



# Mid-Year Progress Report

## 2025/26



## Introduction from the Director, Suzanne Griffiths

It gives me great pleasure to provide this year's Mid-Year Report, outlining how the service has progressed during 2025/26 so far.

It has once again been a busy year for services, and the national team, as we continue to strive to provide the best possible services and work on the wider context that will enable us to continue to do this.



This year is seeing the first round of adoption inspections for eight years. Some of the regional inspections are already completed with reports published and by the end of the year the two remaining regional reports and a national overview report will also be available. I am conscious that this is a view of the service through an important lens, and I will have a keen interest in ensuring pan Wales issues are considered to inform our ongoing work and service development and that regional issues are addressed.

We are already working on a draft new strategic plan for the five years from April 2026, which has been developed with services and stakeholders including adopted parents, adopted adults and children and young people. It will be finalised in the latter part of the year and will continue to provide the framework for the ongoing progress and change that you will see in this report.

The challenges faced are ever present, emotional and wellbeing challenges for families, cost of living pressures, the strain on public finances alongside increased or different emerging demands. This year's Adoption Barometer says,

*'While we're encouraged by the positive feedback regarding services for new adopters in Wales, we recognise there is still more to be done to ensure adoptive families receive the consistent and tailored support they need'.*

I am confident that the positive approaches we are using to modernise adoption in Wales are leading to better outcomes for children and their families – both birth and adopted. We simply need to keep 'Achieving more Together'.

I want, once again, to thank our adopters, foster carers, and others in their networks who display immeasurable commitment to caring for and supporting children in loving homes, as well as to all the adoption professionals and support staff that work tirelessly to achieve positive outcomes for all they work with.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Suzanne Griffiths'.

**Suzanne Griffiths**

**Director of the National Adoption Service and Foster Wales**

## Key Highlights so far this Year

### APRIL

A national review of the financial arrangements of adoption services in Wales, commissioned by the NAS Governance Board, was concluded at the start of the year. This made recommendations to improve awareness in relation to the financial resources available across Wales and how this can be governed. Actions to implement the recommendations are ongoing. The Care Inspectorate Wales commenced an adoption inspection programme, undertaking an inspection of Adoption Mid and West Wales region first.

### MAY

NAS attended the Hay Festival of Literature & Arts, where staff had conversations around raising awareness about adoption with members of the public. Staff were joined by Sam Langley-Swain, author of the **Blanket Bears Book**, who read-out the book and participated in a blanket making workshop. Filming of the event will be used for marketing later in the year.

### JUNE

In June 2025, 36 NAS Governance Board members and key stakeholders met at Cardiff City Stadium to set priorities for the next adoption services strategy in Wales. Facilitated by Professor Keith Moultrie (Oxford Brookes Institute), discussions focused on improving service delivery, supporting lifelong relationships, and ensuring Wales remains a positive place for adoption. These insights shaped the new NAS Strategic Plan, launching from April 2026.

### JULY

In July, Western Bay Adoption Service commissioned a trade stand for the week at the Urdd Eisteddfod at Margam Park. The national Pride event in Cardiff was hosted by Vale, Valleys and Cardiff (VVC) adoption collaborative and supported by South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS). The Care Inspectorate Wales undertook its second regional inspection in South East Wales.

### AUGUST

NAS, represented by North Wales Adoption Service (NWAS), attended the National Eisteddfod in Wrexham, to encourage more Welsh speakers to consider adoption. The stand included a range of activities including story-time sessions, blanket making, tea and chat sessions, and cake and biscuit decorating.

### SEPTEMBER

NAS published its [Annual Report](#) in September, a special edition, celebrating 10 years of NAS.

The [Adoption Barometer](#) was also published this month. It is the UK's only comprehensive, nationwide overview of adoption, drawing on insights from a large annual survey of adopters and adoptees, alongside an evaluation of government adoption policies. It provides valuable evidence about the realities of adopting and being adopted. See later in this report for more detail on the findings from Wales. The Care Inspectorate Wales undertook its third regional inspection in Western Bay.

## 'ADOPT CYMRU 2025 AND BEYOND....' & THE INTERIM PLAN FOR 2025/26

The 'Adopt Cymru 2025 and Beyond....' strategic plan was developed following extensive engagement with children, young people and families, professionals, and service leaders, including via the annual 'Big Adoption Conversation'. For 2025/26 an interim 12-month plan, focussing on the existing priorities, was developed and agreed by the Board.

This report provides an overview of the implementation of the interim plan in the first six months of 2025-26.

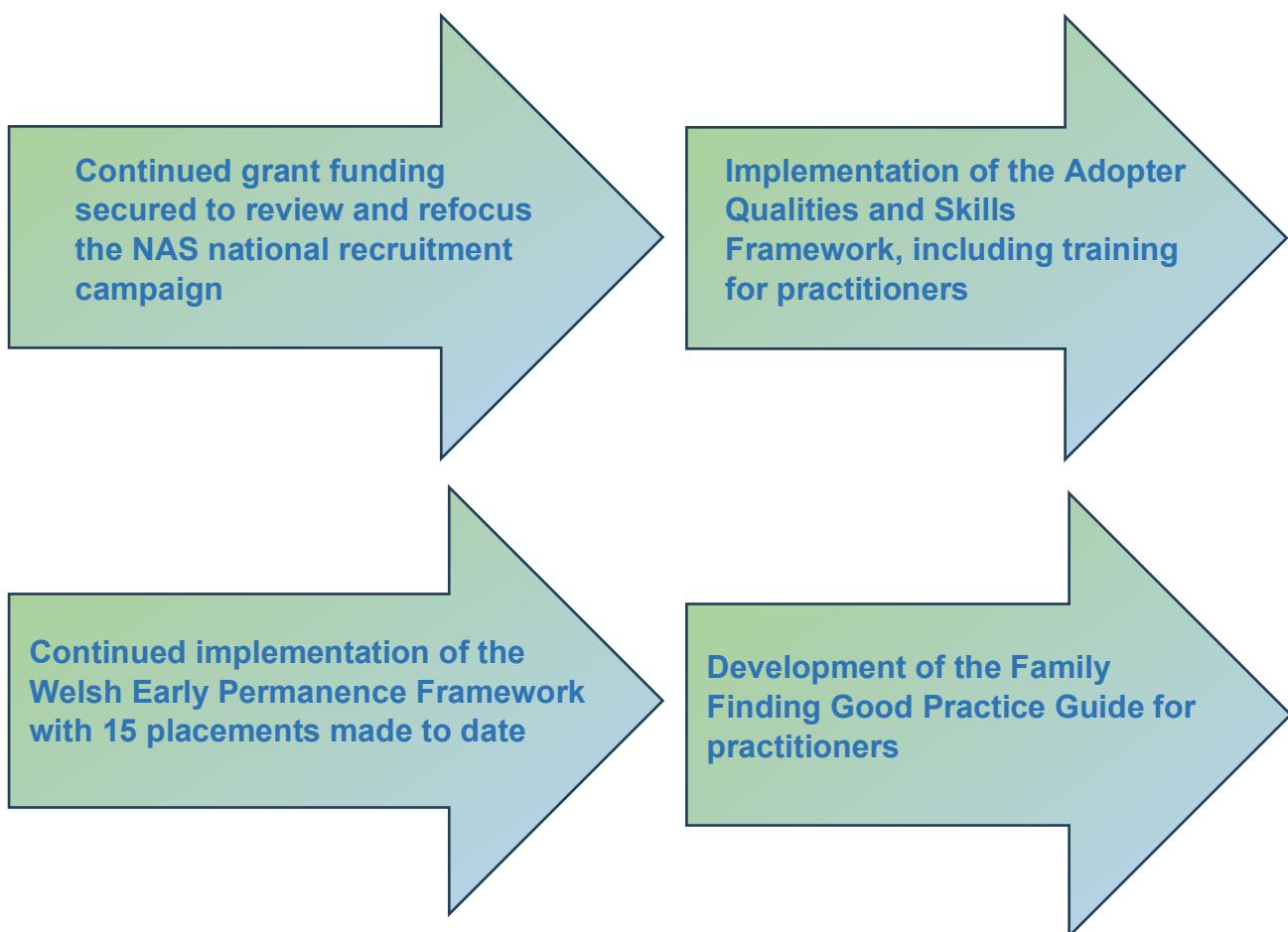


### *Abbreviations used in this report*

AMWW	Adoption Mid and West Wales
AUK	Adoption UK
Barnardo's	Barnardo's
LAs	Local Authorities
NWAS	North Wales Adoption Service
SEWAS	South East Wales Adoption Service
St David's	St David's Children Society
VAAAs	Voluntary Adoption Agencies
VVC	Vale Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Service
WBAS	Western Bay Adoption Service

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY A: THE BEST FAMILIES FOR OUR ADOPTED CHILDREN

This strategic priority area is fundamental to good adoption services, focusing on the placements of children within adoptive families that are recruited. Much has been done to improve and update practice in recent years. NAS aims to build on these improvements and continue to drive forward modern adoption practice across Wales. At the mid-year point of 2025-2026 there has been good progress made nationally in the following areas:



### Adoption Register for Wales

NAS manages the Adoption Register for Wales (ARW) for Welsh Government, which provides an electronic matching facility, with managed adopter access, when usual arrangements within regions do not produce a match.

