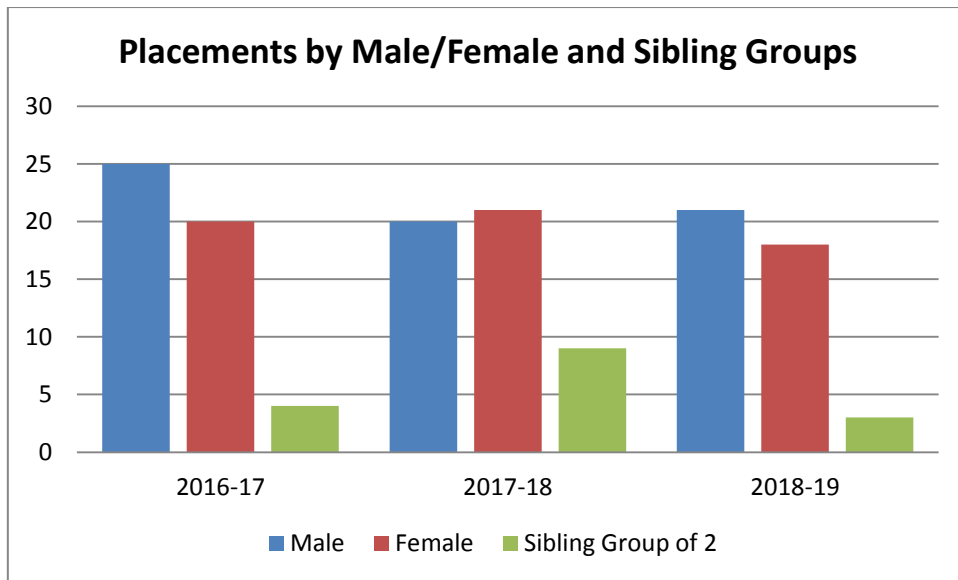
Year	Total Referred	Current Situation						
		Available	On Hold for Link	Matched or Placed	Adopted	Waiting PO	On Hold /Agency	Withdrawn
2016-17	58	12	18	19	1	5	0	3

<b>2017-18</b>	<b>55</b>	18	14	13	1	4	3	2
<b>2018-19</b>	<b>51</b>	21	12	9	2	3	2	2

Of the 51 children referred to the service this year 21 children did not have an identified link at the end of March 2019. A total of 23 children were on hold for potential links, matched, placed or adopted. 3 children were still waiting for placement orders and 2 children were withdrawn. 2 children are on hold due to health issues and foster care being considered.

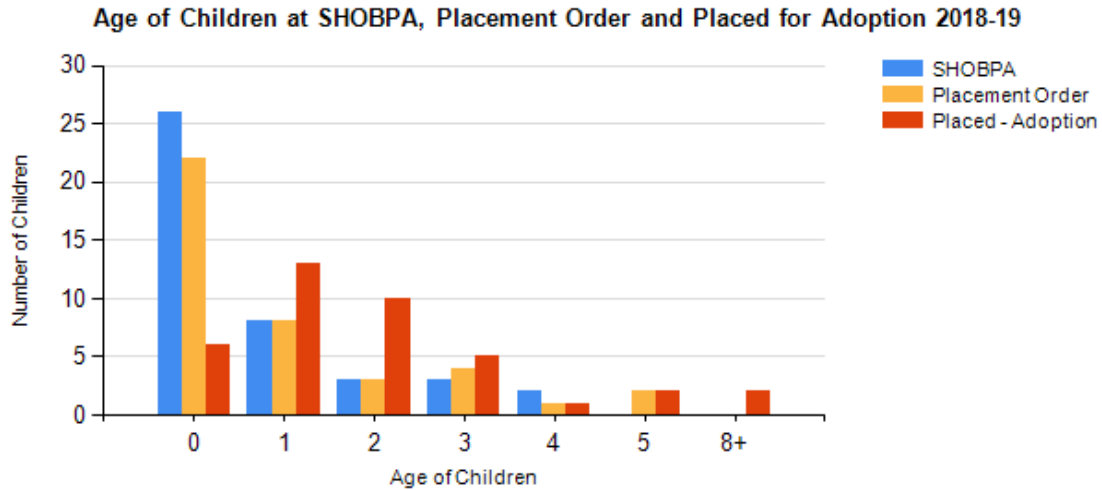
**Gender Comparison of Children Placed for Adoption/Children Placed with other agency adopters**

2016-17 placed 25 boys 20 girls (44) (5 placements (7 children) outside NWAS)  
 2017-18 placed 20 boys 21 girls (41) (2 placements (4 children) outside NWAS)  
 2018-19 placed 21 boys 18 girls (39) (12 placements(13 children)outside NWAS)



