



NAS 2020 Newsletter



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



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



Foreword from Suzanne

As I reflect on the past year, I'm delighted and thankful that I'm writing our National Adoption Service in Wales newsletter for you. As with previous years, I hope you find this issue both interesting and informative.

I hope it will also provide some reassurance of normality as we come to the end of what has been a very strange year. I keep calling it 'strange', but what I think I mean is difficult, bewildering and worrying! However, we have all adapted and carried on as best we can. For me that has meant doing my utmost to ensure our services have continued and I'm pleased to say that has happened.

We started the year with exciting plans to continue our improvement of adoption services across Wales but like many other organisations when coronavirus hit, we found ourselves having to make significant changes that we had not previously imagined. And those changes came at quite a pace. However, I'm pleased to say that in spite of all of the challenges presented by the pandemic, the National Adoption Service has adapted, and I'm so proud of that.

Before 2020, we had limited experience of virtual communication with service users. Traditionally a lot of the work we do has been carried out face to face, building relationships being a key aspect of all that we do. So, like many others around the world, we found this initial working adjustment a tricky one. Thankfully, through the hard work of the staff in the regions and the Voluntary Adoption Agencies, we've supported even more families as they begin, and continue, their adoption journeys – albeit virtually.

I have nothing but admiration for adopters, and others such as foster carers, who have gone to extraordinary lengths to make things happen for their children often while juggling working from home, home schooling and many other things. Equally, I have huge admiration for the detailed and skilled work being done by our staff in this challenging environment, as well as their adaptability and ingenuity in doing things differently.

Many of the improvements that we had envisaged are happening and as a result we are ending the year feeling optimistic about 2021. Not just because there is a vaccine on the horizon, but because our commitment to continuing to support you and improve services remains so strong.

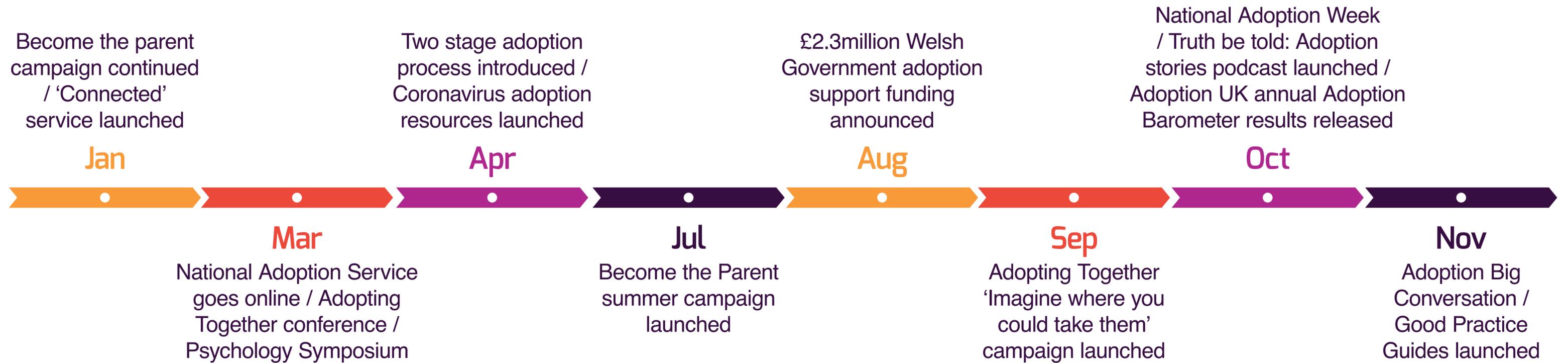
So I will finish by saying a huge thank you to all adopters and staff in our regions, local authorities and VAAs as well as our partners across Wales.

Thank you for your support throughout 2020. I wish you a very Merry Christmas and a peaceful, happy New Year!

Suzanne Griffiths

Director of the National Adoption Service for Wales.

2020 highlights



New for our adopters

Truth be Told: Adoption Stories podcast

Wales' very own adoption podcast, Truth be Told: Adoption Stories is available in both Welsh and English. An insightful and heart-warming listen, it follows 10 adopters with very different experiences as they discuss the whole process – from their first steps to adoption to post-adoption support.

