



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL  
CYNGOR BWRDEIS TREF SIROL RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

A virtual meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Board** will be held on

**24 November 2022 at 10.00 am**

**Contact:** Hannah Williams - Council Business Unit, Democratic Services (07385401954)

**ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

**1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

To receive disclosures of personal interest from Members in accordance with the Code of Conduct

Note:

1. Members are requested to identify the item number and subject matter that their interest relates to and signify the nature of the personal interest: and
2. Where Members withdraw from a meeting as a consequence of the disclosure of a prejudicial interest they must notify the Chairman when they leave.

**2. MINUTES**

To approve, as an accurate record, the minutes of the meeting of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

**(Pages 5 - 10)**

**3. TROS GYNNAL PLANT (TGP) CYMRU**

To receive the Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) Cymru quarterly progress report.

**(Pages 11 - 22)**

**4. LOCAL AUTHORITY'S OFFER OF ACCOMMODATION AND HOUSING SUPPORT RELATED SERVICES TO CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE**

To receive an update in respect of the housing and support assistance to young people leaving care for the period 1st April 2022 to the 31st of October 2022.

**(Pages 23 - 30)**

**5. MISKIN ANNUAL REPORT AND THERAPEUTIC FAMILIES TEAM ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022**

To receive the report of the Group Director, Community & Children's Services which provides Corporate Parenting Board members an update on the work of the Miskin Teams and Therapeutic Families Team set out in the services' annual reports for 2021-2022.

**(Pages 31 - 48)**

**6. VALE, VALLEYS AND CARDIFF ADOPTION COLLABORATIVE (VVC) ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022**

To receive the report of the Group Director, Community and Children's Services, which provides the Corporate Parenting Board with the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative (VVC) Annual Report for 2021-2022.

**(Pages 49 - 108)**

**7. TO CONSIDER PASSING THE FOLLOWING UNDER-MENTIONED RESOLUTION:**

"That the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended) for the next items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 13 and 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Act."

**8. FOSTERING WALES - FOSTERING FRIENDLY EMPLOYER /CHARTER**

To receive the report of the Group Director, Community & Children's Services which provides the Corporate Parenting Board with information on the Fostering Wales: Fostering Friendly Employer/Charter.

**(Pages 109 - 120)**

**9. SOCIAL SERVICES QUARTERLY COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS**

To receive the report of the Group Director, Community & Children's Services providing the Corporate Parenting Board with an overview of the operation and effectiveness of the statutory Social Services complaints procedure.

**(Pages 121 - 140)**

**10. REGULATION 73 REPORTS**

To receive the report of the Group Director, Community & Children's Services, updating members on the Regulation 73 visits and the current position within RCT's Residential Children's Homes and Respite Service.

**(Pages 141 - 272)**

**Circulation:**

**County Borough Councillors:**

Councillor G Caple (Chair)  
Councillor R Lewis (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor C Leyshon  
Councillor J Bonetto  
Councillor S Rees  
Councillor S Trask  
Councillor S Evans  
Councillor P Evans

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## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on Tuesday, 18 October 2022 at 2.30 pm at the Virtual.

### **County Borough Councillors - Corporate Parenting Board Members in attendance:-**

Councillor G Caple (Chair)

Councillor R Lewis    Councillor C Leyshon  
Councillor S Rees

### **Officers in attendance**

Mr P Mee, Group Director Community & Children's Services  
Ms A Lloyd, Service Director, Children's Services  
Ms C Miles, Childcare Solicitor  
Ms J Thomas, Complaints & QA Manager, Social Services  
Ms H Bevan, Education Co-ordinator for Looked After Children  
Ms M Meredith, Residential Services Manager  
Ms N Katchi - Graduate Officer  
Ms M Davies - TGP

### **Others in attendance**

Ms S Burford – Regional Lead, PDG CLA  
Ms L Harper – Voices from Care Cymru  
Young Person – Voices from Care Cymru

#### **1 Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed Members and Officers to the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board and took the opportunity to pay his condolences to the late Councillor Burnell.

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors J. Bonetto, S. Evans and S. Trask.

#### **2 Declaration of Interest**

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

#### **3 Minutes**

To approve as an accurate record, the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on the 14<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

#### **4 Participation Update For Care Experienced Children and Young People and Voices from Care Cymru Update**

The Graduate Officer for Participation provided Corporate Parenting Board with an update in respect of RCT Children's Services' engagement activities.

The update included information in respect of:

- a recent participation event held on the 1st September 2022 with children looked after at Pontypridd Museum;
- a Children's Services survey of care experienced children and young people which would be running to mid October 2022; and
- a care experienced summit on Saturday 10th September with Welsh Ministers to work with children and young people across local authorities in Wales to develop radical reform for children looked after.

In addition to the update, an officer and young person from Voices from Care Cymru were in attendance and provided Members with an update on the work undertaken to support care-experienced young people in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The young person provided the Board with details of recent projects undertaken with VFCC, which included a mental health and wellbeing initiative, a mini sports day and a consultation meeting on the ambitions for 16+. The Young Person informed Members of an upcoming Wales Wide summit meeting, which would allow care-experienced young people to have conversations with Ministers about improvements to services.

One Member spoke positive of the Engagement event and commented that the slides used were colourful and engaging for the young people. The Member thanked the young person for sharing her experiences and emphasised the importance of the views of young people shaping decisions which influence them.

Another Member echoed previous comments and took the opportunity to thank the young person for attending the meeting and extended her gratitude to the 16+ officer for supporting the young people.

The Chair thanked the participants for their presentation and praised the young person for her contribution. The Chair added that it was pleased to note how such services can improve the confidence of young people.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the information in the report; and
2. That Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council should sign up the Charter for Parents in Care and Leaving Care.

## **5 Corporate Parenting Board Work Programme**

The Senior Executive and Regulatory Business Officer provided the Corporate Parenting Board with a summary of the draft work programme for the 2022-2023 Municipal Year. Alongside the regular annual updates, many of the topics for consideration within the Programme had been identified by Members at previous meetings.

The officer explained that the Work Programme was a fluid document that could be amended to reflect any changes to business needs throughout the year.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To provide comment as appropriate on the draft Work Programme; and
2. To approve the draft work programme as a basis, which can be amended to reflect any changing priorities throughout the year.

## **6 Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2021-22**

The Senior Executive and Regulatory Business Officer provided the Corporate Parenting Board with the Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report for the 2021-2022 Municipal Year. The report covered the breadth of work considered by the Board during the year; and put forward the items identified for future consideration.

The officer reminded Members that if approved, the report would be presented to Cabinet.

The Chair thanked the officer for the report and the Corporate Parenting Board

### **RESOLVED:**

1. To provide comment as appropriate on the draft Annual Report before its presentation to Cabinet.

## **7 Children Looked After Prevention Strategy**

The Service Director of Children's Services provided the Corporate Parenting Board with information in respect of the Children's Services' progress with the looked After Prevention Strategy; a report which had previously been considered by Scrutiny and approved by Cabinet in January 2022.

The Director provided information on the four significant areas of improvement identified within the report and ensured Members that officers were already working on implementing them. The Director spoke of the ambition to increase the evidence based family support and to work towards keeping families safely together, when appropriate.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the information in the report.

## **8 Charter for Parents in Care and Leaving Care**

The Service Director of Children's Services provided the Corporate Parenting Board with information in respect of the Charter for Parents in Care and Leaving Care.

The Service Director spoke of the rationale for the Charter and the focus group, which took place in July 2022 with both professionals and care experienced young people in attendance. The Service Director also took the opportunity to thank County Borough Councillor S. Rees for her involvement in the group.

The Service Director provided information on the four areas of the Charter and the next steps to ensure compliance goes beyond just signing up and has meaningful impact on vulnerable young people.

One Member was pleased to note that in addition to reaching out to parents, the Charter was pro-active in targeting young people expecting to be parents.

Another Member spoke positive of the focus group in June and questioned how officers intend to measure the effectiveness of the Charter going forward. The Service Director advised that data was already indicating small improvements and as such, there had been an improvement in the rate at which children become looked after under three years and under one year. The Service Director also spoke of positive progress of the Magu Team, which was a specific targeted service to support the most vulnerable of parents and those parents most at risk of child separation. The Service Director advised that, subject to the view of the Chair, future reports would be brought to the Corporate Parenting Board in terms of performance data and the progress of the Magu Service.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the information in the report;
2. That Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council should sign up the Charter for Parents in Care and Leaving Care; and
3. A future reports would be brought to the Corporate Parenting Board in terms of performance data and the progress of the Magu Service.

## **9 Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) Cymru**

Tros Gynnal Plant Cymru provided the Corporate Parenting Board with the progress made by the service from January-June 2022.

Members were informed that during quarter one (April-June 2022), 48 young people accessed the issue-based service with 61 issues and 19 referred for the active offer. In terms of Children Looked After, 13 young people were eligible and 4 were referred, all of which accepted the offer. The officer advised that 75% were met within 5 working days of the initial referral and explained that the delay in one case was the need to organise interpreters.

The officer went onto speak of the systems in place to monitor how the active offer is received by the young people. It was explained that data was available to monitor the young people receiving the offer and why some were choosing to reject it.

In respect of issue-based referrals, 22 young people had been referred with 26 issues, along with two care leavers with 3 issues. Members were informed that a lot of work had been undertaken in improving the recording systems to find out more about what is being said within the meetings.

The officer noted that the report contained a lot of information on child protection data and suggested that, moving forward, smaller reports would be produced specifically around the Children Looked After, to which Members agreed.

The Chair thanked Tros Gynnal Plant Cymru for the informative report and emphasised the importance of the advocacy service for young people.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report.

## **10 Pupil Deprivation Grant**



The Education Co-ordinator for Children Looked After and the Regional Lead for the Pupil Development Grant for Looked After Children (PDG CLA) provided the Corporate Parenting Board with an update on the evaluation of the school cluster model for the PDG CLA funding during the financial year 2020/21 and 2021/22 in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The Chair thanked the officers for the comprehensive report and commented that it was testament to the work undertaken post-covid to help young people to thrive.

In respect of the Virtual School Model, one Member noted the positive progress being made and questioned how good practice was shared amongst schools, particularly in primary schools. The Regional Lead advised that although the project was a pilot, officers were working closely together and enthusiastic to monitor its progress but advised that the officer within Welsh Government who introduced the model had recently left post, which had delayed matters. The Regional Lead spoke of plans to work in two schools within the County Borough, where the impact of Covid had been a detriment to exclusion numbers. Members were informed that the intention was to undertake the project and evaluate its success. In addition, the Regional Lead spoke of implementing peer lead initiatives which would see the older children working with younger children through the PSE provision or the health and wellbeing curriculum.

The Chair thanked the officers for the update and requested that an update report is presented to a future meeting of the Board.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider the information contained with the report;
2. To comment on the information provided; and
3. To receive a further report to evaluate the PDG LAC cluster model for 2022/23.

**11 To consider passing the following under-mentioned Resolution:**

It was **RESOLVED** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act (as amended) for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of the exempt information as defined in paragraph 13 of Part 4 of the Schedule 12A of the Act.

**12 Social Services Quarterly Complaints and Compliments**

The Service Improvement, Engagement & Complaints Manager provided the Corporate Parenting Board with an overview of the operation of effectiveness of the statutory Social Services complaints procedure between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022 and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022.

The report contained information on the number of complaints received, the nature of the complaints and any lessons learnt, as well as detailing Councillor, A.M and M.P enquiries and the number of complaints received.

Following discussion, the Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report.

**13 Quality of Care Review Report (Regulation 80)**

The Residential Services Manager provided the Board with an update on the monitoring carried out under the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 and the current position within four children's residential homes within RCT.

One Member spoke of the positive comments from the community in respect of Bryndar and asked that it be passed onto the home.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report.

**This meeting closed at 3.30 pm**

**Cllr G Caple  
Chairman.**

## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

24<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2022

#### TROS GYNNAL PLANT (TGP) CYMRU UPDATE

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Board with an update of progress made by Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) Cymru.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board:

- 2.1 Acknowledge the work undertaken by TGP Cymru, the content of which is attached at Appendix 1.

#### 3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is important for Members to note the progress, themes and issues highlighted by the TGP Cymru, in order to work in partnership to ensure the best possible outcomes are reached for those in our care system.

#### 4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 As part of the Board's Terms of reference, TGP Cymru are invited to attend meetings to enable both the TGP Cymru and Children Services to discuss issues that affect service delivery in the community on a strategic level and to work in partnership to provide improved and better outcomes.

#### 5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not needed because the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

#### 6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 There is no consultation required for this report.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

7.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

8.1 There are no legal implications aligned to this report.

## **9. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ FUTURE GENERATIONS – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.**

9.1 The work of the Corporate Parenting Board links directly to the Council's Corporate Plan priority – 'Rhondda Cynon Taf's Children will receive a great start in life...'

9.2 The work of TGP Cymru links to the Future Generations Well-Being Goal of a more equal Wales, by ensuring that children and young people are supported when decisions are being made about them. This ensures that young people have access to a range of information in order to fulfil their potential.

9.3 In addition to the duty to listen to young people and involve them in decisions, the Part 10 Code of Practice (Advocacy) of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 sets out the duties to consider the provision of independent professional advocacy in certain circumstances for:

- Children who are looked after (who should benefit from an active offer of professional independent advocacy) or have previously been looked after
- Children who are subject to an assessment of need or a care and support plan or child protection enquiries

## **10. CONCLUSION**

10.1 TGP Cymru are invited to attend meetings of the Corporate Parenting Board, to provide a broader understanding and contribution into the services available to young people and vulnerable adults.

**Cwm Taf Morgannwg Independent Advocacy Service  
RCT Care Experienced Young People and Care Leavers  
Report**

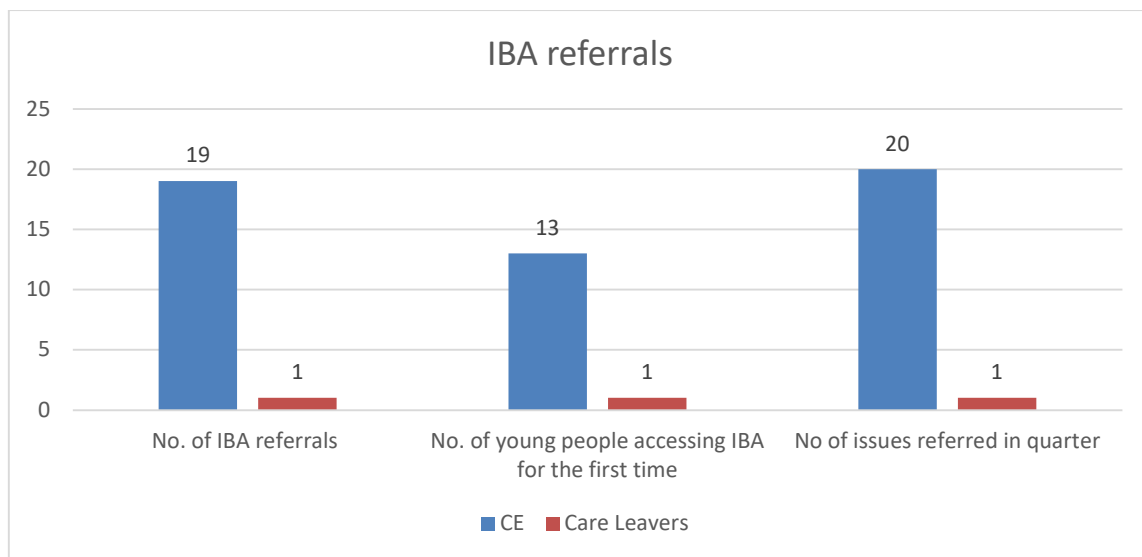
**Quarter Two July 2022 – September 2022**



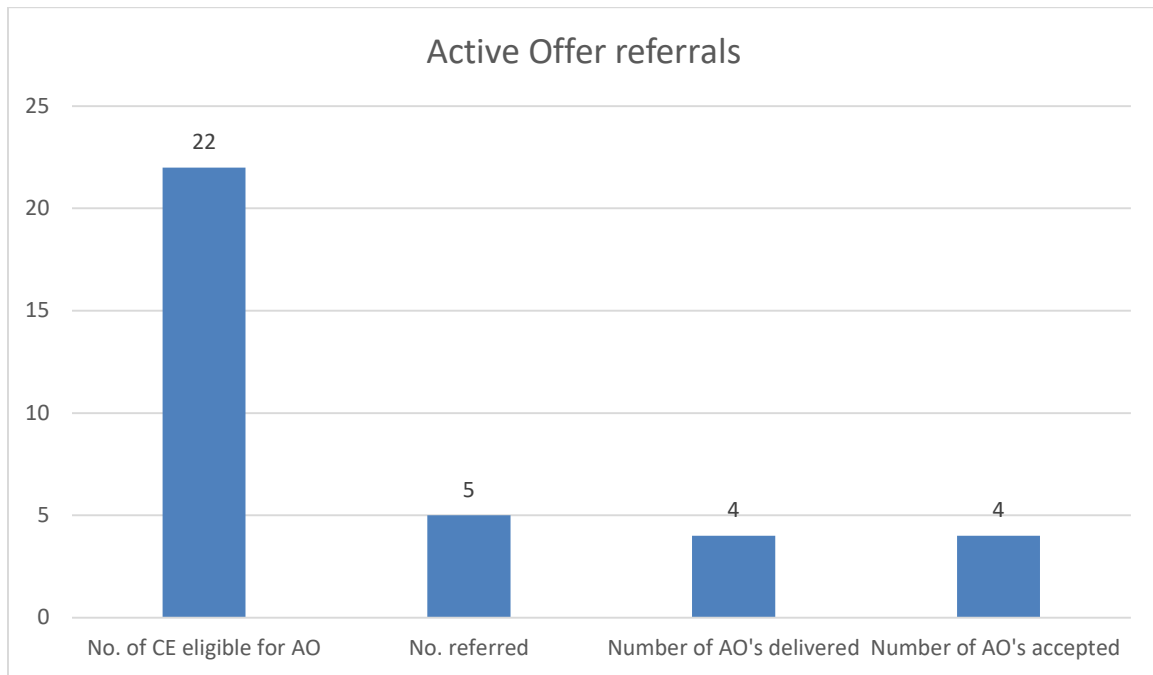
In quarter two, 46 young people accessed Issue Based Advocacy (IBA) and 21 young people were referred for the Active Offer (AO) across RCT.

This report has been prepared for RCT Corporate Parenting Board and provides information on the service delivered to care experienced (CE) young people and care leavers only.

In quarter two, 19 CE young people and one care leaver accessed IBA, presenting with 21 issues. Five care experienced young people were referred for the AO.



Some 13 of the 19 CE young people accessing IBA were doing so for the first time.



According to information provided by RCT, 22 CE young people became eligible for the AO in quarter two. Four AOs were delivered by advocates and four young people accepted the AO and went on to receive IBA. This means 23% of eligible young people were referred for AO.

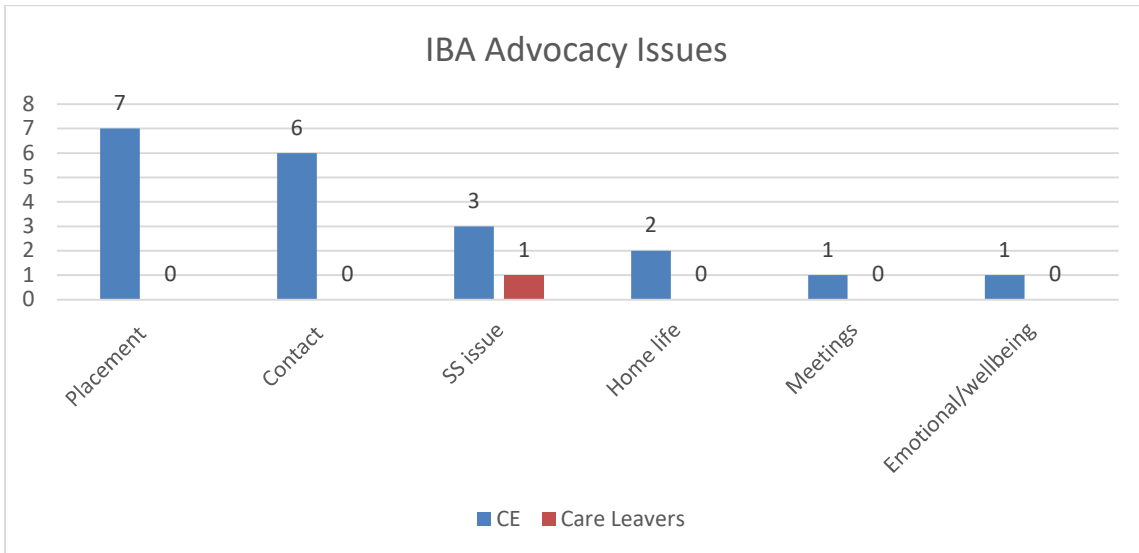
Of the 22 CE young people who became eligible in quarter two, eight young people were recorded as accepting the opportunity to receive the AO. Of the eight who accepted, five young people were referred for AO. One young person was recorded as rejecting the AO visit when offered by their social worker, but was referred for AO, and accepted in quarter two. One young person was referred for AO via the CP pathway as she was both looked after and on the CP Register at the time of referral.

We have not received referrals for two young people recorded as accepting the AO visit when it was offered by their social worker.