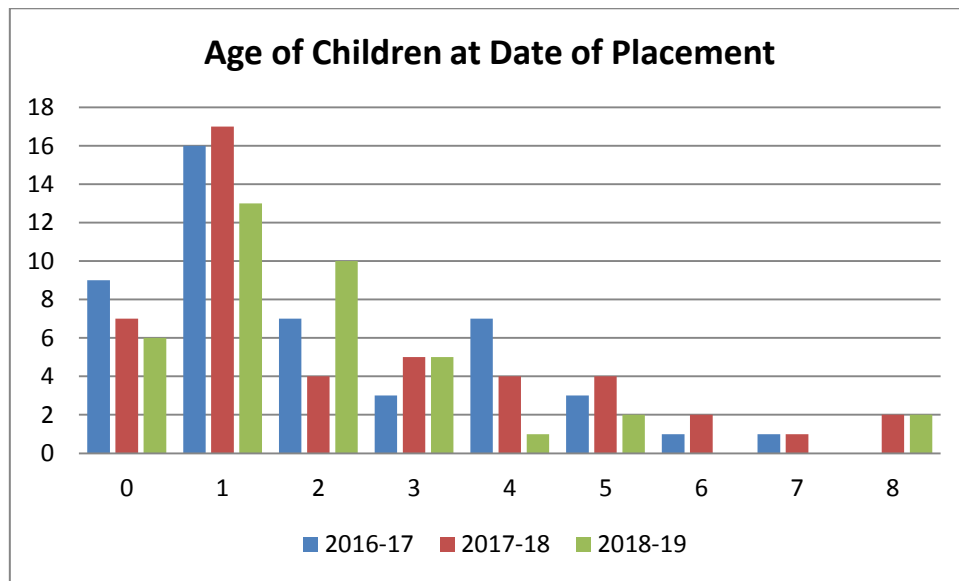
Graph 9.2

There is a significant difference in the total number of referrals for boys (33) and girls (17). The trend for those adopters who state a preference for a specific gender continue to be for girls.



Graph 9.3

A higher percentage of children (26) (50%) having their 'should be adopted' decisions made before 12 months of age continues to be the trend. 43% of children referred this year also had a placement order granted before reaching the age of 12 months.



Graph 9.4

NWAS has succeeded in placing the majority of children prior to their 2nd birthday. 48% of children placed this year were aged between 0 - 2 years. 6 children were placed under the age of 1. This year NWAS was also successful in placing two children over the age of 8 being placed and adopted.

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

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
<b>Number of children adopted</b>	55	60	35	35
<b>Number of children adopted by former foster carers.</b>	8	7	3	4
<b>Number of children adopted by Adopters from other agencies</b>	7	9	4	13

The decrease in number of adopters being available in NWAS has resulted in an increase in children being placed outside the NWAS area with the number of placed with NWAS adopters falling from 88% to 62%.

**Performance Indicator: Average time from date of Placement Order to Placed for Adoption 6 months:**

**NWAS** – Average 11 months. This includes one child on hold for over two years whilst receiving significant therapeutic input and 2 children with significant special were found placements after two years on the waiting list. The relinquished children were placed within the expected timescales. 8 children were placed within 6 months an additional 6 within 8 months.

## 10. Adopters

### Adopters Activity 01/04/18 to 31/03/19

LA	Conw	Denb	Flint	Gwyn	Wrex	Ynys Môn	Other/ ONWAS	Total 18-19	Total 17-18
Enquires	27	23	41	19	35	12	4	161	181
Response Forms	11	12	11	5	12	5	3	59	68
Initial Visits Undertaken	9	12	13	4	11	4	2	55	60
Application Forms Received	4	6	7	2	3	3	1	26	33
Adoption Assessments Completed	4	5	3	4	1	6	1	24	29
Adopters Approved	5	4	4	5	1	3	1	23	27
Adoption Foreign Element Enquiries	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2

## Current Situation of Enquiries Received between 01/04/18 and 31/03/19

Number of Enquiries Received	161
No response form received to date	89 (25 of these enquiries received in 2019)
Closed/Withdrawn	33
Waiting for IV	1 (date offered request to rearrange)
Attended Training (May)	7
Under Assessment	14
Approved or waiting approval	3
Approved and on hold for potential links	4
On Hold	5
Application Deferred	1
Waiting for Training	4 (couples declined training to attend at a later date)

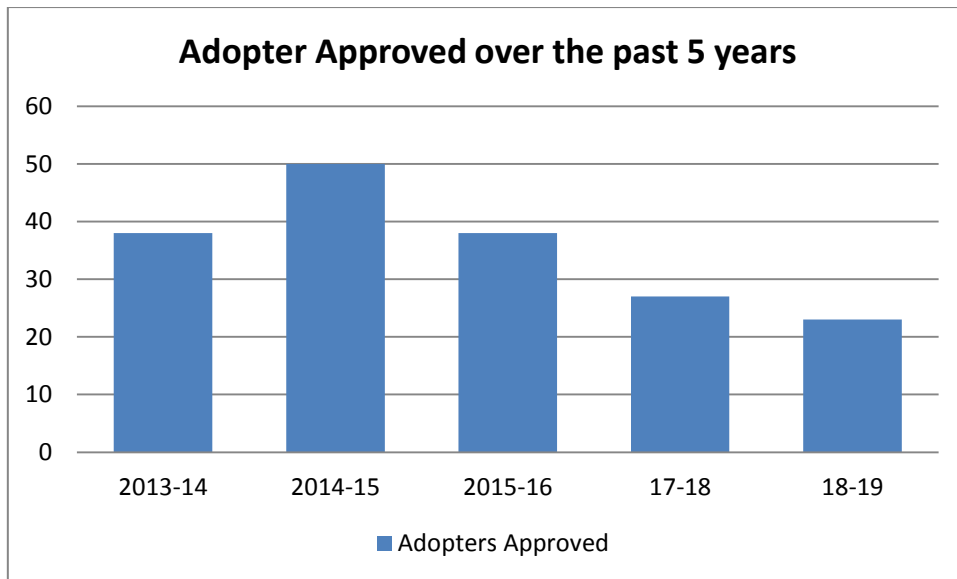
### Reasons for cases being withdrawn or closed:

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:

- 2 families decided to proceed with another agency
- 47 did not return a response form after 1 month or after a follow up telephone call or letter;
- 11 decided not to proceed following initial visit
- 26 were counselled out for various reasons, such as, no spare room, smoking and wanting a young or specific child, medical, , house renovations, pregnancy, still considering IVF
- 11 chose not to proceed as they did not feel ready at the time following initial visits
- 2 enquired on behalf of a friend
- 1 adoption with a foreign element for a country not accepting adoption enquiries.

Some have delayed their applications until further notice and currently there are 33 still at the enquiry stage and waiting their response to information sent.

### Adopters Approved April 2014 – March 2019

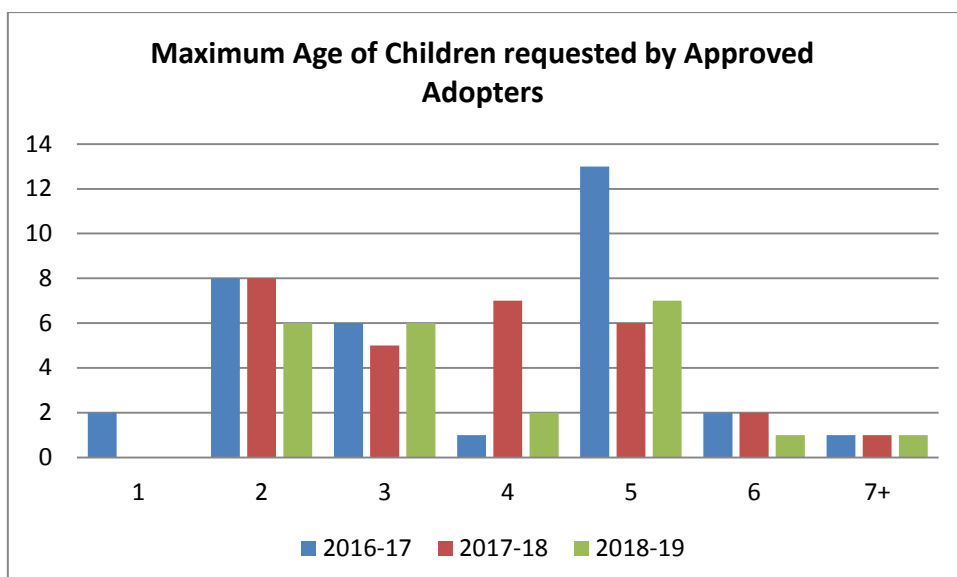


Graph 10.1

The number of families approved this year continues to decrease with only 23 families approved over the year. This had been anticipated given the reducing number of prospective adopters attending training and filing applications. In light of this adoption social workers have been seeking additional placements outside NWAS which tends to incur additional resources due to travel and liaison with other agencies.

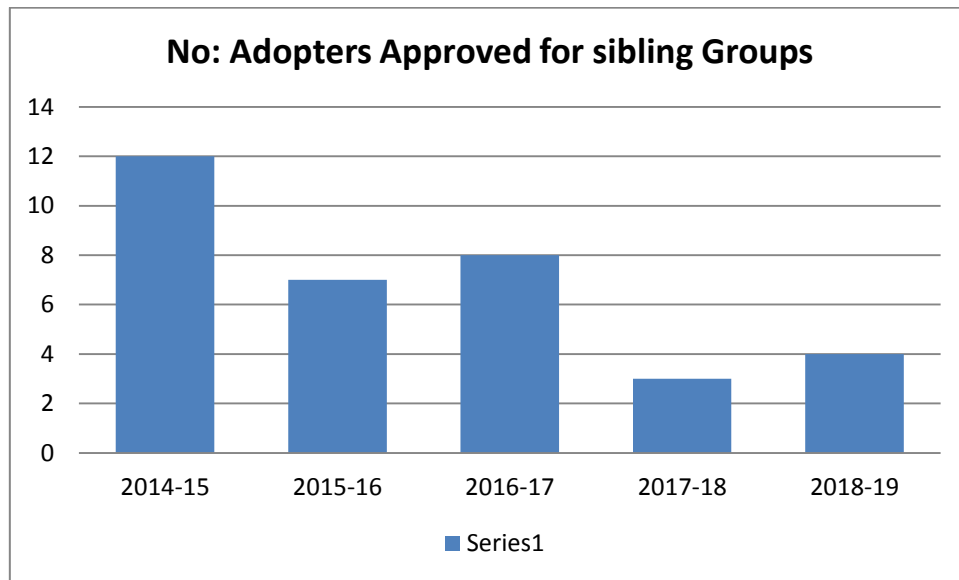
**Performance Indicator: (Target 8 months) Average time taken from Response form to ADM Approval is approximately 7.6 months.**

