



Cofrestr Fabwysiadu **Cymru**
Adoption Register **Wales**

ADOPTION REGISTER WALES

ANNUAL REPORT

2025-2026

Introduction

We are pleased to present the annual report for the Adoption Register Wales (ARW) for the period 1st April 2025 – 31st March 2026.

Launched in June 2019, the Adoption Register Wales is a fully bilingual online family finding service that offers managed direct adopter access to children's profiles. The Register uses Link Maker, a secure and user-friendly system designed to identify suitable matches for children with plans for adoption and help reduce the time children wait to be placed with a family.

Under the Adoption and Children Act, 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) (Amendment) Directions 2019 local authorities within the regional collaboratives and Voluntary Adoption Agencies are directed to refer both children and prospective adopters to the Register within one month of the agency decision for children and within one month of approval for adopters.

The Register is the Welsh Government system to support adoption matching and since 2015 the National Adoption Service (NAS) has been commissioned to host and manage this service on behalf of Welsh adoption agencies. Its primary role is to facilitate cross-regional and inter-agency matching when a suitable match cannot be identified within a child's or adopter's own agency, particularly for children who may experience longer waiting times.

The data presented within this report indicates that practitioners continue to refer children and adopters to the Register within the required timescales and continue to use the Register effectively as a key family-finding resource.

Adoption Register Activity

259 children were referred to the Register during this period compared to **273** children in 2024/25 and **244** in 2023/24.

As of 31st March 2026, there were **328** children on the Register at the various stages of the process; **210** of these children were waiting without any potential links. This is an increase compared to the same time last year when there were **285** children on the Register with **155** children waiting. The number of children waiting on the Register over the past 3 years has

steadily been increasing. This is due to more Placement Orders being granted and a decrease in the number of adopters available. Some children have been waiting longer due to additional complex needs or being part of a large sibling group.

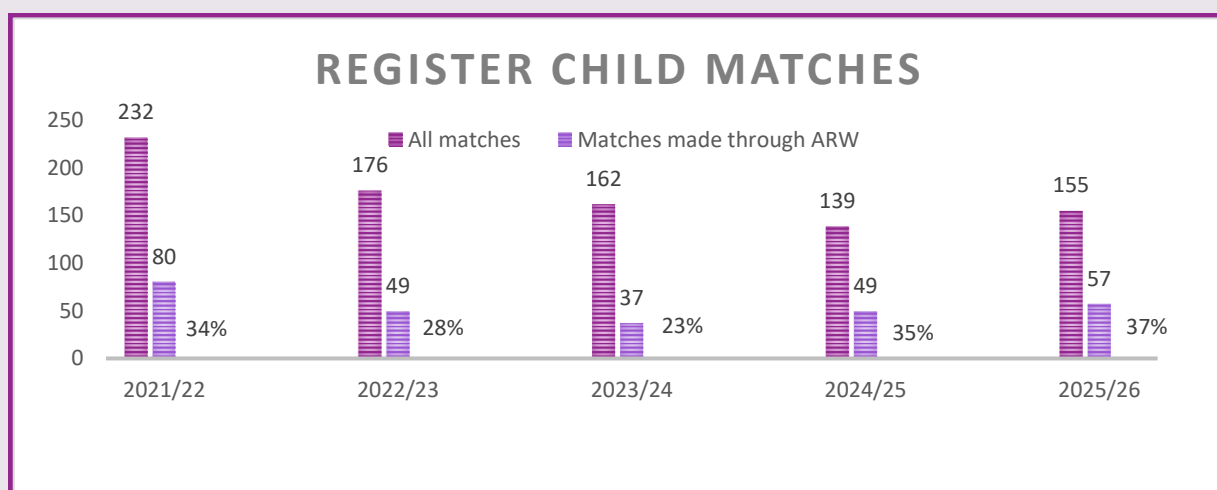
90 adoptive families were referred to the Register during this period compared to **108** families in 2024/25 and **106** in 2023/24. As of 31st March 2026, there were **75** adoptive families on the Register at various stages of the process; of which **39** were waiting without any links. This is a decrease on the same time last year when there were **113** families on the Register with **56** waiting without any links. The decrease in numbers is consistent with a decrease in the number of families coming through the assessment process and being approved as adopters during this period. Adopters are also getting matched with children much earlier which accounts for the decrease in the numbers of families waiting on the Register for a match.