ARW held an Adoption Activity Day on the 28 June 2025 in Cardiff. It was a 'jungle themed' event with 39 children from across Wales featured and 34 children attending on the day. 19 families attended the event. A total of 35 expressions of interest were made for 19 of the children which resulted in 8 matches. This was the highest number of matches made through an Adoption Activity Day in Wales to date, highlighting the importance of these family finding events.

*The regions and VAAs have implemented a range of strategies to ensure children are matched with families who can meet their lifelong needs. These include:*

**Timely Family Finding & Matching** through regional collaboration and early permanence planning, as well as creative family-finding approaches, including internal matching events and external placements.

**Robust Marketing Plans** and community engagement to attract adopters, alongside use of social media and events to raise adoption awareness.

**Supporting Identity & Cultural Needs** by prioritising placements within Wales to maintain cultural heritage and personalised introductions and video profiling to improve matching quality.

**Cross-Agency Collaboration** and out-of-county links to widen adopter choice. This has also involved advocacy and training for adopters on trauma and identity issues.

**Innovative Practices** through using digital platforms for birth family contact and enhanced psychology services and trauma-informed training for staff and adopters.

#### **Good Practice - Update to combined Child Adoption Report/Annexe B (CAR B)**

A CAR B pilot, carried out by Coram BAAF, began in July 2025 with involvement from six local authorities across Wales. Early reports indicate that practitioners are finding the new format helpful. A review meeting is due to be held in October, when more detailed analysis and information will be available.

#### **Challenges – Disruptions**

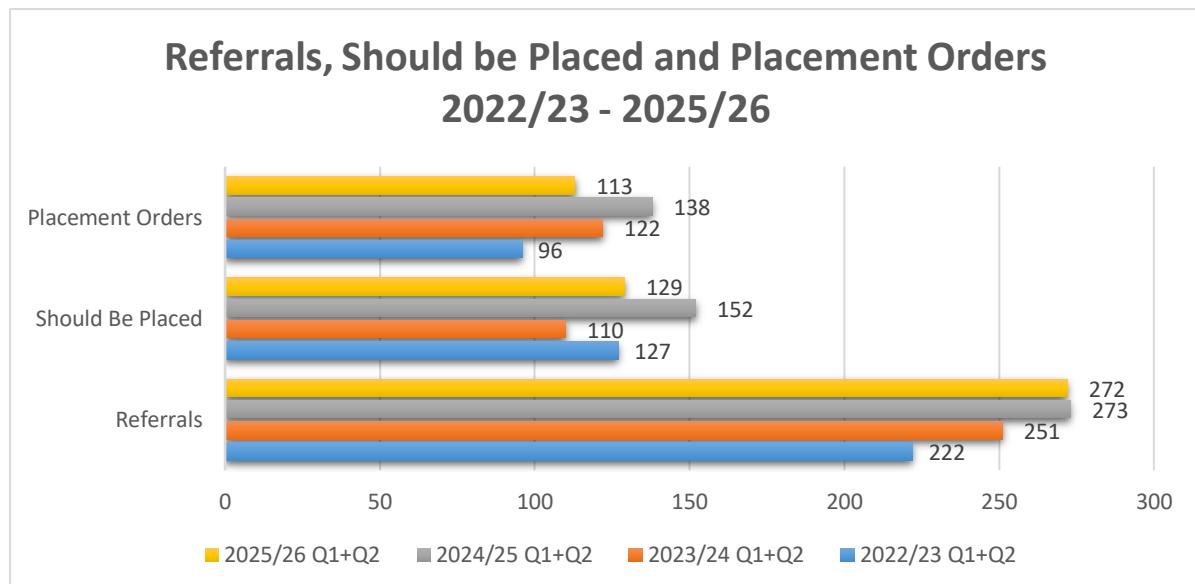
Scrutiny of disruption levels with regions and VAAs noted that these have risen in recent years, with 9 cases reported in 2024/25. A regional survey was conducted, providing baseline data, which led to a plan to understand the causes and patterns of these disruptions across Wales. This national evaluation is currently in progress with all regions considering disruptions that occurred between 1st April 2022 and 21st March 2025. VVC have already undertaken a 10-year thematic analysis, focusing on pre-adoption order disruptions and the VAAs have also considered most recent disruptions.

Analysis of the information will be undertaken in November 2025 with a view to a national report being available early in 2026 which will identify national themes to inform future practice.

## Performance in the first six months of 2025/26

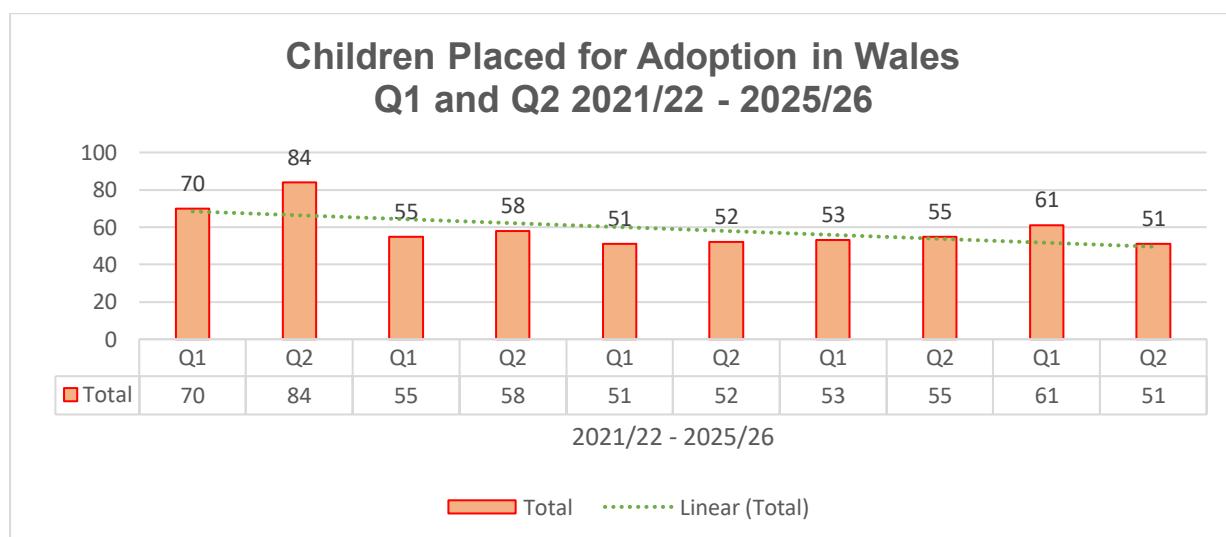
### Children

So far this year, 272 children have been referred to the regional adoption services across Wales, a similar level compared to the same period last year and continues an increasing trend over the last 4 years. However, the number of children being subject to a should be placed decision fell by 15% to 129. Similarly, the number of placement orders made has fallen by 18% to 113, compared to the mid-year point in 2024/25.



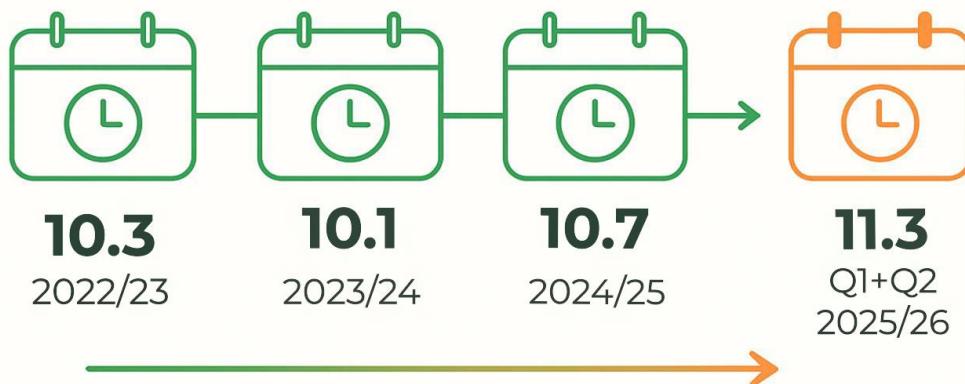
### Children Placed for Adoption

The number of children placed for adoption has remained at a steady level over the last 4 years, although the number placed in Q1 of this year, at 61, was the highest number placed since 2021/22.