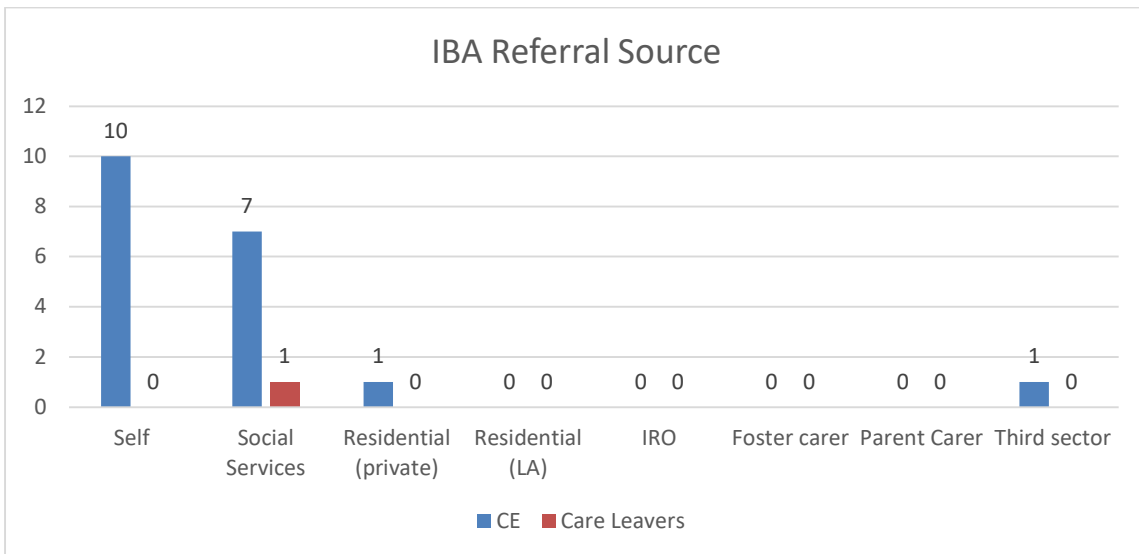
Six CE young people were recorded as rejecting the offer of an AO meeting. The main reason for rejecting the AO was that the young person felt they didn't need the service because they could talk to their social worker or another professional. One young person rejected the AO meeting without a reason but was later referred to the advocacy service.

Six eligible young people did not have the conversation with their social worker for the following reasons: three siblings were only looked after for a short period when their ICO was revoked. Two had received AOs via the CP route last year and the youngest was referred for IBA as he was too young for AO at the time. One social worker decided not to have the conversation with the young person because they were only looked after for one weekend. Another decided against the conversation with two siblings because their parents did not want them to know children's services were involved.

We do not know if two young people had the conversation with their social worker as they are neither recorded as accepting or rejecting the AO on the spreadsheet provided.

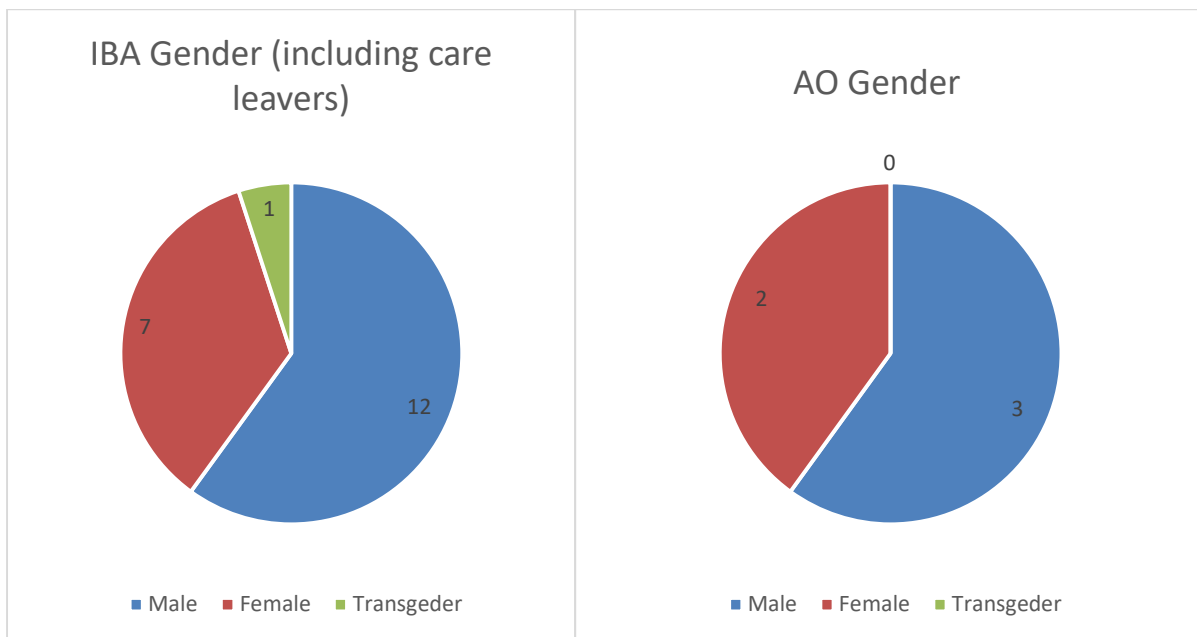


The most popular issues in need of advocacy support in quarter two, were placement followed by contact.



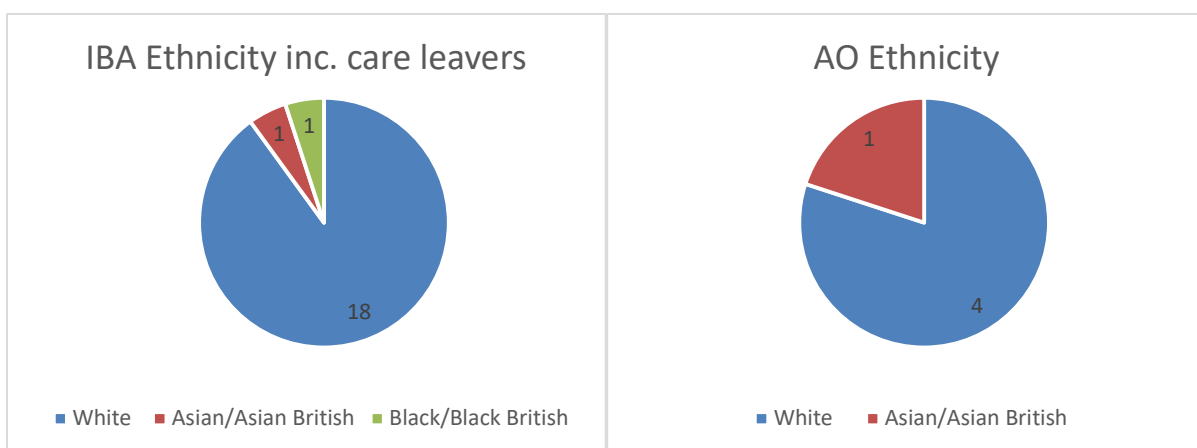
Social services referral and 'self-referral' is the most popular route into the IBA service for care experienced young people and care leavers. This is usually either the result of the young person accepting the AO and going on to received IBA, or the young person contacting their advocate directly with a new issue.





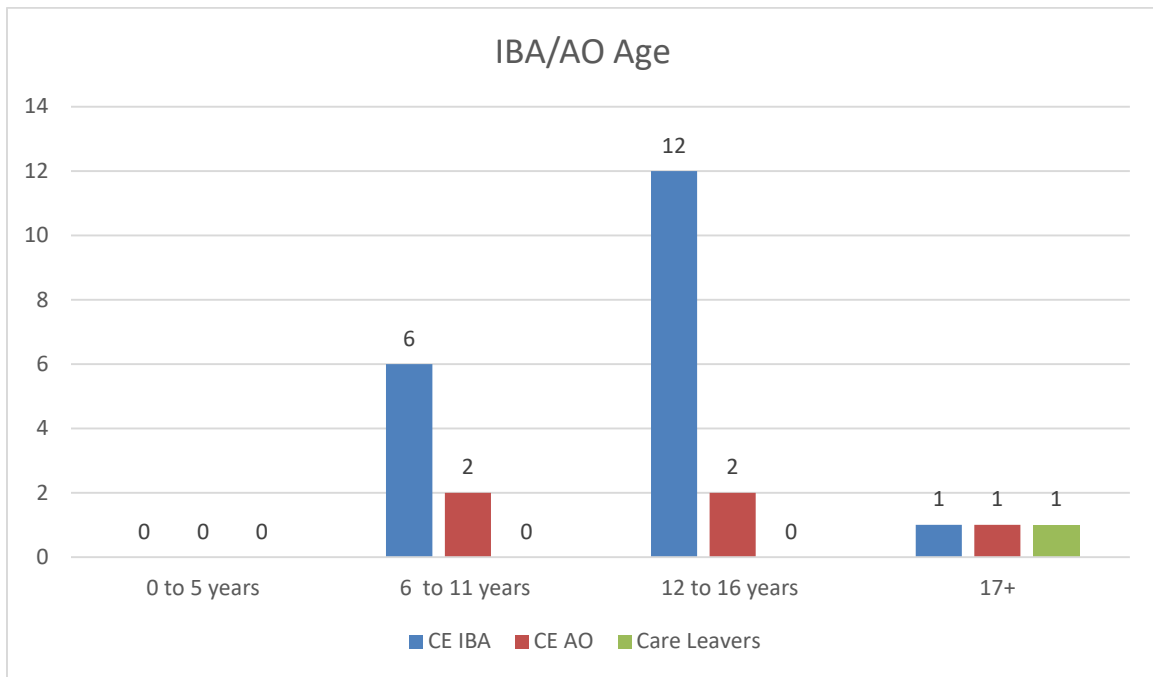
Of those care experienced young people accessing IBA In quarter two, 12 were males, compared to seven females and one transgender young person.

Care experienced young people referred for AO were split fairly evenly with three males and two females referred.



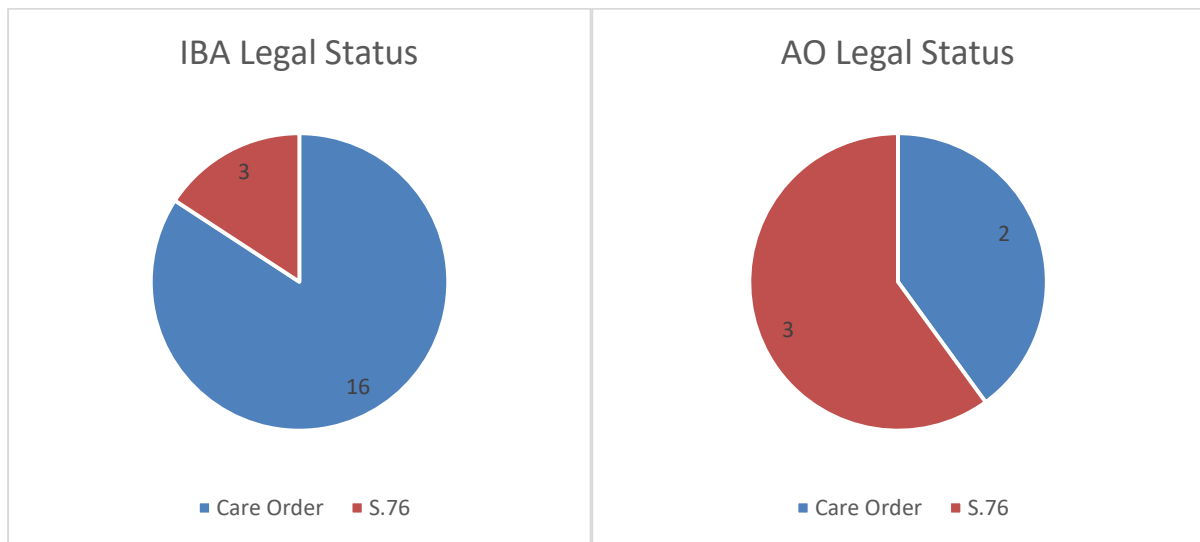
All but two of the CE young people and care leavers accessing IBA in quarter two were white.

All but one young people referred for AO described themselves as white.

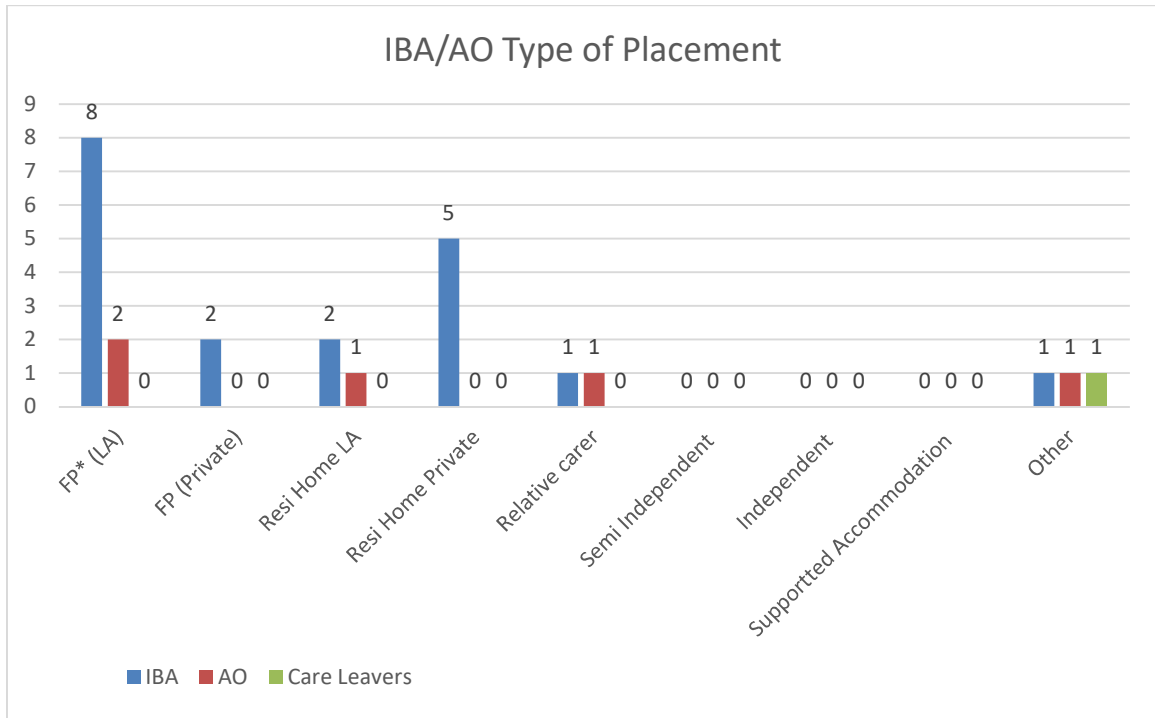


Most CE young people accessing the IBA service in quarter two were aged between 12 and 16 years.

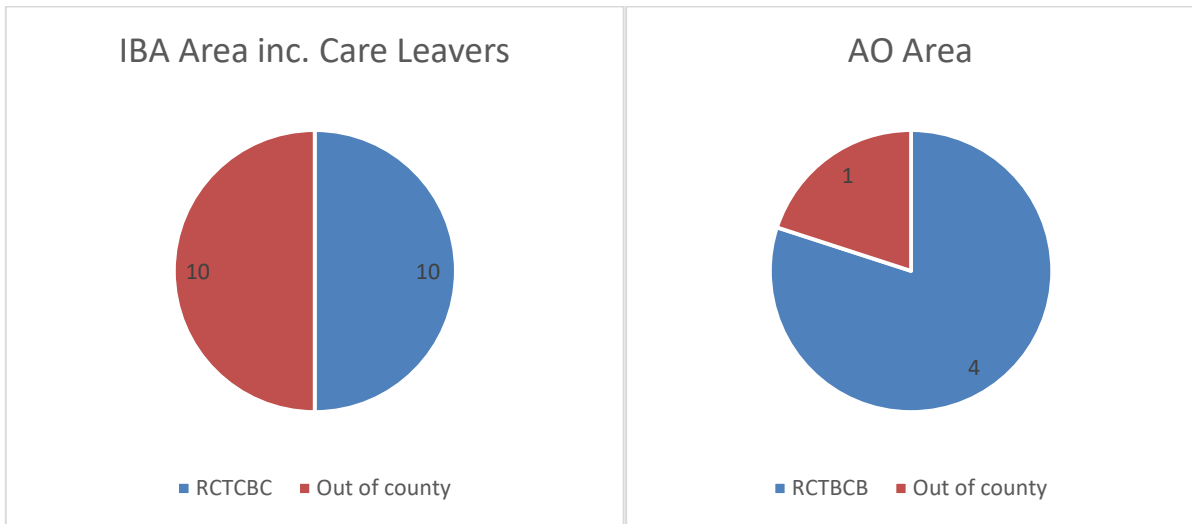
The five CE young people referred for AO were split evenly between the 6-11 and 12-16 age categories with the addition of one young person aged over 16 years.



Most CE young people accessing IBA in quarter two were subject to a full care order while the majority of those referred for AO were accommodated voluntarily.



Most CE young people accessing advocacy services in quarter two were living in a local authority foster placement at the time of referral.



Advocates supported 10 CE young people living outside of RCT in quarter two, in areas including Merthyr, Swansea, Newport, Carmarthenshire and London.

One young person referred for AO lived in Bridgend.

## **Other information**

We have received one referral for an unaccompanied asylum-seeking young person who will be supported to access an Arabic interpreter to communicate with his advocate.

Two disabled CE young people accessed IBA in quarter two (ASD and Cerebral Palsy) and one young person with additional learning needs was also referred.

## **Visiting Advocacy**

Visiting Advocacy continues in five Local Authority community homes across RCT. Face-to-face visits have continued monthly in Bryndar and Beddau. The remaining three homes, Carn Ingli, Nantygwyn and Ty Brynna have advised monthly visits are not appropriate and have requested the advocate visits every two months and stays connected via telephone contact instead. Visiting advocacy has resulted in two IBA referrals for young people living in community homes in quarter two.

## **Service Information**

Following the recent change to the way we record how children and young people are supported at meetings we have continued to observe increases in other issues such as contact and placement and a reduction in 'support at meetings' issues. We will continue to record advocacy attendance at meetings but will do this separately and the recording of issues rather than meetings will continue to tell us more about what young people want to discuss both in and out of meetings.

During quarter two, 'support at meetings' was the main issue only once for CE young people, however, advocates supported children and young people to share wishes and feelings at CLA reviews eight times during quarter two.

We anticipate that who young people spend time with, and how they feel at home will continue to be two of the most prominent issues young people will want to discuss with their advocates. We have planned to make amendments to the way we record contact issues in the future, which will allow us to access data more easily about who young people want to spend their time with.

The CTM advocacy team manager and administrator met with new members of the RCT social care management information team in September. This was a good opportunity to review the process by which RCT share information on young people eligible for the Active Offer service with us. The communication from the team has always been helpful and efficient and we are confident this will continue.

## Case Example

Please find below an example of advocacy work undertaken during the quarter from within RCT. The name has been changed to protect the young person's identity.

**Situation:** Sam is nine years old and was referred to the advocacy service following a breakdown in the relationship between Sam's aunt and uncle whom he had been living with. Sam's aunt and uncle were also his registered foster carers, and Sam had chosen to live with his uncle and his new partner following their split. Sam had been having regular contact with his aunt, but after the contact was put on hold due to his aunt having an operation, Sam said he did not want the contact to resume. Sam's aunt was concerned he was being unfairly influenced by his uncle and his new partner.

**Action:** The advocate planned to meet with Sam at his home, which was out of county, during the summer holidays after asking where Sam would like to meet. Sam and the advocate were able to talk privately at home, and the advocate was able to ask Sam if he would like any help to share his feelings or challenge any decisions around the current arrangements for him to spend time with his aunt. Sam explained he had decided not to see his aunt at all, mainly because when he had been spending time with her, she had asked lots of questions about his uncle's partner which he didn't like at all. Sam said his uncle was fine with him seeing his aunt, but he wanted to have a break for at least a few months while he settled into his new home. Sam was very clear that he wouldn't change his mind, even if his aunt promised not to ask him any more questions, but he would think about contact again leading up to his next CLA Review.

**Outcome:** As a result of Sam independently sharing his wishes via his advocate, his social worker agreed that contact with Sam's aunt would be suspended until his next CLA Review. Sam was happy with the advocate's suggestion that they visit him again before the review, to help him share any further wishes and feelings he may have. Sam felt he may be ready to see his aunt then and was really happy that it wasn't something he had to worry about or be asked about again over the next few months.

## Conclusion and looking forward

Referrals for CE young people and care leavers have remained consistent when compared to the previous quarter, with an increase of one CE young person being referred for AO, and three less CE young people accessing IBA. One less care leaver accessed IBA in quarter one. This means only three care leavers have accessed the IBA service in the last six months. The Advocacy team manager will contact the 16+ team manager in the next quarter to address the lack of IBA referrals for care leavers.

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## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

24<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2022

#### LOCAL AUTHORITY'S OFFER OF ACCOMMODATION AND HOUSING SUPPORT RELATED SERVICES TO CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE

Author: **Cheryl Emery – Head of Community Safety and Community  
Housing**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

The purpose of the report is to provide the Corporate Parenting Board with an update in respect of the housing and support assistance to young people leaving care for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to the 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2022.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board acknowledge the information contained within the report.