Matches

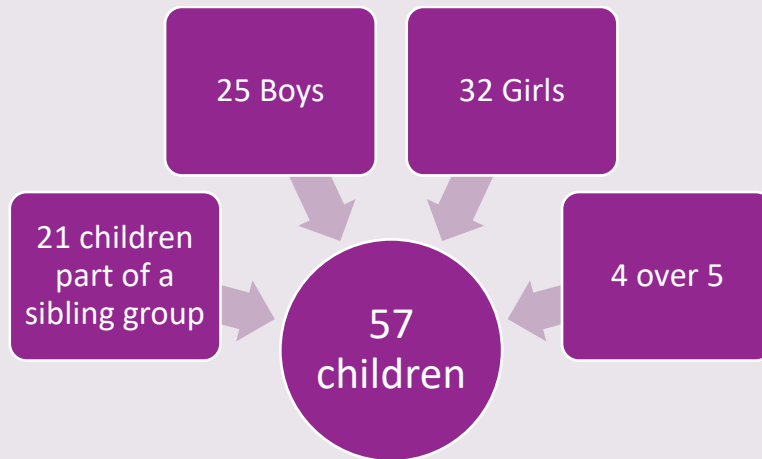
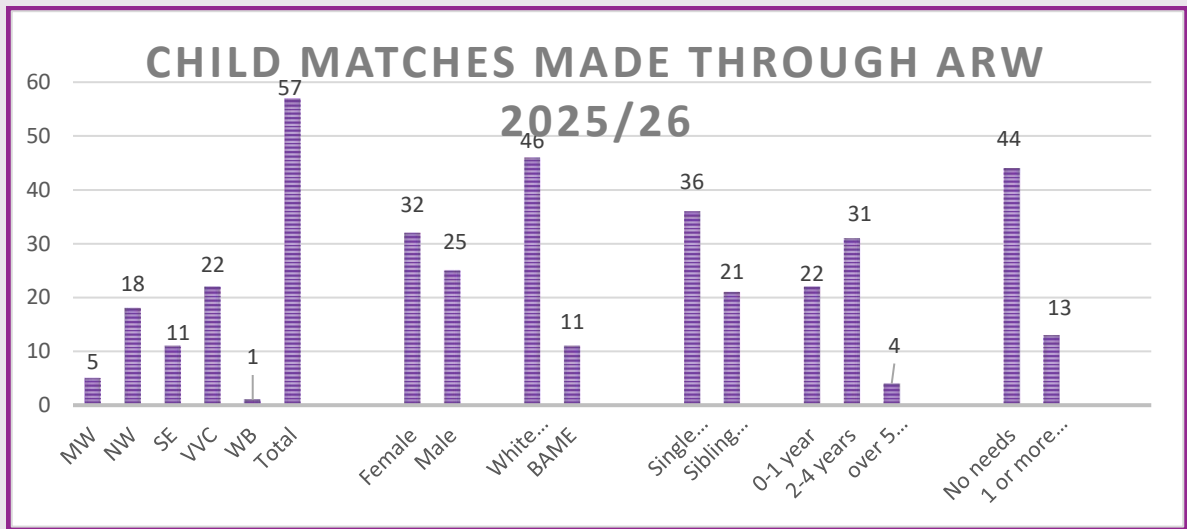
Children

Register data indicates a total of **155*** children known to the Register have been matched in 2025/26 compared to **139** matched in 2024/25. Of the **155** matches made this year **37% (n57)** were matches that were made as a result of using the Register as a way of family finding, with the remainder matched through other family finding methods. This is a slight increase on last year when **35% (n49)** were matches made through the Register. It is encouraging to see that practitioners are continuing to use the Register to match children with adoptive families.

*Some matches are agreed within the region and added later.

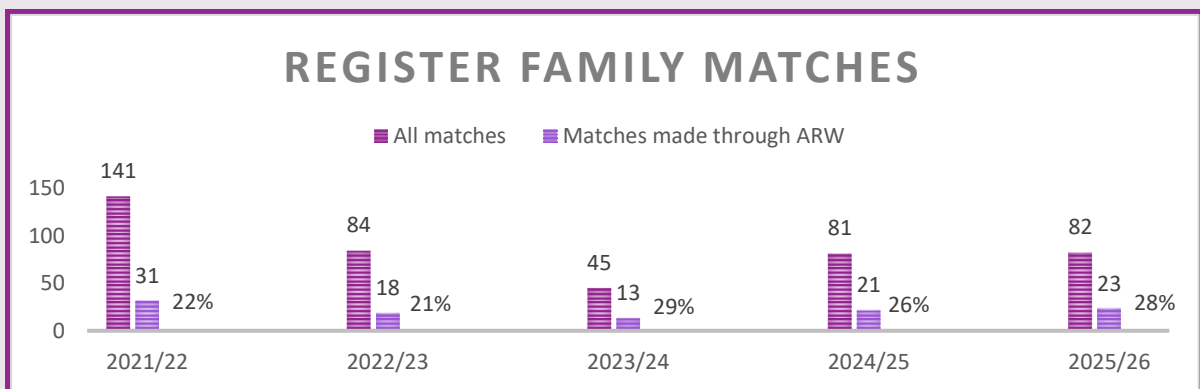


The graph below provides information about the children matched. This shows **37% (n21)** of the children matched via ARW were children who might wait longer for a placement due to being part of a sibling group. **44% (n25)** were boys and **56% (n32)** were girls. **7% (n4)** were over 5 years old and **19% (n11)** were from an ethnic minority background. These figures indicate that the Register continues to work well to identify matches for those children who would wait longer.



Adopters

A total of **82** adoptive families known to the Register have been matched in 2025-26 of which **28% (n23)** were made directly through ARW, with the other matches being made as a result of other family finding activities carried out by the regions. This compares to **81** prospective adopters matched in 2024-25 of which **26% (n21)** were matched directly through the Register. The data shows that practitioners are continuing to use the Register as a way of family finding for both adopters and children.