## Timescales for Placing Children

### Average Timescales (months) from Placement Order to Adoption

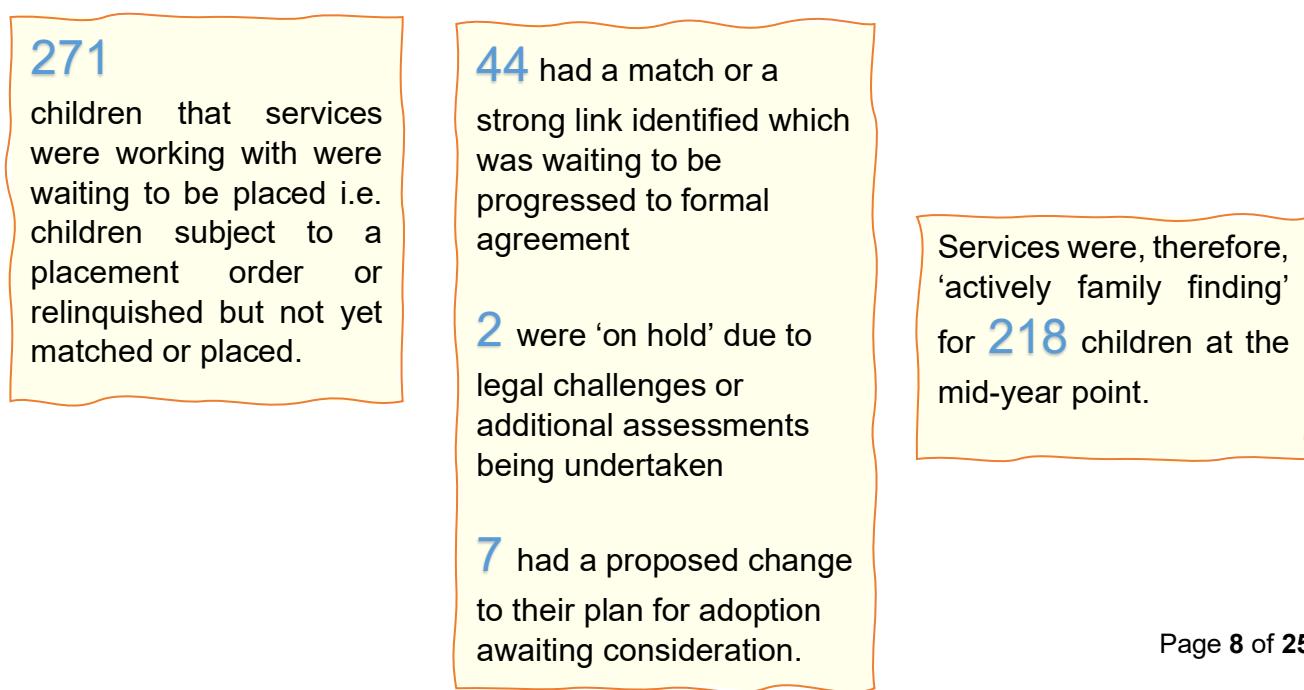


After a decline from 11 months in 2021/22, timescales are rising again

This is likely to be attributed to the lower levels of adopters available to meet the needs of the children waiting, many of whom have increased complexities, as well as different processes for making placements in line with the Good Practice Guide.

## Children Waiting at Mid-Year

This number has continued to increase over the past few years, again due to the lower number of suitable matches being identified. At 218, the number of children who were actively family finding at the mid-year point is 16% higher than the number at the same point last year.



## Adopters

The number of initial enquiries to adopt has been falling since 2021/22, returning to more usual levels following the higher levels received during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the first half of 2025/26, 571 enquiries were received, lower than the same period last year but an improvement compared to the latter half of 2024/25. NAS continues to use marketing and recruitment initiatives to attract suitable adopters to meet the needs of the children waiting for an adoptive placement.

### Initial enquiries to adopt in Wales – Q1 & Q2

2021/22 to 2025/26 (symbol infographic)

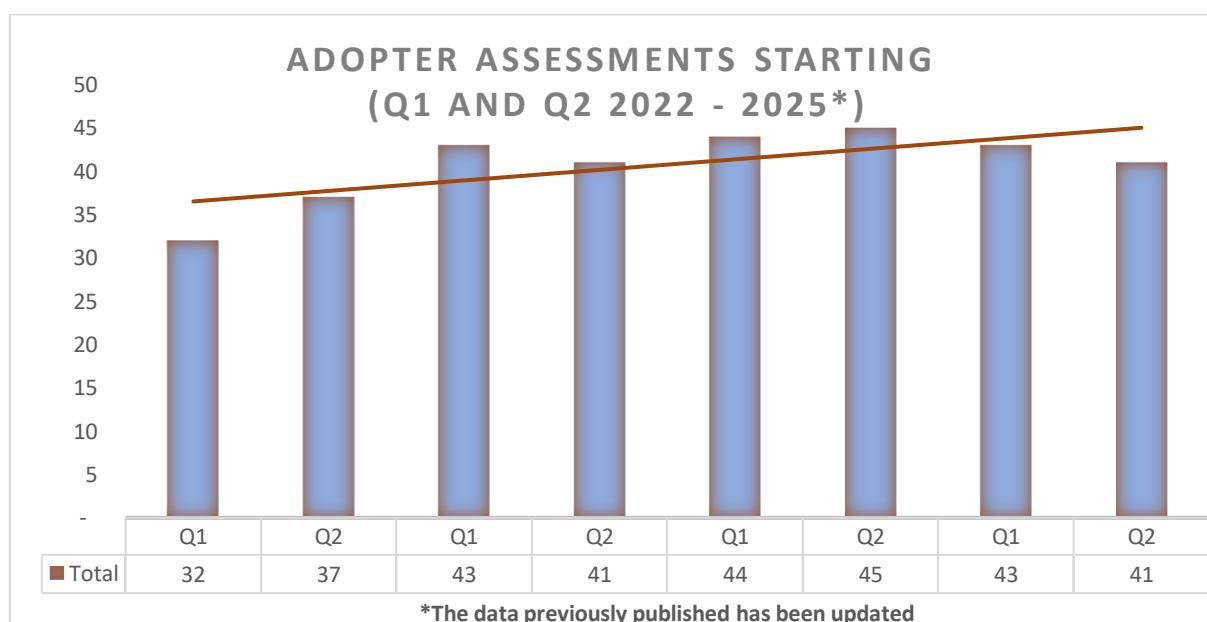


Each card shows Q1 (blue) and Q2 (teal) enquiries per year.

Data: Provided chart (Initial enquiries to adopt in Wales, Q1 & Q2 2021/22-2025/26).

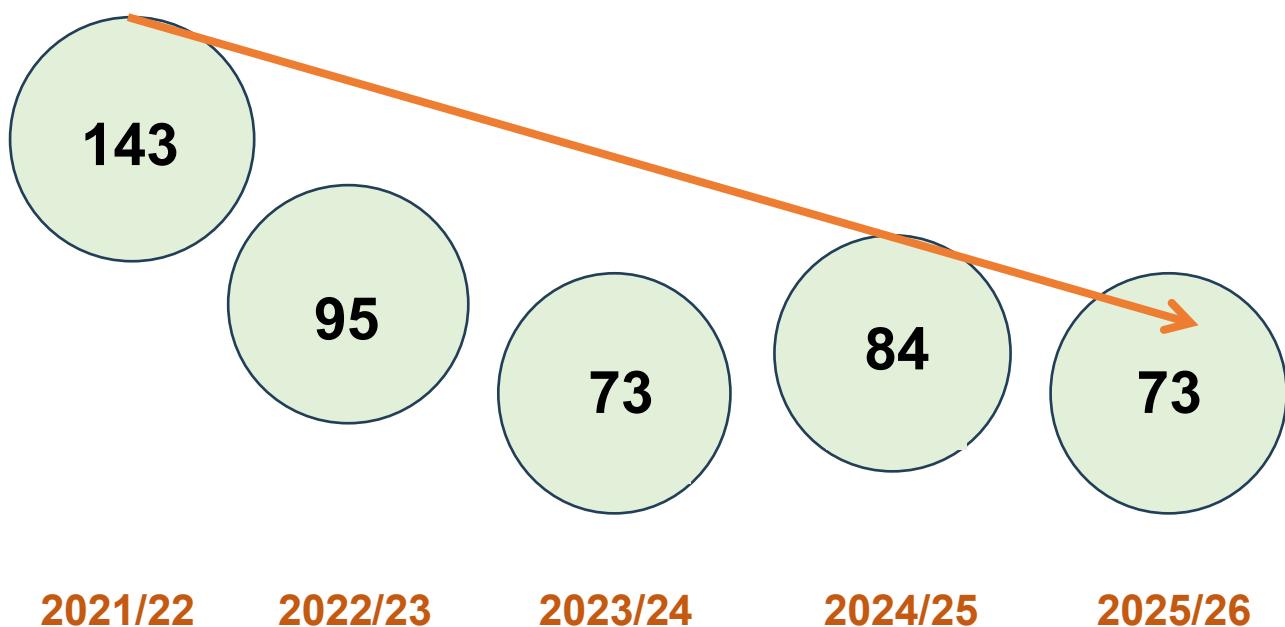
## Adopter Assessments

84 adopter assessments (Stage 2) commenced in the first half of this year, continuing the higher trend since the start of 2023.



## Adopter Approvals

There have been 73 adopter approvals so far this year, a 13% reduction compared to the same time last year when there were 84 approvals. The number of approvals has declined significantly since 2021/22, although data has remained reasonably stable over the past 3 years.



