



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu | National
Cenedlaethol | **Adoption**
Service

Achieving More Together
Cyflawni Mwy Gyda'n Gilydd

**POST-ADOPTION TRAINING
AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

Post-Approval Adoption Training Modules





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Introduction

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

We know that becoming a parent is exciting, rewarding and fun. We also know that all parents can benefit from additional knowledge and insight to help them on their journey. Potential and prospective adopters will have had some training during the assessment stage that will have covered aspects of the theory and processes underpinning adoption.

Our learning never stops and people learn in different ways, and with this in mind, the National Adoption Service in conjunction with AFA Cymru and Adoption UK and in consultation with adoption practitioners and adopters, have developed a number of modules covering some key aspects that we hope will be useful. These are intended to help and support adopters to weave together an understanding of what they need to know and the skills they need to develop to build and continue to improve their relationship with their child.

WHO ARE THE MODULES FOR AND HOW THEY CAN BE USED

The modules have been specifically designed to be easily accessible and in a format that can be adapted for various uses –

- to be used as part of training or a workshop run by the agency, and/or
- as part of specific individual support offered by an adoption practitioner to adoptive parents, and/or
- as something adopters can access themselves online.

The intention is not for them to be accessed only when people might be struggling, but at all times and our hope is that they will be inspiring and enjoyable as well as informative.



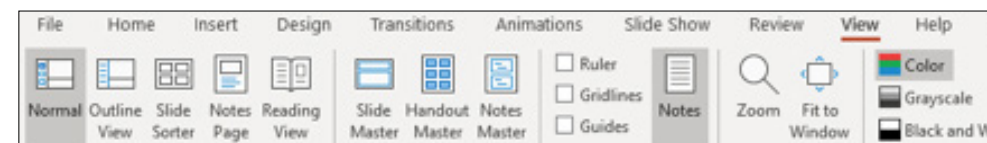
"These online courses were accessible when it suited me – perfect when your day-to-day schedule is busy and often quite hectic".



USING THE MODULES

There are extensive notes that sit alongside each power point presentation with references and links to other resources, practical tips, and suggestions for further reading and tools to help bring about positive changes.

For example, in the Attachment module, there is a link to the NSPCC Brain Builders video which you can see in the screenshot pictured left.



There are some good online resources that explain this. Some of our favourites are

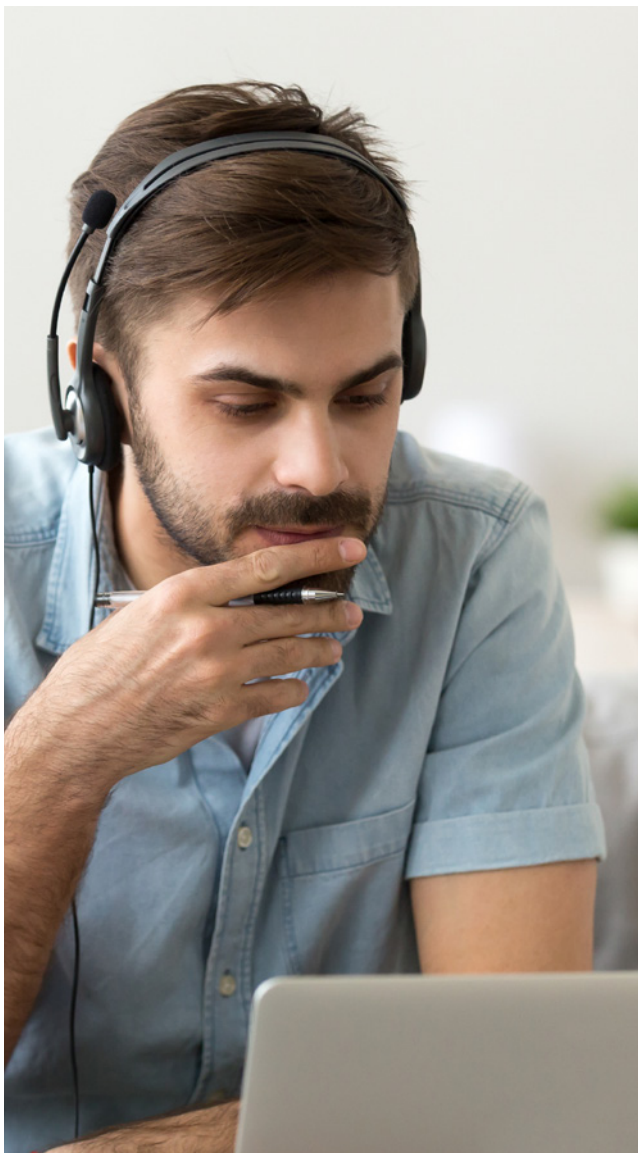
- Harvard University Child Development Centre – they do a series of videos, and other literature about brain development, and what they call Serve and Return Interactions
- The NSPCC Brain Builders video is good and can be found online. It provides a really clear explanation of how brains are built through early year's experiences and social interactions. It talks about the need to help children's healthy development and this is what is hoped will be the outcome of your adoption. It also talks about toxic stress – something we will return to later on.