[Listen now](#)

Y Boced Wag by Eurgain Haf

Y Boced Wag, written by Eurgain Haf (also in our Welsh podcast!) is the first, original Welsh language children's book about adoption. It follows Cadi the kangaroo as she goes in search of happiness and to fill her empty pouch. A useful resource for adoptive parents to explain what being adopted means and the happiness it brings.

[Buy now](#)

Adoption webinars

This National Adoption Week, we held a series of live lunch time webinars about adoption.

- **Meet the Adopters – Truth be Told: Adoption Stories podcast.** Meet some of the families from our Truth be Told: Adoption Stories podcast.
- **Proud Families – Supporting the LGBT+ community through adoption in partnership with Pride Cymru.** Meet members of the LGBT+ community who have been successfully matched through the adoption process.
- **Mabwysiadu'r Iaith Gymraeg – Adopting the Welsh language** Presented by S4C's Llinos Lee, explore the support, resources, and advice available for first-language Welsh speaking adopters and the role language plays in families.

[Watch again](#)

Life Journey Work

The Life Journey archive is an online resource to help children make sense of their past and help them move into the future. There are resources for adopters, foster carers, social workers, support staff, birth parents, adopted children and young people, as well as all professionals involved in the adoption process.

[Find out more](#)

Sammy the Sloth goes back to school

Rachel, a support worker from Adoption Mid and West Wales wrote 'Sammy the Sloth' to help children understand the changes they faced returning to school following the first COVID-19 lockdown.

[Read along](#)

Teulu the Bear

Meet Teulu the Bear, Western Bay's new mascot who is hoping to get back out to meet families as soon as it's safe.

[Meet Teulu](#)

Monthly Coffee Morning at St Davids

St. David's coffee mornings have moved to Zoom and are now held quarterly to comply with COVID-19 guidelines. These sessions are for families to discuss scenarios, difficulties, and challenges they face. The group is primarily led by adopter discussion as adopters have an abundance of invaluable, lived experiences to share with new adoptive families.

To find out more about attending these groups contact your social worker at St. David's or email info@stdavidscs.org.

Information packs in new languages

Vale, Valleys and Cardiff adoption service have expanded their information packs from Welsh and English to include three new languages, Arabic, Italian and Spanish.

[Request a pack](#)



New for our staff

Good Practice Guides

Focusing on changing practice in four key areas - Contact, Working with Birth Parents, Transition and Early Support and Adoption Support - our new Good Practice Guides, developed with AFA Cymru, are now available. We'll be offering furthering training in the New Year and beyond.

[Read more](#)

Life Journey Work

We've continued to improve how we provide Life Journey Materials for some time. Based on feedback, we've re-organised the materials to make them easier to use.

[Access Life Journey Work](#)

Pre-approval guides for prospective adopters

We've produced a new leaflet for prospective adopters to explain the assessment and approval process. This is linked to the '2-Stage process' which started on April 1st. Due to Covid, these leaflets will come into use next year when services begin to return to normal.

Post approval training modules for adopters

Based on feedback from adoptive parents, we have developed a suite of 12 post approval training modules. These provide adopters with additional knowledge and insight on the topics and areas of family life that adopters felt might be helpful - from health and development issues to contact and parenting teenagers.

[Find out more](#)

Vale of Glamorgan Council well-being service

The Vale of Glamorgan Council provide a wellbeing service for staff and have been hosting sessions online during the pandemic. Weekly communications are provided for all staff about changes to staff services and the measures taken by the council to respond to the pandemic.



What our adopters have to say

“The most important thing we would take away from our experience is to ensure you are kind to yourself. You are doing an amazing job and as long as your child feels safe and loved your job is done.”

Barnardo’s adopter

“So many people say to me, he’s lucky to have you. I think it’s the other way round. I’m very lucky to have him.”

[Gavin, single male adopter featured on BBC](#)

‘We’d heard so many scare stories, we’re hoping we can dispel that myth. It’s somewhat of a voyage of discovery about yourself – your values, your upbringing, what has shaped you into the person you are today.’

[Gareth and Clare from Truth be told: Adoption stories podcast interviewed by Metro UK](#)

“As a single parent adopter, I assumed that social services would be concerned with my finances, but it really wasn’t the case at all. I was not made to feel like I didn’t have enough or couldn’t give enough.”