**Number of Placements Offered by Approved Adopters by Maximum Age of Child in the past 3 years**



Graph 10.2

The majority of adopters continue to have a preference for a child under the age of 5 years and often state as young as possible. This has been less of an issue over the last few years given the increased number of very young children being referred. 3 adopters specified their wish for a female child only and one specified male only. 4 were for specific children.



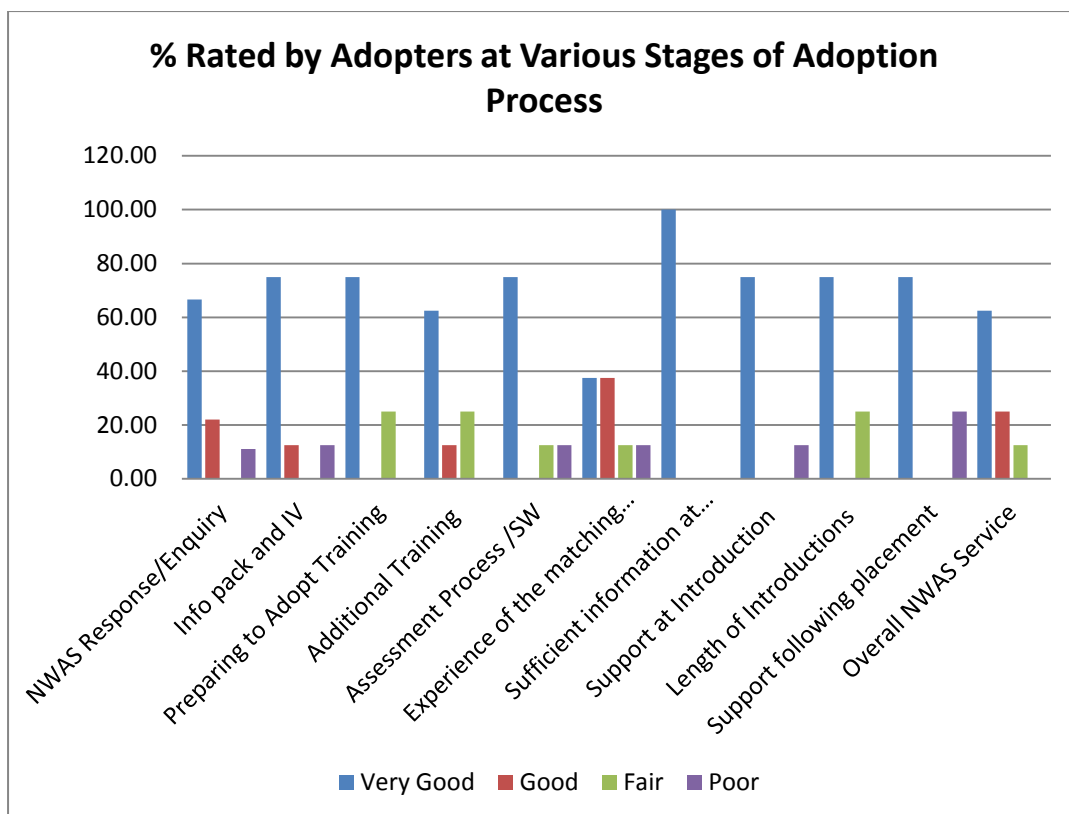
Graph 10.3

The number of prospective adopters willing to consider a sibling group of two children was 4, although more than last year this has been significantly lower than previous years and has had an impact on the number of children waiting. 3 siblings groups were referred to NWAS this year 2 children are placed and the other remain on the waiting list. Family finding activity has been extended outside of NWAS. Focused recruitment by Cowshed for the National Adoption Service has been focused on adopters willing to accept more than one child.

