



## **Cheshire East Council**

### **Adoption Service – Annual Report**

**1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023**

## **1. Introduction and Purpose of the Report**

This report fulfils the obligations in Adoption National Minimum Standards (2011) and Adoption Service Statutory Guidance (2011) Adoption and Children Act 2002 to report to the “executive side” of the local authority. This has guided the structure and information set out in the report below.

It is important to note that data and information within this report is accurate as of 31 March 2023. Plans for children are dynamic and develop every day and the picture will have changed at the point that this report is read.

## **2. Working with Cheshire East Council**

Since going live, Adoption Counts has had responsibility to discharge Cheshire East’s responsibilities as an Adoption Agency. The working relationship between the LA and the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) has been fundamental to the success so far of the partnership working and has been embedded at all levels. The Director of Children’s Social Care sits as a member of the Adoption Counts Board. The Head of Service with a link to adoption is invited to attend the quarterly operations group meetings. These provide an important opportunity for operational issues to be raised and shared with equivalent managers from the other partner LAs and with the senior managers in the RAA. There is a shared ownership of the agenda and a range of issues are discussed with very positive communication and outcomes as a result.

The Operations Manager linked to Cheshire East is in regular contact with the Head of Service linked to adoption to discuss performance over the period and any issues or themes that may be arising. This is very much a two-way dialogue, with Cheshire East ensuring that the RAA is fulfilling its responsibilities as well as the RAA being able to offer feedback to the LA about any emerging themes or issues in care planning or working together.

One of the Team Managers within the Cared for Children and Care Leavers service attends the monthly Adoption Counts tracking meetings and is an active participant. The tracking meetings are an opportunity for scrutiny and performance management following the whole cohort of Cheshire East children where there is or may be a plan of adoption including:

- Children now adopted to ensure that life story books and later life letters are received.
- Children placed for adoption but not yet adopted to track the progress of placements and the timeliness of adoption order applications.
- Children where a family has been identified to ensure that there is no avoidable delay in the shortlisting and matching process and throughout the planning of introductions and placement.

- Children subject to a Placement Order where a family has not yet been identified. This cohort is rigorously discussed to ensure that the family finding strategy is being carried out effectively and is the forum for escalation of agreements regarding family finding within the RAA, other LAs or in the voluntary sector.
- Children in care proceedings where there may be a plan of adoption as their final care plan. These children are tracked closely both in the LA and the RAA to ensure that there is timely progression of the plan from Agency Decision that they Should Be Placed for Adoption, through profiling and the identification of a family.
- Children under the Public Law Outline where there may be a plan of adoption should care proceedings be initiated.
- Children requiring legal revocation of placement orders and “Should be placed for adoption” rescinds.

We are currently tracking 126 children upon our tracker, during this period of time we have tracked between 73 – 126 children each month. There is no doubt that the efficacy of these meetings is improved when care planning representatives from the local authority (LA) attend as this ensures a robust joint approach.

The team manager in the RAA linked to Cheshire East also attends the monthly tracking meetings and she, alongside the three dedicated Family Finders, regularly work in Cheshire East office bases alongside the social work teams, attend legal gateway meetings and final care planning meetings to provide advice and a view where required. Links between Cheshire East and the RAA seem to be embedded well.

### 3. Performance

#### 3.1 Children made Subject to Should be Placed for Adoption (SHOBPA) decisions

Number of children made subject to SHOBPA decisions per month							
Cheshire East	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	
	5	4	3	1	2	3	
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	Total
	4	1	1	3	1	1	<b>30</b>

All of the children made subject to a SHOBPA decision within this period are the subject of Court proceedings and had the decision made following all other options having been ruled out or discounted by the LA.

### 3.2 Children subject to Placement Orders

Number of children made subject to Placement Orders per month							
Cheshire East	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	
	0	1	4	0	1	2	
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	Total
	4	2	1	2	1	3	<b>21</b>

Out of the twenty one Placement Orders granted within the period:

Fourteen children have subsequently been placed for adoption. Twelve of the children were placed below the A2 threshold of 121 days, with two further children (siblings) placed within six months.

The care plan for one of the children is to remain in the care of his foster carer – the foster carer is in the process of being assessed as an adopter, approval panel is scheduled in May.

The care plan for one of the children is to be placed with the adopters of an older sibling. The adopters are currently being assessed as second time adopters.

The placement orders for the remaining five children were granted towards the end of this period, family finding is ongoing with potential links identified for three of the children.

The number of both SHOBPA's and Placement Orders within this period have increased in comparison to data from last year (13 and 13 respectively).

### 3.3 The Number of Children who had a Change of Plan in the Period

There have been two children who have had a change of plan in this period. The children are a sibling pair aged 3 years and 1 year who were placed with extended birth family, which is a good outcome for the children.

### 3.4 Number of Children Placed for Adoption during period.

Number of children placed for adoption per month							
Cheshire East	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	
	1	0	1	0	1	2	
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	Total
	0	2	2	3	2	4	<b>18</b>

94% of the children placed for adoption were placed with prospective adopters approved by Adoption counts.

There were eighteen children placed for adoption during this period. The A10 measure for this cohort of children is 569 days and the A2 measure is 153 days.

Eleven of the children were placed outside of the A10 measure (average time between a child entering care and moving in with adoptive family) It is worth noting that we are continuing to see court timetabling for care proceedings taking longer for a number of children. This therefore has had an effect upon the overall A10 timescales. One of the children had an A1 measure of 1396 days due to complex care proceedings which were adjourned / appealed on several occasions. Seven children were placed within the A10 measure, their average was 340 days which is well below the national target.

Thirteen out of the eighteen children were placed within the A2 measure, timeliness for these thirteen children is excellent with an A2 average of 79 days.

For the remaining children:

Prospective adopters were identified for one of the children within timescales, however, a sibling was born at the end of proceedings and following further assessment, the care plan was to place the siblings together. His A2 measure was 266 days. The remaining four children were identified as having very complex health and developmental needs. Their A2 measures were 177, 177, 174, 935 days respectively.

### 3.5 Number of children adopted

Number of children made subject to Adoption Orders per month							
Cheshire East	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	
	2	2	0	0	0	2	
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	Total
	0	4	1	0	0	0	<b>11</b>

For this cohort, the average number of days for A10 is 659 days, which is over the threshold of 426 days. There are nine children outside of the threshold. Eight of the children experienced extended care proceedings, their A10 measures were 505, 505, 697, 812, 815, 1207, 458 & 504 days. One child had a measure of 1683 days as further assessments of longer term care needs were required prior to formulating a plan of permanence.

For A2, the average number of days for this cohort is 285 days which is over the threshold of 121 days. Seven of the children had a decision made about their match with their adoptive families within the threshold. The A2 average for these children was 81 days.

The four children placed outside of the are the children detailed above. Their A2 measures are: 462, 501, 1448, and 159 respectively.