#### **3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 This is an information report.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 Legislative change in Wales has led to a strengthening of duties on local authorities to prevent, and address, homelessness more effectively. The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires local authorities to produce a joint strategy between housing and social services to address homelessness. This reinforces the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 requirement that housing and social services work together to meet the needs of young people in care as they move to independent living. The statutory responsibility of social services to provide a pathway plan for all those leaving care – to facilitate their transition to independence – can now, where necessary, include a

personal housing plan which focuses specifically on their housing needs.

- 4.2 To meet the above duties and ensure effective collaboration officers from Children Services and Community Housing are working together to enhance joint working arrangements, through a care leaver pathway. The development of a care leaver pathway will offer a joined-up assessment and a single planning process.
- 4.3 This includes a dedicated Housing Solutions Officer role to provide a single point of contact and help identify all available housing options in consideration of a young person's housing and support needs. This will include supported accommodation, Housing First and general needs provision

### **An outline of the Housing and Support Options that are presently available to Young People Leaving**

#### **Social Housing Homefinder (Allocations)**

The Community Housing Department manages the gateway to social housing in RCT in partnership with social housing landlords. Care leavers can apply directly for social housing with applications considered by the Move on Panel, who determine if the young person is ready to live independently. If approved care leavers are placed in Band A which is the highest priority band and are then able to bid for 1 bedroom accommodation in the areas of their choice. It must be noted there is limited supply and a high demand for one bedroom accommodation particularly in the south of the borough.

Between the 1<sup>st</sup> of April and 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022, 14 care leavers have applied to Homefinder and have been assessed as ready to live Independently and registered for housing and placed in Band A. 8 allocations of social housing have made to care leavers during this period with 2 young people leaving care awaiting a tenancy in a new build project in Taff's Well.

#### **Private Rented Accommodation**

The availability of single person accommodation in the private rented sector is a significant challenge in the borough. The Council has received Welsh Government funding to set up a Social Housing Letting Agency (SLA) in Rhondda Cynon Taff. This is a pilot scheme which aims to improve access and support to private landlords to offer long term affordable and good quality accommodation with support in the private rented sector. However, the challenge remains affordability and securing accommodation within Local Housing



Allowance rates which has become almost impossible for anyone in receipt of benefits or a low income.

### **Housing Related Support Services**

Our supported and supportive accommodation services for care leavers helps them secure tenancies and address issues preventing them from living independently.

We currently commission through Housing Support Grant wide ranging provision and holistic support services to care leavers and young people aged 16 -25.

This includes as set out below 28 units of supported accommodation and 11 units of emergency accommodation for young people aged 16-25.

<b>Supported Accommodation</b>				
<b>Provider</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Project Type</b>	<b>Units</b>	<b>Total Units</b>
Hafan Cymru	Dispersed	Support when required (Low need)	11	28
Hafan Cymru	Boys shared	Support 24/7 (High need)	3	
Hafan Cymru	Girls shared	Support 24/7 (High need)	3	
Llamau	Dunraven Street	Support when required (Low need)	3	
Llamau	Ty Rhondda	Support 24/7 (High need)	3	
Pobl	The Old Bakery	Support 24/7 (High need)	5	
<b>Emergency Accommodation</b>				
<b>Provider</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Project Type</b>	<b>Units</b>	<b>Total Units</b>
Pobl	The Grange	24/7 support emergency	10	11
Llamau	Emergency Room	24/7 support emergency	1	

Between the 1<sup>st</sup> of April and 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022, 45 young people have accessed the 28 supported accommodation units. Of these 45 individuals, 9 of these were identified as care leavers.

Since April 2022 to date, we have helped 32 young people access the 11 emergency units.

Despite this assistance, demand for supported accommodation remains high with 8 young people currently on the waiting list. Work is underway to develop a purpose-built project offering 4 units of 24/7 supported accommodation for young people aged 16 -25 including care leavers and is due online in early 2023/24. Challenges remain funding to be able to commission new supported accommodation provision and suitable buildings to develop a project.

### **Floating Support**

The RCT locality based floating support project provides person centred support to people who already have their own accommodation or who are in the process of moving into a property from a permanent full time care setting.

This service helps many individuals including young people to further develop their independent living skills and help them to sustain their tenancies. Over the first 7 months of this year 12 referrals from care leavers were received for tenancy related support and accepted on scheme.

### **Housing First Project**

The Housing First Project in RCT is partnership between RCTCBC and Llamau and provides a person-centred approach for young people who have high support needs and who will find living in supported accommodation and general needs accommodation without support a challenge.

The project is designed to address the needs of young adults by providing them with immediate access to housing that is safe, affordable, and appropriate, and the necessary and age-appropriate support that focus on health, wellbeing, life skills, engagement in education and employment, and social inclusion. The project is currently supporting 10 young people with 4 young people (40%) maintaining their tenancies for 6 months or longer at the end of October. 5 young people are awaiting an offer of accommodation and 1 young person placed in emergency accommodation due to ending their tenancy.

### **Supported Lodgings**

Supported Lodgings provision is currently commissioned through Housing Support Grant in partnership with Community Housing and Children's Services; to provide young people leaving care with a safe home and to offer practical advice and help to manage their lifestyle and become independent. 9 care leavers are currently placed in a supported lodgings placement in Rhondda Cynon Taff.

### **Get Ready and Move on Project (GRAMO)**

Early intervention and prevention are viewed as a fundamental and a common theme which connects directly to the Housing Act Wales, Social Services and Wellbeing Act and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

The GRAMO project provides an early intervention pre-tenancy learning environment for all individuals to develop and evidence the skills to manage a tenancy. The learning is tailored to the client attending each session. Areas

covered in each session include money management, understanding a Tenancy Agreement, Life skills, managing a home and digital inclusion.

Sessions for care leavers are held on a 121 basis to help support their learning and understanding of living independently prior to leaving care.

During the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to the 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2022, 9 care leavers were referred to GRAMO and completed the course.

## **5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**

5.1 This is an information report

## **6 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 This is an information report.

## **7 CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT**

7.1 This is an information report.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

8.1 There are no direct financial implications aligned to this report.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

9.1 The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that children in care and former children in care receive appropriate support in their transition into adulthood.

9.2 Section 1.34 of the Welsh Government's Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness Guidance (March 2016) confirms Local Authorities have a range of duties to care leavers who represent a particularly vulnerable group and require Children's Services and Housing to work together to work together to meet the needs of young people in care as they move to independent living.

## **10. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.**

10.1 The business covered in this report contributes to the Corporate and National Priorities and Well Being and Future Generations Act following well-being goals which include:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales.
- A healthier Wales.
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A globally responsible Wales

## **11. CONCLUSION**

11.1 The provision of Welsh Government funding to increase the supply of both temporary and permanent accommodation has helped. However, despite this financial assistance there is a limited availability of suitable and affordable accommodation in both the social and private rented sector. This is having a significant impact on young people being able to leave care in a planned way and to be able to live independently.

11.2 Whilst a considerable amount of work has being undertaken to address the immediate housing and support needs of young people leaving care. Further work is to explore more sustainable long- term support and accommodation options.

11.3 Working in partnership with health and our third sector partners is also vital to ensure appropriate support services are in place for young people to address complex needs need's such as substance misuse and mental health.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

**24<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2022**

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## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

24<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2022

#### REPORT OF DIRECTOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR G CAPLE

#### MISKIN AND THE THERAPEUTIC FAMILIES TEAM ANNUAL REPORTS

**Author(s): Matthew Free (Service Manager), Sarah Longhurst and Jay Goulding (Team Managers).**

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Corporate Parenting Board members on the work of the Miskin Teams, Integrated Family Support Team (IFST), Therapeutic Families Team (TFT) set out in the services' annual report for 2021-2022.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

**It is recommended that Members:**

- 2.1 Acknowledge the information contained within the report.

#### 3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 This is an information report.

#### 4. BACKGROUND

Miskin is a set of services whose purpose are to prevent child–parent separation or placement breakdown. We do this through the deployment of evidence-based, time limited interventions which are co-produced with the family and the referring case worker. Our work can include:



- Supporting children and young people to remain living at home in their own communities with parents/family members, reducing risks to children living at home, whilst also reducing risk of child/parent separation and family breakdown.
- Supporting young people who are looked after where there is a risk of breakdown.
- Supporting reunification plans for children and young people to return home from care to live with parents/family members.
- Supporting young people to return from living in 'out of county' care placements to return home to parents/family members or to live more locally.

### **Headline outcomes 2021-22**

- *96% of children remained at home living with either parents or extended family members at the end of the Miskin Intervention where the aim was to prevent children from coming into care.*
- *79% of children 11-17 years of age remained living in the same foster care or residential children's home placement at the end of the Miskin Intervention where the aim was to prevent the placement from breaking down.*
- *90% of children supported by IFST, where children were deemed to be at risk as a consequence of parental behaviours including drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health, and domestic violence, either remained at home or returned home to family.*
- *62.12% of children supported by TFT during 2021-22 were closed to Children Services on 01/11/2022*

### **Additional Service activity**

#### **Includes:**

- RCT Corporate Apprentice Scheme: Miskin were again successful in their bid through the councils Corporate Apprenticeship Scheme in 2021-22, the service has embraced the Councils 'grow your own ethos' with most support workers and intervention workers having previously been apprentices.

#### **Demand**

The demand for Miskin interventions and support has never been higher, the service is consistently responding to increasing demand and working creatively to enhance that capacity whenever possible. Referrals are prioritised within regular meetings with Intensive Intervention to ensure best use of resources available as demand exceeds capacity. However, the service continues to be effective with a high percentage of those children, young people, and families that it does support.



5. **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 This is an information report.

6. **CONSULTATION**

6.1 This is an information report.

7. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

7.1 There are no direct financial implications aligned to this report.

8. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

8.1 The legal requirements for children and young people are set down within the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Children Act 1989.

9. **LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/FUTURE GENERATIONS – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

9.1 This consultation links to the corporate priority of promoting independence and positive lives for everyone by ensuring that the Council listens to the people it provides for.

9.2 It also contributes to the following well-being goals:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales.
- A healthier Wales.
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A globally responsible Wales

10. **CONCLUSION**

Miskin and TFT Annual reports demonstrate the strong commitment within RCT Children's Services to achieve positive outcomes for children and families delivered by these Teams through creative innovative practice and evidence-based interventions.



The service is currently undergoing a review to ensure it provides services that meet Children's Services current and future priorities.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

**24<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2022**

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

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# Rhondda Cynon Taf Children's Services



## MISKIN SERVICES

2021-22

**Authors:** Matthew Free  
Service Manager

Sarah Longhurst/Jay Goulding  
Team Practice & Performance Managers



## 1. About this document

1.1 This document provides outline information about Miskin Services, covering period 2021-22.

## 2. What is Miskin

2.1 Miskin is a set of services whose purpose are to prevent child–parent separation or placement breakdown. We do this through the deployment of evidence-based, time limited interventions which are co-produced with the family and the referring case worker. Our work can include:

- Supporting children and young people to remain living at home in their own communities with parents/family members, reducing risks to children living at home, whilst also reducing risk of child/parent separation and family breakdown.
- Supporting young people who are looked after where there is a risk of breakdown.
- Supporting reunification plans for children and young people to return home from care to live with parents/family members.
- Supporting young people to return from living in ‘out of county’ care placements to return home to parents/family members or to live more locally.

2.2 Miskin Services work co-productively with families and aim to deliver family focused evidence-based interventions, responsive to family need, supporting parents/carers/children (0-17 years of age) to improve parenting capacity and enable them to care for their children with the minimum statutory interventions.

2.3 Sitting under the Head of Service for Family Support and Accommodation, Miskin Services are managed by a Service Manager (Edge of Care & Family Support) and organised into **four** main areas (1) **Miskin Teams** (2) **Integrated Family Support Team (IFST)** (3) **Therapeutic Families Team (TFT)** (4) **Glyncornel Centre**.

2.4 **Miskin Teams** – comprises of four social work led teams that cover specific geographical areas within RCT, and are age related i.e., supporting families with children either under or over 11 years of age. The teams have a solution focused approach delivering strength-based, outcome focused whole family interventions and consist of staff with skills and training to deliver the prescribed interventions and practical support relative to the age group they support. The Miskin teams respect families as experts in their own lives, empowering them to move towards positive change, based on the needs of the family which can be achieved in timely outcome focused way.

2.5 **IFST** – is a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary team, which delivers time limited, targeted work to children and families identified by children services who most need evidence-based interventions due to parental drug and alcohol misuse, domestic violence, and parental mental health. Consisting of Social work, health and Barod staff, the team bridges gaps between services,

engaging whole families to develop safety, as a platform to engage in strengths based and relationship-based practice. The IFST also has a strong emphasis on training and developing practice across health and social care.

2.6 **TFT** – is a multi-disciplinary team offering consultation, therapeutic assessments and interventions to children, families, and professionals. Consisting of Systemic (Family) Psychotherapists and Educational Psychologists, the team receives referrals from Resilient Families, Enquiry and Assessment, Intensive Intervention, Disabled Children Teams and 16+ Teams. Educational Psychologists in Therapeutic Families Team do not offer a service to Resilient Families.

2.7 **Glyncornel House or Glyncornel Centre** – The Centre provides a valued and essential base from which teams across the Edge of Care and Family Support Service, as well as others across children services, who can undertake direct work and deliver therapeutic interventions that support children, young people, and families.

2.8 RCT has a legal duty to provide preventative services under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (2014), including Part 9 which makes it a requirement for the provision of Integrated Family Support Services (IFSS) to enable children to remain safely with their families and reduce the risk of them becoming looked after by the local authority. The service provides support to families in order to safeguard the welfare of their children and enable them to remain safely with their families. A key principle is that children are best looked after within their families, with parents playing a full part in their lives – unless compulsory intervention is necessary.

### 3. Values and Principles

The infographic below summarises our recent updated values, vision, and principles. The first and foremost value is our promotion of a child's right to a family life.



## 4. Miskin/IFST/TFT Interventions and Models of Practice

- 4.1 Interventions delivered by Miskin/IFST/TFT teams begin with consultation and Intervention Assessment/Report and Plan to help decide whether an intervention is necessary and which interventions will be most effective.
- 4.2 Across the Miskin/IFST/TFT all teams embody person-centred, relationship-based approaches, which draw on families' strengths and are underpinned by the core communication style of Motivational Interviewing.
- 4.3 Miskin/IFST/TFT staff draw on a range of theories and intervention models, these include.
- Safety Planning
  - Harm Reduction
  - Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
  - Eco-Mapping/family relationships/stories.
  - Trauma Recovery Model
  - Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy
  - Five to Thrive
  - Parenting Puzzle
  - Non-Violence Resistance Therapy
  - Gro Brain
  - Emotion Coaching
  - Kids Talk/Teen Talk/Parent Talk
  - Solihull Model
  - Secure Based Attachment Mode
  - CEOP/Internet Safety
  - Reality Baby
  - Outdoor Adventure Activities

There are some activities specific to each team, e.g., IFST are required to set family goals plans, which are reviewed by an independent, social work qualified practitioner.

### **More Than Activities**

Activities, including outdoor adventure activities are a key tool used within our model of practice as a means of engaging with children and families. A rapidly growing body of evidence exists highlighting the benefits (including therapeutic benefits) of outdoor learning and play, that can lead to improved language and communication skills, motivation, independence, confidence and self-esteem, concentration, self-evaluation, creativity, and openness to new perspectives.

Outdoor adventure activities provide opportunities for children and parents/carers to develop team working skills, work on their own initiative, developing social skills and discipline to manage challenging situations, they can all transferable into everyday family life, promoting positive behavioural change and family relationships.

Activities offer an opportunity to engage young people into mainstream provision, further learning, and universal community-based services. Engaging children and young people in positive and constructive use of their time, re-engaging them in mainstream provision can reduce pressure on everyday family life and requests for children to come into care.

### **IFST what we do**

The RCT IFST is a team of experienced staff, delivering Evidence Based Interventions (EBI) to families with complex issues to reduce risk and promote positive outcomes for children. EBI's are interventions, informed by research, which utilize elements of practice which are proven to work, when compared with social work case management models. The IFST employs a range of approaches including Motivational interviewing (MI); Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) Goal setting, safety planning, and systemic therapy models. The interventions employed by the team are promoted by Welsh Government as essential to good quality social work practice.

The IFSTs were created across Wales, to deliver a short-term intensive model of intervention. This has been adapted in RCT in recent years to meet the demands of children services. The current model of practice delivers interventions, based on the same key principles and skills, oriented by the same theories, values and skills. The IFST remains committed to the core elements of the IFST model; evidence based, person centred, goal oriented, relational, compassionate practice, which is now delivered less intensely.

### **TFT**

The Systemic (Family) Psychotherapists apply a range of theories, beliefs and models of practice which seek to bring about new information to a system, by exploring different views to generate new perspectives. One of the strengths of systemic family therapy and systemic consultation is that it pays attention to the wider context and understands that the culture, resources, and orientation of organisations set and important tone that can either help or hinder the workforce in carrying out effective work with families (Greenwood, 2016). Within the TFT, Education Psychologists (EP's) use consultation, psychological knowledge, and therapeutic tools to support children and young people directly and/or to enable adults around them to better understand and support them.

TFT offer a range of ways to intervene with individuals, families, and professionals, these include.

- Consultation: systemic (described below) and psychological to referrers, wider professionals, children, and their families/carers.
- Individual therapy.
- Family therapy with the whole family, or parts of a family and wider family network.
- Family Consultation/Choice appointments.
- Staff group supervision.
- Psychological Assessments.

- Trauma Recovery Model and TRM Panel.
- Group work.
- Non-Violent Resistance for individual families.
- Staff training and skills workshops.

### **Roles within Miskin/IFST/TFT**

The roles across Miskin provide a progressive and resilient structure which is integral to our delivery model. The structure supports our approach to workforce development in the recruitment and retention of staff at all levels from apprentice through to CSWs and Managers. This approach embodies the “grow your own” ethos of the council, providing a steady flow of qualified and experienced workers into our own service, as-well-as, the wider children services teams.

#### **Consultant Social Workers (CSW’s)**

The CSW role is unique in this service area of RCT. There are a broad range of responsibilities/activities which CSWs are required to undertake; these include holding complex cases (Welsh government suggest that CSWs should spend 50% of their time concerned in social work practice).

Developing capacity within Miskin/IFST and across wider children services, through the sharing of resources, consultation, coaching and mentoring. Within each Miskin/IFST team CSW’s provide line management and monthly professional supervision, leading practice developments with colleagues to respond to the needs of the families they support. The role of CSWs is integral in workforce development through delivery of training, coaching, and mentoring in the use of specific approaches. Although the undertaking of primary research has always been part of the CSW remit, since the role was established in 2010, this has continued to be an area which requires development and strategic direction. CSWs support and deputise for Team Practice and Performance Managers in their absence.

#### **Principal Social Workers**

Principal social workers support and deputise for CSW’s in their absence, provide line management and monthly professional supervision for support workers and apprentices. The majority of the principal social worker role is involved in direct work with complex cases.

#### **Social Workers**

The primary role of social workers is to deliver interventions to children and families, whilst also supporting the development of social work student placements and the mentoring of support workers and apprentices.

#### **Intervention Workers**

The primary role of intervention workers is to deliver interventions to children and families on their own caseloads.



## **Support Workers**

The support workers primary role is to support other team members in the delivery of interventions to children and families. Support workers in Miskin are generally experienced having come through the apprentice scheme, they are supported as a development opportunity to hold their own caseload relevant to their level of experience.

## **Apprentices**

Miskin apprenticeships provide the first step for many into the social care field. They have their own fulltime workload which is managed by qualified social work staff/Outdoor Adventure Activities Officer. The apprentice primary role is the starting point of the Miskin service “grow your own” ethos. The majority of current support worker and intervention worker positions are held by past apprentices. Miskin apprentices are now beginning to study for and qualify as social workers.

*Apprentice “A” gained an apprenticeship with Miskin after working in finance as an administrative assistant for 2 years following sixth form. “A” knew they wanted to learn while earning and had always wanted to work in social care. A’s long-term goal was to become a social worker and the apprenticeship provided experience and skills to apply for a place on the social work degree. Over the two years apprenticeship, Miskin supported “A” with regular supervision and mentoring provided by the Outdoor Activities Officer and a social care mentor. “A” gained the Level 2 Social Care Induction Award and Level 3 Diploma in Health and Social Care. “A” was supported and nurtured to develop confidence, skills, knowledge, and experience in working with children and families. “A” was supported to attend many training courses appropriate to the role and to complement her development. “A” gained a place on the social work degree and during which time remained as a casual project worker within the Miskin and residential services teams. This allowed “A” to gain further experience while undertaking the social work degree. “A” has now completed the social work degree and has fulfilled her dream of becoming a social worker by gaining a full-time social worker position within our Childrens Services department.*

IFST and TFT hold some multi-disciplinary roles specific to the function of the team. These include staff employed by Third Sector organisations (Barod), Health Visiting, and disciplines including Systemic (Family) Psychotherapists and Educational Psychologists.