\*\*\*\*\*

**RESPONSES TO QUALITY ASSURANCE QUESTIONNAIRES FROM ADOPTERS WITH CHILD/CHILDREN PLACED OVER THE PAST YEAR** – Sent to 26, 9 responses





**Additional Information/Comments:**

- Request for a Second-Time Adopters Course – **resource implications given limited numbers**
- Request for Theraplay/Attachment – **training is being provided regularly on these issues**
- Local support group required – **additional support groups currently being developed**  
Two adopters were unhappy with issues surrounding the match –these were being dealt with by the local authority involved.
- Myself and partner both feel we have been supported throughout the process however I feel matching takes far too long

**11. Disruption**

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

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
No: of placement disruptions	1 (2 children)	1 (1 child)	4 (4 single children)	0	0	0
No: children placed in same period	57	55	56	44	41	39

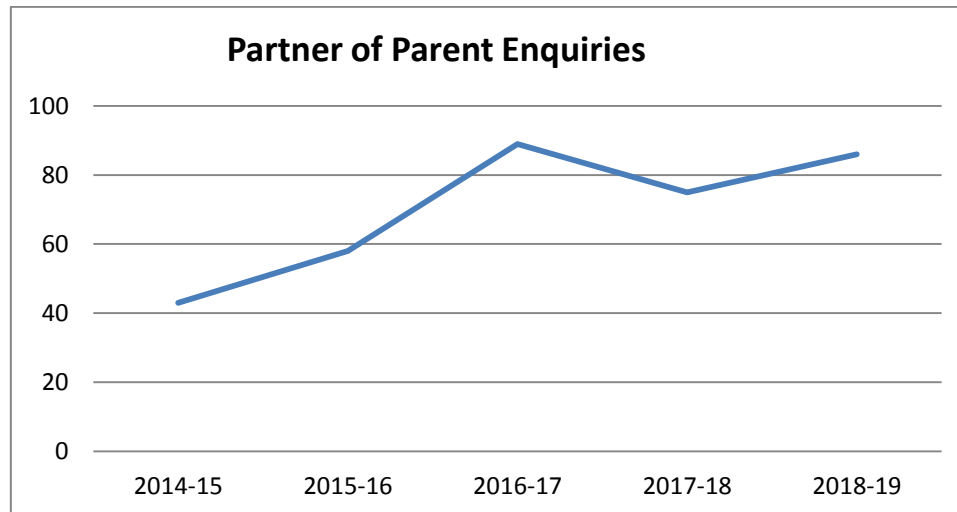
There have been no disruptions of children placed via NWAS during the last 3 years.

No historical disruptions have been reported to NWAS from the Local Authorities.

## 12. Non Agency Adoption Activity

### Partner of Parent Activity April 2018-March 2019

	Conwy	Denb	Flint	Gwyn	Wrex	Ynys Môn	Total 2018-19	Total 2017-18	Total 2016-17
Partner of Parent Enquiries	14	15	12	10	27	8	86	75	96
Partner of Parent Initial Visits	6	3	5	1	7	2	24	34	76
Partner of Parent checks in progress /Waiting Allocation	3	1	5	5	5	2	21	20	15
Partner of Parent Currently Under Assessment	0	2	0	0	2	0	4	7	6
Partner of Parent Adoption Orders Granted	4	1	1	4	1	1	12	12	9



Graph 12.1

The number of Partner of Parent enquiries remain consistently high and this has had a particular impact on resources during 2018-19 particularly with the vacant recruitment officer post as current social workers have had to undertake all the initial visits. Consideration needs to be given by the Partnership Board regarding additional resources for the assessment of these complicated adoption applications in order to comply with court timescales. This is particularly significant in light of the

introduction of Stage 1 and Stage 2 of general assessments introducing tighter timescales in the new financial year.

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

- Final decisions related to recommendations put forward in the review of the service undertaken by Jane Moore in 2017 continue to be under discussion by the Partnership Management Board.
- NWAS continue to promote the development of the NAS and NWAS Life Journey Framework. Additional funding has been provided via the National Adoption Service to further develop this work and additional training has been identified for all involved in the adoption process during the next financial year.
- Additional ICF and TESSA funding has been agreed and a development plan for an in-house adoption support team has been submitted and accepted. It is anticipated that the recruitment of appropriate staff will commence in the new financial year. The availability of an in-house therapeutic team should provide a significantly improved and more streamlined service for adoptive families requiring additional post adoption support, particularly therapeutic input where required.
- NAS continues to provide information and data for the National Adoption Service in relation to performance indicators additional reports will be required in order to provide data on the new PI's and in line with the new Stage 1 and Stage 2 process of assessments due to begin in July 2019. Current information suggests that the waiting list for children is increasing across Wales.
- NWAS has now launched a more formal buddying scheme for additional support to adopters and has 10 active supporting adopters.

### **14. Legal Issues**

For both local authority adoption agencies and voluntary adoption agencies, the Adoption Agencies (Wales) Regulations 2005 are being amended by the Adoption Agencies (Wales) (Amendments) Regulations 2019. These regulations are due to come into force on 1 July 2019. AFA is in the process of amending the Coram BAAF PAR and accompanying documents in readiness for July.

The amendments include the introduction of the Stage 1 and Stage 2 process for adoption assessments.

### **15. Adoption Support**

#### **15.1 Individual Adoption Support**

Referrals for Adoption Support for adopted children continued to be referred to the relevant local authority Duty and Assessment Teams for initial assessment and

referred or signposted to appropriate services. Where appropriate NWAS offered places on training and invites to the support groups.

A total of 8 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. The issues continued to reflect the need for therapeutic support and support in managing contact via Facebook and issues around Life Story work.