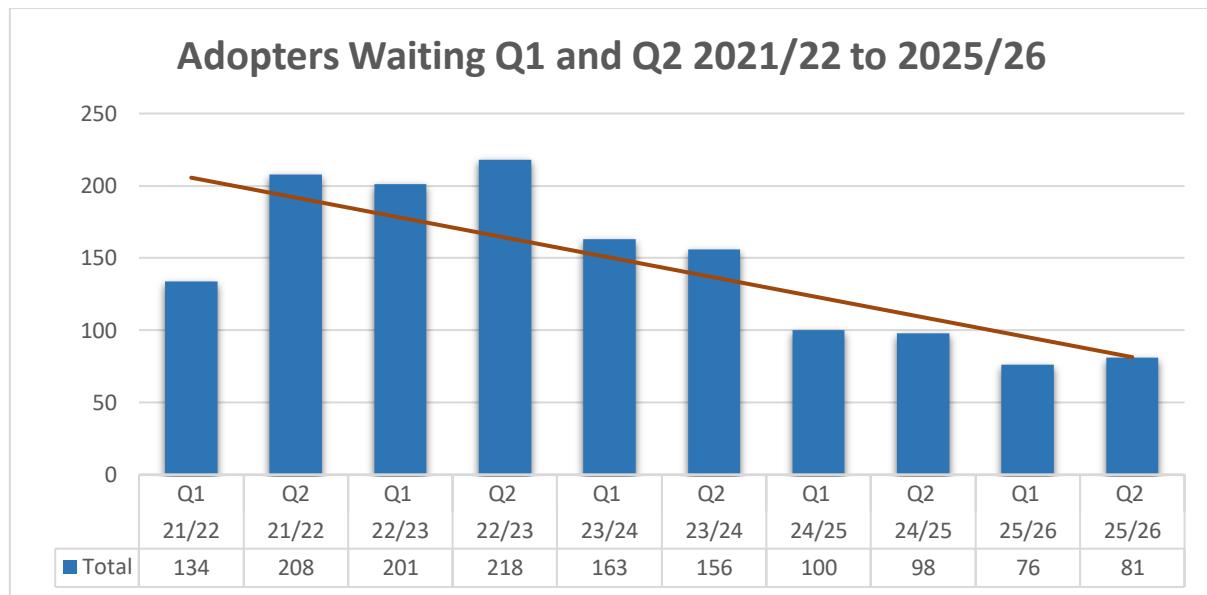
An agreed calculation is in place to determine recruitment goals, based on projected need; at the current time, it is unlikely that the service will meet these goals for 2025/26, which will contribute to a growing gap of children requiring a placement compared to the number of adopters approved.

### Challenges – Vetting of Prospective Adopters

The NAS central team has continued to work on the availability of relevant information linking up with the DBS service, Adopt England, a South Wales Police lead officer, DfE and Welsh Government. There are active discussions ongoing between DBS, DfE and the Home Office to resolve this and we are currently working with an officer from South Wales Police to generate discussions with Welsh police forces about practice in the short and longer term.

## Adopters Waiting

The number of adopters waiting to be matched with a child has reduced to 81 at the mid-year point; figures for Q1 and Q2 are at the lowest level since 2021. This reflects the lower levels of approval as well as efficient matching of adopters with children.



## Good Practice Placement Examples

### St David's

During Stage Two of their adoption assessment, a couple were linked through the Adopting Together programme with a very young child living in residential care. Early discussions and information sharing indicated a strong potential match. However, as the couple approached their approval panel, a change in personal circumstances meant they could not proceed with adoption immediately.

Rather than stepping away, they explored fostering as an alternative, which was supported by the local authority. With robust professional support, they were approved as foster carers by St David's, and a carefully planned transition enabled the child to move into their care.

Recently, the couple were formally approved to adopt this child. This outcome demonstrates how collaborative working and therapeutic support can create flexible, child-centred pathways that meet permanence needs, ensuring stability and continuity for the child while supporting the family through changing circumstances.

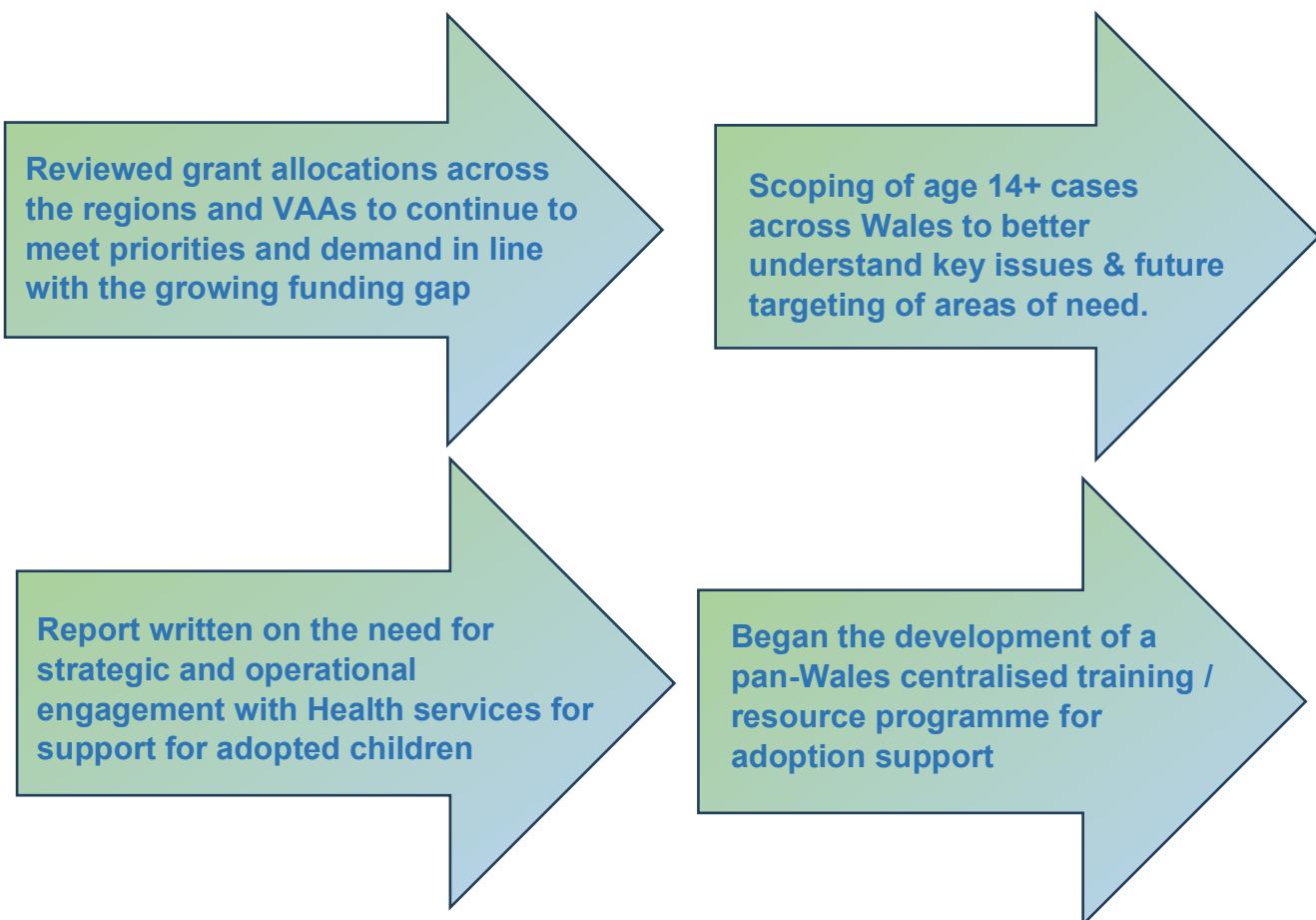
### SEWAS

A large sibling group were placed with adopters. The match was complex due to the children having emotional needs, health issues and a strong attachment to the foster carer. Professionals worked closely with the adopters, who were committed to keeping the siblings together. SEWAS Psychology Service provided enhanced support, including a Trauma/Nurture Timeline, an Understanding the Child Day, and direct work with the eldest child. School staff contributed valuable insight, and psychologists offered ongoing consultations.

The adopters followed professional guidance, maintained contact with foster carers, and ensured continuity by keeping the eldest at their former school. Despite challenges the placement remains stable. Play therapy is being arranged, and the adopters report feeling well supported. This success reflects strong teamwork and the adopters' commitment to the children's best interests.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY B: GREAT ADOPTION SUPPORT – WHEN AND WHERE IT'S NEEDED

NAS has been successful in building improved adoption support services across Wales, guided by the NAS Adoption Support Framework and the public Adoption Support Commitment. NAS intends to continue to build practice and services in this area, and the following aims have been achieved so far this year:



*The regions and VAAs are reporting good progress in relation to this priority so far this year:*

Across Wales, services have made good progress in delivering responsive, trauma-informed, and family-centred interventions. Regions and VAAs continue to have an expanded offer for timely and tailored support to families throughout their adoption journey.

The delivery of high-quality training, therapeutic parenting programmes and peer support remain cornerstones of effective practice. Event and community engagement reduce isolation and foster networks of mutual understanding among adopters. Adoption UK's Connect Services and PATH multidisciplinary team, available across Wales, have strengthened these networks, offering psychologically informed interventions for parents and opportunities for children and young people to build confidence and friendships.

Innovative models such as Virtual Hubs in some regions have enabled early intervention and flexible support packages for complex placements. Families have benefitted from direct therapeutic work, psychology consultations, and life journey interventions, preventing crises and promoting resilience. Collaboration with health and education partners has enhanced trauma-informed practice, with joint workshops and school-based training improving outcomes for children.