[Emma from our Become the Parent campaign](#)

“It’s taken such a long time but now she tells me I’m her best mum. You can’t expect it to be instant. It’s like any relationship, you’ve got to put the effort in. Just give them time.”

Amanda, adopter featured on Truth be told: Adoption stories podcast

“I was 47 at the time, I was a widow, I had lost a child. I was working full time. I thought they wouldn’t consider me. But then I realised, why don’t I just go for it and see what happens? So that’s what I did.”

[Nadine, single widowed adopter interviewed by Wales Online](#)

“He has the sweetest nature as a child really. He’s fun. He makes me and my partner laugh at times in a way that I think I haven’t laughed like that for years. When you’re having a really hard time, and it massively tests your relationship, it really helps to remember that.”

[Ben, gay adopter interview by Wales Online](#)

[Read more stories of adopters](#)



Around Wales – updates from your local service



Adoption Mid and West Wales

The COVID-19 pandemic has meant we've had to adapt our way of working, with many of our activities now online. As well as moving our Information Evenings, Introduction to Adoption and other training courses online, the team have adapted to virtual working and are still carrying on with their work, undertaking adopter assessments, placing children and supporting families.

We have also grown our social media presence, branching out onto Facebook and Instagram where we ran our regional #AdoptionFirsts campaign, sharing memorable moments of our adopters becoming families.

Next year, we'll be adapting our support groups as well as launching a new quarterly e-newsletter for prospective adopters.

Social links: adoptionmwwales.org.uk | mabwysiaducgymru.org.uk @adoptmwwales @adoptmwwales @adoptmw_wales



North Wales Adoption Service

Despite the challenges of 2020, we've seen an increase of 15% in enquiries compared to 2019. We've also grown our team in the past year and welcomed 13 new staff members to NWAS.

During National Adoption Week, we launched our milestone cards and are looking forward to sharing these with our adopters.

Social links: northwalesadoption.gov.uk @mabwysiadugogleddcymru @nw_adoption



South East Wales Adoption Service

This year at SEWAS, we have taken the online world by storm. We launched our new website in June and joined Instagram (our second social media platform) in September, which means we're now able to easily reach new and existing adopters. Thanks to the hard work of all our staff, we have also created many videos and resources, so our training days and events are still available to adopters while being COVID-19 compliant.

Social links: southeastwalesadoption.co.uk @SEWASAdoption @sewasadoption



Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption

At Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption, we've been working consistently throughout the pandemic, embracing new ways of working to ensure services are maintained. Throughout the year we have continued to inspire people to consider adopting, as well as matching children and providing adoption support services for families.

Despite the uncertainties surrounding the pandemic we have continued to see a rise in enquiries. This year, we hosted nine information evenings (seven of which were virtual) and eight, fully booked training sessions.

During the pandemic, our Children and Young People Coordinator established a new way of connecting our adoption community. She now hosts a virtual quiz night for approved adopters and adoptive families, as well as facilitating a virtual toddler group and working with the Connected service to make sure children and young people get the support they need.

Social links: adopt4vvc.org @vvcadoption @vvcadoption



Around Wales – updates from your local service



Western Bay Adoption

The main success of 2020 is the way we've all rallied together during this challenging year. We've approved 56 adopters, matched 62 children and placed 55 children into loving homes, all whilst continuing to support existing adopters.

We've also seen a 38% increase in adoption enquiries. Our website traffic is also up by almost 30% with social media playing an ever-growing role in our work.

In 2021 we hope we can resume and build our presence in our local communities, engage even more with our adopters and continue to develop our audience - getting more people to start thinking about adoption who wouldn't have before and of course, support and participate in national activity.

Social links: westernbayadoption.org @WesternBayAdoption @BayAdoption #OurFamily



Barnardo's Cymru

Whilst 2020 has been full of challenges, we're happy to report an increase in enquiries. We've adapted to virtual working and now host all our training and support groups online.

As it's been a tough year, we've done our best to support our staff's emotional and physical wellbeing during lockdown, by staying connected to each other and providing a range of resources on emotional wellbeing. We're also currently planning our virtual Christmas party!