www.nspcc.org.uk/.../children-in-care/infant-mental-health

To access the notes that accompany the slides, you will need to go to **View tab** and then **Notes Page** – see diagram above.

We would like to continually develop these resources with up to date research, expert information and graphics to ensure they remain relevant and current and continue to reflect the knowledge and support that families need.

We hope you enjoy!



ADDITIONAL NOTES IF YOU ARE A PRACTITIONER OR A TRAINER USING THESE RESOURCES

All the agencies in Wales offer the opportunity for adoptive parents to attend ongoing group training sessions. It is an inherent aim that as parents come together and share experiences, they can continue to offer mutual support as they identify common issues and needs. This is an advantage for adoptive applicants and many stay in touch with the people they meet along the way. There is much benefit from a supported group environment and one that agencies promote as adoptive families often report feeling isolated once they have a child placed.

Group preparation also facilitates discussion of themes and issues which is often integral for adult learning. Any agency offering training should already be familiar with the way adults learn and plan their delivery accordingly.

Group training is not the only method for people to learn and develop, and there is an expectation there be other opportunities and guidance for parents in assisting with their ongoing learning and development. The principles underpinning the National Adoption Service training framework recognises this. Therefore, this development of online resources can be accessed by an individual as well as delivered by a practitioner to promote reflection and continuous learning.

DELIVERY

It is advisable that courses be run by two people, either an independent trainer and/or an adoption Social Worker and/or an experienced adoptive parent. This is particularly beneficial when emotive themes emerge in the session that impact on an attendee; one facilitator can offer individual support whilst their colleague continues with the training material. It is not an expectation that facilitators be qualified in training but at the least there is an expectation that the trainers have the necessary skills to manage a group and that they are fully versed in adoption themes.

The Modules have been developed to incorporate the principles of adult learning. They include a variety of learning methods to allow for individual learning styles with an emphasis on participation and reflection.

Trainers should also be committed to equality and diversity in training and ensure that the course is inclusive to all participants by planning for any physical, language, cultural and gender barriers. Courses work better when they are planned so as to take into account applicants' travel and work commitments, the time of day, childcare etc.

Modules



Health and Development Issues in Children who have been adopted

Most children placed for adoption will have had early experiences that would have adversely affected their health and development. This short course aims to give adoptive parents a jargon free, broad overview of what delayed development might look like. This information might help you to decide whether your child is exhibiting signs of a short-term problem which can be overcome over time within your family or needs more assessment and specific support.

The health and development issues in children who have been adopted is a huge area which underpins the other training modules along with attachment. Whilst we are conscious that we can only provide an introduction at this stage and in such a short course, we have also provided pointers to various other materials and resources which you may find helpful. These are to be found throughout the slides and notes sections and we have included some below:

The aims of the module are to help adoptive parents:

- Understand what is meant by child development and what 'normal development' looks like
- Consider the impact of early trauma and neglect and the effects on development
- Understand how to recognise delays in areas of development
- Consider some ideas about how to support children's development.

Attachment theory and its relevance for parenting adopted children

Attachment is a huge area of study and we recognise the significance of this for children who are adopted. You will already have had some training on this during your assessment process. We suggest it is always worthwhile revisiting and reflecting on what you have learnt to help you understand further why your child is behaving the way they do.

This module will help you think about what is needed for healthy development in children and how interruptions in this development affects the child and their ability to form relationships. This will also look at ways to help you understand and interpret your child's behaviour in order for you to review and adapt your parenting approach to meet your child's needs.

An understanding of attachment and developmental trauma can also help you to see how this may impact on you, yourself, as a parent. It may be useful to visit the Module on 'Looking after yourself' in this context.

