



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu
Cenedlaethol

National
Adoption
Service

ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26

Working together to improve adoption services in Wales – for children, young people, adopted adults, birth families, adopters and the professionals who support them.

A summary report
for ALL ages



This year has been another year of progress and change for the **National Adoption Service (NAS)**. We have kept working with adoption services across Wales to help children find families, support adopted children and young people, help birth families stay connected where this is right, and make it easier for adopted adults to access information about their past.

There have also been challenges. More children were waiting at the end of the year, and families continue to need support that feels simpler and easier. NAS is using what families, young people, professionals and partners tell us to shape the next stage of adoption services in Wales.

This report is a shorter, easier-to-read version of the full annual report. It explains what happened in 2025/26, what changed, and what NAS will keep working on next.

Hi!

from our former Director of
the National Adoption Service,
Suzanne Griffiths MBE



So... what is NAS?

NAS brings adoption services together across Wales so that services can work in a more joined-up and consistent way.

We bring together:

- All 22 Welsh local authorities are part of NAS.
- Local authorities work together in five regional adoption areas alongside three voluntary adoption agencies (VAAs).
- Health, education and other organisations also contribute.
- The NAS central team provides leadership, coordination and national support for all involved.

Together, these services find families for children who need them, assess and prepare adopters, support birth parents, provide adoption support, help adopted adults access information, and develop national guidance and resources.

What is a local authority?

A local authority is the organisation that helps run public services in an area. It is responsible for things like social services, schools, housing, roads and waste collections. There are 22 local authorities in Wales, and they work together with NAS, via five regional adoption agencies, to support children, young people and families affected by adoption.

Things that happened in 2025/26

This year we:

- Brought people together from across Wales at our conference, to share ideas, learn from experiences of adoption and talk about how services can improve.
- Agreed a new long-term plan to help guide adoption services in Wales over the coming years.
- Trained professionals to work together to plan how children and young people can keep in touch with important people in their lives in ways that are safe, meaningful and right for them.
- Encouraged more people to think about adoption and learn about the children who are waiting for families.
- Introduced new ways for adopted children and birth families to stay in touch safely through Letter Swap, which includes writing letters and exchanging photos, videos and messages.
- Improved guidance and support to help children find the right families more quickly and consistently across Wales.
- Helped more children learn about adoption by sharing copies of a book called The Blanket Bears with schools and libraries across Wales.

116

people attended the
NAS conference

5

regions preparing to
use **Letter Swap**

97

people trained on
contact planning



Finding the right families for children

NAS continued to focus on helping the right families come forward and making sure children are understood well before a match is made.

This year we:

- Encouraged more people to think about adoption through talking about adoption on TV, social media, Spotify and in the press.
- Improved how children are matched with adoptive families.
- Helped professionals better understand children's experiences and needs.
- Continued to make adoption practice more consistent across Wales.
- Supported children to move into permanent family homes as early as possible.

1,313

people were interested in finding out about adopting a child

More people showed an interest in adoption this year, but more children were still waiting to find an adoptive family. This means there is still more work to do to help children find the right families.

Between April 2025 and March 2026:

487

children needing an adoptive family

197

children started life with their adoptive families

300

children waiting to be adopted at the end of the year

Support that makes a difference

Adoption is lifelong. Children, young people and families may need different kinds of support at different times.

Last year, we worked on support that is easier to understand, easier to review and more joined up. We:

- Helped schools, health services and other professionals better understand adoption and how to support families.
- Listened to young people to learn more about the support they need as they grow older.
- Improved the way support is planned and reviewed so families can get the help they need.
- Created more information and resources to help children understand their stories and backgrounds.
- Provided therapy support, advice and guidance to families across Wales. This is called the Pathways service.
- Offered activities, support and opportunities for adopted children and young people to connect with others who have similar experiences. This is called the Connected service.

Mini story: understanding your own story

A young person had questions about their early life and found some of the information they had confusing. With support, they were able to learn more about their story and talk through it with trusted adults. This is called **Therapeutic Life Story Work (TLSW)**. This helped them better understand their past, feel more confident about who they are, and strengthen family relationships.