### **Barnardo's**

We supported a family navigating challenges related to their children's behaviour which had escalated over time. Through advocacy and collaborative engagement, we created space for the children's social work team to deepen their understanding of the children's needs in the context of adoption. This led to the development of a tailored support package, resulting in the family feeling more understood and better supported.

### **Adoption Barometer 2025**

The Adoption Barometer provides a comprehensive overview of adoption experiences in Wales, highlighting both progress and persistent challenges.

While new and prospective adopters report high satisfaction with the approvals process (85% felt well-prepared), established adoptive families face increasing difficulties, with 39% describing their situation as severely challenging.

Access to support remains inconsistent, positively 64% of families said enhanced support had a good impact, but others struggle to obtain timely, adoptee-informed services, especially in education and mental health. The report notes the improvements made to Welsh services and calls for improved consistency and access.

Adopted young people in Wales, in common with their peers across the UK, report negative experiences in secondary school, with 63% feeling unsupported. In Wales, 35% of adopted 16–25-year-olds in Wales are not in education, employment, or training—more than double the UK average.

Adult adoptees face barriers accessing personal records and medical histories, with 32% experiencing delayed diagnoses due to lack of family medical information. Mental health services often lack adoptee-competence, though outcomes improve significantly when adoptee-informed therapy is available.

The report calls for systemic reforms, including lifelong access to adoptee-competent therapeutic support, improved education and health professional training, and better support for maintaining birth family connections. It emphasises the need for policy changes to ensure adoptees of all ages receive the understanding and support they deserve.

## *The challenges facing the regions and VAAs:*

**High demand vs. limited capacity:** Some regions have waiting lists for assessments and therapeutic interventions, whilst all have some staff or financial restraints.

**Funding gaps:** Government funding for adoption support is allocated differently in England to Wales and some perceive England's Adoption Support Fund as better for families. Local authorities have limited resources for specialist services.

**Complex needs:** All services are seeing increasing numbers of children with levels of trauma, neurodiversity, mental health, and identity issues that require tailored interventions.

**Geographic and service inequity:** larger regions report difficulty delivering consistent support across rural areas and the different service models in place creates some variation in services available between regions.

**Systemic barriers:** There are long waits for external services, e.g. CAMHS and limited trauma awareness in education in many parts of Wales.

**Reactive vs. proactive support:** Pressures and demand can mean services are often focused on crisis intervention rather than early, preventative support.

### **AMWW – Practice Example**

AMWW has developed a regional model of trauma-informed practice in adoption support, focusing on building resilience and stability within adoptive families.

A multidisciplinary approach, involving therapeutic practitioners, social workers, and education has led to improved outcomes for children struggling with attachment and emotional regulation.

One example involves a sibling group of three placed together where early signs of placement stress were identified. Through timely intervention - including joint therapeutic parenting sessions, school liaison, and ongoing support from adoption, the family reported increased confidence and improved stability.

This joined-up approach reflects our commitment to early, accessible, and flexible support, aligning closely with NAS priorities for great adoption support where and when it's needed.

## Performance in the first six months of 2025/26

At mid-year there were just over 900 active formal adoption support plans in place which is a reduction of around 20% compared to the same time last year. However, this does not include some services provided without the need for an assessment, contact arrangements, the support provided by the VAAs to their adoptive families or those waiting for an assessment.

The number of children waiting for a support assessment has dropped again so far this year, to 43, which is a 40% drop compared to last year, when there were 72 waiting, which is a positive trend.

The number of families in receipt of the Pathways or Connected services is 445, a reduction on last year when short term additional resourcing was made available and reflecting the actual capacity funded.

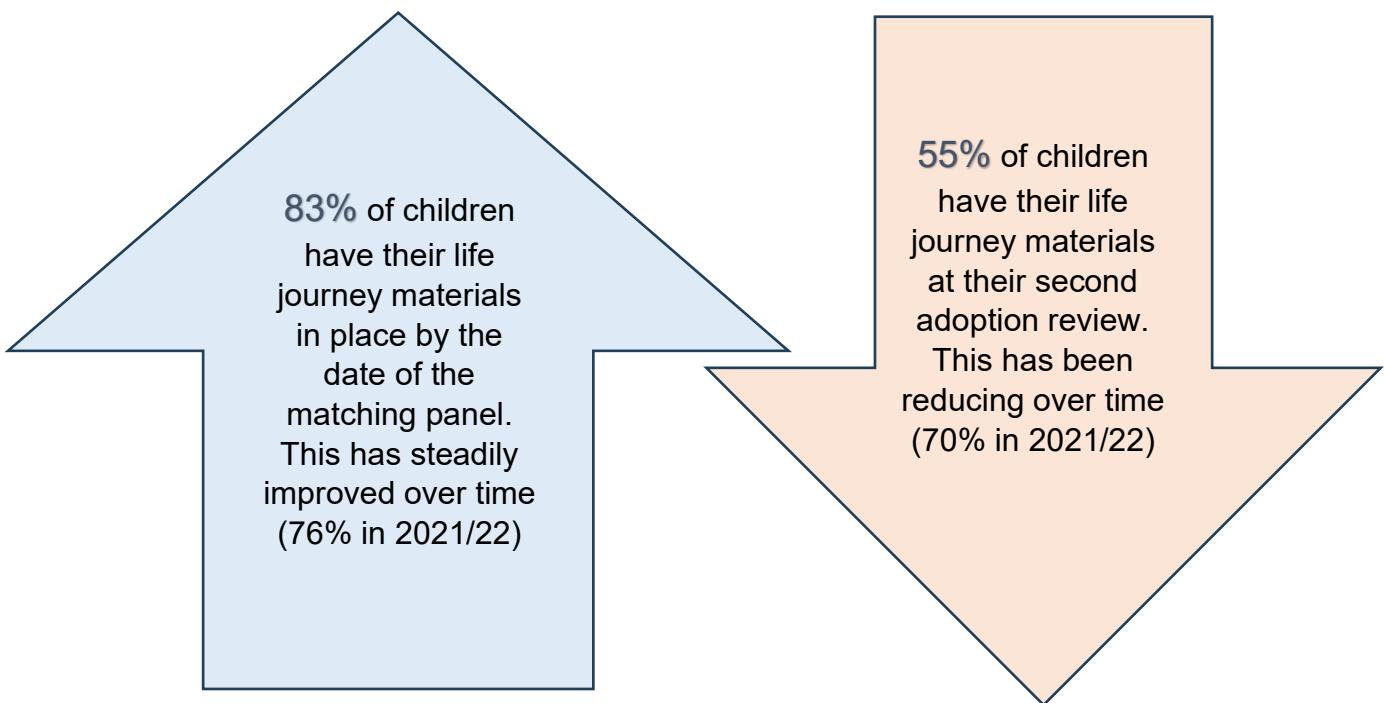


### Practice Example (AUK)

This case study follows adoptive parents C and J and their five-year-old child K, who struggles with emotional regulation and social challenges at school. K's behaviours, including hitting and biting, combined with medical issues and possible ADHD, caused stress and isolation for the family. Support included therapeutic parenting strategies, school interventions, and peer groups, focusing on PACE, connection, and proactive regulation.

The impact has been significant: aggressive episodes have reduced, K is forming friendships, and C feels more confident managing public outbursts. K now uses self-regulation techniques, and the family reports positive experiences at social events. C has also built connections with other parents, reducing isolation. Overall, targeted support improved K's behaviour and family resilience.