As can be seen from the above information, despite robust family finding it has taken longer to achieve permanence for a higher number of children during this period. This is for several reasons, care proceedings for a number of the children have taken longer.

We have seen an increase in the number of birth parents applying for leave to contest placements orders and in family members coming forward to be assessed at a later stage in proceedings. A number of the children also had very complex needs, were older in terms of adoption or were part of a sibling group. In order to achieve good outcomes for these children, it was important to ensure families were found who had the understanding, skills and capacity to meet their long term needs. For these children timeliness needs to be balanced against achieving the right outcome. It is extremely positive that permanence through adoption has been achieved for each child. It is important to state whilst overall timeliness has been affected by the length of time it has taken to place these children, the majority of children with less complex needs have been placed and adopted well within recommended thresholds and a good outcome has been achieved for all children placed for adoption within this period.

The numbers of children placed and adopted in this period are similar to the numbers from the same period last year, 17 children were placed and 14 children adopted 1.4.20 - 31.3.21.

### **3.6 Early Permanency**

Six children have been placed in an early permanence placement during this period with fostering for adoption carers, temporarily approved by Cheshire East's Agency Decision Maker as foster carers under regulation 25A of the Care Planning Regulations on 12.5.22, 28.10.22, 2.11.22, 12.1.23, 3.2.23 and 10.3.23.

### **3.7 Disruptions**

There has been one adoption disruption in this period, a 2 year old who was placed for adoption on 25/8/22 with the placement ending on 31/8/22. A disruption meeting was held and concluded the disruption could not have been predicted and the end of the placement was nothing to do with the child or his needs.

## **4. Quality of Reports**

CPRs (child permanence reports) are audited as routine by the relevant Adoption Counts Team Manager prior to SHOBPA consideration and then again by either the Team Manager, Family Finder or Senior Practitioner before matching panel. This is to ensure that CPRs are graded as being 'Good' as a minimum and that the final report is submitted to panel rather than reports still requiring amendments. The CPR is then graded by the panel considering the match.

Six child permanence reports (CPR's) audits have been completed during this period. Of those:

Four were graded as in need of improvement and two as good at point of SHOBPA.

From these CPR's three were grading as good at point of panel match. Panel gradings for the remaining three CPR's are not available as of yet, as we have not been in the position to proceed to matching panel for these children within this period. To ensure the CPR's reach the grading required of good by matching panel, one to one support and advice will be given to ensure CPR's contain all information required as a lifelong document for the children.

Rating	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	In Need of Improvement	Total
<b>SHOBPA</b>	1	14	0	4	19
<b>Panel</b>	5	7	1	4	17

2CPR's were not given a grading

CPR reports presented to adoption panel consider gradings at the child's match, as opposed to the gradings prior to matching panel from the team Managers. This was due to, on occasion, there being a discrepancy between an auditor's grading compared to that of panel. The figures presented above are based on panel gradings, given their independence and impartiality.

This evidences that the new quality assurance process is now well embedded in practice and the overall quality of CPR's has improved. Support and training is offered to support children's social workers in completing children's CPR's. This includes specific training that can be delivered to teams, one to one support with social workers and advice with a robust quality assurance system with the ADM and Panel Adviser to SHOBPA.

## **Recruitment of Adopters**

### **5.1 Approvals**

There were 42 families approved as adopters during the first six months of this year (1.4.22 – 30.9.22) and 37 families approved as adopters during the last six months of this year (1.10.22 – 31.3.23) 79 families approved in total. This is a decrease of 8 families (9%) from the year before when 87 families were approved.

At the end of the period (31<sup>st</sup> March 2023) there were 42 families in Stage One, 8 in between Stage One and Stage Two, and 35 in Stage Two; a total of 85 families in the assessment process. There were 86 families in the assessment process at the end of last year so this evidences the level of business is maintained at a relatively consistent level. This is positive and is a strong position from which to enter the new year.

Enquiry numbers have significantly increased with 803 in first 6 months of year and 1013 during second half of the year, 1816 for the full year. This is 388 more than the

previous year where there were 1428 enquiries in total. This is the largest number of enquiries we have ever seen and continues the trend from last year. From the feedback we have collated, the increase in enquiries seems to be due to our social media campaigns alongside the messages from the #YouCanAdopt campaigns. It is worth noting that a high percentage of the enquiries are just asking for information packs and not proceeding with an assessment, this could indicate that they are not yet ready to proceed but are exploring adoption earlier than they perhaps would have in the past.

<b>SOURCE</b>	<b>2021/2022</b>	<b>2022/2023</b>	
<b>Online (includes Google Ads/organic Searches)</b>	<b>1058</b>	<b>1373</b>	
Local Council referral (online and offline)	103	91	
Other	16	10	
Recommendation from friend and family	32	36	
Previous Adoption Enquiries	76	93	
<b>Social Media</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>182</b>	
Second Time Adopters	11	15	
Outdoor Advertising	7	5	
Event/Info Stand	1	9	
Radio	4	2	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1428</b>	<b>1816</b>	

Numbers of initial visits have remained constant, with 74 taking place in the first 6 months of the year, 97 during the last six months, so 171 in total. This is a decrease of 2 from the previous year (2021 – 22) when 173 initial visits took place and 214 in the year 2020 – 21.

Registrations of Interest received in this financial year (the formal application to be assessed as prospective adopters) have also decreased by 13%, 43 in first 6 months, 64 in second part of the year, 107 in total from 123 the previous year (2021 – 22).

Our performance should still be viewed in the context of an ongoing national shortage of adopters. It suggests that the strategies implemented through our Recruitment and Marketing plan continue to be effective in terms of our adopter sufficiency, although of course we are not complacent and continue to strive to increase our numbers further.

We will continue to raise the profile of our agency to achieve adopter sufficiency for our children across our five local authorities, with a surplus to generate income and offset the cost of inter-agency placements for our children who need them.

Monthly Adopter Sufficiency meetings continue with the Head of Service, the Operations Managers, the Recruitment and Enquiries Manager and the Marketing Officer meeting to plan and review our progress.



## 5.2 Referrals to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)

No referrals were made to the IRM during this period.

## 5.3 Partner/step-parent adoption enquiries

Our Recruitment Team received 48 partner / step-parent adoption enquiries in the first six months of the year and 57 in the second half of the year, 105 enquiries in total. This is an increase of 17% on the previous year when 90 enquiries were received in total.

<b>Enquiries</b>	<b>1.4.22 – 31.3.23</b>	
<b>LA</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Approx. Percentage</b>
<b>Cheshire East</b>	26	25%
<b>Total</b>	105	

10 enquiries resulted in an office meeting taking place with a social worker, for information gathering and advice, in the first six months of the year. 13 enquiries resulted in an office meeting taking place in the second half of the year. 23 office meetings took place in total. This is 5 less than the previous year when numbers rose dramatically that year following the pandemic.