We are also very pleased to have welcomed Natalie Silcox to the team as our Assistant Head of Business. As a former foster carer and Safeguarding Social Worker, she's a great asset to the team.

Social links: barnardos.org.uk @barnardos @barnardos_uk @barnardos



St David's Children Society

This year at St. David's, we're particularly proud of how our team has responded to the challenges of COVID-19 whilst maintaining and expanding our services. Despite working remotely, we've seen an increase in enquiries. Whilst this can be a challenge with the team working across Wales, we have been able to increase enquiries without impacting on the experience for prospective adopters.

Social links: adoptionwales.org @StDavidsChildrenSociety @st.davids.children.society @AdoptionWales

adoptionuk

ar gyfer pob teulu sy'n mabwysiadu
for every adoptive family

Adoption UK Cymru

Despite the pandemic, 2020 has been a good year at Adoption UK Cymru. We discovered hidden talents amongst our staff and quickly moved from never having used Zoom and Teams to running successful online events daily. These ranged from 'Meet a wild animal' sessions for adopted children attending Connected groups, to 'The Big Adoption Conversation' where over 100 adoptive parents, adopted adults and professionals from right across Wales spent a morning having in depth conversations about adoption policy and practice.

Over 100 families now have support from the TESSA project and are telling us that they feel much more supported and able to understand the world from their child(ren)s point of view. Adopted children and young people aged 7-25 are now able to register to join in the Connect service wherever they live in Wales.

Social links: adoptionuk.org/wales @aukcymru @AUKCymru



Around Wales – updates from your local service



AFA Cymru – Association for Adoption and Fostering Cymru

As we've adjusted to the "new normal", we've shifted our training, conferences and special interest groups online. It's been a challenge but it's also encouraged us to be more creative.

In 2020, we developed four Good Practice Guides in four key areas:

Contact | Working with Birth Parents | Transition and early support | Adoption Support

These guides incorporate best practice examples from across Wales and can be used to inform and support practitioners in what needs to happen at each stage of a child's journey to make a positive difference to the lives of children and families.

Social links: afacymru.org.uk  [@AFACymru](https://twitter.com/AFACymru)

The Adoption Barometer 2020

Wales came out well in many areas of the barometer, reflecting the hard work and co-operation between all the partners who make up the National Adoption Service. There is still a lot of work to do – particularly for families with teenagers and who did not have the benefit of early support when the children were first placed.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and its impact on families and in school settings was highlighted by the Adoption Barometer report and the National Adoption Service will be developing plans for 2021 to ensure adoptive families in Wales know where to turn to for diagnosis and support when pre-natal exposure to alcohol is suspected.



Adopting Together Service

During lockdown, we have managed to organise the casting, filming, and broadcasting of our first ever TV advertisement for the Adopting Together Service (ATS). The campaign ran throughout September and October on ITV and social media. We are really pleased with how the campaign turned out.

We have had continued support from Welsh Government and NAS. ATS is now embedded in the NAS Best Practice Family-Finding Strategy. Referrals to the service include children identified as being priority children at time of placement order due to 1) medical need/large sibling groups/ BAME and 2) all children waiting over 9 months. We now have children referred from all over Wales who are waiting for life-long families.

We have placed five priority children in lockdown, which brings the number of children placed 19, in ATS since we went live. These children were matched through our first remote profiling session in May 2020. We have had three such events this year, with the most recent in October with 36 adopters attending, plus foster carers and children's social workers. These events have profiled up to 42 children and created understanding of real children waiting, as well as many strong links.

Other significant successes have been running our first child-specific campaigns (4 undertaken this year), and psychologist-led support groups and webinars.



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

Adoption Register Wales

This year the Adoption Register Wales has continued to grow in terms of its availability for adoptive parents who are able to identify potential matches of children waiting. We saw a significant increase both in the number of children on the register but also in terms of adopters who are choosing to register themselves which is really good news.

Despite the pandemic the ARW team at NAS has continued to work with staff in the regions to identify placements as well as leading on other important family finding activities such as the annual Adoption Activity Day and Adopter Exchange Days. Both of which were held at the beginning of the year and were successful in helping to reduce delays for a number of children. The team are already planning next year's events and hoping that as well as running some of these virtually there will be an opportunity to do some things face-to-face whilst continuing to observe government guidelines.



Thank you



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