## Life Journey Work



### Practice Example (VVC)

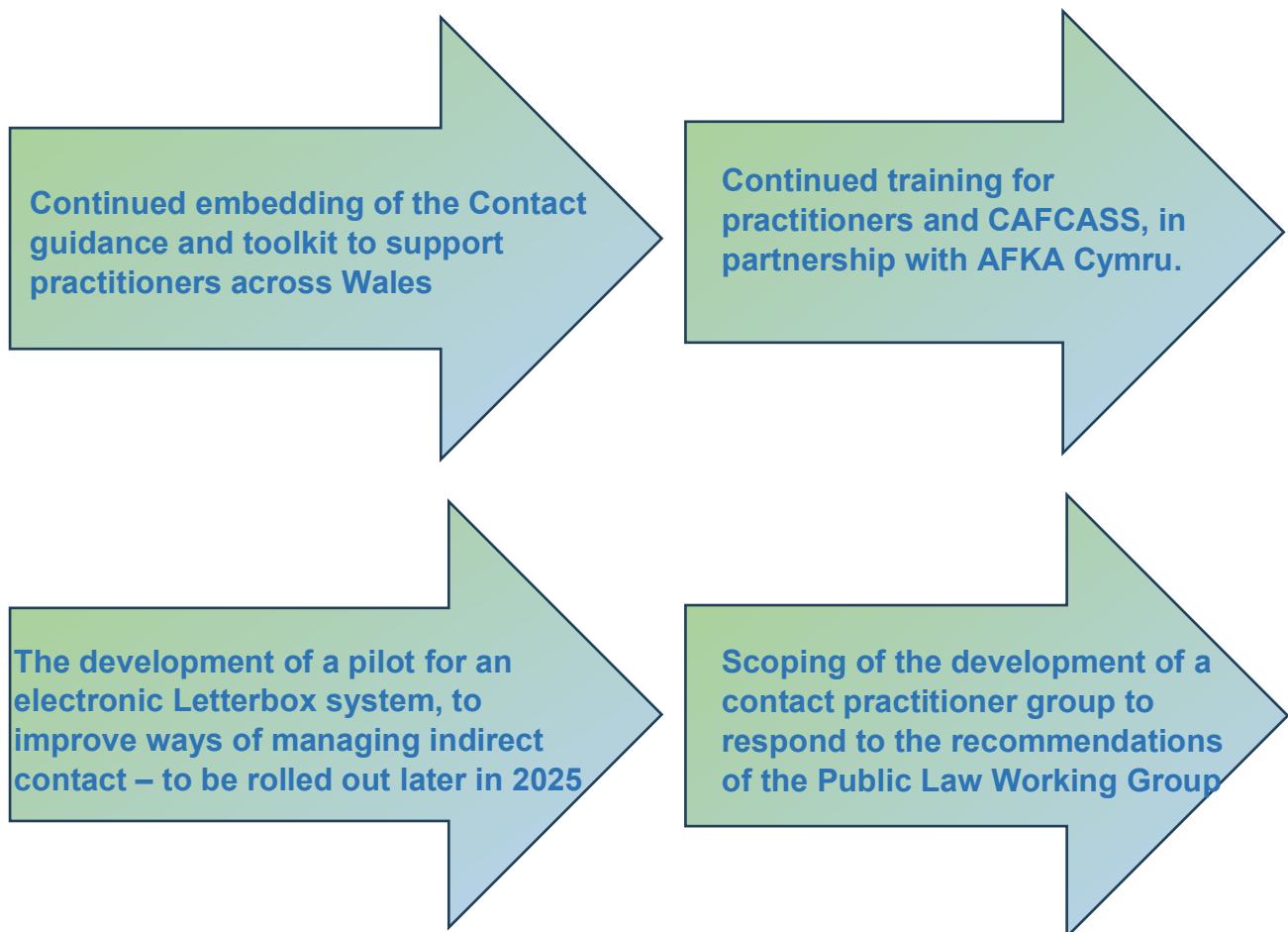
An adopted young person was referred for Therapeutic Life Story Work after distress caused by misinformation about their adoption. Limited background details led to inaccurate information being shared, resulting in withdrawal, low self-worth, and anxiety around achievement.

Reluctant to engage with social workers, the young person began fortnightly sessions with a Social Care Officer, building trust through informal conversations. This prepared them to explore their life story. The intervention corrected misinformation and strengthened family attachment. Historical records were reviewed to create an age-appropriate, truthful narrative. Timelines and emotion cards supported understanding and expression, while adoptive parents learned full details for the first time, improving family bonds.

The work helped the young person make sense of their past, supported emotional wellbeing, and reinforced identity development. The case closed successfully, with the young person thriving at home and socially, highlighting the value of accurate information and therapeutic support.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY C: HEALTHIER CONTACT THROUGH BETTER BIRTH FAMILY SERVICES

As part of creating a modern adoption service for Wales, a NAS focus is on improving adopted children's contact with their birth families (birth parents, siblings, and other relatives). So far this year, NAS has focussed on responding to the recommendations of the Public Law Working Group with regards contact:



### Welsh Government survey on Contact

A survey was issued by Welsh Government (supported by NAS & ADSS) to all 22 local authorities to assess the impact of judiciary-led changes in contact expectations. Responses received from 14 local authorities indicated that there were no significant delays in Placement or Adoption Orders being granted. There was one confirmed case of a Contact Order attached to a Placement Order. Increased scrutiny and discussion around contact was noted but also positive indications that the NAS Contact Guidance and toolkit is being utilised. There was some concern that delays may occur in future, so agreed to monitor and potentially reissue the survey at a later date.

## *Contact & Contact Arrangements – What's Going Well across Wales?*

Regions have embraced new approaches to contact, seeking to move beyond traditional letterbox systems to include virtual communication and digital platforms. This includes expanding contact options to make them more responsive to children's needs and delivering targeted workshops for childcare social workers, as well as all regions seeking to be involved in the pilot of the 'Letter swap' electronic system.

Some regions have a specialist post-adoption contact team or staff, enabling proactive support for both adopters and birth parents. Regions promote the use of NAS contact planning tools, ensuring that contact considerations are embedded at key decision-making stages, resulting in better planning and implementation. Several regions report an increase in direct contact arrangements, supported by robust assessments and creative engagement strategies.

Birth parent voices are being integrated into adopter preparation training. Dedicated birth parent groups and support services across regions have strengthened relationships and are creating improved outcomes for children.

Some regions have organised events to provide safe, supported environments for adopters, children, and birth families to connect. These initiatives promote positive relationships and reinforce the importance of maintaining meaningful contact.

## **Performance in the first six months of 2025/26**

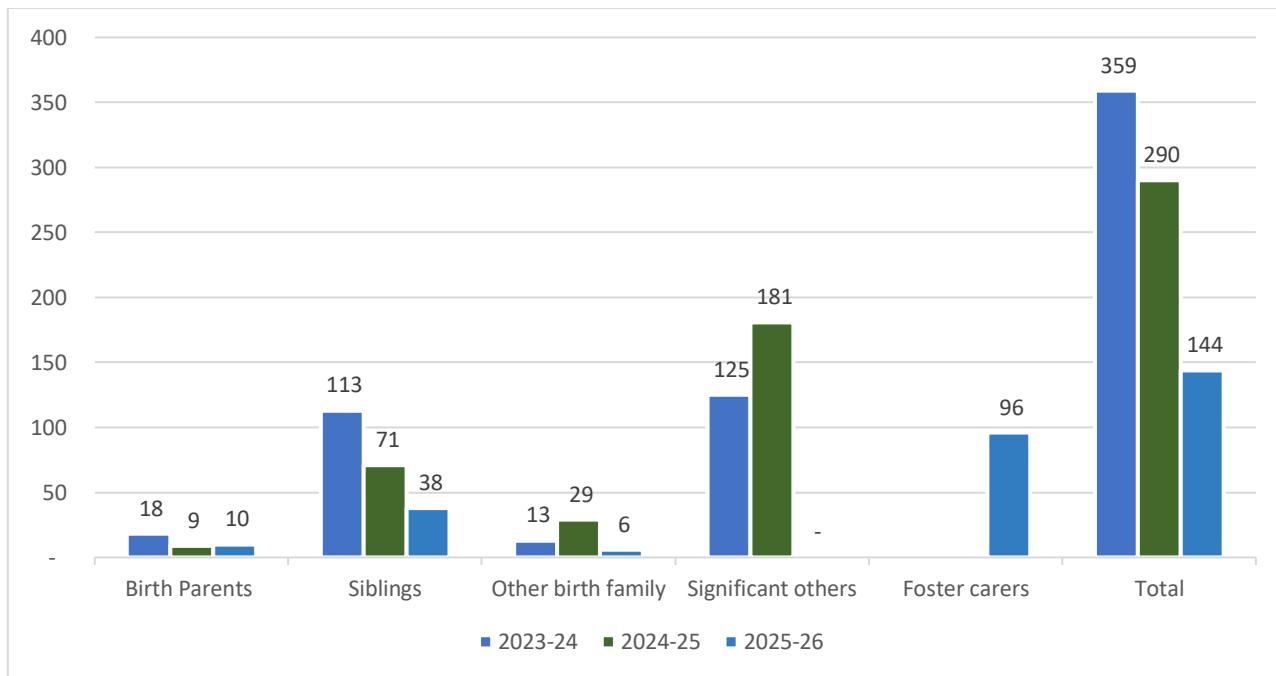
**99% of the children placed for adoption in the first half of the year, had a plan for contact arrangements in place**

**58% had a plan for both direct and indirect contact**

**41% had a plan for indirect contact only**

**1% had a plan for direct contact only**

Of the arrangements for direct contact, regions report on who this contact is with. There may be more than one arrangement in place for many children; most of the arrangements continue to be with former foster carers but with increasing levels with siblings and other birth family. Arrangements with parents remain very low.