The aims of the module are to help adoptive parents:

- Think about what Attachment Theory means
- Consider how attachment theory can help us understand how a child's brain develops
- Understand why this is important to children's development and behaviour later on
- Use knowledge and understanding to build relationships with their child.

Contact: what we mean and how will it promote my child's well-being

Children develop a sense of who they are from birth. This identity is built on their relationships with family members, other adults and children, friends and members of their community. To develop a secure sense of identity, children need to grow up in an environment where they feel loved and secure and where their family know about their personal background and history.

For an adopted child, they will have experienced separation and loss of significant people in their lives. The significance of this might not be obvious when they are young and need the security of an adoptive placement, however their developing sense of identity becomes more significant as they enter their teenage years and this is crucial for their overall well-being. Decisions that are made when a child is young and settling into the family will be hugely significant for their ongoing sense of who they are.

This module will help adopters to understand the crucial role of contact in promoting a child's well-being. It recognises the complexities of contact and the impact on both parents and children. It will help adopters to think about positive ways they can sustain meaningful contact for their child in those relationships that are significant throughout their lifetime.

The aims of the module are to help adoptive parents:

- Understand that contact is beneficial and assists with the development of identity and emotional development
- Appreciate how contact can help the developing child feel that their birth family, and their adopted family are all acceptable parts of their identity
- Accept the need to be open with your child
- Accept and understand that contact is a significant part of their life journey.

Life Journey Work for Adopters

All children who are unable to be cared for by their birth family need to have an understanding of their family history and unique journey. Life journey work is designed to help children make sense of their past and understand their current situation in order to help them move into the future. Life journey work should support a child's identity, promote his or her self-esteem, help give them a sense of belonging, well-being and support good mental health.

This module provides an opportunity to explore the principles of Life journey work with clear links to the toolkit produced by the National Adoption Service (NAS) and which is available on their website. It includes practical suggestions which can be used with children to help them understand their story.

The aims of the module are to help adoptive parents:

- Understand what Life Journey Work is and why this is important
- Appreciate the main messages that children need to understand from this work
- Consider the best people to help with this and what their main responsibilities will be
- Explore a range of tools which are to be found within the NAS toolkit

"It gave very useful, practical advice and guidance that will be invaluable during the next 18 years and more"

"It helped me with refining my child's life journey information and gave me new ideas as to how to keep the information flowing."

"This was a wonderful Life Journey course. I feel this will help me when sharing information with the children. Before I was concerned how to do this, now I feel more prepared."

Transitions

All transitions for adopted children can be tricky as they find change difficult for all sorts of reasons. It is important for parents to understand this in order to think about practical and emotional ways they can best support their child.

When we talk about transitions we could mean a child starting school, moving class, moving to secondary school or it could mean waking up, going to bed, getting up from the dinner table, finishing a book or a film...all these minor daily transitions are significant. This module helps you to reflect on these transitions and how the uncertainties that these trigger can often overwhelm a child. As parents it is important that you are able to recognise these triggers so you can help your child to trust and feel safe in their relationships and thereby increase their resilience and confidence for the major changes ahead.

The aims of the module are to help adoptive parents:

- Consider the particular needs of children who have experienced uncertainty when involved in transitions
- Reflect on their own experience of transitions
- Consider their role in being the secure base for a child and supporting them with regulating their emotions
- Learn some tips for helping children with transitions.

Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders

Many children who are adopted have a background of maternal misuse of alcohol. There is an increasing body of knowledge which recognises the impact of this on the developing brain and how this affects the child's development. This is an emerging picture and as adoptive parents you will need to seek more specialist help if you believe this is an issue for your child.

This module can only touch on the underlying factors as a brief introduction to this complex area. It was prepared with the help of the Adoption Medical Advisors in Wales.

The aims of the module are to help adoptive parents:

- Gain a general understanding of FASD
- Be able to judge with more confidence when it would be appropriate to seek an FASD assessment for your child
- Consider what it might mean for your family and your parenting style if your child does have FASD
- Know where to go for more information and advice.

Parenting our Teenagers

The teenage years are a time of great change. You provide a vital link for your teenager which is crucial for them to make a successful transition to adulthood, but there are inevitable challenges. We know that sometimes these challenges cause families to really struggle and parents to doubt themselves that they are doing what is best for their child.