## **5. How do families access Miskin Services?**

- 5.1 All referrals to Miskin/IFST/TFT are made by the case responsible social (care) worker.
- 5.2 Referrals are received via children’s services teams, through the WCCIS system. The child and/or family must remain open to children services, for the

duration of the work, unless they are supported by Systemic (Family) Psychotherapists, who also support families in the Resilient Families service.

5.3 Referrals are reviewed by a Team Performance and Practice Manager and allocated to an appropriate team within the service.

5.4 Where demand outweighs resources available, referrals are placed on a waiting list and prioritised at weekly Children's Services Interface Meetings.

## **6. How well are we doing & how do we know?**

**6.1 Quality Assurance** - In addition, to analysis of regular WCCIS performance management data reports, Miskin Services have developed a Quality Assurance Framework and associated Implementation Plan in line with the overall Childrens Services Quality Assurance Framework. The Miskin framework and plan includes monitoring and evaluating service user feedback, staff supervision, case file audits, and observed practice, all of which aims to enhance and improve practice. Audits evidence regular team meetings, regular staff supervision and case file audits are being undertaken. Although observed practice takes place throughout Miskin Services, further development of the observed practice element of this framework has seen a delay due to the need to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic.

**6.2 Service User Feedback** matters to us. It provides a great opportunity to help us evaluate whether we are making a difference with the children and families we support and to the professionals that refer to us. Below are some examples of feedback we have received from families.

*Brain development with babies, how much information the brains take in between newborn - 2 years, how a baby's brain grows, development is affected not being in a safe happy environment. (Parent of Baby)*

*That they would help with everything they could to make me happy and settled. (Female 16 years)*

*Yes, if it weren't for Miskin being involved then my son would probably be adopted. (Parent)*

*Your compassion, understanding, experience, your asking appropriate, reflective questions and the discussions/observations that you had at the end of the sessions (particularly with a reflecting colleague) were helpful to me. You can chalk 'Kept the \*\*\*\*\* family together' on your success wall! (Parent supported by TFT, December 2020).*



*Miskin has helped me turn my life around and my son has returned back to my care. (Parent)*

*I know that we have told you this before, but I am not sure that you fully believe it (please do) - there is no doubt in my mind that YOU, with (your colleagues) help at the start, helped prevent the family from fragmenting entirely and will lead to a far better outcome for (names of children) (in particular) than would otherwise have been the case.*

*It was nice to be able to sit down and talk with someone who cared, who listened, who was non-judgmental. She made me feel very comfortable. She didn't try and put the world to rights. She offered good advice which I still use and will continue to use.*

*We are better prepared for the needs of our other children and are actively seeking help to better equip ourselves help them.*

*I would like to thank my worker JS, for all the help she was able to give us to be able to keep our child. (Parent)*

6.3 Below is sample of data and outcome information that the service collates and uses to evaluate the service.

How much are we doing?	How well are we doing & how do we know?																												
<p><b>MISKIN TEAMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2021-22, Miskin Teams received 687 new referrals and worked with 670 <b>(97.55%) new referrals</b>. 17 (2.47%) of referrals did not meet service criteria.</li> <li>2021-22, Miskin Teams completed 483 family interventions, an increase on the previous year of 456 completed family interventions.</li> </ul> <table border="1" data-bbox="483 774 824 1072"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>No. Referrals Worked</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2016-17</td> <td>346</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2017-18</td> <td>402</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2018-19</td> <td>441</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019-20</td> <td>572</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020-21</td> <td>573</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021-22</td> <td>670</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <table border="1" data-bbox="302 1102 1099 1361"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Length of Intervention</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2012-13</td> <td>119 days</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2013-14</td> <td>112 days</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2014-15</td> <td>104 days</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2015-16</td> <td>107 days</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2016-17</td> <td>98 days</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2018-19</td> <td>149 days</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	No. Referrals Worked	2016-17	346	2017-18	402	2018-19	441	2019-20	572	2020-21	573	2021-22	670	Year	Length of Intervention	2012-13	119 days	2013-14	112 days	2014-15	104 days	2015-16	107 days	2016-17	98 days	2018-19	149 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2021-22, Miskin Teams responded to an increase in number of referrals for families:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘experiencing crisis requiring immediate support for child/children to remain in their care’, from 147 (25.26%) to 148 (22.08%).</li> <li>‘needed intensive support to prevent child/children coming into care’, from 327 (55.08%) to 377 (56.26%).</li> </ol> </li> <li><b>96% of children remained at home living with either parents or extended family members at the end of the Miskin Intervention where the aim was to prevent children from coming into care.</b> An increase from 91% the previous year, but a positive outcome that has been maintained at above 89% for several years even in the face of increasing referral numbers year on year.</li> <li>Of the 483 completed Miskin Interventions during 2021-22, the number of children that received a Miskin Intervention based on their recorded status as of 05/08/2022 (date that Miskin statistical report was run from WCCIS) <b>47.61% (230) were closed to statutory Children’s Services.</b></li> <li><b>79% of children 11-17 years of age remained living in the same foster care or residential children’s home placement at the end of</b></li> </ul>
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2018-19	441																												
2019-20	572																												
2020-21	573																												
2021-22	670																												
Year	Length of Intervention																												
2012-13	119 days																												
2013-14	112 days																												
2014-15	104 days																												
2015-16	107 days																												
2016-17	98 days																												
2018-19	149 days																												

<table border="1"> <tr> <td>2019-20</td> <td>147 days</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020-21</td> <td>169 days</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021-22</td> <td>134 days</td> </tr> </table>	2019-20	147 days	2020-21	169 days	2021-22	134 days	<p><b>the Miskin Intervention where the aim was to prevent the placement from breaking down.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As well as performance data Miskin Teams monitor and evaluate their performance on an ongoing basis through service user (external) and referrer (internal) evaluation forms. Service Evaluation Forms are provided to 100% of those accessing service with a return</li> <li>Past inspections have recognised and commented on the practice of Miskin/ IFST and that the most experienced staff tend to be in these teams.</li> </ul>
2019-20	147 days						
2020-21	169 days						
2021-22	134 days						
<p><b>INTEGRATED FAMILY SUPPORT TEAM (IFST)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2021-22, IFST received 210 new referrals and worked with 207 <b>(98.57%) of these referrals.</b></li> <li>The average length of an IFST Intervention in 2021-22 was 156 days.</li> </ul> <table border="1" data-bbox="405 1214 745 1359"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>No. Referrals Worked</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2020-21</td> <td>258</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	No. Referrals Worked	2020-21	258	<p>Of those referrals accepted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parental Substance Misuse was a factor in 81.16% of referrals.</li> <li>Domestic Violence was a factor in 80.18% of referrals.</li> <li>Parental Mental Health was a factor in 82.13% of referrals.</li> <li>Parental Learning Disability was a factor in 7.25% of referrals.</li> </ul> <p>Evidencing the level of complexity, IFST work with, sometimes described as the toxic trio when these issues co-occur.</p> <p>In 2021-22, IFST had 112 completed interventions. By the end of the IFST Intervention,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>there was an increase of those children subject to Care &amp; Support Plan Part 4 (14.29% to 33.93%).</li> </ul>		
Year	No. Referrals Worked						
2020-21	258						

2021-22	207
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Year	Length of Intervention
2020-21	175 days
2021-22	156 days

- IFST deliver training courses on the wider social care calendar (no data available due to courses not running throughout the pandemic).

- a decrease in those children on the Child Protection Register 64 (57.14%) to 25 (22.32%).
- 106 (94.64%) of children supported by the IFST, 101 (90.18%) either remained at home or returned home to family. As Parental behaviours including drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health and domestic violence, are the reason that most children in RCT are deemed to be “at risk”, we are pleased that those children most at risk have remained with their families. Where children are looked after at the end of an intervention, we can be confident that they are safe.

**THERAPEUTIC FAMILIES TEAM (TFT)**

- In 2021-22, TFT received 220 (compared to 174 previous year) referrals and accepted 218 referrals.
- The average length of a TFT Intervention in 2021-22 was 144 days.

Year	Length of Intervention
2020-21	Data not available
2021-22	144 days

- TFT undertook 132 (104 previous year) TFT initial assessments.
- 26 (20 previous year) EP assessments including ECMs
- 29 (15 previous year) referrals dealt with by Consultation only, with no Initial Assessment.
- Services offered; Family consultation 99 (62 previous year)
- Whole family therapy 33 (18 previous)
- Individual family therapy 44 (44 previous year)
- Reflecting Team 7 (7 previous year)

- Of 132 children worked with (3 were referred twice); 25 closed to children services (with 34 of those open to RFS).
- Child status as of 01/11/2022, 82 (62.12%) closed to Children’s Services.

- TFT provide regular consultation & supervision to staff and management in RCT Children’s Homes.
- TFT deliver training courses on the wider social care calendar (no data available due to courses not running throughout the pandemic).

**Who is better off?**

- Service users in receipt of Miskin / IFST / TFT services.
- Children / Young People / Parents / Carers / Extended Family members.
- Foster Carers / Residential Homes – through support offered to the young people who are referred and staff through consultation and supervision, improved placement stability.
- Wider Community – Our team support children and families to live fulfilled lives within their communities.
- Childrens Services Teams / Professionals in Health and Education – staff in Miskin/ IFST / TFT provide training, consultation, and informal bitesize training such as going through methods of direct work/ resources. Improved recruitment and retention
- Referrers into Miskin / IFST / TFT - Supporting them to improve outcomes for children

- Placement Team – supporting and maintaining placement stability for children / young people will reduce the demand, urgency, and cost for alternative placements.



## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

24<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2022

#### REGIONAL ADOPTION COLLABORATION ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

#### 1. **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Corporate Parenting Board members with the Annual Regional Adoption Collaboration Annual Report.

#### 2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Acknowledge the information contained within the report.

#### 3 **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 This is an information report.

#### 4. **BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative (VVC) is the largest of the five regional collaboratives which form part of the National Adoption Service in Wales (NAS). It provides a regional adoption service to the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Cardiff Council and Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council. The service is hosted by the Vale of Glamorgan Council.
- 4.2 This is VVC's seventh annual report and covers the period 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2022. The Collaborative is required to review the service it provides by regulation, and as part of the reporting requirements set out in the legal agreement underpinning the operation of the collaborative. The report seeks to combine the various reporting requirements in one report.
- 4.4 The report is attached at Appendix 1 with data appendices 1-4 also included as follows:
- Appendix 1 sets out key performance data in respect of children by quarter and local authority.

- Appendix 2 provides information in respect of adopter enquiries and recruitment of adopters.
- Appendix 3 provides information in respect of Adoption Support.
- Appendix 4 provides information in respect of Adoption Panel activity.

## **5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 This is an information report.

## **6 CONSULTATION**

6.1 This is an information report.

## **7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

7.1 There are no direct financial implications aligned to this report.

## **8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

8.1 The report was brought before Scrutiny as part of the governance arrangements outlined in Regulation 22 of the Local Authority Adoption Service (Wales) Regulations 2007 and section 15(c) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Regulations) (Wales) Directions 2015.

## **9 LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ FUTURE GENERATIONS – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.**

9.2 The business covered in this report contributes to the following well-being goals:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales.
- A healthier Wales.
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A globally responsible Wales

## **10 CONCLUSION;**

10.1 During the period, the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative (VVC) approved a significant pool of adopters with the result that more children can be placed within the region. The need however, to continue to recruit more adopters for more complex children remains a priority for VVC.

- 10.2 At the end of the reporting period, the service is able to report a healthy level of performance despite the constraints imposed upon service delivery during COVID -19.
- 10.3 Adoption Support represents a large set of challenges for VVC and the need to reduce the waiting list for services and to ensure that the service is targeted to those most in need remain a priority.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

**24<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2022**

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# VALE, VALLEYS, AND CARDIFF ADOPTION COLLABORATIVE REVIEW OF SERVICE AND ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

For Period 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2022

## NATIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE



**Achieving More Together /  
Cyflawni Mwy Gyda'n Gilydd**

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## VALE, VALLEYS, AND CARDIFF ADOPTION COLLABORATIVE (VVC) ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1<sup>st</sup> APRIL 2021 to 30 SEPTEMBER 2022

### 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** Vale, Valleys, and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative (VVC) as part of the National Adoption Service in Wales (NAS), provides a regional adoption service to the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Cardiff Council and Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council.
- 1.2** This is VVC's seventh annual report and covers the period 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2022. The report has been extended to cover the first six months of this reporting year to incorporate the requirement to review the service under Regulation 39 of the Local Authority Adoption Services (Wales) Regulations 2019. It also incorporates the reporting requirements set out in the governance arrangements for the region in one report. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information provided is an accurate record of the activity and quality of the adoption service.
- 1.3** The report has the following Appendices:

**Appendix 1** sets out key performance data in respect of children by quarter and local authority.

**Appendix 2** provides information in respect of adopter enquiries and recruitment of adopters.

**Appendix 3** provides information in respect of Adoption Support.

**Appendix 4** provides information in respect of Adoption Panel activity.

## 2. SERVICE DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNANCE

- 2.1** The organisational and managerial structure of the service has remained unchanged during this period with service delivery structured around Family Finding, Recruitment & Assessment, Adoption Support and Business Support.
- 2.2** The context for service delivery during a significant part of the reporting period has been the global pandemic and the impact this has had upon the way services are delivered. VVC's office has largely remained closed during this time with the majority of staff working from home. Some Business Support staff have continued to work from the office to carry out core tasks and staff utilise the office for specific purposes and to improve work life balance. Due to the geographical spread of the region staff had been used to agile working and so have adapted well to the hybrid mix of face to face and virtual working arrangements. Office working was subject to a risk assessment process during COVID -19, but this has been relaxed as national restrictions have eased.
- 2.3** Despite the restrictions the service has continued to face increased demands, particularly in relation Adoption Support. These pressures are set against an ever-increasing national agenda and the implementation of the NAS Good Practice Guides during 2021-22. A review of capacity issues and the impact of the implementation of the new initiatives upon service delivery was undertaken in April 2021 and presented to VVC Management Board. The report contained an options appraisal for additional resources to meet the increased demand in the immediate, medium, and longer term. These options were further considered by the regional Heads of Service in July & September 2021. Additional investment to employ 2.5 Social Care Officers within the Adoption Support Team and additional capacity within the Business Support Team was agreed and was submitted as part of the cost pressures process in each of the four authorities.



- 2.4** Quarterly meetings of VVC's Management Board have continued to be held and twice-yearly meetings of the Joint Committee. An additional Joint Committee meeting was convened in September 2021 to consider the proposals to meet the capacity pressures prior to the budget setting process.
- 2.5** The budget for the Collaborative is managed by the Vale of Glamorgan and is monitored closely by the Management Board and approved by the Joint Committee. Due to the vacancy position and revenue generated by VVC adopters being utilised by external agencies, the end of year position reported a significant underspend in the budget for 2021-22. A proposal to retain the underspend within VVC was agreed by Management Board and Joint Committee. These monies are being allocated to provide additional Adoption Support services, independent assessments, and the regional contribution to the TESSA programme.
- 2.6** VVC 's financial and governance arrangements are subject to an annual audit by Bridgend and Vale Internal Audit Shared Service. This audit was conducted remotely in May 2022 and recommended "Reasonable Assurance as a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control were in place". The areas for improvement which were identified related to the financial process in respect of purchasing cards and the need to review VVC's WASPI/ISP. An action plan in respect of the audit recommendations has been developed and an update against the plan has recently been provided for the auditor.
- 2.7** There has been no change to the membership of the Management Board during this period although the membership of the Joint Committee changed in May 2022 following the local elections. This caused a delay in convening the meeting scheduled for May 2022 and so a combined meeting of VVC Management Board and Joint Committee took place in July 2022. The Directors for the partner authorities also attended this meeting.
- 2.8** The Operational Group has continued to meet although competing demands placed upon local authority representatives and managerial gaps within VVC has impacted upon frequency of meetings and quoracy. As a result of this the terms of reference for

the Operational Group have been revised and agreed by Management Board to allow a quoracy of three officers from the partner authorities and an agreed mechanism for agreeing matters outside the meeting where one partner authority is absent. A joint Heads of Service & Operational Group meeting was held in June 2022 to look at Adoption Support issues and a further meeting of the Operational Group was held in September 2022 enabling the schedule of meetings to resume.

- 2.9** The agendas for all these levels of regional governance have remained full, incorporating a range of matters including budget approval, performance reporting, setting service priorities and relevant aspects from the national agenda. IPC attended the July 2021 meeting of the Management Board to present the regional findings in respect of IPC'S Evaluation of the Adoption Support Framework.
- 2.10** The service has continued to comply with all required performance monitoring and reporting to the National Adoption Service (NAS). Internal data collection systems have been adapted to incorporate the increased range of measures required to support the two-stage model of adopter assessment and the new raft of adoption support measures which will be collected from October 2022. The Regional Manager has been part of a working group initiated by Western Bay to develop the adoption modules for WCCIS. These have now been completed and work is underway to build them into the national system. Meetings have been held locally to begin the process of VVC transferring their record system onto WCCIS once the new system is live.
- 2.11** The Regional Manager and Team Managers remain active participants in national forums and subgroups. The Regional Manager attends monthly meetings for Regional Adoption Managers facilitated by NAS and monthly meetings which involve representatives from the voluntary adoption agencies. In addition, the Head of Service for the Vale of Glamorgan, as host authority and the Regional Manager attend bi - monthly meetings with other regional and national leads to plan the business delivery of the national service from a regional perspective. In 2021 the Regional Manager contributed to the development of NAS guidance in respect of the transfer of Adoption Support cases at the three-year point post Adoption Order. The Recruitment &

Assessment Manager was also part of a national group developing NAS' Welsh Early Permanence Strategy.

### 3. Staffing

- 3.1** The overall staffing establishment remained the same during 2021, although there has been some staff turnover in all teams. Within the Recruitment & Assessment Team, three experienced Social Workers began their maternity leave during 2021 and another experienced full-time member of staff changed roles to fill a vacancy in the Adoption Support Team. Attempts to fill all these vacancies were unsuccessful although a temporary part time appointment was made to fill one of the positions. Slippage monies were therefore allocated to buy in independent support to assist with some of the assessment work within the team especially in respect of non- agency applications.
- 3.2** Within the Adoption Support Team, an experienced member of staff left at the beginning of the period to take up a post within NAS Central Team although this position was filled via internal transfer. Some agency cover has been provided to address some of the pressures within the team funded from the reserves.
- 3.3** In terms of the specialist posts funded from the 2019 Welsh Government investment for adoption services, the service monitors any movement of staff within these posts carefully to ensure that gaps are covered quickly, and performance is maintained. The Regional Adoption Manager completed six monthly returns to NAS during 2021-22 to report upon the performance of the region in relation to these posts to ensure continuation of the funding.
- 3.4** As a result of the discussions concerning capacity within the service regional partners agreed to some additional investment to support the work of the Adoption Support Team and to review the structure of the Business Support Team to take effect from April 2022. The new Social Care Officer posts have been created and recruited to and work is underway to reconfigure posts within the Business Support Team to provide additional capacity.

**3.5** Similar to other services, VVC experienced a number of staff contracting COVID -19 during this period requiring periods of absence from work alongside a couple of staff on long-term absence. This was carefully monitored by the service and appropriate support systems were put in place.

## **4. SERVICE FUNCTIONS**

**4.1.** Performance against each of the service functions is outlined under the following sections of the report alongside areas of development.

## **5. FAMILY FINDING**

**5.1** Family Finding and its' associated activities remains a key area of activity for the region and the ability to place children effectively and promptly underpins all other activities.

**5.2** The number of children referred for adoption totalled **155**. Over the past three years referral levels have shown slight fluctuation with an increase in 2020-21 which reduced again in 2021-22 but overall remain fairly stable. Nationally there is a trend towards a decrease in the number of children referred for adoption and therefore this will need to be monitored in 2022-23 for any noticeable reduction.

**5.3** **48%** of children referred to VVC were withdrawn and did not require a plan of adoption which positively shows alternative Care Plans have been put in place for those children. This figure is an increase from the 43% of referrals withdrawn in the previous year and may reflect the work being undertaken by local authorities to reduce the number of children needing to be 'looked after'. As noted in previous years, withdrawn referrals in many instances do not equate to a decrease in workload for the service as a lot of work is undertaken to progress the adoption process prior to it being discontinued, particularly from administrative roles within VVC.

**5.4** The number of 'Should be Adopted' decisions made in respect of children increased during this year to **90** (from the 80 and 81 in previous years). This is to be expected in

line with a higher number of referrals during 2020-21 which resulted in 'SBA' decisions within that year and in 2021-22.

- 5.5** The region has recorded **79** Placement Orders being made within the year, which shows an increase from figures in the past couple of years and which would be expected in line with increased referrals and Should be Adopted decisions. It is anticipated that this figure will continue to fluctuate but not significantly from this level based upon the number of referrals received during 2021-22. Should referral rates significantly decline there will be a noticeable impact on the number of Placement Orders granted.
- 5.6** VVC placed **85** children for adoption during the year which is a considerable increase from the 65 of the previous year. This would seem in line both with an increase in Placement Orders but also the successful recruitment of adopters undertaken by the region. Planning for placements in the early part of 2021-22 had to take into account Covid-19 risk assessments but as the year progressed this became less of a necessity. Due to the careful planning of Social Workers within the service the additional demands around Covid-19 have not caused significant delay in placing children for adoption.
- 5.7** Just **34%** of children matched with adopters waited more than the benchmark of 6 months from Should be Adopted decision to matching which is positive and reflects the increased availability of adopters within the region. VVC continues to place a high proportion of our children with VVC approved adopters (**72%**) maintaining a similar level to recent years.
- 5.8** At the end of the March 2022 there were **51** children on Placement Orders awaiting an adoptive placement (down from 63 in the previous year). Of these 17 had active links and went on to be matched with adopters during Q1 of 2022-23. It is positive to see a continued decrease in the number of children waiting for adoptive placements.