### Practice Example - WBAS

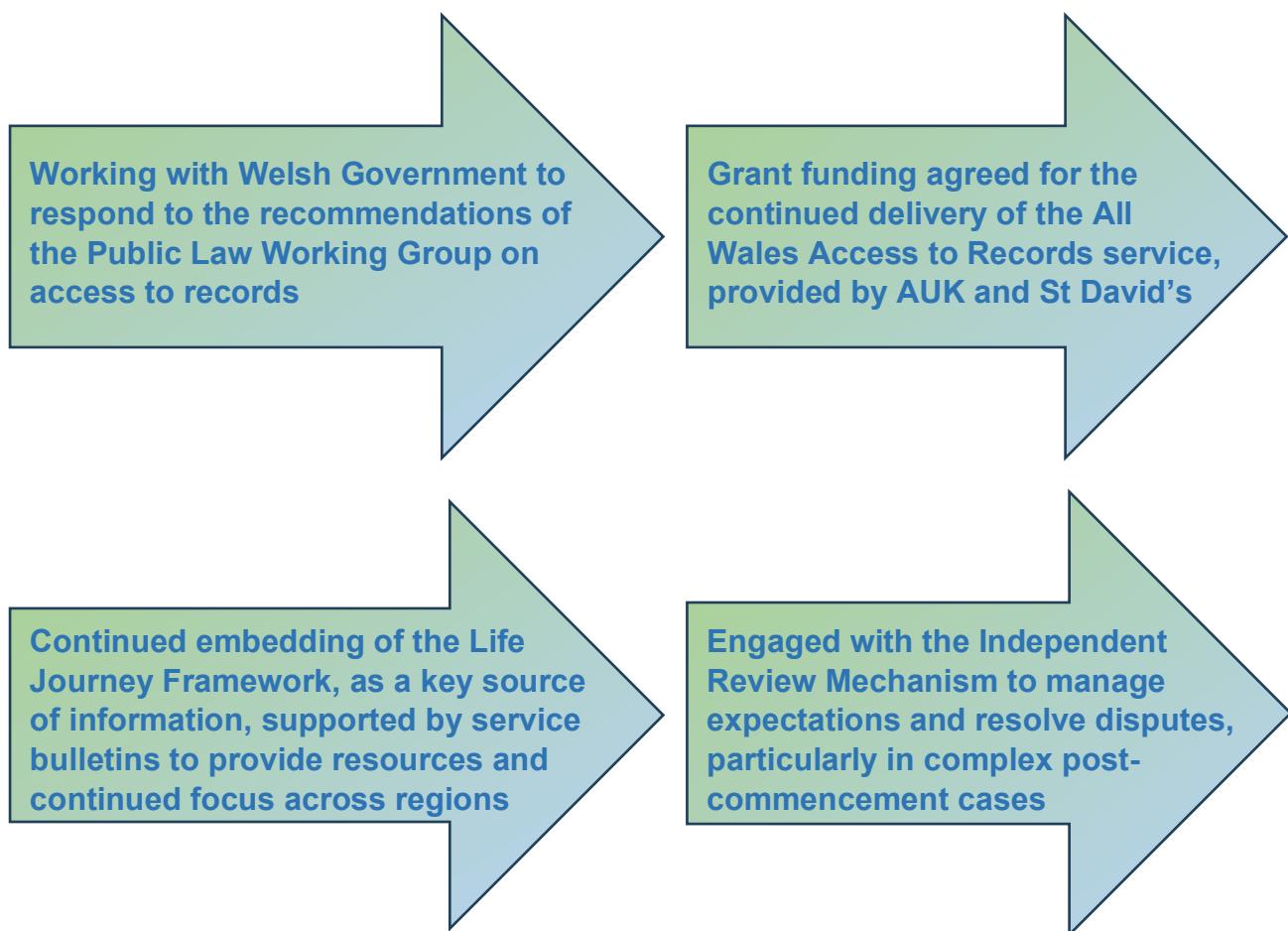
The service has been supporting one birth mother to engage in indirect contact with her two children (emails and birthday voice notes). Assessments were completed to consider whether the contact could proceed to direct contact with her two children.

The adoptive parents were very keen for the children to see their birth mother during a holiday in Wales. Support was needed as the assessment identified early on that there were several risk factors which could impact, including a current relationship. Staff empowered birth mum to make changes and her moving to a place of safety was a significant protective factor.

The contact went ahead, and it was positive for all involved. The adoptive parents were very relaxed and allowed the children to explore their connection with birth mum, whilst being nearby if needed. The children hugged, chatted and held their birth mum's hand during the contact. They would return to their adoptive parents for reassurance and comfort which was natural. Pictures were taken to capture the memories and whilst birth mum was emotional afterwards, she was grateful and thankful for the opportunity to spend time with them. It is hoped this will be an annual get together for the children and a normal part of their staycation in Wales.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY D: BETTER ADOPTION RECORDS AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION AT ANY AGE

A further element of the shift to a more modern adoption service in Wales, will be for all relevant services to recognise the importance of personal information and records to adopted people of all ages. There is a need to deliver improvements in their storage and access as a vital part of good care practice. So far this year, NAS has achieved the following:



*The Regions and VAAs have reported the following in relation to access to adoption records and intermediary services:*

Services continue to embed best practice in supporting adopted adults, birth families, and adopters in accessing their birth record requests. Recent developments have focused on improving accessibility, efficiency, and emotional support for individuals affected by adoption. This includes the development of comprehensive information and literature to guide individuals through accessing adoption records and birth parent counselling, plus system improvements which have streamlined processes. Services are reporting no, or low, waiting times for individuals seeking to access their adoption records.

The partnership between St David's and Adoption UK continues to provide therapeutic and peer support for adult adoptees and birth parents impacted by pre-1976 adoptions. This approach acknowledges the lifelong emotional impact of adoption and offers tailored interventions.

### Practice Example

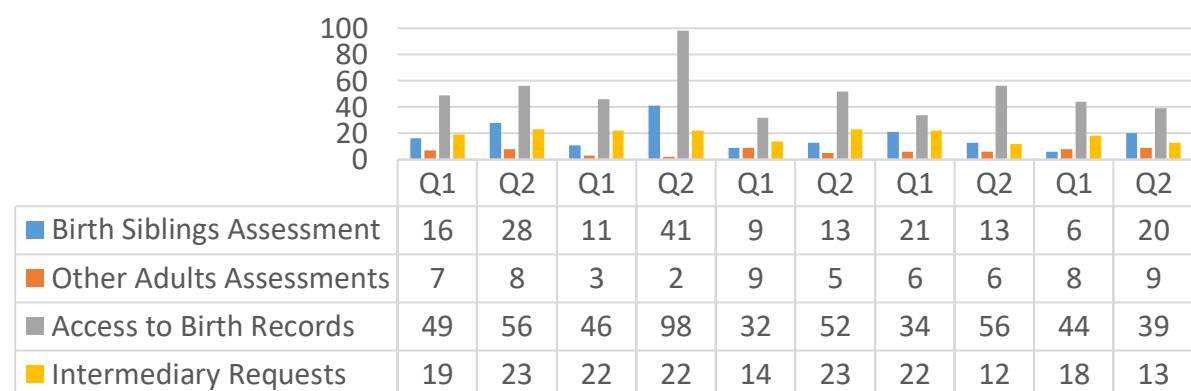
A young woman estranged from her adoptive family, sought to reconnect with her birth father and relatives. She located her father via social media but accessed her records first. Limited information during adoption left her with identity concerns, and the adoption eventually broke down, leading her to supported lodgings. Her early life was marked by severe neglect and abuse, later living with a grandmother struggling with addiction. Her strongest bond was with her grandmother, making foster placements distressing when contact was impossible. Sharing details of her past was highly triggering, so workers provided information gradually to ensure safety.

This case highlights the complexity of supporting adopted individuals seeking records and reconnection. The process must be sensitive, gradual, and supported by skilled practitioners to prevent re-traumatisation.

### Performance in the first six months of 2025/26

There were 83 Access to Birth records requests received during the first half of the year, a small reduction compared to the same time last year, when there were 90. Intermediary service requests remain at a low level, as do assessments for support to birth siblings and other relevant birth relatives (adults) entitled to services.