This module will help you understand the implications of your child's history at this crucial stage, the particular brain development at this stage of life, and how their view of the world and relationships are changing. This means that they respond in different ways, possibly misinterpret social cues, exhibit younger behaviour and need significant emotional reassurance. However this is also a time of great opportunity for you and your child to develop new skills and resilience and to strengthen your relationship.

The aims of the module are to help adoptive parents:

- Learn about teenage brain development, adolescence and the impact on behaviour
- Explore some communication skills that can be used to maintain relationships
- Understand more about the importance of identity, social development and presentation in adolescence
- Consider contact with birth family members and the importance of relevant life journey work
- Understand more about the significance of social media for adopted teenagers.

Living with Challenging Behaviour

Adoption is not without its challenges and these are often as much for the child as they are for you as parents. It is these challenges that often reflect the child's unmet needs and are exhibited in their behaviour. It is critical that you as parents are able to interpret what these needs may be in order to understand how best to respond.

The module is suitable for all parents, particularly those with younger children who are keen to understand any emerging behaviours that they are concerned about.

Living with an adopted child can be an isolating experience and we encourage you to seek appropriate support from your network in order to help you be the best parent you can be.

The aims of the module are to help adoptive parents:

- Consider how they define challenging behaviour
- Reflect on the unmet needs beneath challenging behaviours
- Identify a range of strategies to address challenging behaviour.

Introduction to Non Violent Resistance (NVR) – Child to Parent violence

Child to Parent violence in adoption is something that has become more recognised in recent years. It is reflected in the many calls to the Helplines and cited as a major factor in adoption disruptions. If adopters are experiencing this it is important they seek advice and support as soon as possible.

This module is a brief introduction to a particular approach of responding to Child to Parent violence which has an evidence base and has received positive results. This should not be seen to replace the more in depth training sessions run by Partnership Projects on which it is based. This module has been created by an accredited practitioner in NVR.

This module will help adopters to consider the neurophysiological issues underlying aggressive and violent behaviour in adopted children. It will introduce a range of practical Non Violent Resistance strategies and explain the vital role of those people supporting families both in professional roles and as family members or friends.

The aims of the module are to help adoptive parents:

- Increase their understanding of why children who have experienced trauma may display aggressive and violent behaviour
- Consider how the brain works and how this affects a child's development and behaviour
- Identify where Non Violent Resistance fits in alongside other therapeutic interventions
- Understand the need to adapt own behaviour and communication in order to influence that of your child.

"Very helpful in terms of awareness building and strategy finding. The course also helped build more of a 'can do' attitude"

Looking After Yourself

We know that living with traumatised children can impact on a parent's well-being in many and often surprising ways. As a sensitive and attuned parent it is possible for adopters to soak up the child's trauma and this will affect his/her ability to think clearly and behave in the way they would wish. The child may resist attempts to love them and efforts to build trust may become exhausting. It is important adopters stay strong enough to help their children and look at means to stop this becoming overwhelming.

This module helps adoptive parents to understand that difficult feelings can be normal and also that by ignoring their own needs they are not helping the family dynamic and are not helping the situation for their child. In recognising the need to look after themselves, they can continue to be the best parent they can be.

The aims of the module are to help adoptive parents:

- Think about how living with an adopted child can impact on your well-being in surprising ways
- Understand what is meant by 'Secondary Trauma' and 'Blocked Care' and how self-awareness is really important
- Recognise if this is an issue for you or members of your family
- Consider ways for looking after yourself.

The Legal Framework for prospective adoptive parents and adoptive parents

Adoption is one of the most highly regulated areas in Social Care and it is often overwhelming and daunting for adoptive parents to think through all the different legal aspects at each stage of the adoption process.

This module is based on information which can be found in the Legal Framework for Adoption: The Prospective Adoptive Parent's Guide and covers each leg of the journey to becoming a family. Neither this module nor the Guide should be seen as a substitute to legal advice from a qualified solicitor should the need arise.

The aims of the module are to help adoptive parents:

- Understand the system for reviewing and visiting a child in your family
- Understand the definition of Parental Responsibility
- Know how to make an application for an Adoption Order
- Be familiar with your entitlement to adoption support services
- Understand the legal framework for post adoption contact.

Getting involved – a session for family members and friends

The decision to adopt will affect an adopters' whole family and social network. They will have heard them talking about adoption for a long time, and have shared the journey, eagerly waiting for the new family member to arrive. Your family and friends often want to play a significant role with your child as they embrace their new identity as grandparent, aunty, cousin, etc. You need their support too.