New Development – NWAS has been allocated a significant grant from Welsh Government via the National Adoption Service in order to develop in-house adoption support services. It is anticipated that this will include the recruitment of a team of staff members with therapeutic experience and training and the ability to undertake these assessments in-house without delay.

### **15.2 Adoption Support Groups in North Wales**

The NWAS Regional Adoption Support Group which was started in March 2016 is held on a quarterly basis and continuous to be well attended to date. A total of 6 groups met over the past twelve months with numbers varying from 20 to 11 in attendance. The regional group continues to be held in the Colwyn Bay area and the new Flintshire/Wrexham group has taken place on two occasions. An additional Group in the Gwynedd/Ynys area is expected to hold their first meeting early in the new financial year. Due to limited staffing/resources approved adopters are taking the lead in organising the meetings supported by the training officer in booking venues and sending out invites.

#### **NWAS Support Groups include:**

- NWAS Support Group available to all adopters across North Wales
- Flintshire/Wrexham Adoption Support Group run by adopters
- Current development of an additional support group for adopters from the Gwynedd and Ynys Mon areas.

#### **Birth Parent Support Groups:**

The service provided by After Adoption is no longer available as the organisation went into administration at the end of March and no other organisations had responded to NWAS' request for alternative tenders. Decisions regarding the service need to be considered as to whether it is appropriate for this to be undertaken in house or whether an additional tender is required for this specific service alone.

The additional group set up by the NWAS contact co-ordinator has not been further developed as the post became vacant in September 2018. Interviews were

undertaken and the post is due to be filled in May 2019. In addition funding provided via the WG grant will provide additional support to the contact service given the significant rise in numbers of contact arrangements. It is anticipated that this may also provide an opportunity to develop the birth parent support groups given the contact coordinator's ongoing liaison with birth parents through letterbox arrangements.

#### **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. The number of referrals reflects the number of children adopted in the last 12 months.

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.

Home and office visits are still conducted to provide support with letter writing. This is usually accessed by birth parents. Support with letter writing is also provided over the telephone to birth parents who have moved outside of North Wales but whose letterbox contact we co-ordinate as requested by them. Our process for receiving referrals once a child has been adopted has been in place since January 2017 and this is now working well.

One issue was raised during the court process regarding letterbox arrangements being introduced following the adoption order and not at the time of placement. The case involved a significant period of time between the child being placed and the adoption order being granted, In these cases it was felt that contact should be supervised/coordinated by the child care social workers who continue to have contact with all parties until the adoption is granted.

#### **Home and Office Visits:**

In addition to telephone contact to support adopters and birth parents a total of 54 office visits were undertaken over the past year. This included 16 home visits and 38 meetings in the office. Several of these visits had to be undertaken by the assessing social workers following the coordinator's post becoming vacant in September 2019 which has continuous to stretch current resources.

Due to the difficulties in filling the vacancy the Contact administrator has had to manage the service and needs to be commended for her additional support in maintaining the service and ensuring that the majority of contact arrangements have

been fulfilled within reasonable timescales, although this situation can not be sustained. A new contact coordinator is due to take up the post in May 2019.

#### Active agreements:

	Conw	Denb	Flint	Gwyn	Wrex	Ynys Mon	Other	Total
<b>2013-14</b>	82	136	41	53	77	43	-	432
<b>2014-15</b>	102	152	45	61	107	56	-	523
<b>2015-16</b>	115	165	71	78	130	63	2	624
<b>2016-17</b>	100	189	82	88	145	68	2	674
<b>2017-18</b>	107	187	89	90	158	66	2	699
<b>2018-19</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>762</b>

#### 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
2017-18	152	288	119	124	220	88	2	993
2018-19	170	309	130	140	220	93	2	1064

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

Birth record Referrals received and transferred to After Adoption 2018-19 and previous 2 years:-

	2018/19			2017/18			2016/17		
	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	1	3	2	2	4	2	2	6	2
Gwynedd	0	5	2	1	11	4	1	8	0
Conwy	1	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	3
Denbighshire	1	4	0	5	11	2	5	5	5
Flintshire	1	9	0	7	8	4	2	8	3
Wrexham	1	11	2	6	5	10	6	6	3
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Total Referrals for After Adoption</b>	<b>50*</b>			<b>68</b>			<b>72</b>		

\* After Adoption gave notice to NWS in a letter dated 07/11/2018 that their Trustee Board had taken the decision to withdraw from service provision in Wales, effective from 01/04/2019. As a result NWS have been unable to make any new referrals to After Adoption since 01/12/2018. As at 31/03/2019 there are 7 Birth Parents and 16 Section 98 cases on a waiting list.

\*\*\*\*\*

**RESPONSES TO QUALITY OF CARE QUESTIONNAIRE TO CASES CLOSED BY AFTER ADOPTION ONCE WORK HAS BEEN COMPLETED - 5 Responses**

80% of the responses received rated the service as excellent or very good.