- 5.9** There were **80** Adoption Orders granted during the year which is a continued pattern from previous years. There were no placements which disrupted during 2021-22 which is hugely encouraging.
- 5.10** Performance in relation to the provision of Life Journey Material for children being placed for adoption has improved considerably over recent years and is 100% at matching and 90% of final materials at the 2<sup>nd</sup> adoption review. There remain some challenges for the capacity of Social Workers within the local authorities to finalise the later life letters for children which affects the 2<sup>nd</sup> review performance. The Life Journey Work Co-ordinators are developing further training and guidance to assist in improving the quality of the materials provided as well as on how to support local authority Social Workers to achieve 100% compliance. As a region we will be exploring the impact of the new performance indicators for 2022-23 in relation to life journey work which form part of the new measures to be collected from October 2022.
- 5.11** The Life Journey Work Co-ordinator post is now shared between two part-time workers due to the previous Co-ordinator leaving the post in autumn 2021. The Co-ordinators offer regular support, advice, and guidance to the Life Journey Work Practitioners within our partner authorities and in addition offer workshops/briefings to local authority teams. The Life Journey Work Co-ordinators support the allocation process within each authority and monitor performance across the region. The Co-ordinators are developing an Improvement Plan to support both improvement in measurable performance and in qualitative feedback on the materials themselves.
- 5.12** During 2021-22 the Transitions Worker supported **40** children through a combination of direct work, support for foster carers and adopters and completion of Trauma Nurture Timeline reports. Transitions support is provided for all our children aged 3+ and has become integral to the service that we offer and to our ability to provide an enhanced level of support to children moving on to adoption. The demand on this service over the past year has meant that priority has had to be given to the direct work needed for children and other aspects of the role have had to wait longer e.g., training and Understanding the Child Days. VVC has continued to review the impact

of the expectations from NAS Good Practice Guides and consider the capacity implications for our service.

- 5.13** VVC has continued to embrace the use of all available family finding methods over the year. The team liaises closely with the Adoption Register Wales (ARW)/LinkMaker team to ensure information is updated and monitored in a timely manner. We have been able to participate in national profiling events and an Activity Day over the past year. During 2021-22 we continued to refer children into the Adopting Together Scheme although the one match identified through this scheme could not proceed until the start of 2022-23 due to a legal challenge made by birth parents.

### **Family Finding Performance 1 April 2021 -30 September 2022**

- 5.14** The number of children referred for adoption during the first six months of 2022-23 is **73**. If this trend continues for the remainder of this reporting year this will place referrals on a similar trend to previous years. Whilst nationally there has been a decrease in referrals into adoption this doesn't appear to be reflected regionally within VVC.
- 5.15** It is too early to consider the rate of children referred who have been withdrawn as many of these children are still within care proceedings and so the plan for adoption could change. In previous years this has been between 43-48% of referrals.
- 5.16** To date **34** 'Should be Adopted' decisions have been made. This could reflect a slight decline in the number of 'Should be Adopted' decisions for the year if this figure were doubled in the second 6 months however it is too early to draw any conclusions. Likewise, the region has recorded **33** Placement Orders being made which is in line with the number of 'Should be Adopted' decisions and rate of referrals. Should referral rates significantly decline there will be a noticeable impact on the number of Placement Orders granted.
- 5.17** VVC has placed **28** children for adoption during the year to date. There has been a slight reduction in Placement Orders over recent years which would result in less children requiring placement for adoption. However, family finding and matching

activity for the start of Quarter 3 is scheduled to be very busy and therefore we anticipate a higher rate of placements during Quarter 3.

- 5.18** 48% of children matched with adopters during the year to date waited more than the benchmark of 6 months from Should be Adopted decision to matching. This does however include a sibling group of 4 who were placed with in-house adopters, and which slightly inflate the figure. 75% of children placed this year so far have been placed with in-house adopters.
- 5.19** As at the end of September 2022 there were **53** children waiting for an adoptive placement. 20 of those children have an ‘active link’ defined as the matching meeting having taken place and the matching panel having been booked. 3 children have an alternative care plan being pursued where they will be remaining with their current foster carers and for 1 child’s foster carers are currently being assessed as prospective adopters, albeit not defined as yet as an ‘active link’. Therefore, there are 29 children still waiting for a link, 22 of which had their Placement Orders within the last 6 months.
- 5.20** There were **41** Adoption Orders granted within the first 6 months of 2022-23 which is a continued pattern from previous years. There have been no placements which disrupted during 2022-23 which is hugely encouraging. One match did not proceed to placement due to a sudden change in personal circumstances for the adopter during the introductory period.
- 5.21** Performance in relation to the provision of Life Journey Material for children being placed for adoption has been maintained at a similar level.
- 5.22** During the first 6 months of the year our Transitions worker has supported **30** children through a combination of direct work, support for foster carers and adopters and completion of Trauma Nurture Timeline reports. Some of these children were referred in 2021-22 and so work has continued into 2022-23 and 11 of these have been new referrals in this year.



- 5.23** As indicated earlier one child was placed in the first quarter of 2022-23 under Adopting Together and a further match for a sibling group of two under is being considered.
- 5.24** One child has also recently been placed under a Welsh Early Permanence arrangement which allows the adopters to foster the child prior to the plan for adoption being agreed.

## **6. RECRUITMENT AND ASSESSMENT**

### **Marketing**

- 6.1** For the past few years, VVC's Marketing and Recruitment Strategy has continued to focus on raising the profile of the service and helping the public see the Collaborative as very much their first choice when they are exploring adoption. This has been achieved by ensuring VVC has a physical and virtual presence. The Recruitment and Marketing Officer's role remains essential in ensuring the service develops both platforms to continue to raise VVC's profile.
- 6.2** During 2021 -22, VVC utilised the opportunity to include an information insert into the Council Tax mail drops for all residents of Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf. Unfortunately, the Council Tax Team serving the Vale of Glamorgan confirmed they were not able to assist us for this particular year. Shortly after residents received the inserts, the service saw a small increase in the number of enquiries quoting the fact that they had received our details in the post, and this had prompted their enquiry. It is hoped that this type of marketing will serve as a reference point should individuals wish to consider adoption in the future.
- 6.3** As a result of COVID restrictions, the service continued to face challenges in exploring opportunities to attend in-person marketing events but as the restrictions have eased VVC has begun to focus upon some in person events. In August VVC were able to have a stand at the Vale of Glamorgan show. In addition, members of VVC staff assisted and represented the service at this year's National Eisteddfod of Wales. VVC also supported the national service in having a presence at this year's Cardiff Pride. Two of the three adoptive parents who participated in the Pride adoption discussion

were VVC adopters. More recently, VVC's Recruitment & Assessment Manager was interviewed live on BBC Radio Wales for an afternoon segment promoting adoption. All of these events have led to positive engagement with the public and supports the goal of raising the general awareness of the service.

- 6.4** Our Marketing Officer remains proactive in ensuring posters and physical information promoting the service is being displayed in high footfall areas across the region. In addition to physical advertising, VVC has utilised social media. VVC has active Instagram and Facebook accounts where we encourage existing adoptive families to remain engaged with us along with buying pay-per-click advertising. The service has experienced positive engagement through these platforms and the reach of the pay-per-click advertising is substantial.
- 6.5** Looking ahead, VVC intends to revisit the Council Tax inserts for all four local authorities, to continue building on our social media presence and explore all appropriate opportunities to attend in-person community events. To date the strategy appears to be working as over half of our enquirers continue to be members of the community who come direct to the service via our website.

### **Recruitment of Adopters**

- 6.6** VVC received a total of **369** enquiries during 2021-22. This is a decrease when compared to the previous reporting year (377) but an increase when compared to 2019-20 (336). A reduction in the number of enquires has been reported by the other four regional Collaboratives and it is now a pattern being observed by our enquiry numbers for the first six months of 2022-23 where 98 enquiries were received compared with 165 for the same period last year.
- 6.7** VVC continues to maintain a well-established and professional tracking system whereby a response to all enquiries is made within five working days (typically within 1 working day). When tracking enquiries, as much information as possible is captured to understand the enquirer's circumstances and how they heard about our service. Every enquiry is followed up by the Marketing Officer on three occasions (within the first week, followed by 1 month and 6 months).

- 6.8** Whilst neither VVC nor the national service have commissioned any research into understanding the reasons behind the reduction, it is suspected that a number of factors are pertinent e.g., the cost of living and fuel crisis could be leading to people being more cautious about beginning the process at such an uncertain time. As part of the monitoring of enquiries, reasons for non-progression are recorded in order to better understand the decline in enquiries.
- 6.9** During 2021-22 the Collaborative hosted nine virtual Information Evenings for prospective applicants. These events were delivered remotely by VVC's Recruitment and Assessment Manager and Marketing Officer. 113 households attended these events and feedback received has continued to be positive. This represents a small decrease in the number of households that attended an Information Evening when compared to the previous year (136 households).
- 6.10** Since April 2022, five virtual Information Evenings have been held with a total of 50 households attending. This again represents a decrease when compared to the same period last year as 73 households attended. This is unsurprising given the reduction in the number of enquiries.
- 6.11** Since January 2021 VVC's virtual Preparation to Adopt training course has been jointly delivered with one of our neighbouring adoption collaboratives, Western Bay and a member of staff from VVC. This collaboration has worked well, as it affords applicants greater flexibility in attendance. The feedback regarding the course content and delivery is universally positive. In order to enable participants to build networks with other participants, a WhatsApp group has been set up for VVC participants which enables them to remain connected if they chose to do so.
- 6.13** The course was held on nine occasions during the last reporting year and on four occasions during the past six months. One course was cancelled due to this being scheduled for the same date as the state funeral of Queen Elizabeth II.

- 6.14** During 2021-22 59 VVC households attended the preparation training. Out of these 59, four withdrew following the training as they no longer felt adoption was the right choice for them. A further four applicants withdrew during the assessment process. Reasons included ill-health, change of mind, and change of circumstances.
- 6.15** In addition to the Preparation to Adopt training course, the service also offers a bespoke second-time adopters 1-day training course. This course is scheduled when there are sufficient number of attendees. When numbers are insufficient to hold the training, individual assessing social workers weave the topics and themes covered in the training into their assessment sessions.
- 6.16** During the first six months of this reporting year, one further second time adopter training course has been held with a total of six households attending. One of these households withdrew following the training citing they felt they needed more time to reflect before deciding to adopt again.
- 6.17** During 2021-22 **64** adopter approvals were recommended by VVC's Adoption Panel with **59** of those recommendations being ratified by the Head of Service at 31 March 2022. This represents a small decrease when compared to previous year's performance where **66** approvals were ratified. Despite the reduction, this remains a significant number of approvals and is a pleasing outcome given the restrictions upon service delivery.
- 6.18** These approvals are broken down as follows, **25** RCT, **19** Cardiff, **9** Vale of Glamorgan, **3** Merthyr Tydfil and **3** other (**2** Bridgend and **1** Powys). Of those approved **45** were first time adopters, **12** were second time adopters and **2** foster carers were assessed for children already residing in their care.
- 6.19** The majority of the applicants approved during 2021-22 have been linked with children from within the region. Two families have been matched with children from other areas, one from North Wales and the second Wiltshire. Two applicants withdrew post their approval due to a change in their circumstances. As indicated under the family finding section, a significant number of VVC children have been placed with in-house

adopters. However, due to the reduction in the number of children waiting, VVC has accrued a significant of approved adopters who awaiting a suitable match. This trend has been noted across Wales and is being monitored by NAS.

- 6.20** During the first six months of 2022-23 **30** approvals were recommended by VVC Adoption Panel with **26** being ratified to date.
- 6.21** On 1st April 2019 changes to the Adoption Agency Regulations came into force introducing a two-stage model of adopter assessment. Due to the pandemic Welsh Government allowed for an easement to the Regulations during 2020 enabling the two stages to run together. The temporary easement came to an end on 30 September 2021 and since 1st October 2021 any new enquiries are managed under the new model. The new way of working and tighter timescales are being closely monitored and reported upon. A more accurate picture of compliance with the model will be available during second half of the reporting year.

## 7. ADOPTION SUPPORT

- 7.1** Referrals into the service for Post Adoption Support services and requests for assessment of Post Adoption needs have stabilised during the period when compared with the later part of the previous reporting year. **69** new referrals were received during this period when compared with **92** received during the preceding year demonstrating a **25%** decrease in service demand. During the first half year 2022-23 **32** new referrals have been received. However, the nature of these referrals are increasingly more complex and therefore require more staff resource.
- 7.2** Referrals for Access to Birth Records for adopted adults have also stabilised during the period with a total of **34** referrals being received. There has also been a continuation in requests for information under the Post Commencement Regulations 2005 as a number of those enquirers have reached 18 years of age. **21** referrals for Intermediary Services have also been received. During the first half of 2022-23, **29**

referrals to Access to Birth Records and Intermediary Services have been received demonstrating a significant rise.

- 7.3** Due to a pre-existing backlog of work, there is a waiting list for all Adoption Support services. Work has however been undertaken with the team to review the current workload and the role and remit of the service. An audit of caseloads is being undertaken. A triage process and a case priority system has been introduced into the service to ensure that critical cases are allocated.
- 7.4** The team has continued to be proactive in seeking alternative means of supporting families with a monthly virtual quiz, a monthly toddler group and the development of a birth parent support group.
- 7.5** By utilising some monies from the reserves, VVC was able to commission an NVR course for 20 families facilitated by Adoption UK during the year. Two courses on the Circle of Security have also been facilitated by an agency worker and team member. The service piloted a Welsh Language Support Group for Welsh speaking adopters facilitated by an external facilitator which will now be adopted at a national level. In addition, the ENFYS Psychology service for Cardiff and Vale offers Nurturing & Attachment courses which families have been able to access.
- 7.6** Due to the lifting of restrictions, VVC was able to support a programme of Easter activities for young people supported by the Children and Young Person's Co-ordinator and a successful family fun day was held for over **80** families in July 2022.
- 7.7** The grant funded posts are continuing to be embedded into the region and to enhance the overall service provision maintaining positive links with national counterparts. The Birth Parent Adviser has been proactive in developing a range of support mechanisms for birth parents. This however is a part-time role and the capacity to further develop this work is currently under consideration.
- 7.8** The TESSA Co-ordinator's role has had a positive impact on supporting lower priority needs. The Co-ordinator undertakes assessments of need and processes referrals of

families who may be eligible for the service. **67** referrals have been made to TESSA by VVC during the period April 2021 to September 2022 which is one of the highest in Wales. The role has also been important in sign-posting families to other relevant services.

- 7.9** The Children and Young People Co-ordinator has continued to be directly involved in supporting Adoption UK Connected groups on a monthly basis with staff from the Connected service. These groups have returned to face-to-face meetings. The service caters for adopted children and young people 7 upwards, **83** children and young people from VVC are registered with the service. In addition, the postholder provides direct support sessions to children within the region and has also supports direct contact sessions for adopted children.
- 7.10** The NAS Good Practice Guides place a number of expectations upon the service to continue to improve Adoption Support services. One aspect is the requirement to undertake check in visits with adopters and birth parents post Adoption Order. The service is developing a process whereby this can be delivered a year after the Adoption Order has been granted and at the three-year point. It is envisaged that the newly appointed Social Care Officers will assist with this process and the support to birth parents will be linked to the post adoption contact service. In addition, NAS has developed a strategic plan, Adopt Cymru 2025 which details several objectives to improve adoption support services. This plan will form the basis of the regional business plan going forward but will require additional resource to enable the objectives to be met.
- 7.11** A new service, MAPPS, has been introduced within RCT and Merthyr Tydfil in conjunction with Health and an independent provider to provide therapeutic support for children. Requests for therapeutic support packages for adopted families are now being considered by this service.
- 7.12** VVC does not manage a budget for the provision of adoption support services although undertakes assessments of support needs which may recommend an adoption support package to the respective authority where the adoptive family resides. The

budgets to support such provision is held in the respective local authority. The total expenditure on adoption support services for the reporting year was **£186,484.95** which covers **90** children. The average spent per child has increased to **£2072** per child, although this only represents **24 %** of children who are being supported by the team.

**7.13** The Operational Group has discussed increasing demand for therapeutic services for adoptive families and additional mechanisms to screen the assessments are being put in place to ensure that families receive the best outcomes.

## **8. ADOPTION PANEL**

- 8.1** VVC continues to manage a central list of Adoption Panel members. In terms of practical delivery, Panel sittings are scheduled four times a month and are currently held virtually.
- 8.2** The workload of the Panel remains high, and the new national templates have increased case preparation time for Panel members. During the eighteen-month period, **126** cases were heard.
- 8.3** During the past eighteen months, VVC has been proactive in recruiting several new Panel members, with a particular focus upon increasing representation of adoptive parents and adopted people. There is an ongoing need to increase our Social Worker membership from our partner authorities whilst recognising that workload constraints often prohibit this.
- 8.4** Panel member training has been restarted and a course was held in September 2022 facilitated by AFA Cymru for Panel chairs and members. Other national training opportunities have been offered to Panel members on the Good Practice Guides and Welsh Early Permanence.
- 8.5** As part of the recent audit, DBS checks for all Panel members are being updated and a programme of annual reviews is scheduled.



## 9. COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS

- 9.1** Two complaints have been received during this period. One complaint was from an adoptive parent concerned about the availability of services to support her adopted son. The second complaint was from an adoptive parent concerned about the level of therapeutic support available for her child. Both complaints were investigated and resolved at Stage 1.
- 9.2** Regional staff have continued to receive positive feedback on the range of services they provide from a range of sources: service users, local authority colleagues, other agencies, and the Adoption Panel. Staff are encouraged to collate this information, as contribution to their own personal development plans.

## 10. Consultation, Engagement and Quality Assurance

- 10.1** An ongoing priority for the service has been to develop our quality assurance framework. VVC managers have been working closely with the Vale of Glamorgan's Quality Assurance Officer in devising robust service user questionnaires. These are being used in order to gain the feedback of service users and to listen to the views on the areas for improvement. VVC has a well-established mechanism to gain the views of service users from the point of enquiry to attending our preparation training and reports are now being collated and the findings are shared with the service. Questionnaires have also been developed post placement and following the Adoption Order which are also now being collated. Going forward there is a need to seek constructive feedback at the point of approval which will provide reflections upon the assessment process, preparation, and Panel experience.
- 10.2** In terms of Adoption Support, evaluation of the service has continued at key points of delivery and the TESSA Co-ordinator has developed a questionnaire for all families in receipt of TESSA which complements the evaluation being undertaken at a national

level. Recent discussions have taken place with the Quality Assurance Officer to agree the best mechanism to undertake check-ins with birth parents.

## **11. Policies and Procedures**

- 11.1** At the end of 2020-21, VVC undertook an audit of policies and procedures to contribute to the work being commissioned at a national level by NAS to develop a common suite of policies for the service. This work is nearing completion.
- 11.2** The Family Finding Manager has developed a Matching Guide for practitioners which is based upon the Good Practice Guide and relevant research. This Guide has been disseminated to Childcare Teams across the region. A risk assessment tool has been developed to consider facilitating direct a contact session between prospective adopters and birth parents.
- 11.3** In addition, the service has begun to utilise some of the new processes contained in the Good Practice guides such the Trauma Nurture Timeline and the revised Adoption Support Plan.

## **12. CONCLUSION, FUTURE PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES**

- 12.1** At the end of the reporting period, the service is able to report a healthy level of performance despite the constraints imposed upon service delivery during COVID - 19. Staff have demonstrated an ability to adapt to change and yet also focus upon core tasks. In terms of the placement for children a significant number have been placed in a timely way and there are less children waiting. The region has not experienced a marked reduction in referrals for adoption as apparent in other areas, but this will be continue to be monitored closely on a regional and national basis. Similarly, VVC has also been able to approve a significant pool of adopters during this time with the result that more children can be placed within the region. The need however, to continue to recruit more adopters for our more complex children remains a priority for VVC whilst at the same time managing the

expectations of those adopters waiting. The reduction in enquiries to adopt again will need to be monitored carefully to ensure that the service can respond proactively and remain innovative in order to attract the best families.

- 12.2** Going forward Adoption Support probably represents the biggest set of challenges for VVC. The requirement to build robust Adoption Support plans for children with ongoing support as needed and for this to underpin our core offer for adopters does impact upon our ability to adequately resource these requirements. The need to reduce our waiting list for services and to ensure that our service is targeted to those most in need remain a priority.
- 12.3** The requirement to develop Adoption Support services is set against a backdrop of an ever-increasing national improvement agenda. The full implementation of the NAS Good Practice Guides places new expectations upon the way services work with adopters, birth parents and children and young people both pre and post adoption. The full impact of these new ways of working will need to be monitored and evaluated. The appointment of the Social Care Officers within the service provides the region with an exciting opportunity to meet some of these expectations especially in terms of follow up with adoptive families and birth parents post adoption and so their roles will need to be developed to meet these expectations. Meeting the objectives laid out in the NAS Adopt Cymru 2025 does also place other expectations upon the service which will have to be evaluated so that gaps in meeting these objectives can be identified.

