



Together for Children

Adoption Service 6 Monthly Report

1 April – 30 September 2021

Together for Children's Adoption Service

This report covers the first 6 months of the Regional Adoption Agency, Adopt Coast to Coast which is a partnership 'hub and spoke' model between Together for Children, Cumbria and Durham County Councils. Adopt Coast to Coast launched on 1st April 2021 and the communications and marketing activity is centrally managed within the hub.

Staffing Updates

- Michelle Ash has remained the Adoption Team Manager and Adoption Agency Advisor during the period of this report.
- The Adoption Team's staffing complement has changed following the resignations of a part time social worker and a part time child and family worker. 2 full time social worker posts have been created; 1 social worker is in post and the other post is still going through the recruitment process and it is expected the new staff member will join the Team by January 2022.

Adopters Journey

Recruitment

- In this period, there have been 68 initial enquiries and 26 initial visits, the majority face to face. Teams remains available where necessary, however the Adoption Team have returned to face-to-face working recognising the importance of this to practice.
- Please refer to appendix 1 for Adopt Coast to Coast's marketing activity.

Stage 1

- Information, counselling and preparation courses (ICP) continued to be provided via Teams during this reporting period.
- Fostering for Adoption course 8 families attended the training.

Stage 2

- In this reporting period, 16 adopters were approved, which is 5 more than the same period in 2020/21.
- At the end of this reporting period, there were 6 prospective adopters in Stage 1 and 7 prospective adopters in Stage 2.

Panel

- Panel continues to operate within the regulatory framework.

- Panel Member's annual appraisals are scheduled throughout the year.
- Panel's annual training is booked for the next period.

Child's Journey

- In this reporting period 14 children had an ADM decision for a plan of adoption; this is a reduction on the 26 in 2020/21.
- 18 children have been granted a Placement Order which is a small increase on the 15 in 2020/21.
- 21 children have been matched at Panel, which is a tremendous achievement in this period and slightly more than half of the 2020/21 total of 39. Of the 21 children, 9 were placed with external providers.
- 23 Adoption Orders have been achieved, which is more than half the 2020/21 figure of 8.
- 24 children are living in their forever homes but not yet adopted so if these Adoption Orders are achieved before the 31st March 2022 then last year's figure will be improved upon.
- 4 children's plans changed away from adoption after the Placement Order was granted - all were as a result of family finding not being successful due to their age or complex needs.
- In this period 1 children experienced a disruption 3 weeks after moving to their new home, 0 whilst in introductions, and 0 after moving to their new home.

Family Finding

- Profiling events moved to a virtual format and they have been positively received. However, the return to face-to-face activity days and profiling events are being planned for early in 2022.
- Early permanence via Fostering for Adoption continues to be utilised and 1 child is currently in a foster for Adoption home. One child has returned home to a family member in this period.

Post Adoption Support

- Post-box arrangements there are 555 active post box files from a total of 823 and 34 new post box arrangements from April to September. The responsibility for post box is held within the Adoption Team alongside a post box administrator.
- The Adoption Team have had 49 contacts for post adoption support in this reporting period. Of this number, 37 had an assessment of support needs and 32 have had applications to ASF completed.

Post Adoption Support Services

Birth Family Support

The contract for the provision of Birth Family Support with ARC Adoption North East has seen a decrease in referrals. In this period 46 birth family members were engaged with the service; this is an increase on the 41 families in 2020/21.

Of this 46, 38 were ongoing referrals from the previous periods.

Between 1st April and 30th June 2021, ARC have worked with 40 birth family members in total, 37 ongoing birth family members carried over from the last quarter and 3 new birth family members. The large majority of this work took place with birth parents, with the exception of 3 birth grandparents and 1 birth sibling. 36 of these families engaged with ARC, there was no engagement from 1 family, and they are still trying to engage with another family.

Between 1st July and 30th September 2021 ARC have worked with 41 birth family members in total, 36 ongoing birth family members carried over from the last quarter and 5 new birth family members. The large majority of this work took place with birth parents, with the exception of 4 grandparents. 35 of these families engaged with ARC, there was no engagement from 2 families, and they are still trying to engage with another family.

The quarterly performance and monitoring meetings to embed practice were held on 23.07.21 and 01.11.21.

Non-Agency Adoption

Together for Children Adoption Sunderland continues to receive a steady flow of interest from stepparents in respect of in-family adoptions.

In this reporting period there have been:

- 27 enquiries, this is an increase as this is 4 more than the 23 of the previous year.
- 12 initial visits were completed
- 12 reports were completed, this is a decrease as it is 1 less than the 13 of the previous year.

Complaints

In this reporting period the Service received no complaints.

Update on Key priority areas for 2021/22:

- To continue to support the development and integration of practice in Adopt Coast to Coast that will work towards our shared vision.
- To work collaboratively with our partners in Coast to Coast to recruit, assess and approve adopters in a timely manner.
- To continue to improve the excellent record of the service regarding timeliness.
- To continue to enhance the therapeutic support that is provided by the team.
- To work with the hub in developing consistent feedback opportunities from prospective adopters, adopters and children to help shape Adopt Coast to Coast and the 3 spokes.

- To embed the monitoring of the birth family support contract with ARC and review the process for referrals to increase knowledge of this independent support.

Michelle Ash

Adoption Team Manager

25th October 2021