**Access to Records, Intermediary Services and Other Assessments Q1 & Q2 2021/22 to 2025/26**



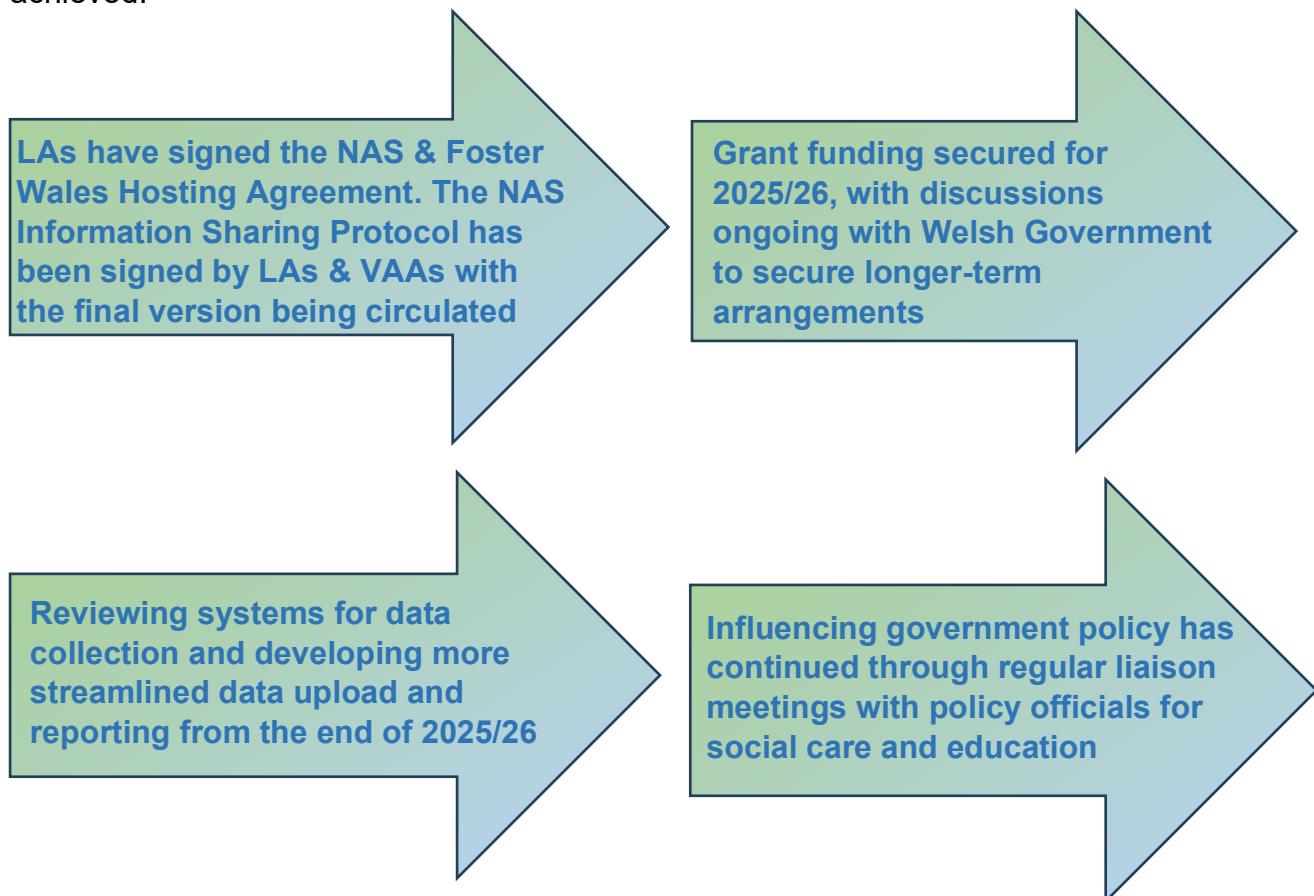
### Practice Example (NWAS)

In the 1950s, a young woman became pregnant and was sent to a mother-and-baby home in North Wales. Life there was harsh, marked by judgment and hard work. After caring for her newborn for six weeks, the baby was taken for adoption. A year later, she married the baby's father, and they had three more children, but the firstborn remained a secret. They had been warned never to search. Decades later, one of their adult children contacted our service. With sensitive, person-centred support, the adoption records revealed the firstborn had accessed her files years earlier. Married with children, she feared rejection and family reactions but agreed to meet her birth parents. The reunion was emotional and healing, eventually including siblings and her own family. This long-awaited meeting brought closure and connection to the family.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY E – MAINTAINING THE INFRASTRUCTURE NECESSARY TO DELIVER NAS AND MAINTAIN SOUND GOVERNANCE ACROSS NAS AND FOSTER WALES

### ***What has been achieved in the first six months of 2025/26?***

To continue the successful delivery of NAS and Foster Wales, there is a need to ensure continued investment in the infrastructure, and newly established governance arrangements. To date, for 2025-2026, the following aspects of the governance have been achieved:



#### **National Joint Committee for NAS and Foster Wales**

An update to the National Joint Committee Agreement is currently underway to amend the required quoracy level at its meetings. This will ensure that future meetings are able to proceed with an achievable number of attendees and with a fair regional representation.

#### **Engagement with people who use services**

The national engagement arrangements with adopters, adopted children and young people have continued. The adoption Youth Council were involved in the development of the 'All Ages' version of the 2024/25 NAS Annual Report, a piece of work they do with the central team and our publishers each year. Central team staff have met with representatives, at their request, to discuss changes in service delivery over the last few years.

The annual 'Big Adoption Conversation', supported by the Adoption UK Wales team, provides a national opportunity to engage with adopters and adoptees and is scheduled for October. AUK also maintain the 'Adoption Voices Wales's website for NAS.

There is much regional and VAA engagement at a local and regional level, some of which is detailed above in particular the links with birth parents which are more appropriately done directly by services.

## **Links with Welsh Ministers and Welsh Government Officials**

The **Care Inspectorate Wales** has commenced adoption inspections this year the first since 2017 when only one region was inspected and a national report produced.

As at the mid-year, three out of the five regional inspections have taken place – AMWW, SEWAS and WBAS. The NWAS and VVC inspections are likely to be completed by the end of this calendar year. A meeting with the Inspection team, members of the Governance Board and NAS Central Team is due to take place in November in relation to the national overview report which they plan to produce by end March 2026.

The Director and Central Team have continued to meet with **Welsh Government (WG) policy officials** to discuss a range of issues linked to the Public Law working Group and the 'A Home for Me' report, including:

- WG discussions with the Department for Education NAS discussions with Adopt England
- The WG contact questionnaire to local authorities
- Proposals that require legislative change/resource injections (contact and access to records work)
- Re-positioning adoption in public policy

NAS has also been involved in two Welsh Government facilitated workshops, exploring the **Children's Social Care Strategic Plan**, up until 2030. The aim is to continue to build the future vision for children's services to 2030, and in particular a focus on multi-agency working for children and families.

The Director and other members of the central team remain involved with **various other Welsh Government strategic groups**, including the Programme for Government (PfG) - Transformation Delivery Group, the Eliminate Profit Board and two workstreams (primarily linked to Foster Wales).

The central team have also been working closely with Welsh Government regarding changes to the Adoption Support Regulations which we hope will enable more adults and young people to access counselling services. In line with this work a response to the consultation regarding proposed changes to secondary legislation and revisions to the code of practice on how social services support looked after and accommodated children in part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 was submitted.

## **Regional Management Boards**

The five Regional Management Boards (RMBs) across Wales meet on a quarterly basis. All RMBs have oversight of the performance, finance, and governance arrangements in each region. Specific areas of discussion in the first part of this year related to:

REGION	TOPICS
<b>AMWW</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Service Review</li> <li>▪ Partnership Agreement</li> <li>▪ Statement of Purpose</li> <li>▪ Policies and Procedures Review</li> <li>▪ CIW Inspection Action Plan</li> </ul>
<b>NWAS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Service Review</li> <li>▪ Audits and Archiving of Adoption Records</li> <li>▪ Partnership Agreement</li> <li>▪ Letter Swap System</li> <li>▪ CIW Inspection Action Plan</li> </ul>
<b>SEWAS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Letter Swap System</li> <li>▪ CIW Inspection Feedback</li> <li>▪ Adoption Disruptions</li> <li>▪ Modernising Contact Training</li> <li>▪ Marketing and Recruitment Plan</li> </ul>
<b>VVC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Performance and Governance Updates</li> <li>▪ Audit</li> <li>▪ Updates from Health, Third Sector and Central Team</li> <li>▪ Letter Swap System</li> <li>▪ Adoption Support</li> </ul>
<b>WBAS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Performance and Budget Updates</li> <li>▪ CIW inspection</li> <li>▪ Letter Swap System</li> <li>▪ Supervision and Appraisal Audit</li> <li>▪ Adoption Allowances</li> </ul>

## National Finances

The core funding for the national functions for the National Adoption Service is provided from a top slice of the Revenue Support Grant (made available through the WLGA). This allocation is subject to the annual approval of the WLGA Executive Board.

The top slice allocation for 2025/26 is £524k, making up 14% of the total national budget of £3,736,195. The remainder of the national budget is made up of Welsh Government grant aid<sup>1</sup> to support expansion and service development in adoption. A very significant proportion of the national budget is passported to regions and third sector partners (the VAAs).

The income sources and expenditure to date are detailed in the table below. The grant allocations for the year are projected to be fully spent. The Central costs, funded via the

<sup>1</sup> The 'Adoption Support grant' and the 'Adopt Cymru 2025 and beyond...' grant.

WLGA, are fully committed and it is likely that the contingency will be accessed again this year to cover a higher-than-expected staff inflationary pay award plus additional costs associated with invest to save developments.

INCOME SOURCE	ALLOCATION FOR 2025/26	SPEND AS AT 30/09/2024	PURPOSE
Revenue Support Grant (WLGA Top-Slice)	£524,528	£278,070	National Co-ordination costs
Welsh Government Grant (Adoption Support)	£2,300,000	£150,705	Passported to the Regions and VAAs for the delivery of adoption support services ( <i>the bulk of this spend will be in the second half of the financial year</i> )
Welsh Government Grant (Adopt Cymru and Beyond)	£689,577	£205,115	National PR and Marketing, with the rest being passported to the VAAs for services
Welsh Government Grant (Adoption Register for Wales)	£222,090	£146,448	Management of the Adoption Register for Wales on behalf of the Welsh Government

## Summary and Next Steps

In the second half of 2025/26, NAS will continue to progress with its strategic priorities; specific areas of focus will include:

- National Adoption Week and launch of the ‘Now is a good time.....’ adoption marketing campaign
- The annual on-line ‘Big Adoption Conversation’ event
- Launch of the Family Finding and Building Good Practice Guidance
- Further implementation of initiatives to take forward the recommendations from the Adoption Barometer report, including addressing issues relating to adopted learners experience of education and health services in Wales
- Launch of the pilot of the Letter Swap system for digital letterbox contact
- Continued engagement with the Connect Youth Council.

The end-year Annual Report for 2025/26 will be available in the Autumn of 2026



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