<b>Office Meetings</b>	<b>1.4.22 – 31.3.23</b>	
<b>LA</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Approx. Percentage</b>
<b>Cheshire East</b>	10	43%
<b>Total</b>	23	

7 applications were accepted during the first six months of the year, and 7 in the second six months, 14 in total.

	<b>1.4.22 – 31.3.23</b>	
<b>LA</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Approx. Percentage</b>
<b>Cheshire East</b>	3	21%
<b>Total</b>	14	

## 5.4 Information events

Before the pandemic, these were held on a fortnightly basis at locations around the region. Since then, these events have been held 'virtually', currently on a bi - weekly basis, where potential adopters watch from their own homes.

These have continued to be very successful indeed.

We had 136 families attending information events in the first six months of the year, and 172 in the second six months, 308 in total. This is an increase of 26 families (9%) compared to last year when 282 families attended events.

## **5.5 Training groups**

During the last 12 months, 3 day adopter preparation training groups have been held on a monthly basis, with additional tasks/modules being given to applicants to do in the evenings. These are now held in person, replacing the virtual sessions which were presented just after the pandemic.

93 families attended these groups during this period, with 36 attending the first half of the year and 57 in the second half of the year. This figure is 18% less than the previous year when 114 families attended training.

Regular reviews of how the training is delivered have taken place and a work group has been set up to ensure information given is constantly up to date.

## **5.6 Marketing and Recruitment Campaigns**

Our marketing activity remained consistent this year. We continued with a high presence of digital and social media advertising, and continued with outdoor advertising (billboards, etc.), radio advertising, magazines specifically for certain communities/locations, leaflet drops, etc.

We also commissioned the Manchester Evening News for set time periods of online/media advertising. This has been very successful as not only was there targeted Facebook advertising, but there was also a high additional digital presence.

We have continued with targeted Facebook advertising to specifically reach out for members of the Black Community to come forward and think about adoption, and we attended specialist certain events with this aim in mind.

This year was the first since the pandemic that we were able to return to attending outdoor public events, and our attendance at these included Pride events, BobExpo, etc.

The national #YouCanAdopt summer campaign took place this Summer, and the website and social media hashtag #YouCanAdopt was used widely. We were able to use the resources from this campaign to assist us with online and social media marketing.

Additional marketing was booked for National Adoption Week, which took place between 17th – 23rd October 2022. We ran our own advertising during the entire campaign period, to go alongside the national campaign, using the same message, content, and useful podcasts, aiming to make Adoption Counts stand out amongst our competitors and drive applicants to our website.

## **6 Compliments, comments and complaints**

<b>Description - compliments</b>
Feedback from an adopter who advised their adoption support social worker had been fantastic.
Positive feedback received from prospective adopters about their supervising social worker.
Feedback from an adopter who said their supervising social worker has been excellent with the right balance of pragmatism, practical advice, and sensitivity. They have always found her to be approachable and non-judgmental.
Positive feedback from someone attending Friends & Family training. 'The session was very well put together and delivered, set everyone at ease while sharing naturally difficult by appropriate material and helped prepare families for long-term support.'
Praise for Adoption Support SW's for their 'incredible support' in helping with therapeutic approaches to parenting
Feedback for Adoption Support SW who supported an adoptive parent on several occasions by visiting the child's school to try and educate them on how to deal with adoptive children and trauma.
Positive feedback from a new adopter regarding the transition process, from both her point of view and that of the foster carer.
<b>Description – complaints</b>
A complaint from a company director in relation to payment processes for therapeutic work commissioned for children and families. The complaint was upheld in part.
Complaint from a potential adopter who had a match with a child withdrawn post shortlisting and approval. They criticized the Adoption services lack of transparency during decision making. The complaint was not upheld
A concern raised from an adopter regarding the care the child's previous foster carers had provided for the child. This included cancellation of health appointments, the possessions and clothes passed on during introductions, and the fact they did not keep a memory box for the child. The concerns were passed on to the Local Authority and the independent fostering agency to explore further.

A complaint from an adopter who had experienced an adoption disruption. The adopter expressed unhappiness regarding the levels of support and tone of communications. The adopter stated they had experienced a lack of honest, transparent information and advised they were unhappy with the way the Local Authority had managed the breakdown.

## **7. Practice Developments in Adoption Counts**

### **Family Finding**

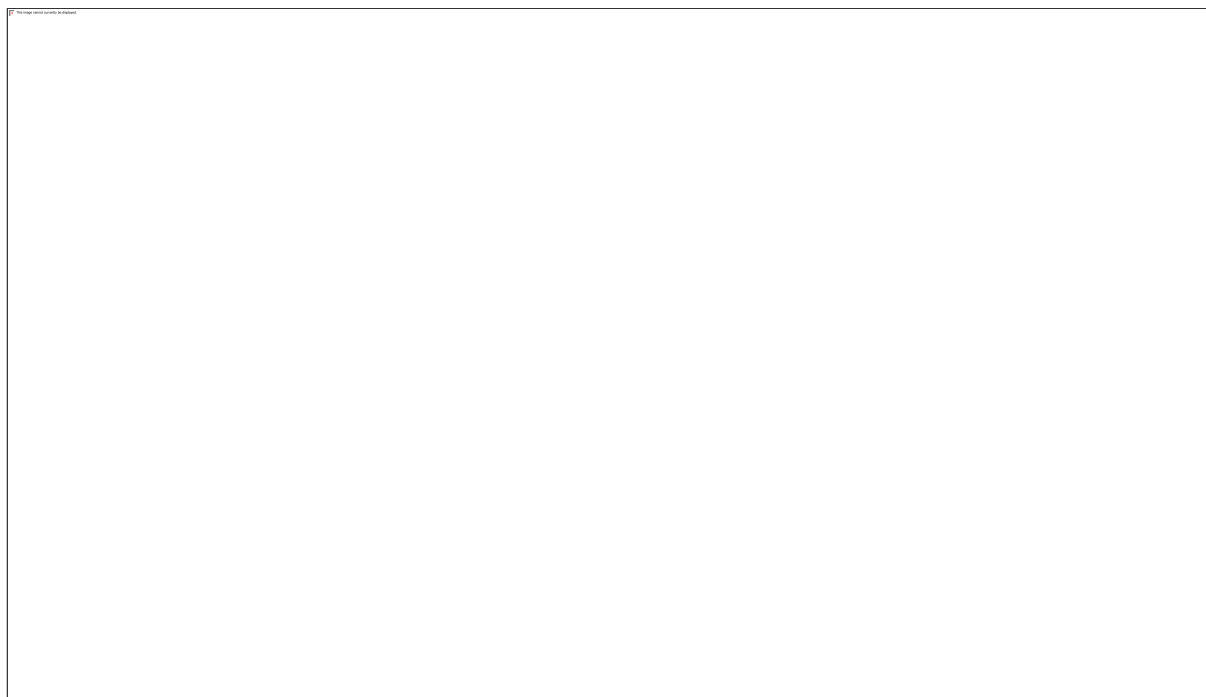
We continue to hold monthly strategic matching meetings which are attended by all our family finders and recruitment and assessment social workers. These meetings enable us to profile all our priority children (children with a final hearing in the next month and children with a Placement Order) to ensure links and matches are prioritised for all our children waiting. We are currently in the process of completing a review of our strategic matching process to ensure best outcomes for all our children and prospective adopters.