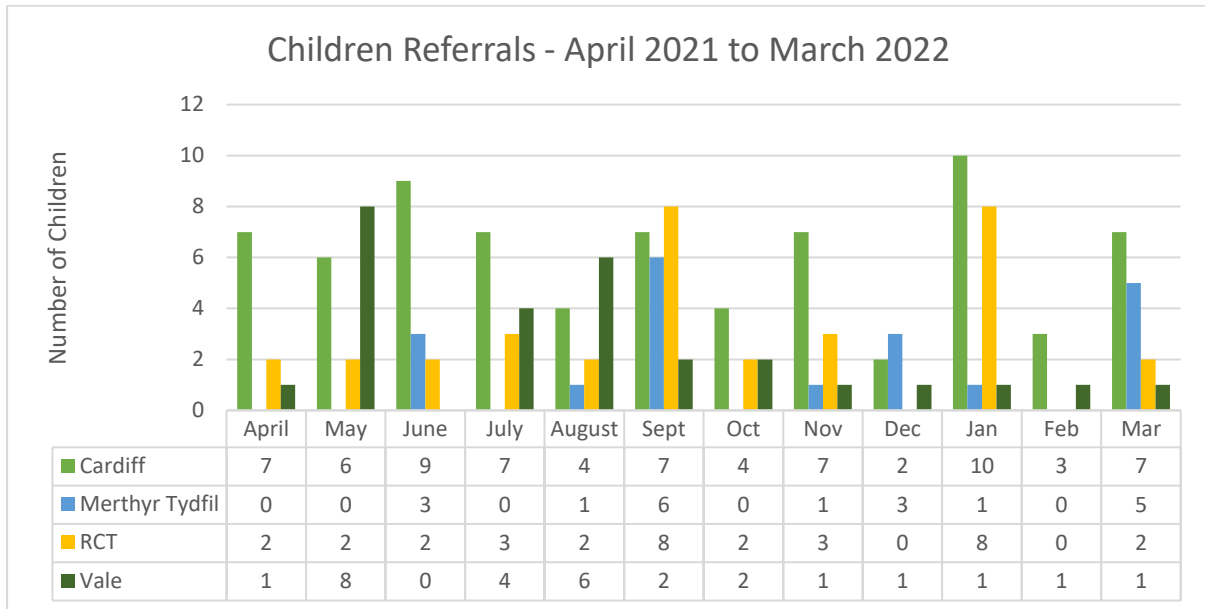
**Angela Harris**  
**Regional Adoption Manager**

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## Appendix 1 – Family Finding

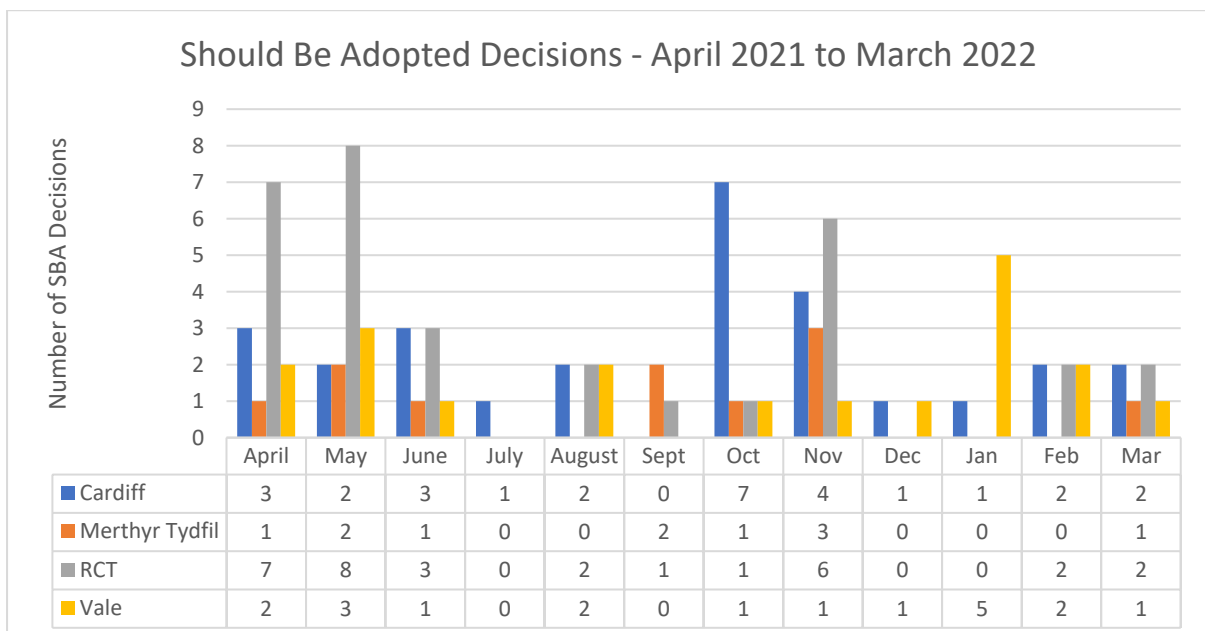
### Referrals

155 children have been referred to the service since April 2021.



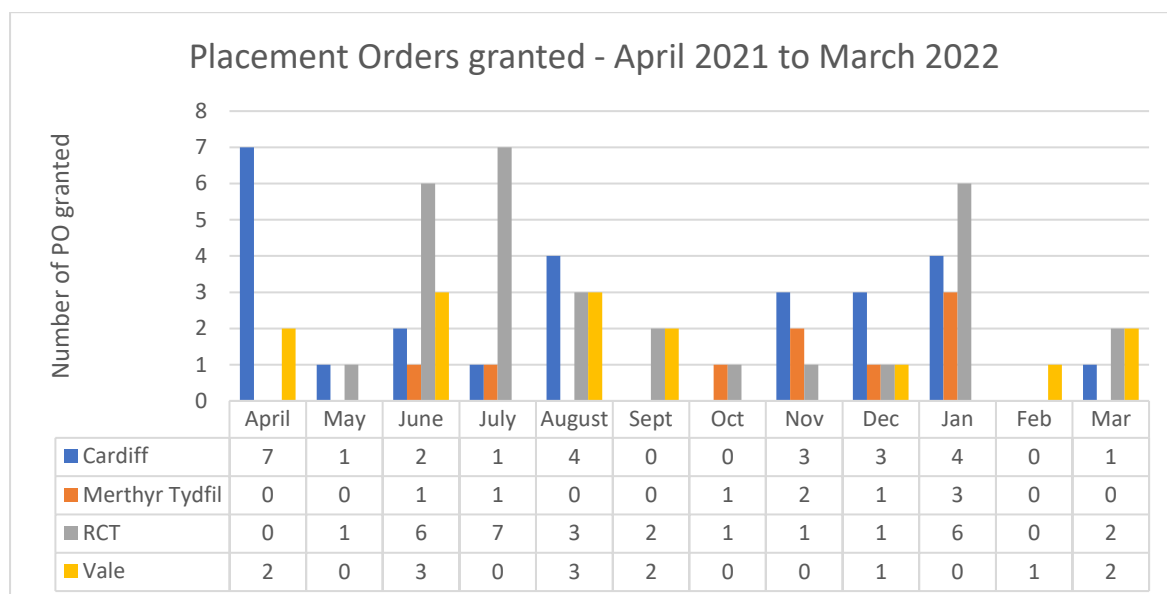
### Should be Adopted Decisions

90 SBA decisions have been made during the reporting period.



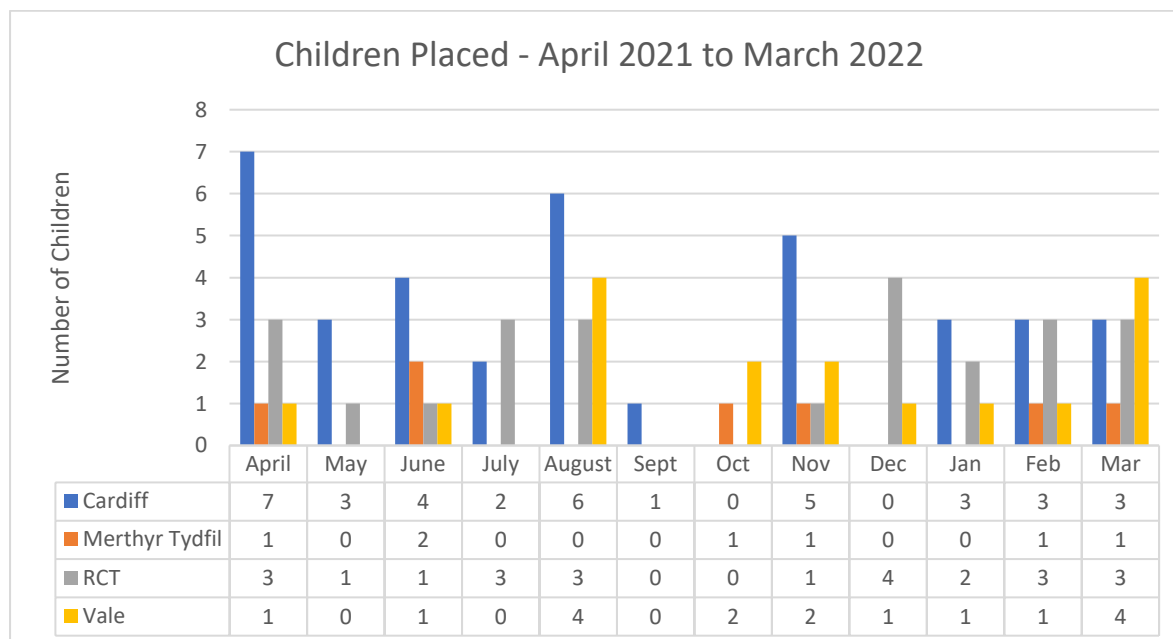
## Placement Orders

**79** Placement Orders were granted in the period April 2021 to March 2022.



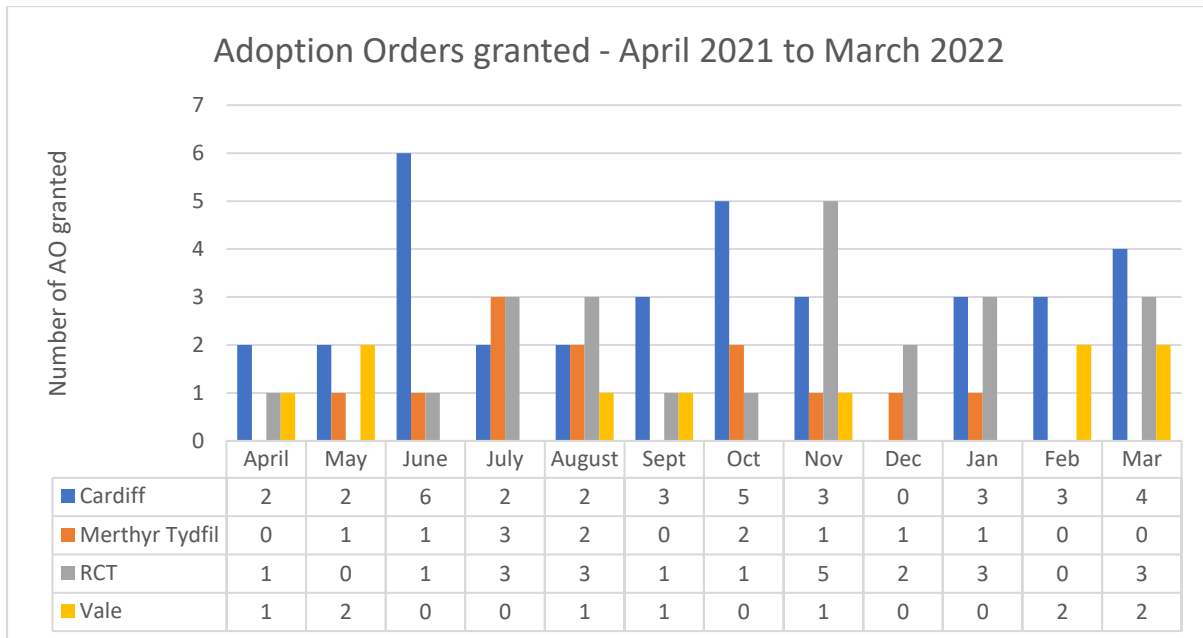
## Children Placed

**85** children were placed between in the reporting period.



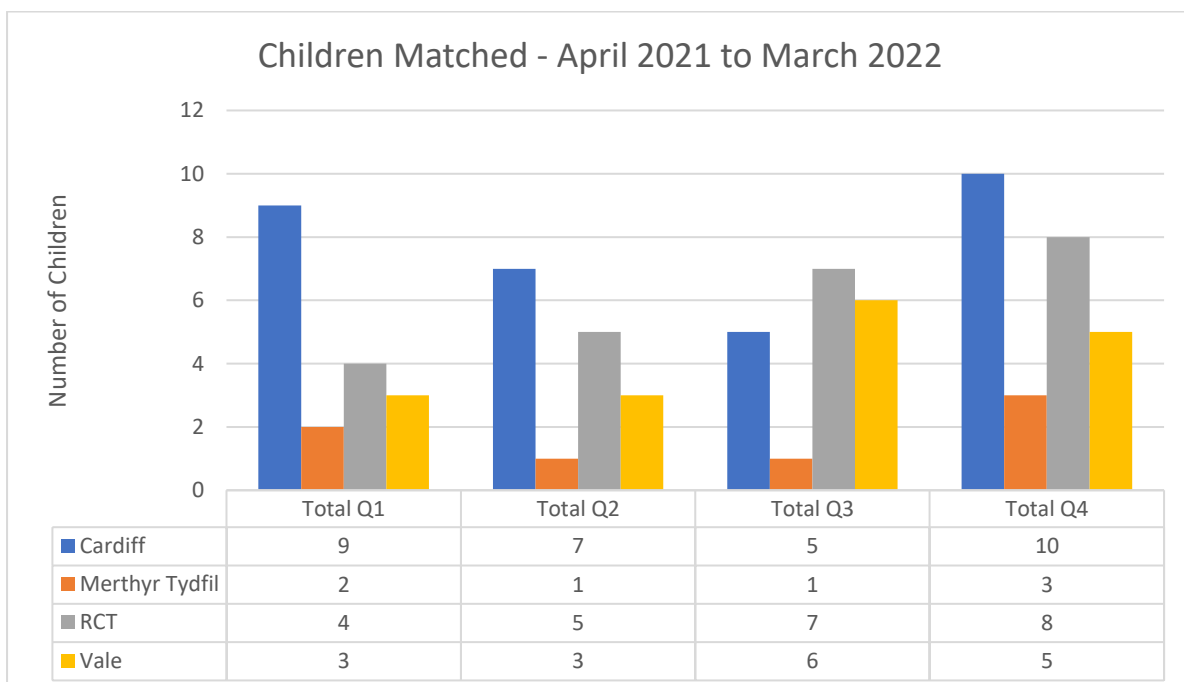
## Adoption Orders

**80** Adoption Orders were granted in the reporting period.



## Children Matched

**79** children were matched to adopters during the reporting period. This figure is consistent with comparative data for same period in previous year.



**Number of children Matched since April 2020 who have waited longer than 6 months (or 3 months for a relinquished child under 6 months of age) to progress from “Should be placed for Adoption” decision to approve to Match**

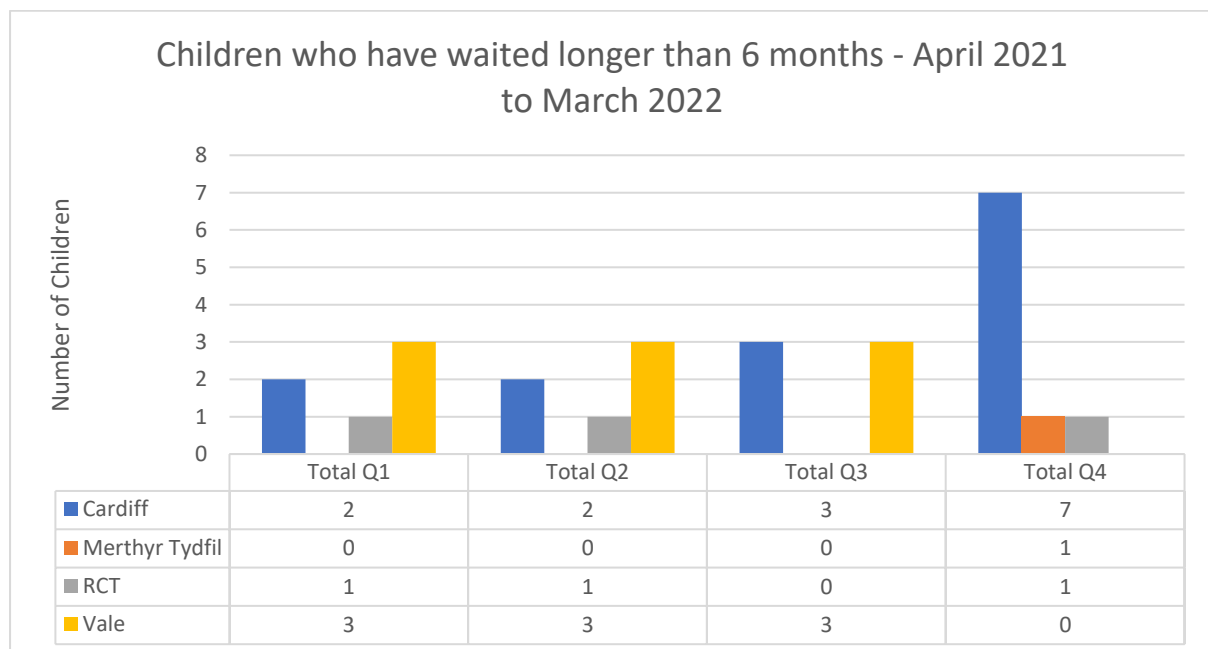
**27** children matched in the reporting year have waited longer than six months to progress.

Of the **6** children matched in Quarter 1 who waited longer than six months to progress, two children were siblings, one child was 7 years old, 2 children were delayed as a result of foster care assessment and 1 child was delayed as a result of new medical information.

Of the **6** children matched in Quarter 2 who waited longer than six months to progress; 2 children were aged 4+, 2 children were BME, 2 children were a sibling group, and for 3 children, no suitable link was available.

Of the **6** children matched in Quarter 3; 2 children were a sibling match and aged 4+, 1 child was 4+, and 3 children were delayed as a result of foster care assessment.

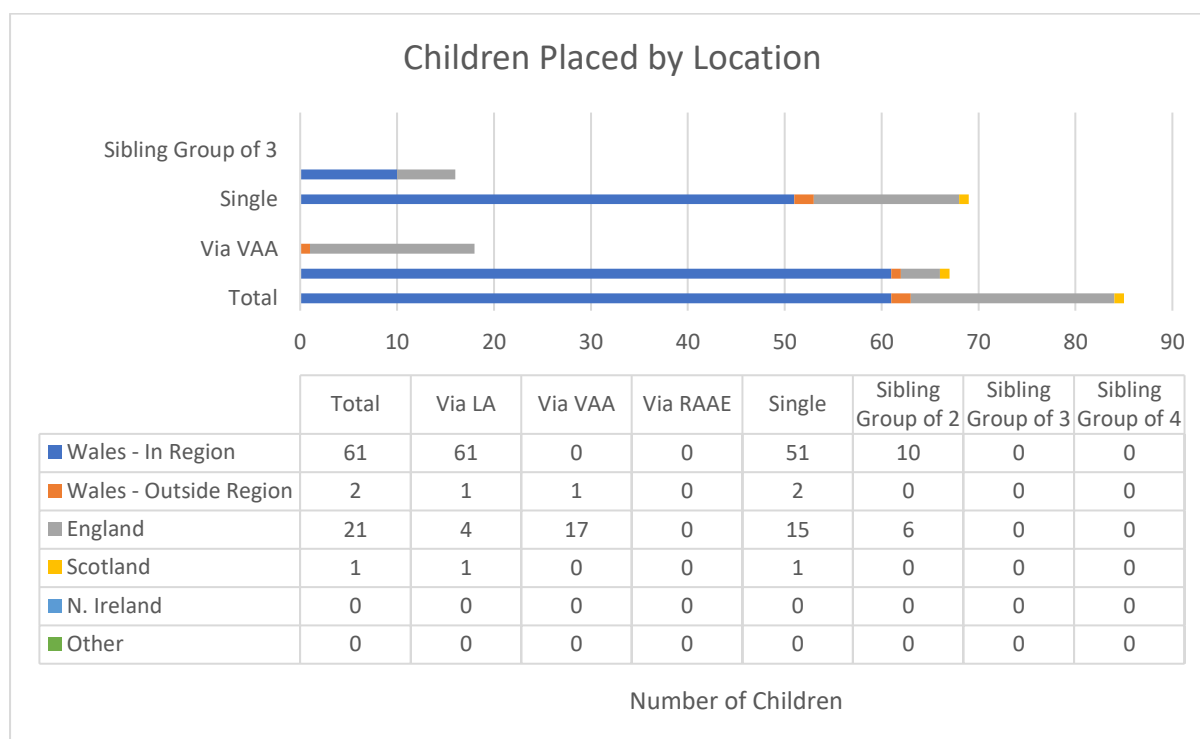
Of the **9** children matched in Quarter 4, two children were siblings, three children were aged 4+, one child was BME and three children were delayed as a result of foster care assessment and/or complex needs.