109

families received support through a service called **Pathways**

473

therapy and support sessions were provided to families across Wales

216

adopted children and young people were part of the **Connected** service

114

group activities and sessions helped young people connect, learn and support each other

Families and young people told us that the support they received made a difference. Many said it helped them feel more confident, achieve their goals and connect with others who had similar experiences. We know there is still more to do to make sure support is available consistently across Wales.



Keeping connected with birth families

For some adopted children and young people, staying connected with birth family is important. We have continued to support contact that is safe, planned and focused on the child's needs.

This year we worked to improve the way adopted children and birth families stay connected. We developed new tools and support, listened to people with experience of adoption, and helped professionals plan contact in ways that put children's needs first.

197

Children starting life with their adoptive families had a plan for keeping in touch with their birth family or other important people in their lives

63%

Children had plans for keeping in touch through direct and indirect contact

36%

Had plans for keeping in touch through letters or exchanging gifts and photos

Mini story: siblings reconnecting

One adopted young person wanted to get to know their birth brothers and sisters better. With support, they gradually rebuilt their relationship by exchanging letters, photos and gifts before meeting in person. Over time, their bond grew stronger and they are now able to stay in touch with each other independently.

Understanding the past and accessing records

NAS wants adopted people to have clearer, more consistent information about their adoption when they are ready to access it.

This year we worked to make it easier for adopted people to find information about their past, understand their rights and access support when they need it. We also looked at how services can become more consistent across Wales.

Mini story: finding family across countries



An uncle asked for help to trace a nephew who had been adopted in the 1950s. The case involved people and records outside Wales, requiring careful social work and research. Once the nephew was found, he was asked if he would like to have contact with his birth family. He said yes, so contact was made and a reunion took place in North Wales. The reunion was very important to the nephew, as well as to the uncle and wider family who had hoped to find him.

Keeping services working well

Not all of our work is seen by children and families. Behind the scenes, we work to help make adoption services better across Wales.

This year we:

- Worked with organisations across Wales to plan how adoption services can improve in the future.
- Looked at how services are working and suggested ways to improve support for children and families.
- Used data and research to better understand what helps adoptions succeed and where more support may be needed.
- Developed new tools to help track progress and measure the impact of adoption services.
- Worked closely with the Welsh Government and others to improve services and plan for the future.



Listening to people with experience of adoption

At the Big Adoption Conversation, people shared their experiences of adoption and the support they receive. They spoke about the importance of getting the right help at the right time, particularly in education, health and emotional wellbeing.

The ideas and experiences shared are helping us decide what to focus on next and are shaping future plans for adoption services in Wales.

Learning and improving

We want to keep improving adoption services, so it is important that we listen when things do not go as planned. This year, some families told us about problems they had experienced. Their feedback is helping us improve communication, strengthen support for families and make services work better in the future.

How we were funded last year

We receive funding from Local Government and the Welsh Government to support adoption services across Wales.

This funding helps us:

- Provide support for adopted children, young people and families.
- Run national services and provide resources that help children find families.
- Raise awareness of adoption and encourage more people to consider becoming adopters.
- Manage services that help match children with adoptive families across Wales.



What's next?

Many children, young people and families received support this year, but some children were still waiting to find an adoptive family. This is why we continue to work towards better support and brighter futures for children and families across Wales.

The ideas for our next plan came from children and young people, families, people with experience of adoption, and professionals from across Wales. Together, they told us what matters most and where more support is needed.



Over the next few years, we want to:

- Help more children find the right adoptive family.
- Improve support for adopted children, young people and their families.
- Make it easier for children and families to stay connected with birth relatives when this is right for them.
- Help adopted people access information about their past when they are ready.
- Keep listening to people with experience of adoption so services continue to improve.

Want to find out more?

Check out the NAS website
www.adoptcymru.com

...and finally



Thank you to everyone who has helped make a difference this year, including children and young people, adopted adults, adopters, birth families, professionals and partner organisations across Wales.

We know there is still more to do. By continuing to listen, learn and work together, we can keep improving adoption services and help more children, young people and families get the support they need.



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