In addition to strategic matching we will also be working in partnership with CoramBAAF from April 2023 to pilot a collective matching project.

Collective matching is a strategic solution to family finding that builds on existing individual practice and aims to use our supply of adopters as efficiently as we can to maximise the number of children we find families for.

We will be applying this to all our priority children we are aiming to match and using the data supplied by CoramBAAF to inform our strategic matching processes.

*The image below shows two sets of adopters and two sets of children and the perceived 'strength' of the matches between them.*



*Under current practice, the likelihood is that the 'very good' match would be pursued, leading to only one match being made. Taking a Collective Matching approach, we would progress the two 'good matches' so that two matches are made.*

The table below compares the characteristics of the traditional approach to family finding with those of Collective Matching:

Traditional approach	Collective Matching
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Family finding is done on an individual basis – a child is allocated to a social worker and they search for appropriate families for that child</li><li>• It tends to maximise the number of 'best' matches made – social workers look for the strongest possible match</li><li>• We are already using technology to support us in searching for families</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A centralised approach to identifying potential matches</li><li>• It aims to maximise the number of children for whom a match is found</li><li>• It uses technology to look at all the children and all the families and assess the 'strength' of each possible match</li><li>• It would replace the initial sifting step of family finding by identifying potential matches for each child, so</li></ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practitioner and QA role are essential in determining whether a match is suitable</li> <li>• Adopters can choose not to adopt a child</li> </ul>	<p>that family finders do not have to review multiple PARs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practitioner and QA input would remain in place so that matches are still suitable</li> </ul>
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We have continued to hold adoption picnics and have held 2 virtual picnics where we profiled children using a range of video clips. Adopters can access these video clips of children for a limited period via a secure Adoption Counts website on our SharePoint site. During this period we have featured 17 children with 54 households attending resulting in 15 expressions of interest. One match resulted from this event for a sibling pair, both children are now placed. We had planned to hold a face to face picnic in February 2023 but this did not go ahead as all bar 2 of the children we were intending to profile were linked / matched. We will be holding a face to face picnic event in June.

Our adopters have also been invited to and attended several profiling events and we feature our children at a regional activity events. We worked in partnership with the NW RAA consortium to hold an adoption picnic in March, this resulted in several EOI's for our children. We are working with CoramBAAF to hold an activity day in Manchester in April 2023.

The family finders have continued to meet on a quarterly basis as a group to discuss practice issues and developments. During our last three development days, we have discussed a range of issues including performance data, sharing best practice, early permanence, peer support, race and ethnicity and matching considerations. Our next development day will be a joint event with our recruitment and assessment colleagues in June.

The Adoption Counts annual report for 21/22 highlighted that our children who wait longer are continuing to wait. It was agreed that we needed to look at each individual child to ascertain the reasons behind the delay and to reflect on any approaches that may reduce further delay. The themes which have arisen from the meetings taken place to date include:

- Delays in court timetabling which have impacted upon care planning decisions.

Courts have directed additional independent social work assessments to be completed both in terms of parenting assessments and in relation to assessments of connected carers.

For several children connected carers have come forward at a late stage in proceedings.

- Completion of sibling assessments.

A sibling group of three experienced a break down in introductions. Further assessment of the children's needs was subsequently completed with a recommendation to place each child separately. The importance of understanding the effects trauma bonds and adversity can have upon sibling relationships was highlighted.

- How we can enable prospective adopters to gain practical parenting experience and a real understanding of children's lived experiences.

We continue to work in partnership with other regional adoption agencies within the northwest and attend the northwest early permanence consortium meetings held on a quarterly basis. We have worked together as a group to offer 6 weekly peer support groups / meetings for all our early permanence carers. A member of our staff has been appointed to develop national early permanence procedures in line with the strategy to promote early permanence opportunities for children aged 4 and over.

A national practice guide with resources for early permanence is in the process of completion.

We will be offering the opportunity for ten of our early permanence carers to receive individual mentoring via a peer support system offered via Adoption UK during 2023.

## **Recruitment and Assessment**

Enquiry numbers to assessment data relating to numbers and approved adopters is detailed in section 5.1. The conclusions we can draw from this data is that we have approved the least number of adopters since Adoption Counts became operational in 2017, we have approved 79 adopters in this reporting time period.

Performance in relation to timescales for Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the assessment process are as follows:

- Stage 1 - 27% were within timescales.
- Stage 2 - 70% were in timescales.

The delays in stage one have been related to statutory checks taking longer, the additional counselling references that are now requested following the Cumbria CSPR, overseas checks causing delay and previous partner references. In relation to systems and processes the Business Support Manager has reviewed these and support from one of the Team Managers has got us back on track in completing statutory checks in a timely way. This will not account however, for the delays in some checks as detailed above.

Adopter tracking meetings have (currently) been introduced to focus on the timeliness of Stage 1 & Stage 2 assessments whereby individual social workers report on the key dates and progress in relation to assessments being completed. The impact of these

meetings will be measured each month to ensure any barriers to meeting timescales are considered.

Applicants withdrawing from the assessment process were all considered appropriate by the agency and the adopters, with reasons being; change of circumstances, reflective learning changed the adopter's perspective and matching considerations not correlating with the needs of the children waiting.

Recruitment and Assessment social workers target (FTE) is to complete 8 assessments per year. We have reviewed this figure in line with the caseload weighting for a FTE social worker as this was previously 9. This was compared with other RAAs in the region and was felt to be a realistic achievement.

Sufficiency meetings focus on the number of adopters needed to meet the needs of children with a plan of adoption, if this needs to be reviewed strategically plans will be put in place to consider the number and type of adopters needed to meet the needs of children.

In relation to assessments, Adoption Counts have six staff who are trained in Adult Attachment style interview (ASI) training. One is an Operations Manager one Advanced Practitioner and four social workers. ASI interviews are completed families in assessment if it is considered this tool can enhance the assessment. The attachment style interviews are a model of practice that offers a conversational style interview which questions adoptive applicants about their current relationships with their partner (if a couple), family of origin and with two adults close to the applicants. The interview looks at general styles of relating to other adults in terms of self-reliance and how easy it will be for them to get close and be at ease in accessing help. This will be a clear indicator of how as adoptive parents they will reach out for support during the parenting of a child or young person through adoption.

In relation to the quality of assessments this is high on the agenda. The robust QA system in place whereby Prospective Adopter Reports (PARs) are quality assured by Team Managers, Panel Adviser and Panel chairs. This three tier process ensures that assessments are thorough, child centred and clear in adopters skills and abilities to meet the needs of children.