## Type of placement

**72%** of children have been placed with VVC adopters, **25%** of children were placed in England and the remaining **3%** were placed within Wales but outside of the region and Scotland.

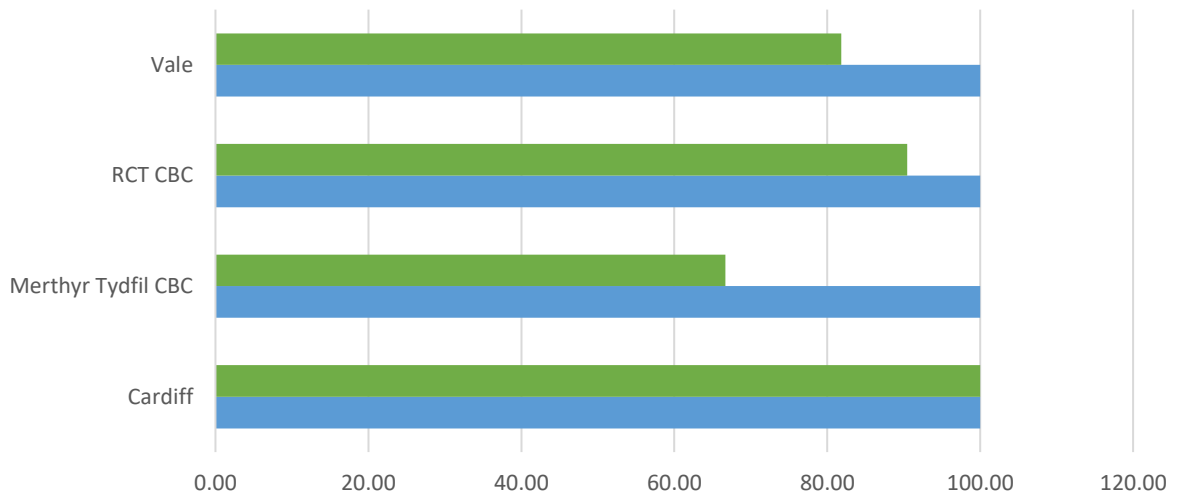


## Life Journey Work

In the reporting period, 100% of life journey material in draft format is made available at the time of panel. An improvement is observed in life journey material available at the point of 2<sup>nd</sup> Review when compared to previous year. It should also be noted that in instances where life journey material has not been available at the point of 2<sup>nd</sup> review, further investigation has revealed either the review was bought forward, or adopters have been difficult to engage and have needed prompting to approve the final draft of the life journey book.

M20, M20A and M21 - Life Journey Work – April 2021 to March 2022						
	Matches	LJ Materials	2nd Review	LJ Materials	Panel %	2nd Review %
Cardiff	31	31	34	34	100.00	100.00
Merthyr Tydfil CBC	7	7	9	6	100.00	66.67
RCT CBC	24	24	21	19	100.00	90.48
Vale	17	17	11	9	100.00	81.82
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>90.67</b>

### Life Journey Materials available at Panel and 2nd Review - April 2021 to March 2022

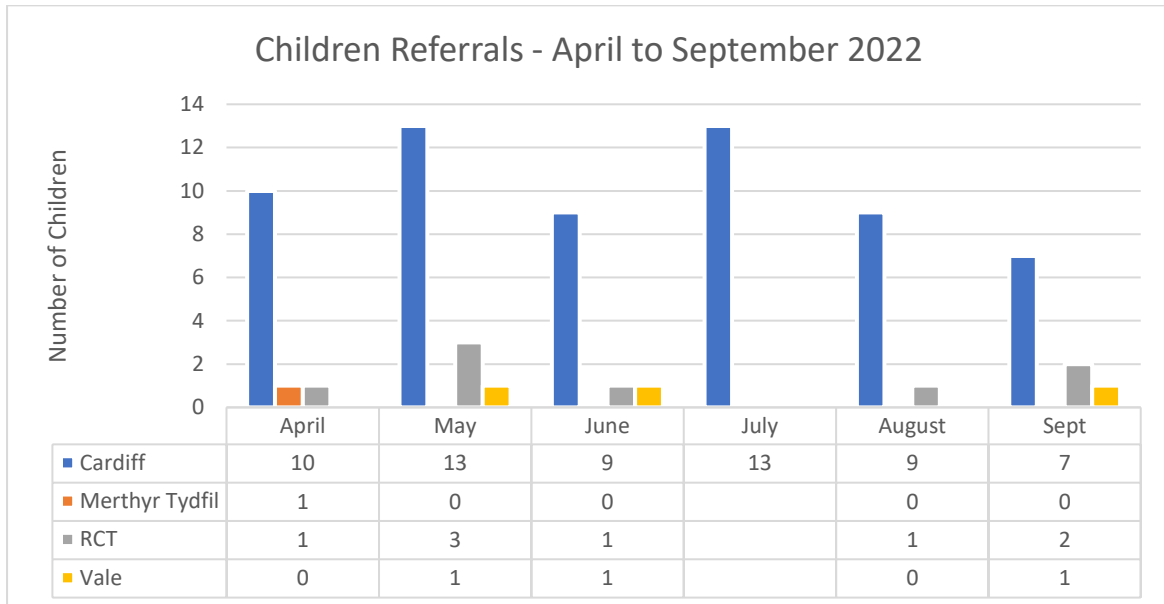


	Cardiff	Merthyr Tydfil CBC	RCT CBC	Vale
2nd Review %	100.00	66.67	90.48	81.82
Panel %	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

## Family Finding – April to September 2022

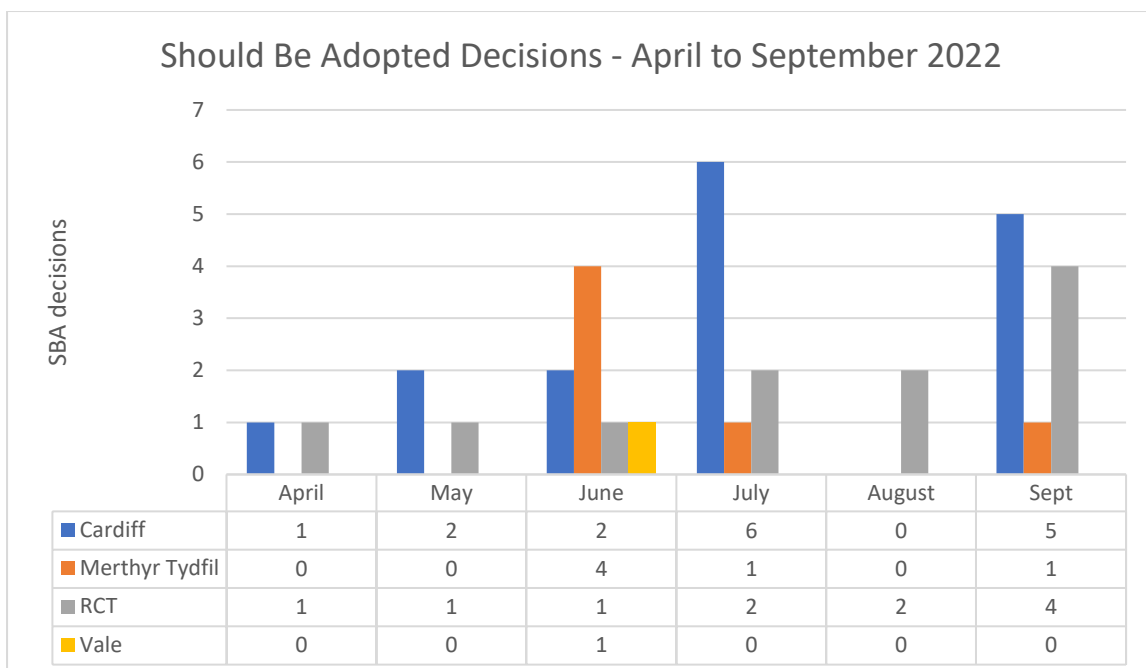
### Referrals

73 referrals have been received during the reporting period.



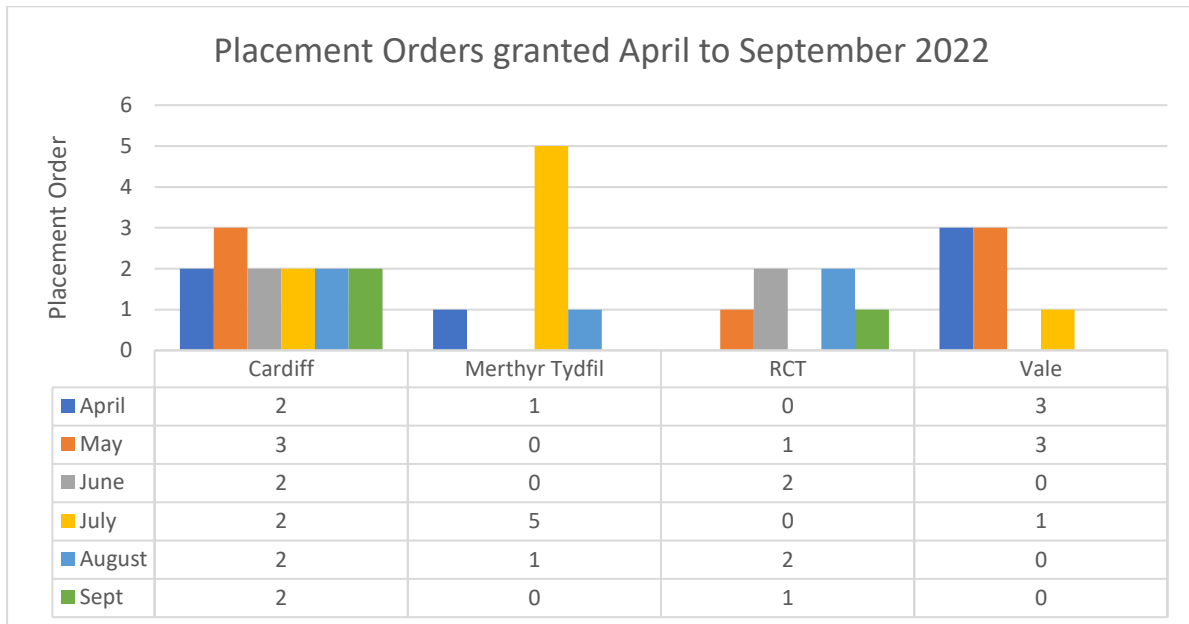
### Should be Adopted Decisions

34 SBA decisions were made during the first half year.



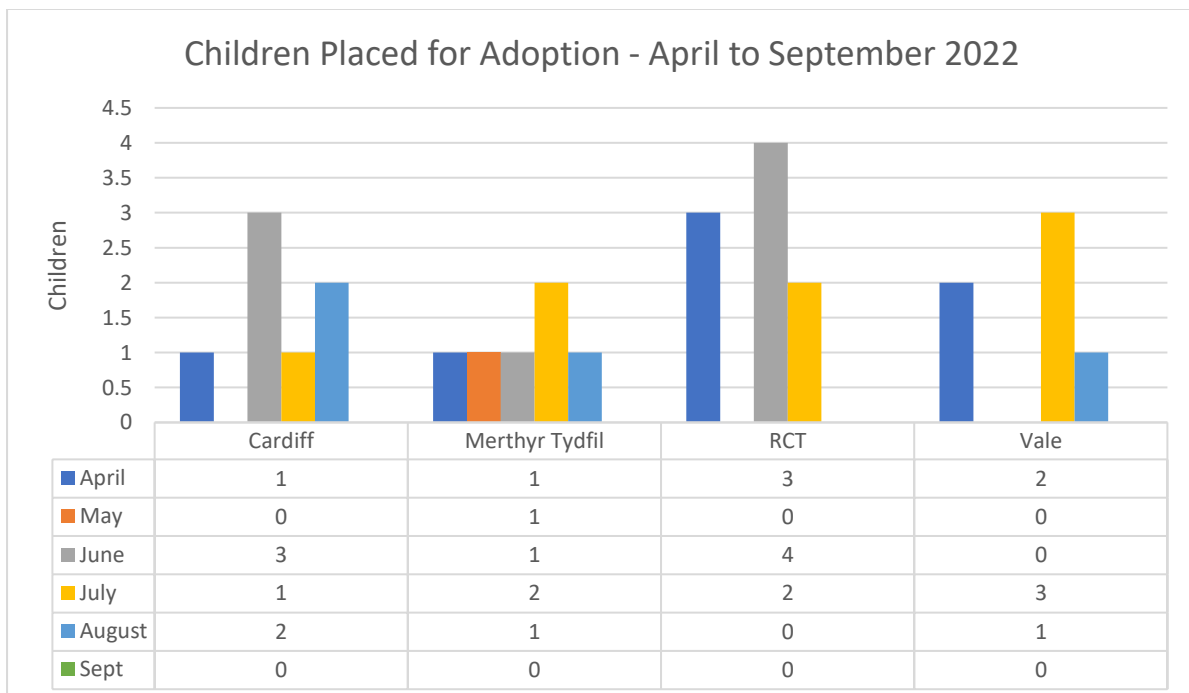
## Placement Orders

**33** Placement Orders were granted during the reporting period.



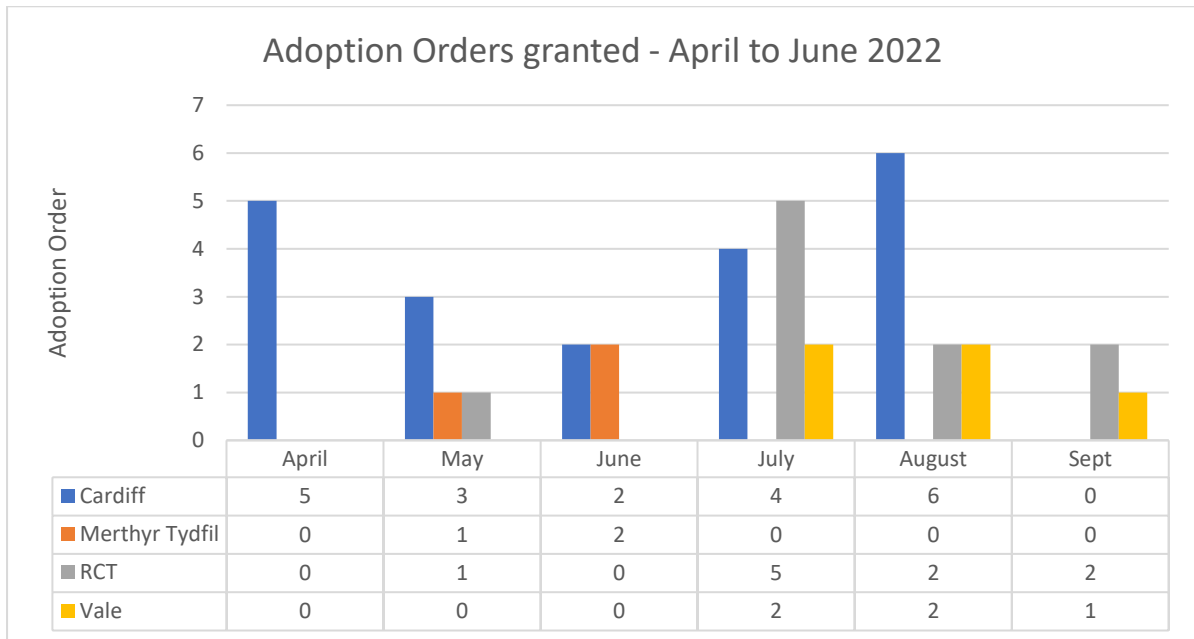
## Children Placed

**28** children were placed with their adoptive families during the reporting period.



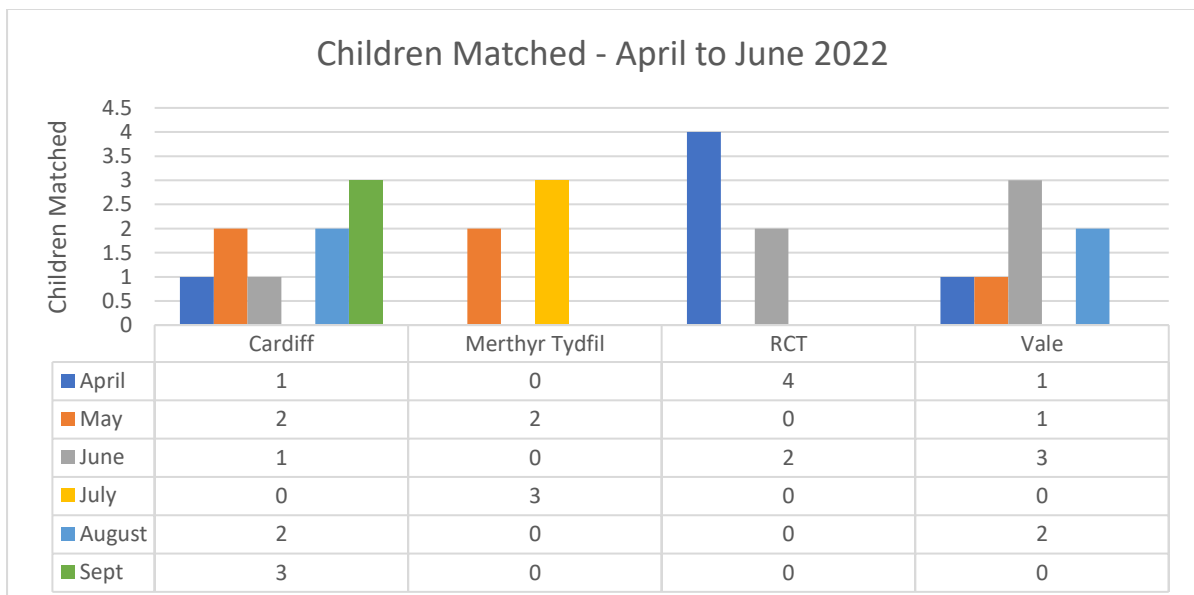
## Adoption Orders

38 Adoption Orders were granted.



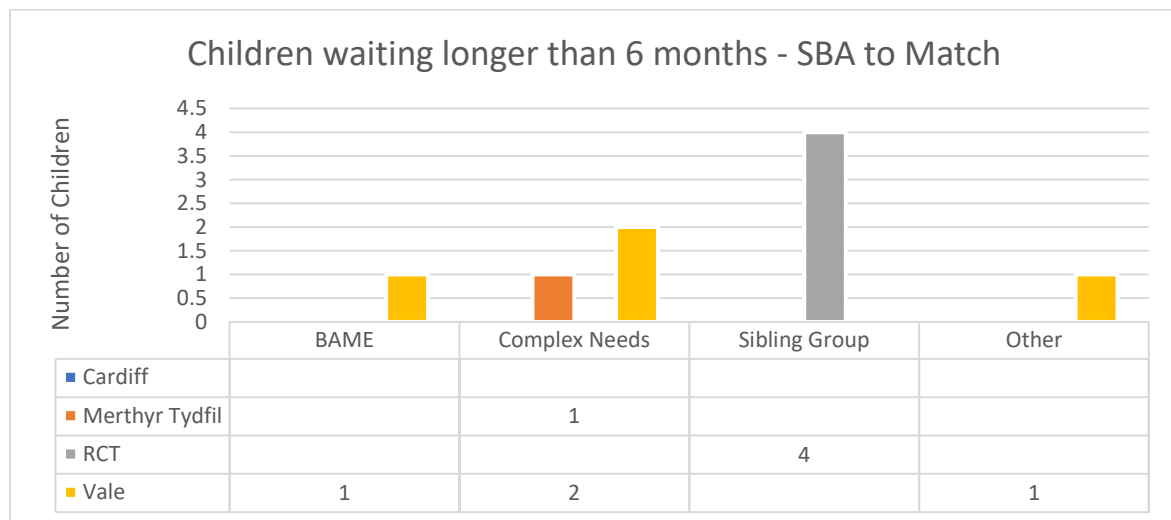
## Children matched

27 children were matched during the period April to September 2022.