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**Birth Parent Referrals**

**QUARTERS 3 & 4 2018/19**

**Birth Parent Referrals**

<b><u>County</u></b>	<b><u>Number</u></b>	<b><u>Comment</u></b>
Ynys Mon	1	Received Q3, historic adoption – child placed approx 2007
Gwynedd	3	Referrals currently held on Waiting List as unable to forward to After Adoption
Conwy	1	Referral currently held on Waiting List as unable to forward to After Adoption
Denbighshire	2	Referrals currently held on Waiting List as unable to forward to After Adoption
Flintshire	0	
Wrexham	1	Referral currently held on Waiting List as unable to forward to After Adoption
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>	

\*Of the 8 cases, 7 are currently held on a Waiting List as unable to forward to After Adoption

**Section 98**

<b><u>County</u></b>	<b><u>Access to Records</u></b>	<b><u>Intermediary</u></b>
Ynys Mon	2	0
Gwynedd	2	1

Conwy	1	1
Denbighshire	3	3
Flintshire	2	6
Wrexham	1	5
Other	1	0
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28*</b>	

\* Of the 28 cases, 17 are currently held on a Waiting List while the issues around bringing the service in house are resolved.

## 16. Development of Adoption Service

Developments for the coming financial year include the following:

- Recommendation from the review of service regarding regional budgets, funding formula, management structure and the current employment status of NNAS staff. to be agreed and put in place
- Development of the In-house adoption support services
- Additional support for the contact service
- Agreed budgets for training and recruitment
- NNAS Life Journey Framework and training delivered and staff member to be recruited to develop the work required.

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

## 17. Policies and Procedures

A new policy and procedure will be required to comply with the new legislation regarding the change to a Stage 1 and Stage 2 process of assessment for adopters in line with the Adoption Agencies (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2019. Work on a shared policy framework is being concluded through the NAS Adoption Support sub-group due to be completed prior to the introduction of the new process in July 2019.

A new policy and procedure is also required to comply with the change in regulations regarding the requirement to register adopters and children on the new Adoption Wales Register within specified timescales.



## 18. CIW

No inspections on the adoption services across North Wales were undertaken in the last financial year.

The NWAS Team manager and other NWAS staff members took part in the consultation regarding changes RISCA (The Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 which came into force on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2018. To date only one regional service has been inspected under the new regulations.

## 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 (annual questionnaire)
- 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 2018 – March 2019).
- 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.
- Adopters attending NWAS Family Fun Day.
- Adopters attending meetings with the Medical Advisers at matching stage.

Responses to the consultations are included within this report.

## 20. Compliments, comments, complaints and representations

### **Complaints**

One formal complaint was received by NWAS and Local Authority related to decisions regarding matching, This has been dealt with by both services at the Stage 1 level. Other issues were raised regarding the provision of Life Story Information, and difficulties via the matching process which were being dealt with by the relevant local authorities.

### **COMPLIMENTS**

A total of 3 specific compliments were received by NWAS over the past year. These do not include compliments included in the questionnaires, evaluation feedback on training events or personal cards sent to staff members from adopters. Extracts:-

- Just wanted to say a huge thank you to you for today. Our families have come away with a lot of information that they wouldn't of been able to get from us. We have obviously spoken to them lots, but we can't portray the information as well as you have. They all said it was interesting, intense, yet inspiring all at the same time. This course is a fantastic idea and we can't praise NWAS and yourself enough. Feeling very emotional tonight, so happy that we have the support from our families and also that they are aware of the challenges that are yet to come, and that's down to you.
- It was so great to see you again, even fleetingly! The event was terrific, X was ecstatic and meeting Peppa Pig was the highlight of her life so far! Thanks for everything.
- There aren't enough words to express our gratitude for all your support. You have been there for us since the very beginning, anchored and kept on track. There have been difficult times along the way but we are delighted that we have now reached our goal – that is because of your care and encouragement. You do a really important job and you are very skilled in your role. We are a happy little family who are very grateful to you for your important part in bringing us together.

## 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 them 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. NWAS will need to consider additional methods of advertising and recruitment activity, should the budget allow for this dependent on the decisions regarding funding the service following the review. Further liaison with 'Cowshed' the marketing company undertaking advertising for the National Service needs to be developed once the recruitment officer post is filled.

NWAS look forward to the new developments planned for the in-house adoption support service for adoptive families which should support adopters through the

matching and placement of children processes from an early stage and in time prevent adoption breakdowns wherever possible.