Approved adopters are given the opportunity to complete an Interactive profile to demonstrate their skills and abilities in offering a child permanence through adoption. This enhances the matching process and hopefully assist those who wait longer for a match as family finders for children will see a different dimension to them. Some approved adopters are reluctant to go down this path however, social workers are encouraging in this way of profiling.



Preparation Training continues to be delivered face to face by social workers within the Recruitment and Assessment teams along with colleagues from family finding and adoption support. This offers a holistic view of adoption and co-production evidenced from the three areas of service.

We will continue with all R&A SWs as part of the Preparation Training rota to facilitate the training with the support of their colleagues.

Top up Training is offered for prospective adopters in Stage 2 of the approval process and for approved adopters, is jointly delivered by the recruitment and assessment team, family finding team and adoption support. This is a comprehensive programme of training for applicants and adopters increasing their knowledge and preparation of parenting their child or children through adoption. Feedback from approved prospective adopters both pre-and post-approval is positive. We plan that all prospective adopters will attend the Race and Ethnicity Training to not only widen their thoughts and understanding of parenting a child from a different ethnicity but also about parenting children having a deeper knowledge and acceptance of diversity.

**Nicola Booth**

Operations Manager

30.9.2023

Adoption Support

**Adoption Service – Annual Report**

**01.04.2022 – 31.03.2023**

## **Adoption Support**

Adoption Support remains integral to our delivery for adopted children, new and established adoptive families, birth families and adopted adults, recognizing the lifelong journey. We remain committed to supporting families in the early transition stages of a placement, through to Adoption Order and beyond. We recognize that new challenges may emerge throughout a child's life requiring varying levels of tailored support to ensure successful outcomes for children. We have based our service delivery on a graduated approach, with our Adoption Psychology Service forming the foundation of our delivery.

### **Adoption Psychology (Centre of Excellence for Adoption Support)**

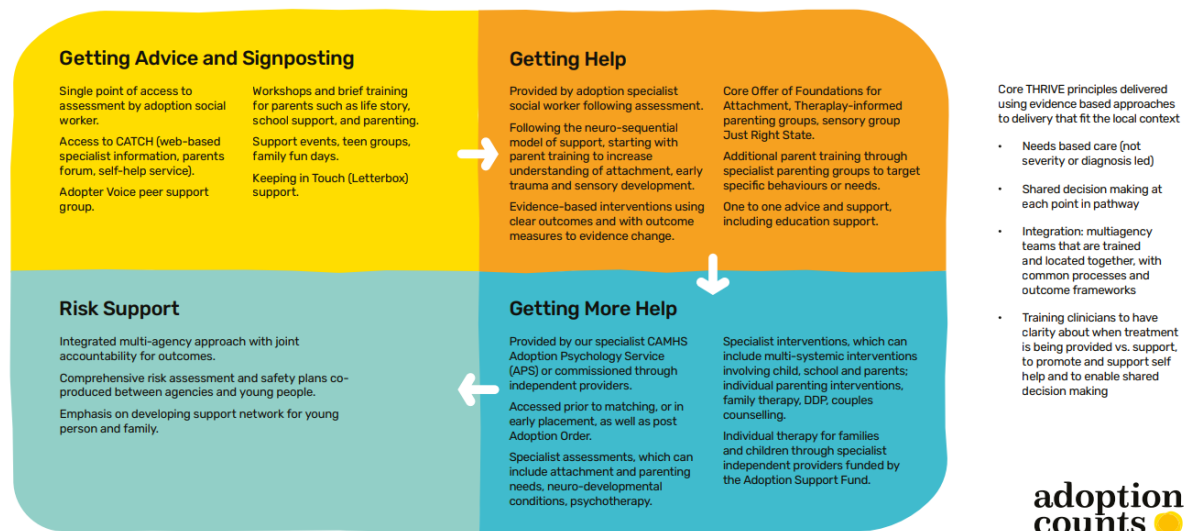
#### **Service Overview**

The short-term funding for this service has been agreed by the board until March 2023, with negotiations with Clinical Commissioners to secure longer term funding on a joint basis moving forward. Due to a freeze on funding any new services during the pandemic there has been no opportunity to present this business case to CCG's until this year. This process is underway with our Greater Manchester and Cheshire East NHS commissioning colleagues and a renewed request will be made this year.

**The Adoption Psychology Team** is an assessment, consultation and therapeutic CAMHS and Educational Psychology partnership service for adopted children, their parents, carers and workers. It is a partnership between Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, One Education and Adoption Counts. The service is multidisciplinary including clinical psychology, therapeutic social work, child psychiatry and educational psychology.

The service enables a coordinated approach to the mental health and emotional wellbeing and develops the skills of the social work teams through consultation, training and joint working. It is consultation and referral-based and offers timely and flexible appointments. The updated iThrive model below shows how the Adoption Psychology and Adoption Counts Adoption Support Service fit together.

## i-THRIVE Model of Care - Adoption Support



### AP Service outcomes

1. Adopted children have good mental health
2. Adopted children have healthy relationships
3. Adopted children have stable placements
4. Adopted children and their parents have a positive experience of care and support

### Service Aims

Children who have a Placement Order and an adoption plan are offered, where necessary, assessment and intervention to support decision making and make recommendations to inform their placement needs. Transitions consultations has been developed to identify the right support pre- and early placement.

Adopted children and families have access to assessment and interventions to improve their relationships, emotional and behavioural regulation and engagement with learning.

Children and families placed in their adoptive placement can access group-based approaches as part of an early intervention package to enable families to have a good start on their adoption journey.

Children who have been placed in their adoptive placement are able to access specialist assessment and intervention up to age 12.

Adoption social workers, family finders and children's social workers can access Specialist Consultation for adopted children up to the age of 18 for advice and signposting.

Prospective adopters and adoptive parents are offered training, consultation and evidence-based interventions to enhance their understanding and management of the psychological needs of children who have experienced abuse and neglect.

Adoption Social Workers are offered training and consultation to enhance their understanding, assessment skills and knowledge of attachment, mental health difficulties and interventions

The adoption psychology annual report is available which details the services offered, take up from families and measurable benefit of the services delivered.

The **Multi Agency Resource Panel**, continues to consider complex cases that require Adoption Support Fund (ASF) match funding from the Local Authority. This has enabled more consistent and transparent decision making across the region. The panel consists of representative from CAMHS, Virtual Schools, and Social Care, and enables professional challenge and support to make the best use of resources in our agency.

In this period the panel have considered 26 requests for match funding, for therapeutic work which costs over and above the Fair Access Limit of £5000 per child per year. Further details are in the table below regarding ASF applications.

### **Adoption Support Fund Applications**

We have continued to access the ASF to provide additional therapy for adoptive families. This has enabled families to receive specialist support that we would not have been able to provide in house or access from other universal services.

The ASF continued to offer funding for specialist assessments and therapeutic support. This year 541 applications were made (compared to 2021/22 this is a 19% increase). Funds drawn down for adoptive families increased to £1,912,477.

As anticipated the majority of applications were made in Q4 and a significant increase in the number of applications year on year (456 increasing to 541). This may reflect the social workers ability to plan ahead this financial year which was hindered by the ASF late renewal date in February 2022.

	2021-2022 total	Current year total 2022-23
Number of applications made	456	541
Amount in £	1,672,387	1,912,477 Includes 48,562.76 matched funding for the highest need families

Each Local Authority's ASF applications in 2022-23 are detailed below:

LA	Number of applications	Amount	Applications approved with match funding	Match funded amount paid by LA
Cheshire East	162	542,434	4	6940.51
Group applications (spanning all LA's)	11	57,574	0	0
Totals	541	1,912,477	19	48,562.76

The ASF pilot project, requesting outcome measurement tools at the start and end of therapeutic interventions, ended in October 22. Adoption Counts made the decision to continue to ask providers to complete outcome measures for all applications. This was because we felt it was best practice. The ASF also indicated that this would be rolled out to all applications from April 23, so we felt it was best to continue with the requirements we had from our providers. The ASF have since postponed this national roll-out to later in 2023.

## 5.5 Referrals / Enquiries for Adoption Support

The team has 930 open cases. These cases are:

	Previous year 2021-22	Q1 2022	Q2 2022	Q3 2022	Q4 2023	Comments
Open cases (these are broken down into	853	897	898	956	930	First Response, Long term and adopted adults cases

categories below)						
First Response	185	198	199	206	199	
Long term	465	516	501	538	529	
Adopted adults open cases	203	183	198	212	202	
Letterbox (not in figure above)	1298	1266	1385	1367	1360	See breakdown below

Further information about the case numbers, including specialist workers:

	Previous year 2021-22	Q1 2022	Q2 2022	Q3 2022	Q4 2023	Comments
Therapeutic social worker (cases counted in long term team above)	72	81	81	93	82	2.5 FTE
Education advisor	39	39	45	42	39	0.5 FTE
Adoption "Surgeries" completed	126	25	25	25	25	

In the year 2022-23, demand has increased by just under 10% for adoption support services, which includes assessment, therapeutic support and ongoing social work provision. Due to increased demand, the waiting period for an assessment has increased this year.

All families who ask for support, and require an adoption support assessment, are currently offered an appointment within 12 weeks of their initial call, with 2 appointments a week being available. (This period has varied between 8-17 weeks this year). Calls are triaged by First Response team with those needing more urgent help receiving support on the initial call and signposted to early support services such as CATCH. At the point of assessment, families are given a named social worker who supports them in accessing the relevant support, often from the ASF.

Note, very few birth families contact First Response for advice as they would get in touch directly with their KIT (letterbox) coordinator, with whom they already have a relationship; or with PAC-UK directly, to receive independent support.

	<b>Referrals for Adopted Adult</b>	<b>New referrals for Adoptive Families</b>	<b>Birth Family</b>	<b>Advice &amp; Signposting</b>
<b>CHESHIRE EAST</b>	18	56	0	6

## Analysis

This year, there has been a steady demand for services for adoptive families. We had 56 new requests for support from adoptive families and 18 new requests for support from adopted adults; these join the 135 families receiving ongoing support (209 in total). On behalf of Cheshire East families we made 162 ASF applications, drawing down £542,434 for specialist assessments and therapy. On 4 occasions this was matched funded (totalling £6940.51) by the LA.

In this year Cheshire East also agreed to fund ongoing therapy for a child placed in London. Although now the responsibility of their London LA, the agency agreed to carry forward unused funding which had been offered for ongoing therapy when the child was adopted. This amounted to £32,742.50 and will be paid over no more than three years to the London LA.

Referrals for letterbox services increased; this appears to have had a substantial increase (147 to 285) but this is due to a change in the recording method, where we have listed each child individually rather than each family.

## Keeping in Touch Team KITT (previously Letterbox):

We updated the name to KITT to reflect our drive to improve ways for adopted children to maintain contact with their birth relatives. This will not only be through letters but through exchanges of photos, emails, voice notes and in-person meetings where possible. We continue to develop resources for families and professionals in response to adoptee feedback on what works for maintaining relationships and creating identity post-adoption.

	Previous year 2021-22	Q1 2022	Q2 2022	Q3 2022	Q4 2023	Comments



Cheshire East	147	190	269	285	285	Increase over 12 months due to change in recording process
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The Keeping in Touch Team (Letterbox) team are holding all contact referrals; this has 1367 active exchanges, with some having exchanges several times a year involving multiple birth family members. We write to all who reach 18 and have an active letterbox arrangement and offer ongoing support, so a small number of the cases above relate to young people aged 18+.

We continue to be part of the letterswop pilot alongside 4 other RAA's. The Letterswop service is a digital platform to exchange information between adoptive and birth families; again, this is part of our focus on Keeping in Touch and maintaining relationships for children. The pilot period has been extended and additional features, such as voice note and video exchanges, have been trialled. There has been particularly good use of this platform by a Salford adoptive and birth family, who have exchanged information including birth parent wishing their child a happy birthday, and adoptive parent responding shortly afterwards to share the birthday activities and thank them.

## **Process**

The Board granted an additional 2.5 staff on a temporary basis in recognition of the historic under-resourcing of Adoption Support, and to manage the increasing demand post-Covid. 1 joined in November 22 and left in Mar 22, with replacement joining in April; and the others in January 23. These staff have settled into their roles and have offered a benefit for the service to enable:

- Enabled development and delivery of a teen group for young people
- Enabled development and delivery of a sensory attachment programme for children (Just Right State group)
- Increased opportunities to deliver additional therapeutic group support to adopters and children
- Slowed the increase in the waiting times by offering additional assessment "surgeries"
- Increased therapeutic social work availability to extend the transition support for early placement
- Improved morale in the social work group by enabling a small reduction in caseloads
- Enabling a return to monthly evening workshops, and monthly peer support drop-in sessions for parents and children
- 

A report will be shared with the Board for September to consider the benefits these workers bring to adopters and children.

Management support has been increased as a senior practitioner role was dissolved, and a post created in a management position. This individual moved into the new post. The therapeutic social workers has been boosted by an additional social worker, and we have seen benefit to the services offered to pre- and early placement support with the majority of the 93 families being supported being in early placement. We have observed increasing demand from early placement and this may reflect factors including:

- Increased awareness of adoption support from preparation training
- Better recognition of emerging need by social workers and prospective adopters
- Increasing complexity of children being placed for adoption

Closing cases and signposting families on to other services continues to be a challenge, as families often have a need for adoption support for long periods while change can be slow, and pressures on family high. We continue to look at options for closing cases, including reviewing outcome measures to identify goals achieved. We are also offering more face-to-face events and groups and anticipate this will alleviate some anxiety for families who can still access the service regularly, without needing to have an allocated social worker.

We encourage the use of CATCH, which is an online platform from Adoption UK which offers specialist online support, training, and a forum for families. As this was not used as extensively as expected, we reduced our contract with the provider this year. We hope to increase usage for all families in early placement as well as those more established families. We have so far not seen extensive take-up from families, but those that do use CATCH report they find this really valuable and these are often the families accessing our universal offer. We will continue to advertise this in the newsletter as well as at events with families and at the top-up training.

The core offer of therapeutic groups for all families in the early stages of placement continues. We ran therapeutic parenting groups “Foundations for Attachment” and the “Theraplay-informed parenting groups” for parents and children together. We have invested in training for our therapeutic social workers so they can deliver these groups without the need for external providers; this will give more flexibility and increase service income.

### **Birth families**

First Family delivered through PAC-UK are our current provider of support to birth families following a decision for their child to be adopted.

The clear and easy referral process is increasing the number of families who access the service.

**PAC-UK** offer our independent birth parent counselling for all 5 LA's. We continue to have a positive working relationship with PAC-UK. The 44 new referrals to the service in Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4 represents 88% of the annual target of 50.

Through PAC-UK, birth mothers and fathers have the opportunity to attend a support group at the end of their intervention. This is used as an exit strategy for birth parents to continue to access support but to also build upon peer support. We value this as an important step in our maintaining contact agenda. In practice we see birth parents who have received good counselling support, are more able to manage reunions with adopted teens, and this benefits the young person and their adoptive family.

A focus for PAC-UK in the year ahead is to increase referrals for birth fathers earlier on in the adoption process. A birth fathers focus group meeting therefore took place in March 2023 to look at how PAC-UK can reach birth fathers at an earlier stage. Some really helpful discussions took place, and themes have emerged for PAC-UK to consider moving forward.

### **First Contact**

90% of Q4 referrals were contacted within 14 days.

### **First Family Facebook Group**

This closed and well monitored group is allowing birth parents to share thoughts and feelings around adoption as well as for PAC-UK to post useful links to help and resources around eg mental health and domestic violence. A number of Adoption Counts birth parents are members.

**Further detailed information is available in the PAC – UK annual report, which can be shared on request.**

### **Support Groups**

This year we have been able to return to in-person events and activities. Adopter Voice feedback informed us that they would like an online and in-person offer so this was developed.

We have delivered:

- Monthly play and stay (coffee drop in) sessions for families
- Fun days at Tatton Park and Z-Arts
- Teen group
- Evening workshops on therapeutic parenting, education and sensory need, both in person and online
- Developed alongside North West RAA partners “keeping safe online” training

## **Practice Developments in Adoption Counts**

Developments within the service include:

- The Education Psychology team have created education advice for children moving to adoption
- Establishing a regular meeting with our virtual schools to explore topics which benefit adopters
- Developing a group for adopted teens
- Developed a sensory group
- Created and continue to develop direct contact procedures and good practice guidance
- Adapted and delivered adoption support top-up training

We undertook a “blueprint” assessment in September 2022 with Stephanie Blshop, who evaluated each aspect of our adoption support offer. She gave feedback and development ideas which we have taken forward to improve our service and offer. For example, developing information about post-commencement access to records; developing a clearer intake process and differentiating between teams. This report is available on request.

**Kristen Roberts**

**Adoption Support Operations Manager**

## **Adoption Panel Chair's 6 monthly report 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023**

### **1. Introduction**

This report is a biennial report completed in rotation by the Independent Panel Chairs for Adoption Counts. The statistics used in the report and the quotations from the Panel feedback process are supplied by the Panel Administration Team, the Data Coordinator and the Panel Advisor for Adoption Counts. Thanks are expressed for their hard work in bringing the information together.

### **2. Overview of Panels**

The 'temporary' arrangements for Panels brought about by the Covid pandemic situation have continued and Panels are still being held virtually using Microsoft Teams. This has been seen as the "normal way" to conduct panels with many members and adopters having a preference for this arrangement, however in person panels have been re-introduced and 3 have been undertaken although in recent months the planned in person panels have had to take place virtually due to availability and time constraints of panel members. Panel Chairs have been available.

Panels are held every two weeks on Fridays; every three weeks on Thursdays; every six weeks on Wednesdays and every six weeks on Tuesdays. This pattern of timings is consistent with arrangements pre-Covid and the usual locations of Panels are used as a reference.

Room availability post lockdown has been problematic and there are only available rooms for in person panels at Etrop Court or Unity House (however Unity House cannot commit to a consistent room as this depends on room availability)

Panels usually begin at 9.15 /9.30am, can cover from one item to a maximum of five items and generally happen on a weekly basis. The frequency of Panels supports the timeliness of approvals and matches. There remains the option to arrange additional Panels should that be necessary.

Sometimes items are removed from the agenda by the chair, in discussion with the agency advisor, before other panel members have had sight of the documentation, however this is rare. Items are usually taken off the agenda early rather than later because of outstanding checks, references or other key documentation

### **3. Panel Membership**

During the reporting period there were 42 panel members on the Central List. The make-up of the list is as follows:

4 Panel Chairs, 1 Vice Chair, 14 Local Authority and/or Adoption Counts Social Worker representatives, 18 Independent members, 3 Medical Advisors, 1 Elected Member, and 1 NHS member.

The independent members are made up of Adoptive Parents, and/or people with a background in Health, Education, Youth Work and the Police

9 of the Social Workers are from Adoption Counts, 1 is from Stockport, 1 is from Salford, 1 from Cheshire East and 2 are from Manchester.

Panels do not have to have a fixed membership or a maximum number of members and there is no limit to the number of people whom it considers suitable to be members of an adoption panel. These members need to be suitably qualified and/or have the experience to consider these cases. We are fortunate in that our members do have the expertise and experience to make recommendations however our ethnicity is that of predominately White British and we need to proactively encourage new members that reflect the diversity of the area that Adoption Counts serves.

During this period we have had regular attendance by one of the Local Authority's Paediatricians and this has been very much welcomed, however this is sometimes limited to the start of the meeting and if any new medical information arises during panel we are left without that level of expertise. It would be beneficial if this function was shared between the 5 authorities to ease the burden of this on the 1 paediatrician that currently supports our work and this might allow them to commit to the full panel meeting.

Similarly social workers from the 5 authorities should commit to releasing at least 2 from the 4 smaller Authorities that make up this RAA and 3 social workers from Manchester to again ease the pressure on the existing volunteers that we have from them and to ensure that we have representation to cover for sickness and leave. On rare occasions the panel advisor has had to step in and be the social worker representation which leaves panel without an advisor.

### **Panel Member Appraisal**

2 appraisals took place during the reporting period. All remaining appraisals will take place during the next 6 months with any 1 of the 4 chairs.

### **Panel Member Training**

No specific adoption related training days in this period. However various members of staff undertook training on GDPR, DBS undertaken, and Safeguarding training. The learning pool has continued to develop.

Panel Chairs have continued to meet up quarterly with agency senior managers. This has been meaningful and allows all parties to discuss any issues, both good practice and areas for development in a constructive manner. The meeting is enriched by the attendance of ADMs joining the meeting, this supports good

discussion about issues pertaining to all 5 authorities and promotes consistency . Comments from ADMs are particularly useful and much valued, however not all ADM's attend and their ability to influence practice and resources can be limited.

The Panel Member Learning Library is still active and available to all panel members via SharePoint. This resource contains a wide variety of learning material including policy and procedure documents, information leaflets, training slides, information re: adoption support; recruitment and assessment and family finding.

All Panel members are required to keep a record of their learning and research, which should be reflected on and discussed during their appraisals to ensure their commitment to continued professional development. For panel members that are social work trained this CPD can be used to meet the requirements of their professional registration

#### **4 Panel Business Cases considered by Panels (1 October 2022- 31 March 2023.)**

Total number of Panels:	26
Number of approvals heard:	40
Number of approvals agreed	38
Number of approvals deferred	0
Number of single adopters approved	4 out of 5 presented
Number of couples approved	34
Number of matches heard:	43
Single children matched	36
Sibling groups of two matched	7 (14 CPR's in total)
SHOBPA's	3 (1 child presented twice due to deferral)

There has been 2 less panels in this quarter than last and a slight decrease in number of adopters approved ( 38 approvals , last quarter 42).

However there has been over 30% increase in children(43 matches to 31 last quarter) being matched this quarter with increases seen in both single children(36 to 28 previously) and sibling groups , sibling groups over 50% rise (7 sibling groups to 3 previously)

There has been 3 SHOBPA's on the agenda for 2 relinquished children.

#### **Data**

#### **CPR/PAR**

For the above period, 53 CPRs were presented to Panel (this included seven sibling groups of two) and 40 PARs.

<b>RAA data on quality of reports at final audit. All agencies</b>					
<b>Matches 53 CPRs</b>			<b>Approvals 40 PARs</b>		
Outstanding	8	15.09%	Outstanding	5	12.5%
Good with outstanding features	2	3.77%	Good with outstanding features	5	12.5%
Good	31	58.49%	Good	26	65%
Satisfactory	1	1.88%	Satisfactory	1	2.5%
In need of improvement	9	16.98%	In need of improvement	3	7.5%
Ungraded	2	3.77%	Ungraded	0	0%

Agency policy requires all CPRs and PARs presented to Panel to be graded at least Good at second audit. The percentage of CPRs graded Outstanding , Good with outstanding features or Good is marginally less at 77.35% than last quarter's figure of 79.41%, however we are now seeing some CPRs that are outstanding.

The outstanding CPR's give a robust analysis of the options available that have been considered by the agency for the future care needs of that child whilst consideration is given to the Welfare Checklist at all times.

PARs graded Outstanding, Good with outstanding features or Good has risen from 58.14% in the previous quarter to 90% . Some of the reasons behind this improvement are better analysis and information on relevant and current issues coupled with the inclusion of adopter's emotional well-being/ risk assessment post Leiland-James Corkhill review .

## **SHOBPA**

	<b>Cheshire East</b>
Outstanding	0(1)
Good with outstanding features	1(0)
Good	12(2)
In need of improvement	2(2)
Ungraded or not applicable	0



The figures in brackets show the quality of these reports at the end of the previous reporting period

There appears to be far more consistency across all 5 authorities in producing Good paperwork for SHOBPA , what we need to see is more Good with outstanding features and Outstanding reports .

This will ensure that all children in the future will have a better understanding of their need for a permanent placement outside of the family and the decision making process that led to this.

## 5. Panel Scrutiny – timescales

### Matches

A1 met	20	41%
A1 not met	22	46%
A2 met	27	56%
A2 not met	19	40%

### Breakdown by LA

	Children Matched in Period	A1 Met	A1 not met	A2 Met	A2 not met
CE	14	6(43%)	7(50%)	9(64%)	5(36%)

The statistics model used for A1 and A2 performance give only an average performance indication based on local and national trends, however this is the same for all RAA's and Authorities.

A1 in this period has again seen improvement on the last reporting period (41% compared to 38% in April 2022 to September 2022).

The A2 performance has dipped from 68% to 56% As always, there have been a few children where there have been protracted care proceedings , outside the control of the Local Authority or the Agency, and carer assessments put forward late .

These statistics need to be seen in the general context of increases in Special Guardianship Orders and a reduction in numbers of Placement Orders leading to adoption, reflecting the view of only to be made where nothing else would do , where

no other course was possible in the child's interest, i.e. that the least interventionist approach should be adopted by the judiciary.

## **Approvals**

Of the 37 Adoptive families that were approved in the period:

- None completed Stage One within 8 weeks. All were outside timescales.
- For the 31 that were still ongoing in Stage One at the end of the period, 15 (37%) were still within timescales and a further 16 (63%) were out of timescales
- 9 approved Adoptive families completed Stage Two within 16 weeks (24%); 28 were completed out of timescales (76%).
- For the 27 families that were still ongoing in Stage Two at the end of the period, 19 (48%) were still within timescales and a further 8 (52%) were already out of timescales.

Some of the reasons for delay have been due to sickness, change of social worker and where applicants have changed jobs, had imminent house moves or had sudden bereavement. However what is causing most of the delay is obtaining reports / information about any counselling that prospective adopters may have had (recommendation from Leiland -James Corkhill review) in the past. Where it has been impossible to get that information a risk assessment must be completed that is agreed by the Head of Service and countersigned.

Both PARS and CPR's should have been quality assured before panel and of a Good standard.

A number of PARs and CPRs have been sent for Panel consideration which, although graded 'Good' by the auditor, are not considered to meet that standard by the Panel Chair. A discussion will then follow with the agency advisor and, possibly, the relevant Operational Manager as to whether the report should be withdrawn for further work or allowed to proceed to avoid delay. Lack of proof reading is often an issue making reports difficult to read. The general rule being that the CPR/ PAR must contain sufficient information for panel to be able to make a decision with further work undertaken prior to match will usually suffice to prevent delay.

It is a shame for staff that in some instances the very high quality of the pre-Panel social work is not reflected in the quality of the reports.

Progress from recommendations from previous Chair report:

Work has been undertaken to promote the notion that a CPR should be written **to** the child, or as a minimum, all of section 9. This has been fed back to the team managers within Adoption Counts to be distributed to family finders and the Local Authorities. This will also be noted in each feedback to ensure the message is being shared.

Additionally, the panel advisor has put together a tool for auditing CPR's that has been shared with Adoption Counts as well as the 5 local authorities. The tool clearly outlines what is expected in each section. The existing audit has been updated to be section specific to enable more explicit audits to be completed that support workers.

Although it has been agreed that in Foster to Adopt placements coming for a match should give information about transition and how the child is settling with the adopters this is not consistent across the RAA. Some of it can be gleaned from the foster carers report but again the quality can vary.

Kim Scragg  
Adoption Counts Panel Chair  
September 2023