Family finding events

Adoption Register Wales held two Adoption Activity Days this year in June 2025 and March 2026. Over the years, Adoption Activity Days have consistently been the most successful family-finding events in achieving matches.

Adoption Activity Day ~ 1

The first Adoption Activity Day was held on the 28th June 2025 in Cardiff. It was a jungle themed event with **39** children from across Wales featured at the event 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 and highlights the importance of these family finding events.



Adoption Activity Day ~ 2

The second Adoption Activity Day was held on the 21st March 2026 in Cardiff. The theme for this event was “Spring Time on the Farm”. **38** children from across Wales were profiled at the event with **34** children attending on the day. **10** of the children were part of a sibling group and the ages of the children ranged from 9 months – 7 years. **13** families attended on the day. **5** of the children who attended received an expression of interest, these potential links are still currently being explored.



Both events received positive feedback from adopters, foster carers and social workers who felt that the events were well run and worthwhile. Here is an example of some feedback we received following the events:

“The child we look after really enjoyed the day, it was very organised and well run. It has been worth it for us as a link is now being explored for our child – which is wonderful.” – Foster Carer (June 2025)

“I was nervous to start with, however I was put at ease, there was plenty of staff available to answer questions and they helped enormously. The event was well run, spread out and plenty to do.” – Adopter (March 2026)

“I have noted a marked difference for those adopters who have been able to attend an activity day, in comparison to those who have not. They have been much more open to exploring links having met the children, than they would have if they had not had the opportunity.” – Adoption Social Worker (March 2026)

Family Finding Meetings

ARW Practitioner & Manager Forum

The ARW Team meets quarterly with managers and practitioners across the 5 Welsh Adoption Regions and 2 VAA's. Meetings focus on planning for family finding events, sharing profiles of children waiting and discussing any issues around family finding from a Register or region/VAA perspective. The use of Link Maker is also discussed within these meetings, and any issues are reported back to Link Maker.

Monthly Online Drop-In's

A new initiative developed in line with the new NAS Family Finding Good Practice Guide was the introduction of a monthly online drop-in session, the first of which was held on the 25th February 2026. These sessions are held on the last Wednesday of the month and are open to all adoption practitioners from across Wales who would like support around family finding for a child or family that they are currently working with. The sessions are tailored to the needs of the practitioner, but support is usually offered around formatting the written profile, searching the

Register for potential matches as well as sharing the profile with adoption agencies across Wales and externally if appropriate.

Adopting Together Service

ARW work closely with the Adopting Together Service meeting with them once a month to discuss children on the register who have been waiting 9+ months or meet criteria for referral to the service.

During the last meeting on the 13th March 2026, a total of **69** children were discussed, **38** had already been referred to the Adopting Together Service.

The remaining **31** children were followed up –

- 14 were considering internal links
- 7 were changing the plan to either long-term fostering or SGO
- 7 were considering a referral to ATS
- 3 were on hold due to sibling assessments

The ARW team also supported ATS to plan their first “play day” which was a pilot and held on the 15th November 2025. This family finding event followed a similar model to the Adoption Activity Days but on a smaller scale. Prospective adopters were invited to come and meet children who are currently waiting and referred to the Adopting Together Service. Further events are planned for summer 2026.

UK Register Meeting/Inter-register protocol

ARW have developed a positive working relationship with the Register Teams in Scotland and Northern Ireland as well as Adoption England. Meetings are held quarterly; the last meeting was held on the 3rd March 2026. Discussions are held around current working practices in each of the 4 areas with an emphasis on sharing of ideas and good practice. Profiles of children and adopters who have specific needs and matching criteria are shared by the group outside of the meetings.

Training

A profiling writing workshop was held on the 1st October 2025 for practitioners working within adoption with the aim of improving the quality of written profiles for children and adopters. 7 members of staff attended this training.


Link Maker

ARW continues to meet regularly with Link Maker to discuss service development and resolve any issues or queries. Contract monitoring meetings are held twice a year and were held on the 4th June and 26th November.

Refresher training for staff on using the Register/Link Maker was held on the 2nd April, 22nd October and 4th February 2026. 9 members of staff from across the National Adoption Service attended over these 3 days.

Moving Forward

Priorities for 2026/27:

-  Two Adoption Activity Day are being planned for October 2026 and March 2027.
-  Monthly online drop-in sessions will continue to be held and developed through the course of the year to support practitioners with family finding for specific children.
-  Register/Link Maker training will be offered to new and existing practitioners and managers throughout 2026, to ensure correct processes are followed and to reinforce good practice in family finding.
-  A profile writing workshop will be held on the 8th July 2026, to improve the quality and consistency of written profiles for both children and adopters.
-  The ARW team will continue to meet with Link Maker regularly to discuss service development and improvements. Bi-annual contract monitoring meetings will be held.
-  Continued monitoring of children on the Register for 9 months+ to ensure regions are prompted in a timely way to consider referring to the Adopting Together Service.

“This document is available in Welsh / Mae’r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg”