



ANNUAL REPORT AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

For Period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018

Annual Report on PI data for Western Bay Adoption Service 2017/18

Introduction

This report reflects the region's third full year's performance as a collaborative service.

It is fair to say that there are areas of performance in which the service was doing well in 2016-17 where there has been a dip in performance in 2017-18 namely the number of children waiting longer than 6 months, Adopter enquiries and approvals. However, in other areas it is pleasing to note that the service has made some significant improvements, such as the number of Adoption Orders Granted, provision of life journey materials by 2nd adoption review, number of children waiting overall has decreased and the number of placements made within Western Bay has increased. The report highlights those areas where we need to focus attention and improve, along with those where we have demonstrated improvement and provides analysis to demonstrate the reasons and challenges.

There are continued developments being progressed within the service as a whole, these include ongoing improvements to the IT system and reporting mechanisms, ongoing development of adoption support services, the progression of the Life Journey Framework regional implementation plan and the implementation of our recruitment strategy to increase the number of adopters required to meet the needs of children whose plan is for adoption.

This report provides data for the Western Bay Adoption Service (WBAS) performance activity, against the national key PI measures. It provides data for the region as a whole along with comparative data across the three partner agencies, comparative data across the regions within Wales and against last year's regional performance.

Section 1 – Progress update

During 2017-18 the ongoing development of the Adoption Support service continued but has not been without its challenges. There has been a steady

increase in demand for adoption support, which has impacted on capacity. In addition to this there has been an increase in the complexities of referrals, with higher levels of need warranting longer, targeted and more specialised interventions. Of particular note is an increase in contact investigations which require an analysis of existing arrangements to enable contact to be restarted where appropriate.

Areas of development within Adoption Support include:

- Co-creation/engagement with adopters particularly around life story / journey work and enabling adopters to engage in or create life story books where these are missing or inadequate
- Building on the previous training implemented in order to meet service and NAS objectives and improve adoption support delivery
- Continual improvements in the IT system as service need demands
- Greater involvement with and engagement of birth parents early on the adoption journey
- Revisit, improve and act on the analysis of the impact of adoption on siblings, particularly when these are being separated and some children remain in foster care or other permanent placements. These impacts on their longer term support needs and letterbox arrangements.

We have continued to increase our performance and ability to place children within WBAS despite the challenges faced regionally and nationally in recruiting adopters for harder to place children. This increased has resulted from improved marketing, recruitment and engagement of adopters.

Areas of development within the region have included:

- Continued development of the WBAS transitional model in relation to preparing children to move on to adoption
- Development and implementation of the Life Journey Framework-Regional Plan which includes the roll out of training in relation to the framework and the transition model throughout 2018
- Redesign and development of the Western Bay website to support recruitment
- Development of the regional recruitment strategy and marketing plan
- Facilitating open events for approved and shortly to be approved adopters. This included an, adoption support information event which was highly regarded
- A very successful profiling event which will be repeated twice annually

Western Bay Adoption Service (WBAS) has also continued to play an active role in the national developments:

- Development of the national Life Journey Framework
- Partnership working with St David's and Barnardo's around the development of the new Adopting Together Project
- Engaging in the development of adoption support strategies, including joint work with AUK on promoting both Education developments and the first 1000 Day project.

The recruitment and assessment of Adopters was a key objective for 2017-18 and despite significant resource issues and lower numbers of enquiries and approvals, there were improvements in the number of children being placed within the region. We continue to focus on:

- Service user consultation and engagement
- Better align the take up of adopter assessments with the needs of children waiting for adoptive placements
- Increase the use of adoption support staff earlier in placements, specifically for more complex children
- Continue to reduce overall the time taken to approve adopters
- Increase the number of approved adopters for the more complex children through a process of an interactive website, open events and improved marketing.

The key achievements:-

- The number of children placed during the year has shown a slight increase on last year's performance, 74 compared to 71 in 2016-17. Of the 74 children placed, 30 were in the 'harder to place' category, this included, 8 sibling groups of 2, 2 sibling groups of 3 and 8 children who were either older children or children with complex needs. This demonstrates the successes and positive outcomes the service has achieved for this particular group of children
- Of the children placed during the year we continued to place more children with WBAS adopters than in interagency placements. By year end the service had placed 47 children with WB adopters and at the same time reduced the number placed in interagency placements from 32 to 27. Of the placements made 64% were placed within WB adopters, despite there being challenges in placing those deemed as 'harder to place' children and a sustained position of adopters wishing to have the more straightforward and younger children. Six of these

children were placed as a direct result of the profiling event in Western Bay

- There continues to be collaboration between the Family Finding and Adoption Support function(AS) to put together packages of support for more complex children or where placements need additional support. 18 children placed for adoption this year had an ongoing service provision/package of support at the point of placement
- The region developed and organised a 'Profiling' event during the year which included some of our harder to place children who have been waiting longer than 6 months. 34 children were profiled and 17 approved adopter families were invited to consider those children as potential links/matches. This event proved very successful and resulted in 6 children being placed, a little under 10% of the total number of children placed by the region. The feedback from adopters and staff was extremely positive and following the outcome and success of the event it has been decided to continue holding the 'Profiling' events on a regular basis within the region, with the aim of holding 2 events a year
- The number of Adoption Orders granted (AOG) has increased significantly from the previous year from 69 to 90 in 2017-18. This is an excellent achievement despite many of our adoption applications being contested. Thirty four (38%) of the applications made in the region were contested in 2017-18, resulting in delay and therefore, having an impact on the performance which is beyond the region's control
- Following a number of strategies implemented by both Western Bay Adoption Service and the Local authorities there had been an increase in the number of children within the region presented to panel where there is evidence of Life Story Materials (LSM). During 2016-17, 23% had evidence of Life Story Materials in place at time of panel, during 2017-18 this figure rose to 50% amounting to a 27% increase in performance. There has also been some improvement in the number of children who had Life Story Materials provided to adopters by the time of the second adoption review, with 58% of children in the region having these in place compared to 30% in 2016-17
- Despite the reduction in the number of adopter enquiries to the service there is evidence to demonstrate that less initial enquires are being withdrawn and more being deemed suitable resulting in higher conversion rates through to assessments and approvals. This may

have been impacted on through, improved responses to enquirers, literature and website information as well as the outcomes of targeted regional/national campaigns

- The average time taken to approve adopters from the inquiry stage to Agency Decision Making (ADM) decision has decreased compared to 2016-17 from 9.7 months to 8.2 months in 2017-18 which brings us closer to the national benchmark of 8 months
- The number of adoption support interventions has increased. Whilst there is some evidence this has reduced the use of higher cost commissioned services, of more note is the range of interventions. These have included more requests for engagement in resolving letterbox issues particularly between siblings
- We have developed the Western Bay Adoption Service website to make it more interactive, user friendly and to include the active offer. In the coming year all of our information leaflets will be accessible via the website. We are also developing a member's only login page where adopters will be able to access key information, including our newsletter, playgroup dates and venues. There are child friendly pages included in the website also to target and encourage our children to access the site. The improved website will be launched by the end of July 2018/19
- Development and implementation of the Transition/Moving on model to assist in improving the preparation of children for adoption and in the provision of life journey material has continued to be rolled out with training to staff across the region. Targeted training has been offered for all WB staff and for all three local authority social workers and foster carers where a child is subject to a plan of adoption and a Placement Order (PO) has been granted
- An inspection took place in December 2017 which was positive and demonstrated the service was improving

Challenges / Priorities

A number of challenges have been identified for the coming year and these include –

- The service has seen a significant decrease in Adopter enquiry rates with 117 enquiries received during 2017-18 compared to the 174

received in 2016-17. The issue of adopter recruitment has been an issue nationally and data shows there is a re-emerging gap between placement need and adopter recruitment. The region is working hard on improving website access and interactivity as well as with the NAS Central team to develop a revised All Wales Marketing and Recruitment Strategy for the coming year the aim of which is to;

- Increase interest, enquiries and approvals from prospective adopters who can meet the needs of our children and
 - Increase the number of children placed;
 - Reduce the number of children waiting;
 - Meet the need for sibling group placements and children with other complexities;
 - Reach a level of adopter sufficiency that allows for choice but does not create significant levels of adopters waiting lengthy periods

Whilst we have seen some success during the year the reality is that many adopters are still presenting themselves as wanting younger children which is in line with national research. We have identified a target for the coming year 2018-19 to achieve 63 adopter approvals. Staffing issues within Recruitment and Assessment appear to be resolving which will aid in achieving the targeted number of approvals in the coming year

- Where possible to further reduce the time from LAC, SBPD and Placement Order (PO) to placement for adoption. We anticipate this continuing to be a challenge as we are mindful that the number of children that have been waiting longer than 6 months to be matched has increased. This is reflective of the National picture and we are currently participating in an All Wales National Recruitment Campaign to attempt to combat this. If we are successful in placing more of these children who have waited longer in the coming year we will anticipate our performance in this area to show a decline, however this will be a successful outcome for those children
- There needs to be a robust and whole region approach to the improvement of Life Story Materials (LSM) in relation to quality and timeliness. The current NAS measure is by 2nd review however, WBAS with the support of the senior management in the LAs has agreed that this measure should be the longest time and the best practice aim is to have these in place at the point of placement. Our IT system will need to be developed in order to capture this data at various points, i.e. match and placement of adoption. Although this measure has improved during the year close monitoring and continued development

will be needed to maintain and improve our performance in this area to achieve the revised national benchmark of 100%

- Performance in the number of birth parents referred and offered a service has been sustained. Take up of this service within the same period remains particularly low with evidence suggesting that birth parents refer back into the service at a later date for support. WBAS has identified this as a key focus for the coming year to improve the work with birth families and the take up of the service offered
- Improving the early engagement of birth parents enabling greater information gathering of relevance to the child's adoption medical and identity issues
- Consultation with adopters, identified support for the additional training for family and friends, alongside the pre-approval training. As resources improve this will be implemented in the coming year
- Improving the matching paperwork for children being presented to adoption panel
- Further improvements are needed in Child Adoption Report – Annex B (CAR B) to improve quality of information. This will include rolling out additional training throughout the year
- Further development of the IT system throughout all functions in WBAS is needed for the coming year to collate further information to feed into our reporting and identify areas of need. This will include recording life journey materials at various points of the adoption journey and capturing more closely the amount of adoption support provided in certain areas, focusing for example on therapy packages being provided and enabling more robust monitoring
- The continuing development of policies and procedures is a key priority for the coming year
- Addressing the significant backlog of non-agency assessments through a number of strategies

Section 2 - Performance

The purpose of this section is to highlight some of the key performance areas for WBAS for the year 2017/18. The report is based on data that has been supplied to the NAS on a quarterly basis throughout the year and provides comparison data against last year's performance.

1. Children Referred 2017/18 - 187

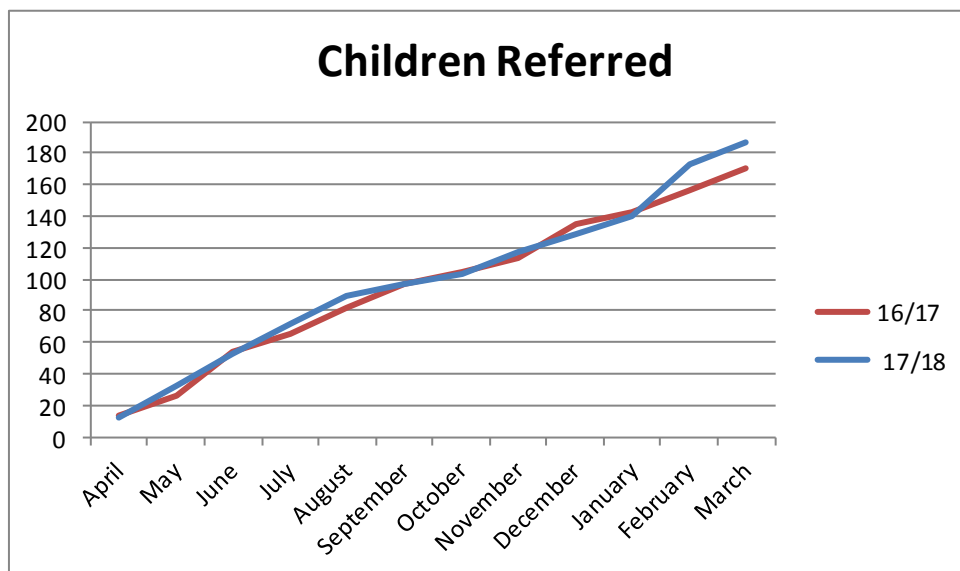
In the first three quarters of 2017-18 there was a downward trend in referrals, however a spike in quarter 4 resulted in the number of referrals at year end rising to 187. This shows a 10% increase on the 170 received last year.

Children Referred TOTAL	BCBC	NPT	SWAN	
2017/18	39	51	97	187
2016/17	72	43	55	170
2015/16	58	45	92	195
2014/15	68	56	79	203

Of the 170 referrals received in 2016-17, 90 were withdrawn, leaving just 80 active referrals. This could indicate why performance, in some measures this year has shown a decrease.

Whilst it is too soon to report on the whole of the year 2017-18, it is noted that at the end of Q3 129 referrals were made and 72 have been withdrawn to date (56%) leaving 57 active referrals at end of Q3. If this trend continues it will be likely to be reflected in lower figures for Placement Orders and children placed in the coming year.

At end of Q3 comparison of the local authority figures show that Swansea had 65 referrals, of which 42 were withdrawn leaving 23 active referrals (66% dropout). NPT had 43 referrals of which 25 were withdrawn, leaving 18 active referrals (58% dropout). BCBC had 21 referrals of which 5 were withdrawn leaving 16 active referrals (24% dropout).



Comparative data for other regions in Wales show that WB are the second highest in receiving the numbers of referrals. Figures for other regions are as follows Mid and West Wales Adoption Service (MWW) 65, North Wales Adoption Service (NWAS) 53, South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS) 184, Valley, Vale and Cardiff (VVC) 245.

The overall figure across Wales is showing a slight decrease in the number of referrals for 2017-18.

2. Should Be Placed Decision (SBPD)

The number of children that progressed to have a 'should be placed decision' in Western Bay totalled 77 a decrease of 35 compared to 2016/17.

Compared to other regions across Wales, WBAS had the third highest number of SBPD with VVC having the highest at 120. MWW 46, NWAS 31, SEWAS 101.

3. Placement Orders Granted = 68

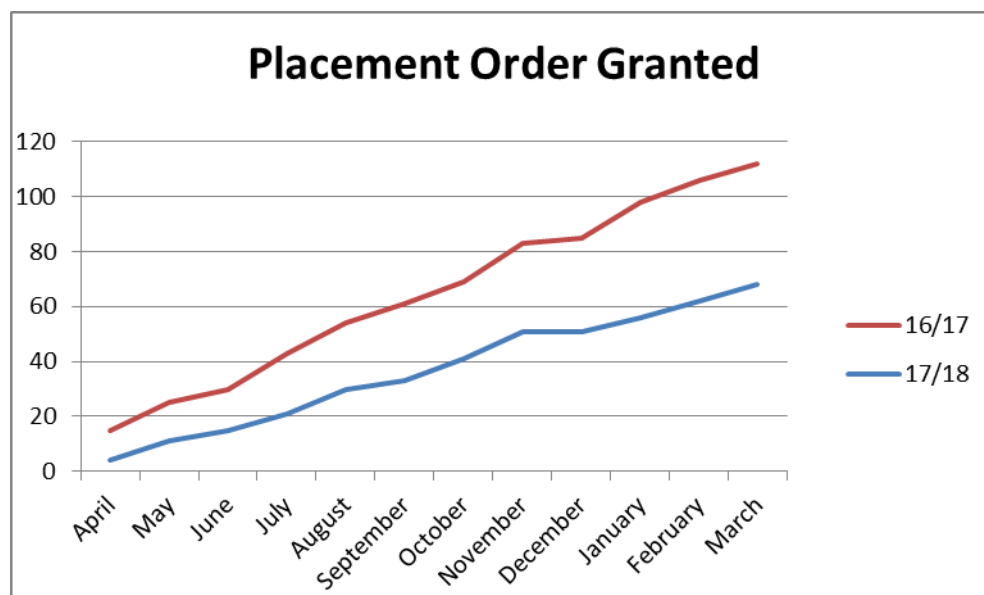
WBAS regional data

There has been a decrease in the number of POs granted during 2017-18 with 68 being granted compared to 112 in 2016-1, showing a 39% decrease. The data in the second table below shows a significant decrease in the

number of POs granted in two of the LAs with one LA decreasing by more than half.

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
2017/18	15	18	18	17	68
2016/17	30	31	24	27	112

POG	BCBC	NPT	SWAN	TOTAL
2017/18	22	26	20	68
2016/17	36	23	53	112
2015/16	31	26	26	83
2014/15	25	36	33	94



The figures for other individual regions across Wales show an upward trend for PO being granted compared to WBAS which shows a downward trend. MWW 43, NWS 50, SEWAS 95, VVC 105.

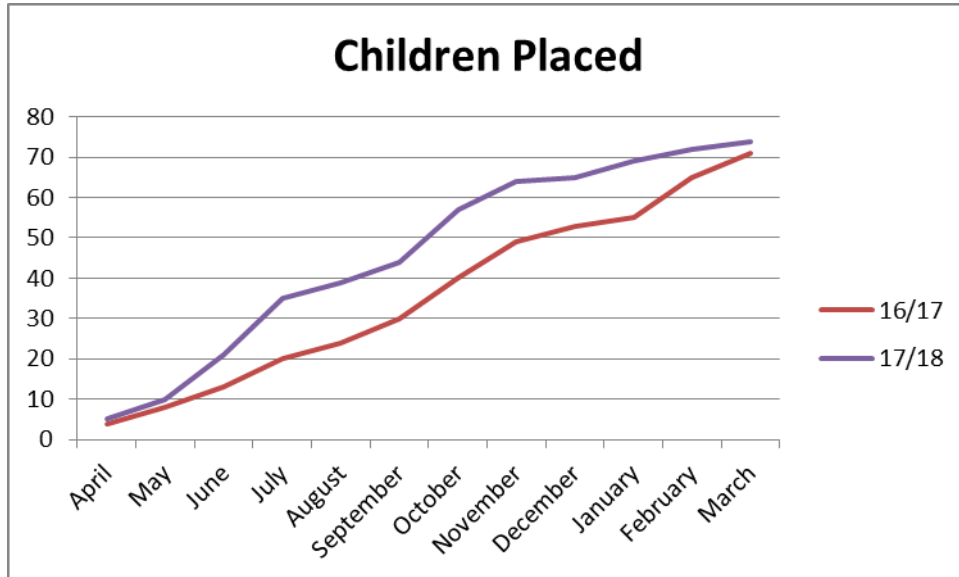
Overall across Wales the number of PO reported as being granted by courts in 2017-18 shows a small reduction, 375 to 357 around 4%.

4. Children Placed = 74

Statistics evidence that during the year there had been a consistent number of children being placed for adoption by WBAS in the first three quarters of 2017/18. Quarter 4 however shows a decrease in the number placed. Those being placed are a combination of children that represent harder to place and more straight forward children. Overall there was a slight increase in the numbers placed by the region compared to 2016/17.

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
2017/18	21	23	21	9	74
2016/17	13	17	23	18	71
2015/16	20	25	21	27	93

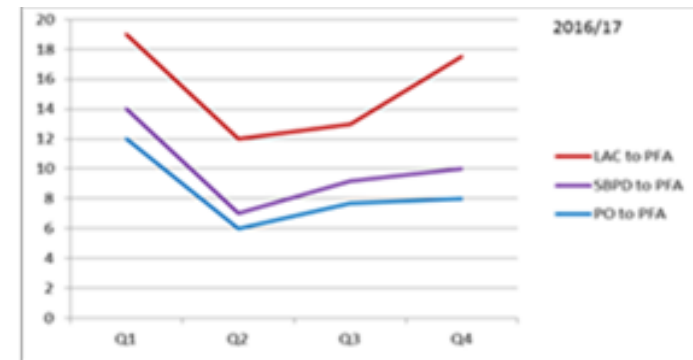
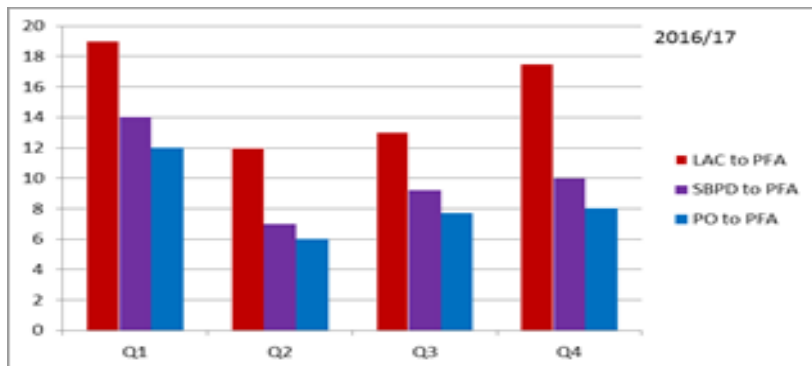
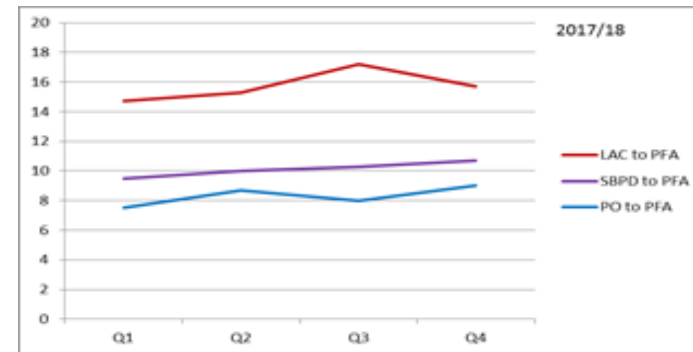
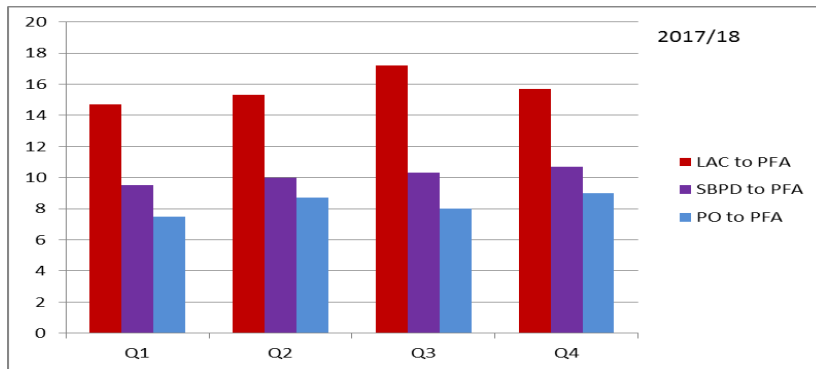
Children Placed	BCBC	NPT	SWAN	TOTAL
2017/18	24	22	28	74
2016/17	24	17	30	71
2015/16	24	40	29	93
2014/15	28	28	37	93



Performance in other regions across Wales is as follows, MWW 35, NWAS 41, SEWAS 71, VVC 86.

The National figures show the number of children placed overall was 307 in 2017-18 slightly more than the previous year.

5. Average Time (in months) Taken for Children to be Placed.



Average Time in Months (days) Taken for children to be placed

	16/17					17/8				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year Total
LAC to PFA	19.6 (590)	11.6 (347)	13.2 (396)	17.6 (527)	15.1 (453)	14 (421)	15.3 (460)	17.3 (518)	15.6 (469)	15.7 (470)
SBPD to PFA	14 (417)	7 (222)	9.2 (281)	10 (312)	10 (283)	9.1 (272)	10.1 (303)	10.3 (309)	10.7 (321)	10 (299)
PO to PFA	12.4 (373)	6 (17)	7.7 (235)	8 (240)	8.4 (255)	12.4 (373)	6 (17)	7.7 (235)	8 (240)	8.2 (246)

LAC to Placed For Adoption (PFA) – 15.7 months (Average)

The average length of time taken from 'becoming looked after' (LAC) to placement for adoption is 15.7. This has not met the national bench mark of 13 months and further work is needed within the Local Authorities (LAs) to address this.

Some of the delay in this area however, will remain out of the control of the service, for example, 3 children who all took over 900 days each were the result of a delay in care proceedings. One of these children took over 900 days from LAC to placement however proceeded from PO placement in only 104 days.

There were 19 children who were deemed 'harder to place' due to them being in a sibling group, having complex needs or were older children. Of these 1 child who took 917 days from LAC to placement had a high level of need and 1 child who took 1152 days was an older child –7 years.

The National Average overall for the year was 14.5 months. This figure has reduced in 2017-18 demonstrating that regions are placing children more quickly from a child becoming looked after to being placed for adoption.

Of the number of children placed across all regions 56% were placed within the 13 month benchmark. Two regions (SEWAS & VVC) were within the 13 month benchmark.

SBPD to Placed for Adoption (PFA) – 10.2 months (Average)

The average time it takes for children from Should Be Placed Decision (SBPD) to placement for adoption (PFA) is 10.2 months. There have been considerable successes with a number of children placed in very short timescales. The shortest time being 102 days, (3.4 months). This is attributed to the close working between Recruitment and Assessment (R&A) and Family Finding (FF) teams to identify early the needs of children and adopters so that where suitable the link can be progressed without delay. This measure has been interrogated and it is clear that whilst there is a slight drop in performance, there are more complex children being placed which has necessitated increased social work activity and as explained above there were 3 children who took considerably longer to place who impact on these timescales.

Comparative data for this measure across other regions was not available at the time of completing this report.

Placement Order to PFA – 8.3 months (Average)

The average time it takes for children from PO to placement for adoption has increased marginally from 8.2 month to 8.3 months. This is not within the national benchmark of 6 months or under. 43% of children were placed within the 6 month benchmark with the shortest time being 85 days (2.8 months).

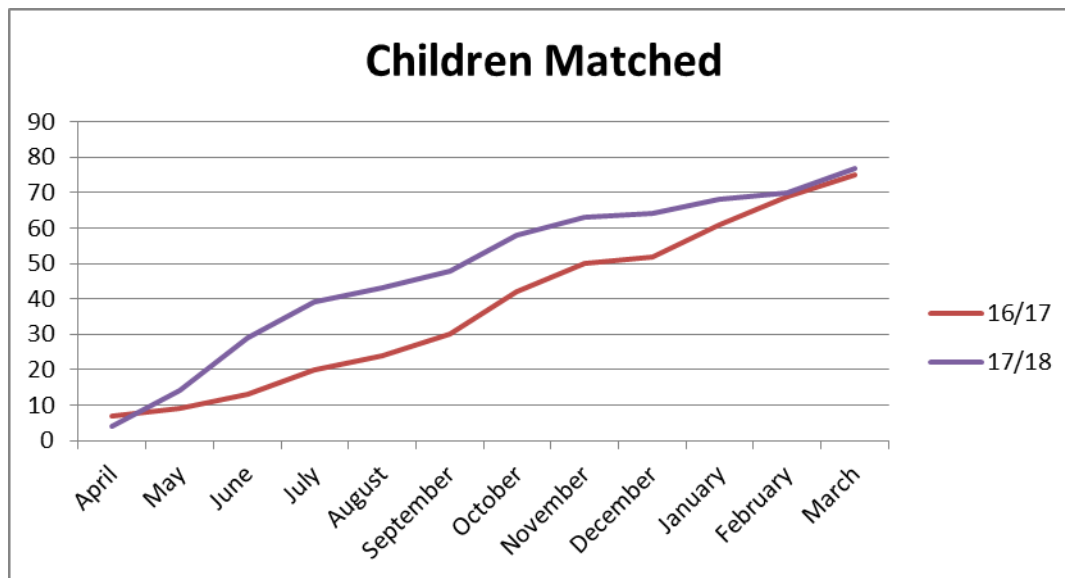
National performance in relation to Placement Order to Placement across the regions is encouraging with the average being 7.9 months. Reaching the benchmark of 6 months remains a challenge throughout the regions, although 49% of children placed in Q4 were placed within the 6 month benchmark.

Figures for other regions are, MWW 7.4 months, NWS 8.6 months, SEWAS 7.7 months & VVC 7.7 months.

6. Children Matched = 77

This is slightly higher than the performance achieved in 2016-17 which was 75 but remains fairly consistent over the two years.

Matched	BCBC	NPT	SWAN	TOTAL
2017/18	26	23	28	77
2016/17	26	17	32	75
2015/16	25	39	30	94
2014/15	28	27	36	91



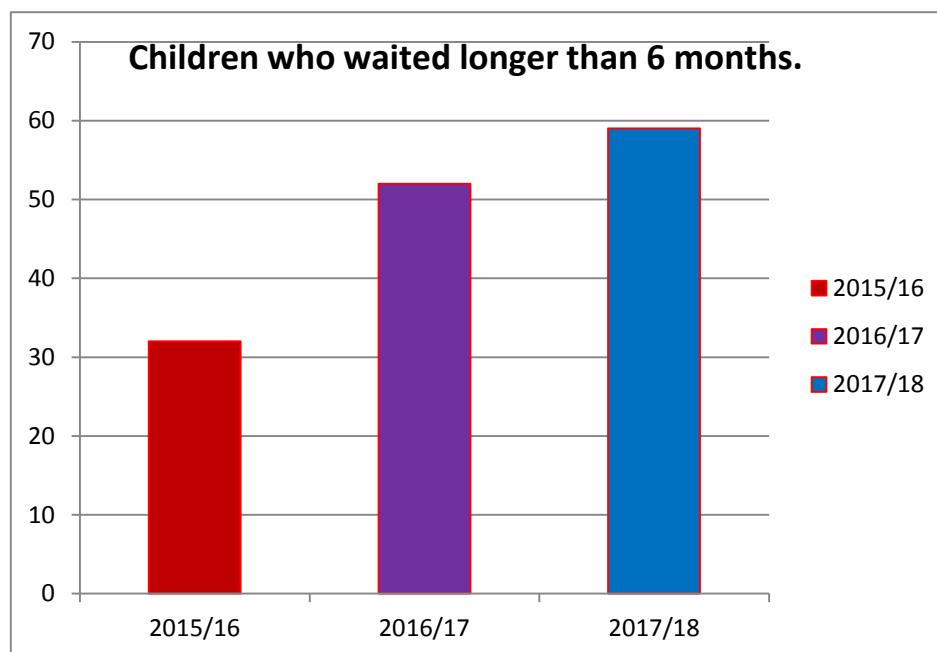
Performance in other regions is, MWW 38, NWAS 38, SEWAS 73, VVC 89.

7. Number of children matched who have waited longer than 6 months to progress from SBPD to agency decision to approved match = 59

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
2017/18	24(83%)	15(79%)	12(75%)	8(61%)	59(77%)
2016/17	7 (54%)	12 (71%)	12 (55%)	21 (91%)	52 (67%)
2015/16	12 (50%)	8 (32%)	8 (31%)	4 (21%)	32 (34%)

The number of children who waited longer than 6 months was 59, this shows a slight increase in the number of children who have waited longer than 6 months from SBP compared to 2016-17 which was 52.

At 77% we remain above the benchmark of 40%. Other regions across Wales have also seen an increase in the number of children who wait longer than 6 months. Figures are, MWW 19 (50%), NWAS 24 (63%), SEWAS 48 (66%), VVC 60 (67%)



A number of factors have played a part in this drop in performance this includes:

- An increase in complex and harder to place children
- Adopters to meet the needs of those children are not readily available both within the region and wider afield resulting in delays

Whilst strategies in WBAS have been very successful, for example, identifying potential adopter's earlier and working with adoption support to explore what packages of support are needed to enable a placement to proceed, more systematic work is needed on harder to place children.

This is reflecting the national picture, whereby we know that the number of children waiting longer than 6 months nationally has increased. Due to these concerns we are currently participating in a national campaign to try and

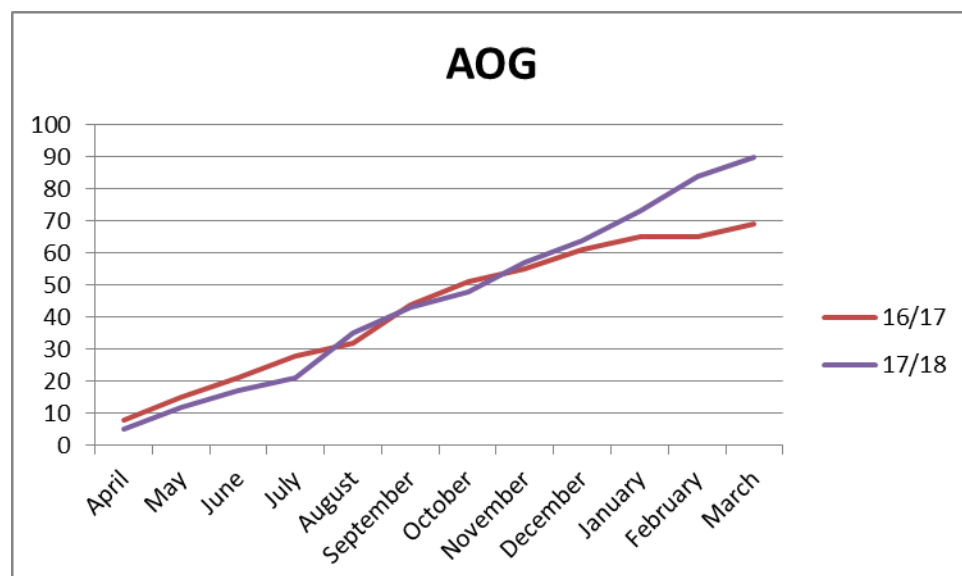
combat this problem, if this campaign is successful and we place some of these children we would anticipate this figure will continue to be high in the coming year.

In addition the region has agreed to participate in the pilot for the 'Adopting Together Project' and have identified 8 children who have waited longer than 12 months that can be considered for referral to the new scheme. This will hopefully assist in reducing the numbers who wait longer.

8. Adoption Orders Granted (AOG) = 90

This figure has demonstrated a significant increase with 21 more adoption orders being granted in 2017-18 compared to 69 in 2016-1. This increase has been achieved despite the increased number of contested adoption applications by birth families during the year.

AOG's	BCBC	NPT	SWAN	TOTAL
2017/18	28	28	34	90
2016/17	12	27	28	69
2015/16	24	36	34	94
2014/15	21	34	40	95



There are currently **xxxx** adoption applications submitted to court and are at various stages of the process.

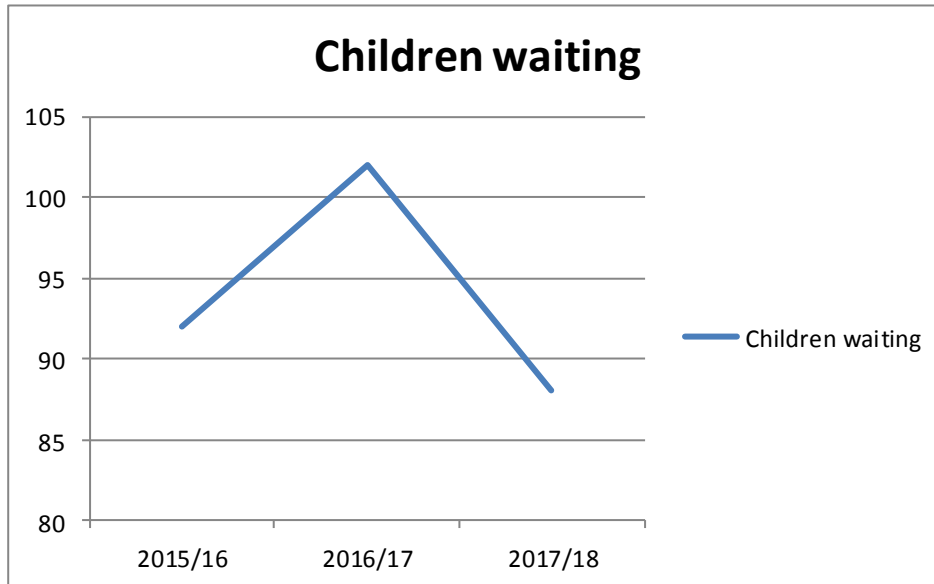
In comparison with other regions across Wales WBAS is the highest achieving with MWW 22, NWAS 34, SEWAS 73, VVC 71. Only WBAS and VVC showed an increase with other regions achieving less than the previous year.

9. Children Waiting = 88

The number of children waiting overall has decreased by 14 compared with the figure for the previous year 2016/17 -112. Of the 88 children waiting at year end 2017/18, 74 (84%) of those had a SBPD decision and a PO but have not yet been matched, 6 (6.8%) children had SBPD and a PO and were matched.

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	End of year
2017/18	96	83	82	88	88
2016/17	97	100	100	102	102
2015/16	105	111	74	92	92
2014/15	101	94	100	92	92

Of the 74 children with SBPD and PO still waiting at year end we had 22 links identified, 22 matches identified and 12 children where a change of plan was being considered. Family finding/searching continued for the remaining 18 children.



The data for other regions is MWW 34, NWAS 46, SEWAS 76, VVC 117.

The National figures show that the level of children being placed is not keeping pace with the levels of new children being made subject to placement orders. All regions except Western Bay have seen an increase in the number of children waiting with some regions having a significant increase over the period of this data.

At the end of March 2018 two regions reported that some children had firm links or matches that were proceeding but had yet to be formally agreed, WBAS being one of these regions.

This amounted to 22% of all children waiting across Wales and exemplifies the fluid nature of the service. It is likely that some children in other regions would be at a similar stage. Nonetheless adopter recruitment is not keeping pace with the level of children waiting or those becoming subject to PO.

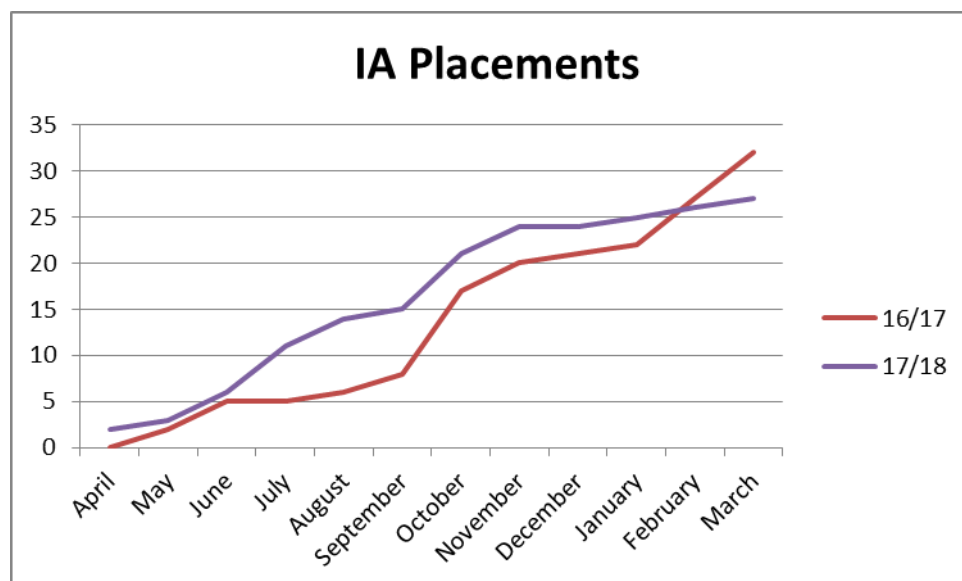
10. Number of Inter-Agency Placements = 27

Of the 74 children placed with approved adopters in the period, 27 (36%) were placed in IA placements, this is lower than in 2016-17 and is positive that we continue to place more children within the region.

The majority of our IA placements were in respect of sibling groups and children with complex needs. Of the 10 sibling groups placed (22 children) 8 were placed outside of WBAS in interagency placements (18 children), and of the 8 harder to place children that were placed in single placements 4 were placed in interagency placements. Of the 30 children who were identified as harder to place 73% were placed in IA placements.

The regional/local picture is outlined in the table and graph below.

IAs	BCBC	NPT	SWAN	TOTAL
2017/18	5	10	12	27 (36%)
2016/17	11	6	15	32(45%)
2015/16	8	20	7	35(38%)
2014/15	24	20	15	59 (63%)



11. Number of WBAS Placements = 47

We continue to place more children within the region than externally, 47 children this year compared to 39 in 2016-17.

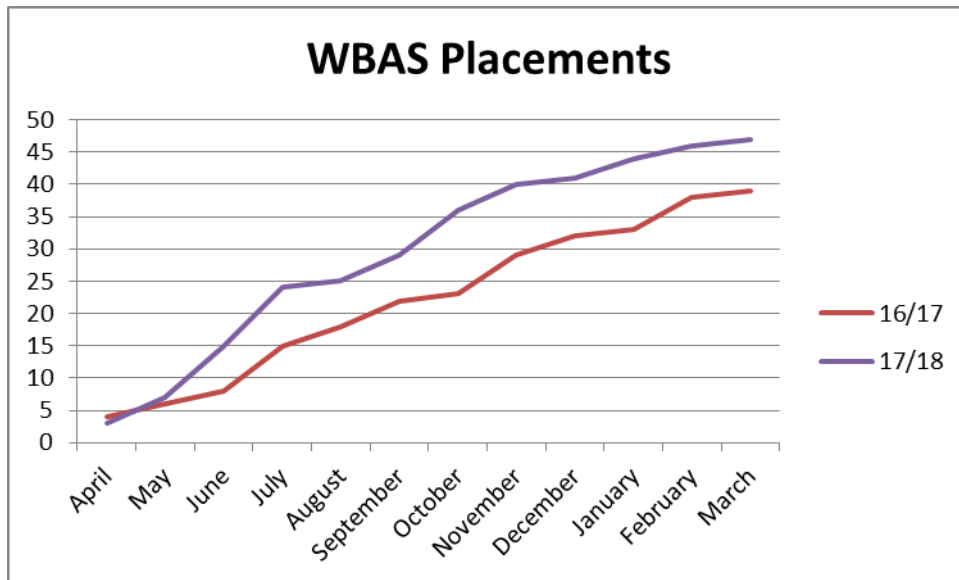
The arrangements/processes in place that contribute to achieving this are:

- Continued close liaison between FF and R&A through the monthly linking meetings remains a strong and effective activity in WBAS to identify children and adopters locally
- Links made locally have the potential to be achieved in a very timely manner given that early information is available and access to adoption support is within the service
- Adapting marketing and recruitment activity to prioritise adopter enquiries who can meet the needs of children waiting
- Development of robust assessment, marketing and information materials
- Training and use of adoption support has resulted in a number of adopters taking more complex children
- Use of the Welsh Register and Link Maker to assist adopters to see in detail a range of children, usually with complex needs who are waiting for placements
- The 'Profiling' event contributed to success in linking and matching adopters to children who had not previously been considered within the normal linking processes.

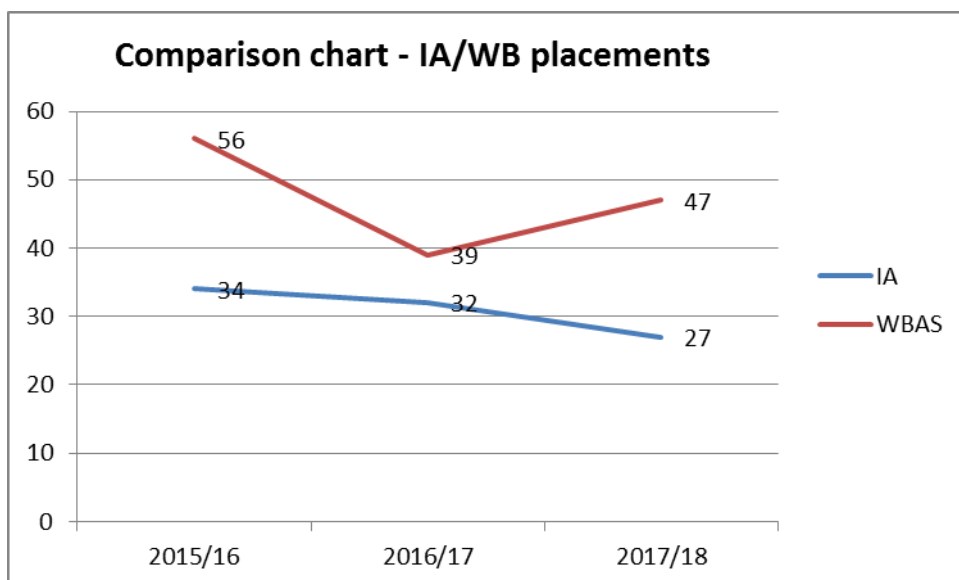
Due to the success of the regional profiling event in 2017-18 there is a plan to hold at least 2 events a year as part of the recruitment strategy, with an event taking place on 20th June 2018.

The regional/local performance of children placed within WBAS is outlined in the table and graph below.

WBAS	BCBC	NPT	SWAN	TOTAL
2017/18	19	12	16	47 (64%)
2016/17	13	11	15	39 (55%)
2015/16	14	18	22	56 (62%)
2014/15	7	9	18	34 (36.5%)



The comparison chart below for the last 3 years demonstrates that the trend in the use of IA placements has continued to decrease. While at the same time placements found within WBAS has increased showing a positive widening in the gap.

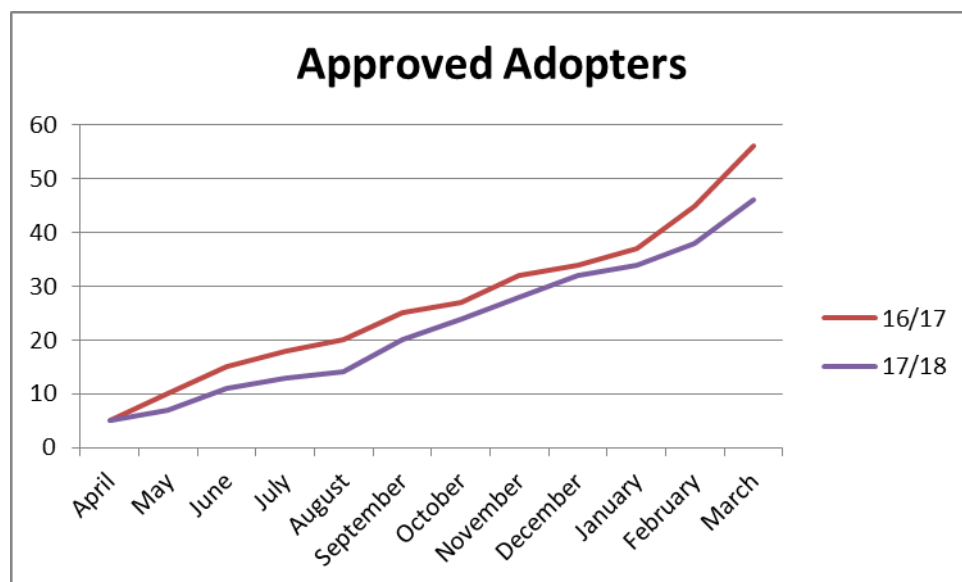


12. Number of Adopter Approvals = 46

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
2017/18	11	9	12	14	46
2016/17	15	10	9	22	56
2015/16	18	16	15	4	53
2014/15	6	12	19	8	45

We have seen an 18% decrease in performance for 2017-18. This is in part due to an increase in adopters with complex issues, delay in assessments being completed due to the applicant's circumstances but mainly reflects a sustained period of staff absence in excess of 30% at times during the year.

In the 2016-17 56 adopters were approved generating 64 placements. Performance for 2017-18 was lower than anticipated with 46 adopters approved, generating 51 placements. (Projected figure for approvals for the year was 50).



Western Bay is working towards the aims of the revised national marketing and recruitment strategy to explore ways of not only increasing our adopter numbers but looking at how to recruit the right adopters for our children waiting. This has included a radio campaign launched by NAS that featured across Wales - Heart in South Wales and Capital in North Wales. We

have also been engaging with a Marketing company- Cowshed, commissioned by NAS with the aid of Welsh Government grant money to work with 3 of the regions WBAS, VVC and SEWAS, using their expertise to enhance and build on our local marketing/recruitment plan.

Performance in other agencies which includes regions and the Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VVAs) within Wales is as follows, MWW 29, NWAS 31, SEWAS 39, VVC 46, St Davids 16, Barnardos 5.

Overall 212 adopter approvals were achieved across Wales in 2017-18. The numbers seen in the last two years are lower than the first two years of regional services within NAS being operational, 236 in 2016-17 and 266 in 2015-16.

Current analysis by NAS of the current adopter gap indicates that at least 459 placements will be needed across Wales to place those children with PO'S, showing that there is a considerable gap to bridge through National and Regional recruitment activity.

13. Average Time to Approve Adopters = 7.9 Months

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	AVERAGE
2017/18	7.2 Months (217 days)	9.9 Months (296 days)	8.4 Months (251 days)	6.7 Months (200 days)	7.9 Months (236 days)
2016/17	9.7 Months (294 days)	10.7 Months (324 days)	9.5 Months (286 days)	9 Months (270 days)	9.7 Months (293 days)
2015/16	10.2 Months (294 days)	10.6 Months (320 days)	10.8 Months (326 days)	8.8 Months (264 Days)	10.1 Months (313 days)
2014/15	10.2 Months (232 days)	8.6 Months (305 days)	12.3 Months (255 days)	8.8 Months (310 days)	9.8 Months (275 days)

Despite pressures within the service, and a decrease in approvals we have seen an overall improvement in the average time taken to approve adopters

within the region which has fallen from 9.7 in 2016-17 to 7.9 months in 2017-18. The chart clearly demonstrates that this has been a continued area of improvement over the last 3 years showing success in our average performance and surpassing the national benchmark 8 month of 8 months.

The Service and NAS also collect performance in respect of the total length of time and average time it takes to approve adopters from the formal application to Agency Decision to Approve. Performance in respect of this is also good. Welsh Government guidance indicates that this stage should take 6 months. Western Bay was slightly over this at 6.6 months with the national average being 6.2 months.

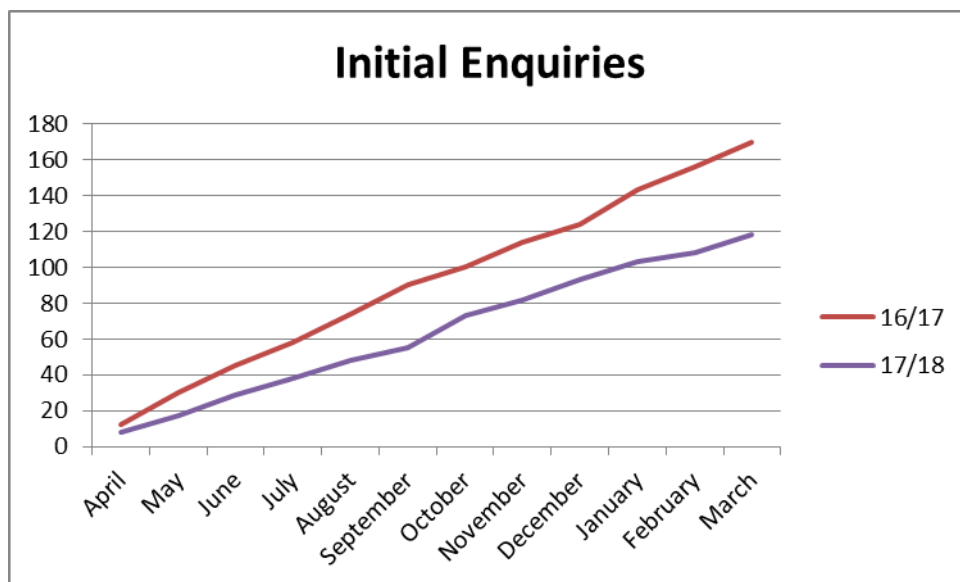
14. Numbers of Initial Adopter Enquires - 118

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
2017/18	29	26	38	25	118
2016/17	45	46	37	47	175
2015/16	41	59	34	42	177
2014/15	44	35	26	33	138

There has been a significant decrease in the number of enquiries in 2017/18 falling from 175 to 118 despite NAS running an extensive campaign which WBAS were actively involved in. It is fair to say that despite this campaign, holding events locally and actively participating in national adoption week, the number of enquiries has continued to decline.

Even with these efforts we are aware that nationally as well as locally those wishing to adopt still wish to be considered for younger and less complex children. From our close working relationship within the service it is evident to see that there remains a need to approve adopters for young children alongside those deemed to be the harder to place.

We have this year invested in developing our website and this will be launched by the end of July 2018/19. Our new website will be more user friendly, easy to navigate, and will provide information for adopters to access and the option to request further information at the push of a button. We have also looked at how to get us to the top of any search engine when potential adopters are searching 'Adoption', and how to direct more traffic through our website. In the coming year with our new website we will also be able to access website analytics which will give us information to further scrutinise.



Overall enquires across Wales increased by 20% during 2017/18 indicating that improved marketing is starting to have an impact.

Response times to enquiries, within 5 working days, remains good with most agencies and regions achieving 100% over the year.

National data analysis shows that the conversion rate of enquiries into application has varied across the year by region/agency. The average conversation rate for enquiry to assessment in 2017-18 was 20% a similar level to the previous year. Conversion rates in regions are generally higher than in the voluntary sector which may indicate that targeted recruitment is beginning to have an impact for regional services. This is positive; we need to increase interest and approvals from more prospective adopters who can meet the needs of our children as well as understanding the changing pattern of enquiries and ensuring we have the capacity to assess and support more adopters.

The number of adopter assessments that had commenced in Western Bay during 2017-18 was 64, slightly lower than 2016-17 at 69.

Overall across Wales 277 assessments were commenced in 2017-18 compared to 246 in the whole of 2016-17 demonstrating a positive step in increasing on this measure. This increase will make a contribution to closing the gap but bigger increases are needed. The figures for other agencies /

regions were; MWW 29, NWAS 31, SEWAS 67, VVC 47, WBAS 64, St Davids 26, Barnardos 13.

15. Life Journey Material

Table 1.	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
No. of children presented to panel for matching	28	16	13	11	68
No. of children where evidence of LJM materials undertaken.	5	10	11	8	34
Direct Work	7	3	6	2	18

Table 2.	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
No. children who had a 2 nd adoption review in the quarter.	13	20	32	21	86
No. children placed for adoption in the quarter where life journey material has been provided to adopters by the time of the 2 nd adoption review.	3 (23%)	14 (70%)	20 (63%)	13 (62%)	50 (58%)

Performance has improved in this area with an average of 58% of materials provided at the second adoption review compared to 30% in 2016/17. The national benchmark for this performance measure in 2017/18 was for 75% of children to receive life journey material by the 2nd adoption review, therefore the region fell short of this. A variety of measures/actions have been undertaken across the region in partnership with the 3 local authorities to continue to influence improvements to performance related to life story work.

- Within two Authorities life story work project groups have been established
- Standards for life journey work are being developed and will be shared with WBAS and the three LAs
- Briefing events on the National Life Journey Framework have taken place for managers and staff involved in undertaking life journey work with children

- Training has been commissioned on the transition model and is being rolled out in the first half of 2018 for social workers and foster carers with children who have a Placement Order
- 'Champions' have been identified within each Local Authority to act as links with WBAS for life journey work and Fostering
- Measures are being put in place to capture the number and for the first time quality of materials at matching panel and aim as good practice for these to be provided by time of placement
- The need to ensure life journey materials and evidence of preparing children age appropriately for adoption is being fed back to the LAs to ensure where materials are not available this is being addressed
- Development of an audit tool which is being considered within the Principal Officer group for use across the region.
- Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) in each LA have been advised they are to cover this matter in adoption reviews and to ensure it is being undertaken and captured as part of the process

Comparative table.	MWW	NWAS	SEWAS	VVC	WBAS
No. children who had a 2nd adoption review in the year.	26	46	42	72	86
No. children placed for adoption in the in the year where life journey material has been provided to adopters by the time of the 2nd adoption review.	24 (92%)	21 (46%)	25 (60%)	49 (68%)	50 (58%)

Overall across the regions we have during 2017-18 begun to see improvements in the availability of life journey materials for children and their families which could be linked to the implementation of the Life Journey Framework development project and the focus on this across Wales. The national average across all regions for children placed during the year that had their life journey materials by the 2nd adoption review was 62%. Nationally we have continued to see improvement from the baseline year of

2014-15 which was 24%; with the following years showing 49% in 2015-16 and 45% in 2016-17.

For the coming year 2018-19 the benchmark for this measure has been increased to 100%, which will prove challenging for all regions.

Adoption Support

16. Number of Birth Parents referred and who were offered a service.

2017/18	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Referred.	102	81	62	118	363
Offered a service.	97	81	60	113	351

2016/17	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Referred.	63	80	68	63	274
Offered a service.	63	80	67	56	266

The numbers of birth parents referred to the adoption service has increased in 2017-18 which is in keeping with the child referrals. Good performance has been maintained in the offer of a service being made; with 97% of birth parents referred being offered a service. There were a number of birth parents whose whereabouts were not known at the time the service received the referral and this impacted on the figures shown above.

Our performance in relation to those birth parents who take up a service within the same period as being offered a service is particularly low at 2%. Take up within 2017-18 was also low nationally at 21% similar to previous years. We know however that many birth parents choose to take up offers of support at a later stage. WB has identified that this will be a focus within the region for the coming year to improve the work with birth families and the take up of the service offered.

The number of birth parents who took up a service during 2017-18 that were referred and offered in a different period was 54, and as above suggests that more birth parents make contact with the service at a later stage.

17. Number and Percentage of children placed for adoption that have had an assessment for adoption support and the plan has been discussed with adopters.

2016/17	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
No. who have had an assessment.	13	15	23	18	69
Plan has been discussed.	13 (100%)	15 (100%)	23 (100%)	18 (100%)	69 (100%)

2017/18	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
No. who have had an assessment.	21	23	21	9	74
Plan has been discussed.	21(100%)	23(100%)	21(100%)	9 (100%)	74 (100%)

For this measure, 100% of children placed have an adoption support plan in place at the time of matching panel, in preparation for the placement for adoption. In every case, the support plan is shared with adopters and they are consulted on the content

17. Adoption Support Referrals

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total 17/18	Total 16/17
Number of other birth parents who took up a service in quarter	17	19	11	7	54	21
Number of requests for an assessment for post adoption support from birth siblings in quarter	4	2	0	0	6	8
Number of requests for an assessment for post adoption support from other adults (relatives/former guardians) affected by the adoption of a particular child in quarter	4	3	0	9	16	22



Comparative Chart	MWW	NWAS	SEWAS	VVC	WBAS
Number of other birth parents who took up a service in year	25	5	34	1	54
Number of requests for an assessment for post adoption support from birth siblings in year	6	5	9	2	6
Number of requests for an assessment for post adoption support from other adults (relatives/former guardians) affected by the adoption of a particular child in year	8	5	6	0	16

In the coming year the AS function will continue to work more closely with FF and neighbouring regional services to improve the amount of services and information for birth parents. This will include:

- WB to consider playing a role in completing the birth parent referral and medical forms to improve timeliness, information gathered and birth parent engagement at the start of the adoption process
- Consider an early referral meeting to identify the key tasks, adoption support needs and to improve quality
- Improving the information for birth parents to ensure the wording is more inviting on all communications
- Working with colleagues in two neighbouring regions to explore the feasibility and viability of birth parent support groups.
- Training and process redesign in matching children to ensure sibling attachments are given greater credence, considered on a case by case basis and there are mechanisms in place to preserve and promote sibling relationships.
- Of particular focus will be the development and improvement in work completed around sibling attachments.

There continues to be evidence of rising adoption support needs, with an increase in referrals across some aspects of adoption support particularly requests for assessment of need including direct work/therapeutic intervention and letterbox work. Letterbox is showing approximately a 14% increase in active letterbox cases within the last year. Interventions have taken longer with more complex needs being identified. In 2016/17 the numbers of new assessments for post adoption support were 23. For 2017/18 the numbers increased by more than half to 53, with the highest increase being in assessments completed for adoption allowances.

18. Birth Records and Intermediary Services Referrals

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total 17/18	Total 16/17
Number of requests for access to birth records in quarter (BRC)	10	14	6	6	36	45
Number of requests for Intermediary Services (IS) in quarter	3	8	2	5	18	18

During 2017-18 there has been almost a 25% decrease in requests for Birth Record Counselling (BRC), requests for Intermediary Services (IS) has remained consistent with the previous year 2016-17. Alongside this the service has improved how BRC and IS cases are monitored and allocated, with priority being given to pre 1975 cases.

A comparison of adoption support requests with other regions is demonstrated in the table below

	MWW	NWAS	SEWAS	VVC	WBAS
Number of requests for access to birth records in year	36	40	32	49	36
Number of requests for Intermediary Services (IS) in year	32	37	9	51	18

In relation to access to birth records the national trend is showing a reduction in the number of requests for this service, however, the national trend for intermediary services shows that there has been an increase in requests in 3 of the regions and a decrease in 2 regions which includes WBAS.

Date of report update 14th June 2018
Val Jones