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: 09<sup>th</sup> May 2018  
Author: Mandy Humphries  
Title: Manager North Wales Adoption

**APPENDIX 1 Joint Adoption Panel Membership and Advisors April 2018 – March 2019**

		Flintshire /Wrexham			Conwy/Denbighshire			Gwynedd/Ynys Môn		
	Panel Role	Name	End Date	Review	Name	End Date	Review	Name	End Date	Review
1	Panel Chair	Emyr Owen/ Linda Vickery	24/02/19	N/A 12/04/19	Sue Roberts	26/01/22	17/10/17	Non Davies	20/12/22	09/05/18
2	Medical Advisor	Dr Ewoud Bos	N/A	01/04/19	Dr Sue Roberts	N/A	27/11/17	Dr Teyrnon Powell	N/A	On sick leave
3	Medical Advisor	Dr Anil Ninan	N/A	18/02/19	Dr Lindsay Groves	N/A	27/11/17	Gwyneth Hughes Education	20/01/22	9/5/18
4	Independent Member	Joy Dymant	26/09/20	01/04/19	Kate Dyke	26/01/22	17/10/17	John Peake	20/12/22	9/5/18
5	Independent Member	Denise Nicholls	26/09/20	28/01/19	Megan Meeke	01/11/20	17/10/17	Eirian Hughes	11/11/20	9/5/18
6	Independent Member	Lucy Hay	24/01/21	18/02/19	Rod Bowden	26/01/22	27/11/17	Dewi Rhys Jones	20/12/22	Due
7	Independent Member	Linda Vickery /Vacant	26/09/20	12/04/19	Leanne Owen			Hazel Liptrot	11/11/20	9/5/18
8	Elected Member	Cllr Paul Cunningham	19/03/23	28/01/19	Cllr Jeanette Chamberlain Jones	26/01/22	17/12/17	Cllr Llinos Hughes	20/12/22	9/5/18
9	Elected Member –	Cllr Beverley Parry-Jones	23/04/23	24/01/19	Cllr Cheryl Carlisle	26/01/22	27/11/17	Cllr Anwen Hughes	08/03/17	Term finished 08/03/17.
10	Social Worker	Abigail Rogers	25/09/22	24/01/19	Sarah Halley	26/01/22	17/10/17	Ann Taylor	13/01/21	9/5/18
11	Social Worker	Helen Smith	21/01/23	26/02/19	Helen Fenner	20/02/20	27/11/17	Nia Hardaker Gwyneth Hughes	09/09/20 10/01/22	9/5/18
	Legal Advisors	Glenda Jones (Wrex) Jenny (Flint) Sally Williams (Flint)			Wayne Cooper; Ceri Williams (Conw) Heidi Roberts; Jane Griffiths (Denb)			Rhian Brown (Gwyn) Sioned (Ynys)		
	Panel Advisor	Mandy Humphries			Trish Welsh			Stevie Thomas		
	Admin/Minute Taker	Sarah Picken			Minute Taker – Sue Abbott			Manon Roberts		

## MEDICAL ADVISER QUESTIONNAIRES

1. Number of miles travelled to meet with the Medical Advisor and mode of travel:-  
On average 124.4 miles were travelled by car/train for this meeting
2. Of the 12 adopters who responded, 8 indicated they were able to combine this trip with other activity relating to the adoption, such as a meeting with Social Worker, Foster Carer, Play Therapist, CAMHS, etc
3. By meeting with the Medical Advisor adopters were asked if they learnt anything new about the health or development needs of the child/ren which they did not know already.  
Responses:-
  - We got a much better understanding of development needs and his experience in similar cases
  - Reassuring to see a Doctor, although very brief
  - However as 'B' had been visiting the practice for a couple of years, he could see his progress
  - We just received much more comprehension and reassurance
  - All our questions were answered and she explained everything very clearly
  - Although confirmed clear of issues unknown about
  - More than anything she allayed some of my fears
  - Children with me too long so I knew more really. Just wanted to make sure there wasn't any more information that could be passed on.
  - Really great chat with Doctor – this was so useful. He spent a good amount of time with us and explained things simply. Thank you!
  - The details were all in the report. I'm sure these meetings are very informative and useful when adopting children who have experienced multiple moves/trauma.
4. Of the 12 respondents, 1 found it partially useful and 9 useful. Comments made:-
  - The meeting was very useful to us as adopters as the level of detail cannot be obtained from a report and there is a natural questioning interaction
  - Not informative – reassuring to feel health is considered as part of process
  - It was great to get further information on health and re-assurance re questions we had
  - Doctor was a valuable resource in our final decision
  - The Medical Advisor was very reassuring, friendly and helpful
  - Very thorough, vital part of the process
  - Nothing was going to change our minds. The information was all in the child's profile
  - We didn't get the opportunity in our first adoption and even though we didn't learn any more we aren't wondering now like we are with our first – was there more to know, etc
  - Clearer understanding of his pre-natal and ante-natal care. Comprehensive, helpful meeting
  - The Paediatrician was reassuring and interesting to note he had dealing with birth father as a LAC
5. When adopters were asked if they felt anything would improve this service, the following points were made:-
  - Appointment was the right length and we were given contact details of the medical advisor in case we had any further questions. We have also received a follow-up letter outlining everything we discussed
  - It is a really important and valuable service to offer – please keep offering it to other adopters!
  - Ideas – book appointments quicker, we totally missed out on Panel and had to wait another month. Thankfully work were flexible
  - I think it needs to be provided. It's really important to the children and will help the new adopters care for them with greater knowledge of medical background
  - To speed up the process perhaps telephone (conference) call would be sufficient – particularly for a child with no identified needs