This module is designed to help your family and support network to understand a little bit of the journey that you have taken to reach this stage in your family life. However also and most importantly it will help them understand the child's journey up to now. This understanding will explain why you have been advised to parent the child in the way you do, but also help them understand how they can help you and your child in settling in and becoming a member of the family.

You as the adoptive parent can use this module as a resource to help you explain all of this to members of your family network. Alternatively, you can signpost them to where they can access this themselves.

The aims of the module are to help the wider family and friends network of adoptive parents:

- Have the opportunity to gain answers to any questions they may have
- Better understand the adoption process
- Consider the needs of children who are adopted and how these might be reflected in their behaviour
- Consider what adoption means for you all as a wider family and friends network.



Resources

Video clips/Films

Still Face clip

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apzXGEbZht0>

Sarah Naish clip re impact of abuse/therapeutic parenting

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-oWUZNhEXo>

Bryan Post resources on <https://postinstitute.com>

Dan Siegel "Hand Model of Brain" clip from youtube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gm9CIJ74Oxw>

Helen Oakwater "Lack of truth telling" presentation from youtube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2EX3G1-XOs>

BBC podcast The Adoption

Films:

Thunderbird film "My Life as a Courgette"

Disney Pixar film "Inside Out"

Youtube Film 'Removed'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lOeQUwdAjE0>

Instant Family

Books:

Child Development and Attachment

Nurturing Attachments (2008) by Kim Golding

Building the Bonds of Attachment (2006) by Daniel A Hughes

What Every Parent Needs to Know (2007) by Margot Sunderland

Blame My Brain (2013) Nicola Morgan

Attachment in Common Sense and Doodles (2013) by Miriam Silver

Attachment Trauma and Resilience (2002) by Kate Cairns

Stories

Holding on and Hanging in by Lorna Miles

No Matter What by Sally Donovan

An Adoption Diary (2006) by Maria James

Adoption Conversations (2008 and 2010) Renee Wolfs

Parenting therapeutically

Therapeutic Parenting in a Nutshell (2016) by Sarah Naish

The A-Z of Therapeutic Parenting by Sarah Naish

Brain Based Parenting (2012) by Dan Hughes and Jonathan Baylin

From Fear to Love (2010) by Bryan Post

Parenting with Theraplay (2017) by Vivien Norris and Helen Rodwell

The unofficial guide to adoptive parenting (2014) by Sally Donovan

School issues

Louise Bomber 2007 Inside I'm Hurting

Adoption UK (2017) Getting it Right for every child – guide for parents and separate guide for practitioners

FASD

Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Parenting a child with an invisible disability by Julie Brown and Mary Mather

For Family and Friends

Related by Adoption by Heidi Argent

Can I tell you about Adoption (2013) by Anne Braff
Brodzinsky

Resources for working on Feelings with children

The Bear Cards Feelings www.qcards.com.au

Feelings Flashcards Todd Parr

Inside Out Box of Mixed Emotions

Books to read with children:

There is no exhaustive list of books on adoption for children. We have listed a selection and suggest you seek more by some of these authors.

- The Huge Bag of Worries by Virginia Ironside
- Owl Babies by Martin Waddell
- The Family Book by Todd Parr
- How are you feeling today? By Molly Potter
- Nothing by Mick Inkpen
- Maybe Days by Jennifer Wilgocki and Marcia Kahn Wright
- Silly Billy by Antony Browne
- The great big book of feelings by Mary Hoffman and Ros Asquith
- I am too absolutely small for school by Lauren Child
- How to take the grr out of anger by Elisabeth Verdick and Marjorie Lisovskis
- Stories for feelings for children by Hilary Hawkes
- A Niffenoo called Never Mind by Margot Sunderland
- The day the sea went out and never came back by Margot Sunderland
- The frog who longed for the Moon to smile by Margot Sunderland
- How Hattie hated kindness by Margot Sunderland (and other titles)
- Rosie Rudey and the very annoying parent by Sarah Naish and Rosie Jefferies
- William Wobbly and the very bad day by Sarah Naish and Rosie Jefferies
- Charlie Chatty and the wiggly worry worm by Sarah Naish and Rosie Jefferies
- Sophie Spikey has a very big problem by Sarah Naish and Rosie Jefferies
- The Family Fairies by Rosemary Lucas
- Y Boked Wag (The Empty Pouch) by Eurgain Haf

Working in Partnership



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