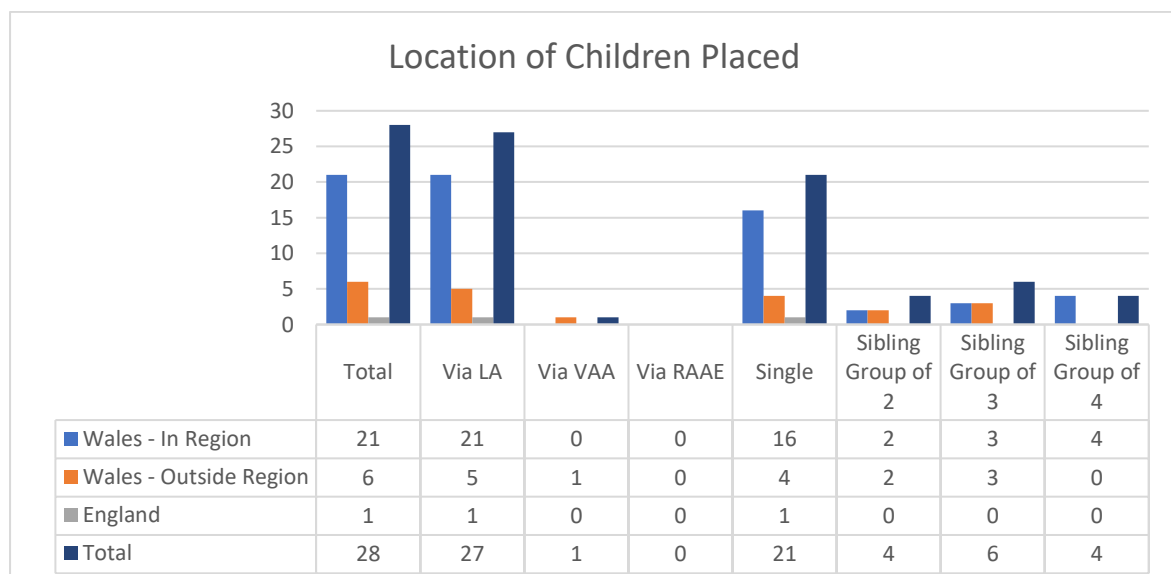
## Number of children Matched since April 2021 who have waited longer than 6 months (or 3 months for a relinquished child under 6 months of age) to progress from "Should be placed for Adoption" decision to approve to Match

8 children waited longer than six months to progress from SBA to matched. Four children were part of a sibling group, three children have complex needs and one BAME child's prospective adopter withdrew at the point of introductions, so family finding has restarted.



## Type of placement

75% of children were placed with VVC adopters. 21% of children were placed in Wales and 4% of children were placed in England.

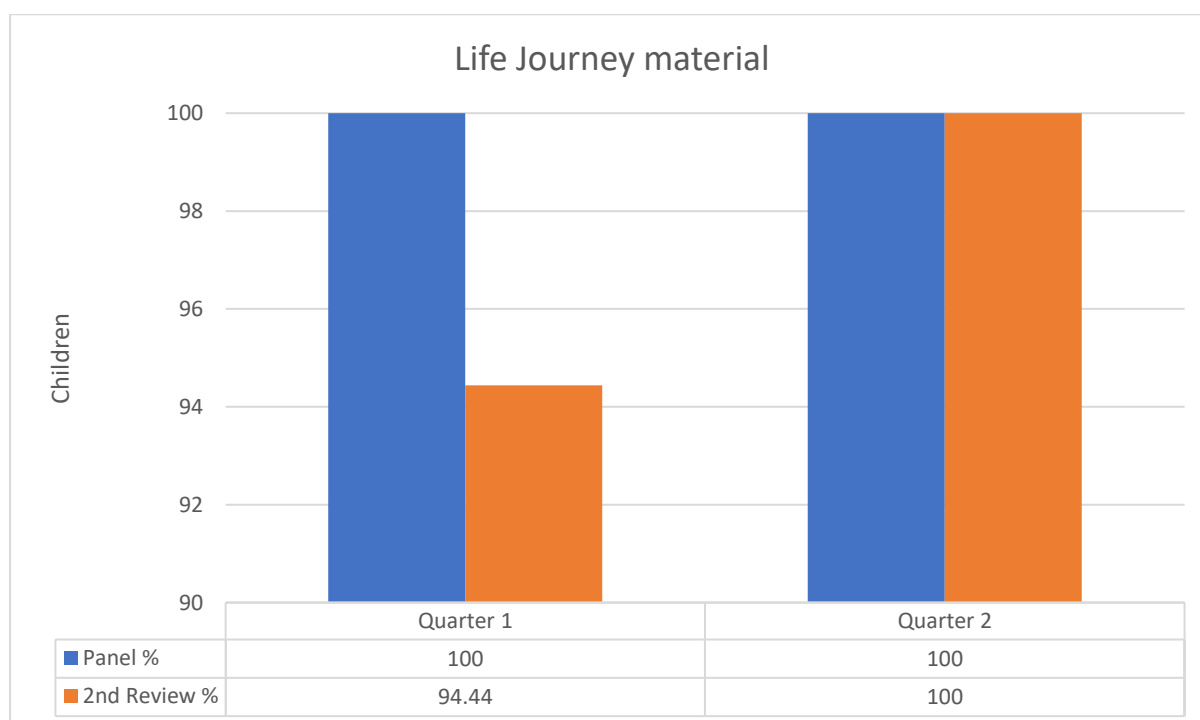


## Life Journey

In the reporting period, **100%** of life journey material in draft format is made available at the time of panel. An improvement is observed in life journey material available at the point of 2<sup>nd</sup> Review when compared to previous year.

M20, M20A and M21 - Life Journey - Accumulated Data						
	Matches	LJ Materials	2nd Review	LJ Materials	Panel %	2nd Review %
Quarter 1	17	17	18	17	100	94.44
Quarter 2	10	10	10	10	100	100.00
Total	27	27	28	27	100	96.43

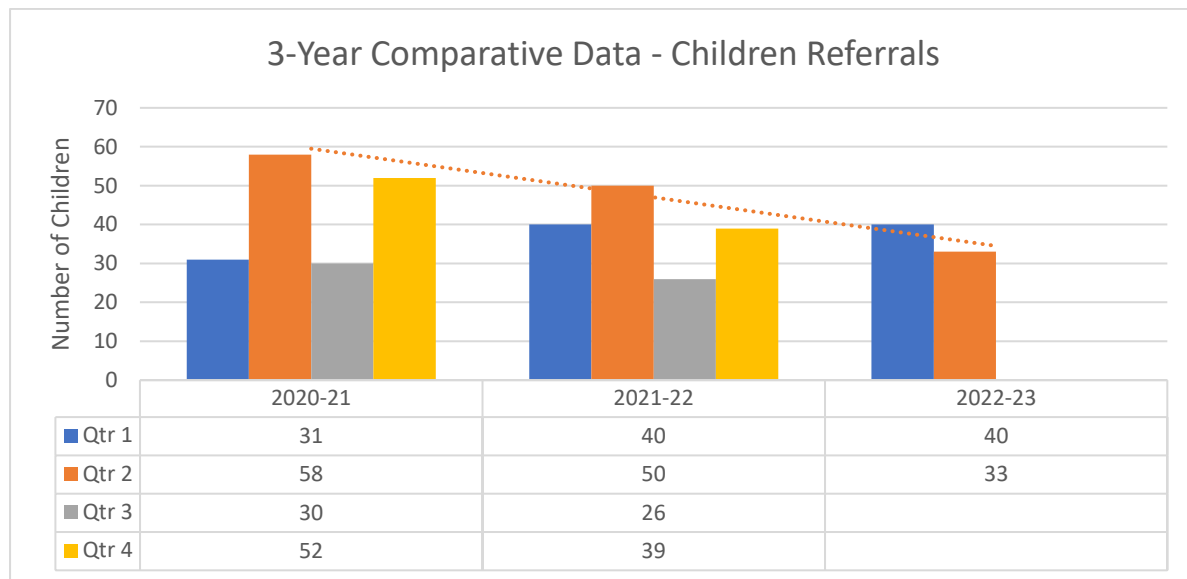
In Quarter 1, Merthyr Tydfil reported the delay in providing later life journey material at the point of 2<sup>nd</sup> Review because adopters were difficult to engage and needed prompting to approve the final draft of the life journey book.



## Comparative Data April 2020 to September 2023

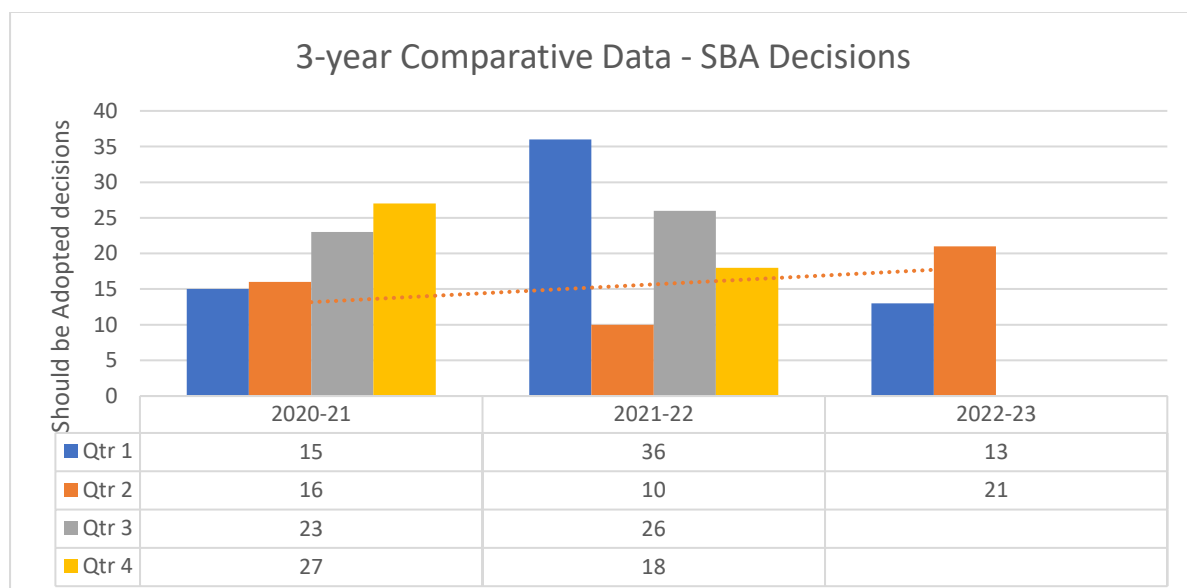
### Referrals

Over the past three years, referrals to the service have remained stable. Nationally, for the same comparative period, other regions have reported a decrease in the number of referrals. When comparing referrals at the mid-year point of the year (April to September), an **18%** decrease is noted and is less than other regions. This trend will need to be monitored for the rest of the year to establish whether this is consistent with national trends.



### Should be Adopted

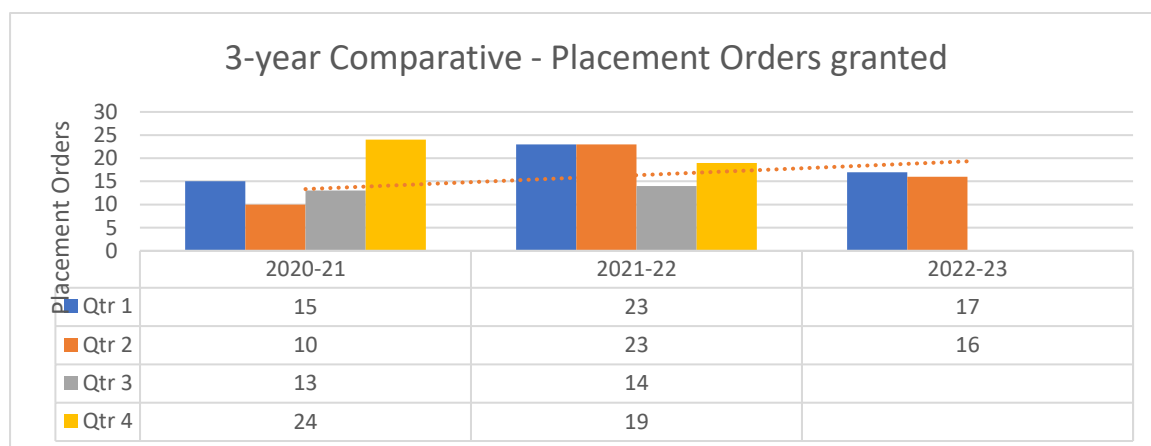
Should be Adopted decisions over the three-year period remain stable. When comparing data at mid-year point, a **9%** increase is observed when compared to 2020-21 and a **26%** decrease is observed when compared to 2021-22.





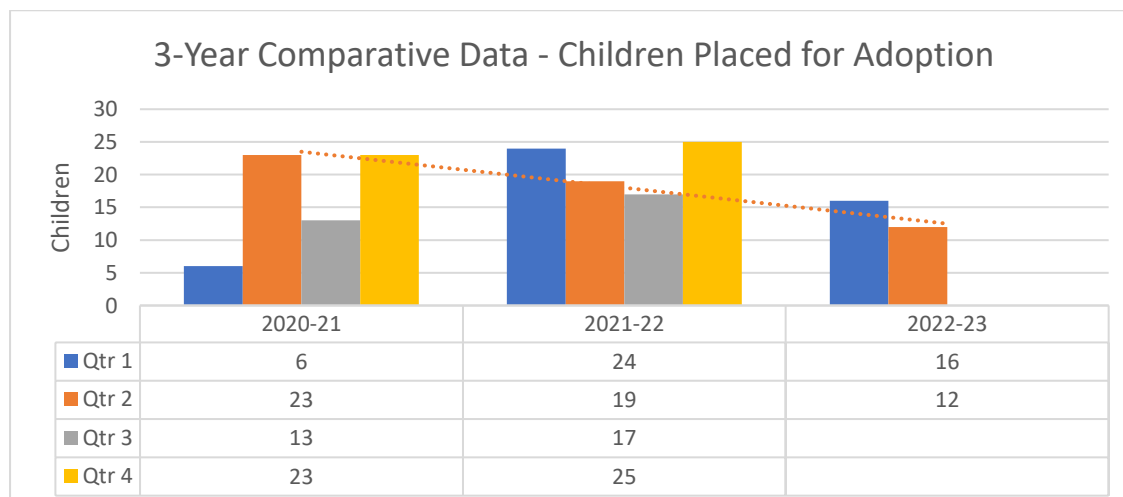
## Placement Orders

VVC observed a slight decline in placement orders in around 2019/2020 but not as significantly as being felt across Wales at present. Our rates of Placement Orders within VVC remain consistent albeit with a larger cohort of these from Cardiff rather than the other local authorities. Cardiff's referral rates remain steady into the adoption service at present. The Vale of Glamorgan noted a decline in care proceedings over the past year although report that recently these have been increasing again. Rhondda Cynon Taff and Merthyr Tydfil both report a change in the way they are working under PLO/pre-birth and that this has been having an impact. Merthyr advise that they have seen a decrease in the rate of children becoming looked after linked to a number of service developments. RCT note the work being undertaken in assessment pre-proceedings including parent and child placements but are mindful that these are situations which inevitably involve risk management and there could be an increase in referrals to adoption if alternative care arrangements are not sustainable.



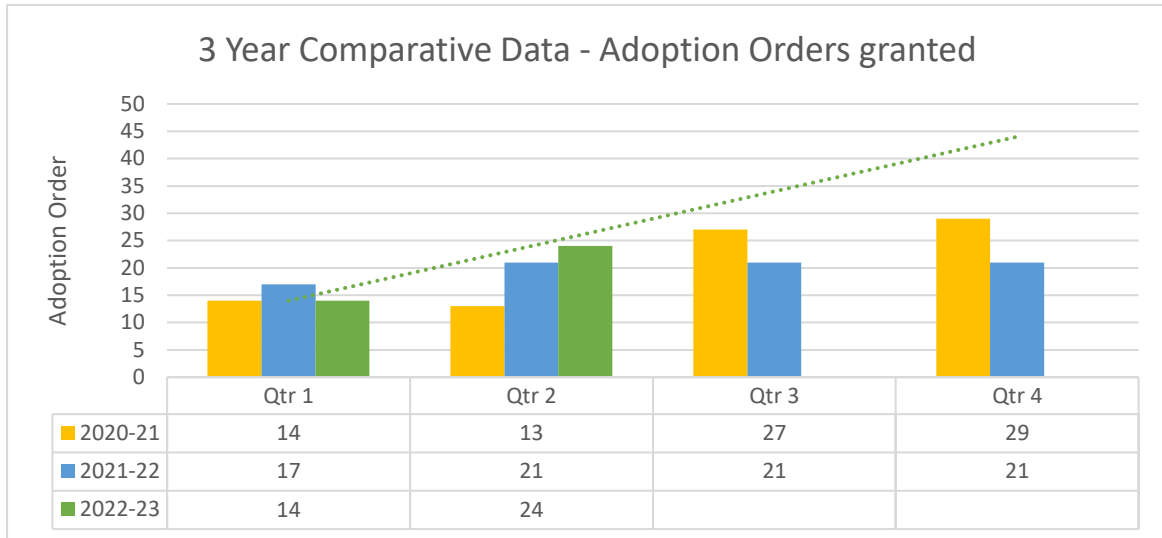
## Children placed

A noted decrease (34%) is noted when compared to the same period in previous year. This is consistent with the decrease in the number of children waiting.



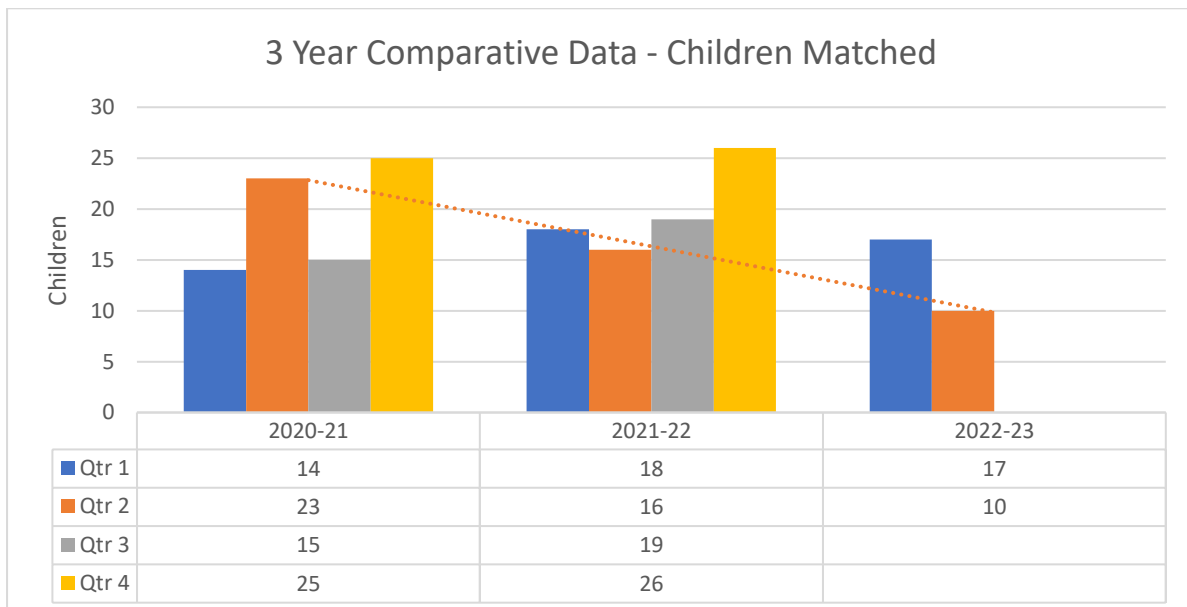
## Adoption Orders

An increase in the number of Adoption Orders granted is observed when compared to previous years.



## Children matched

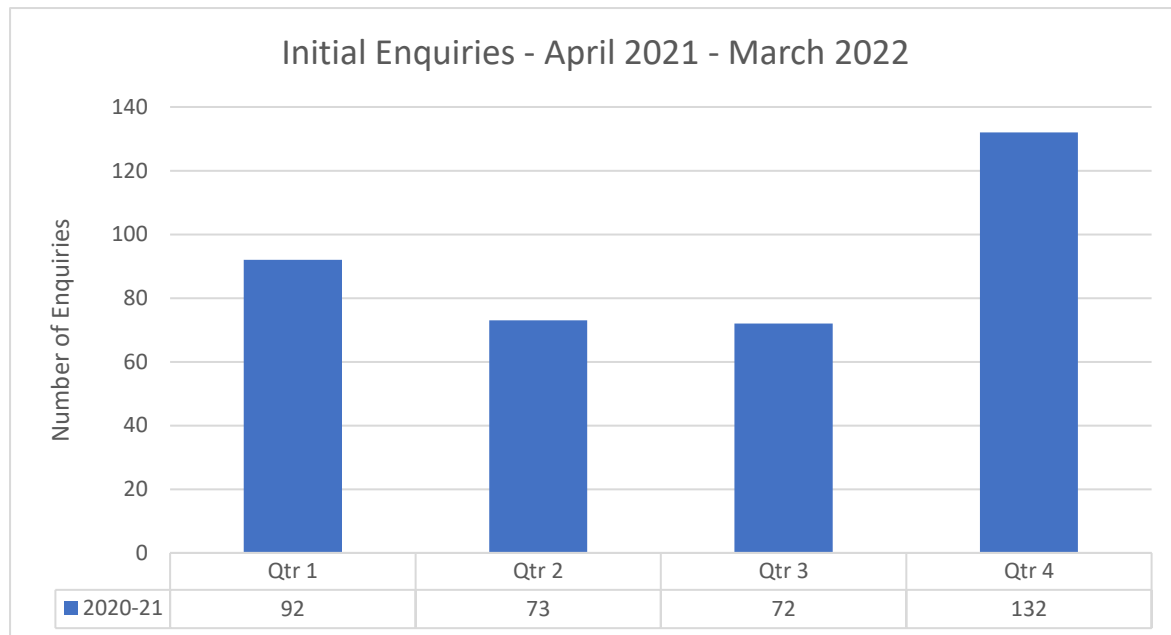
A downward trend is noted in the number of children matched, which is consistent when considering the number of children waiting.



## Appendix 2 – Recruitment & Assessment

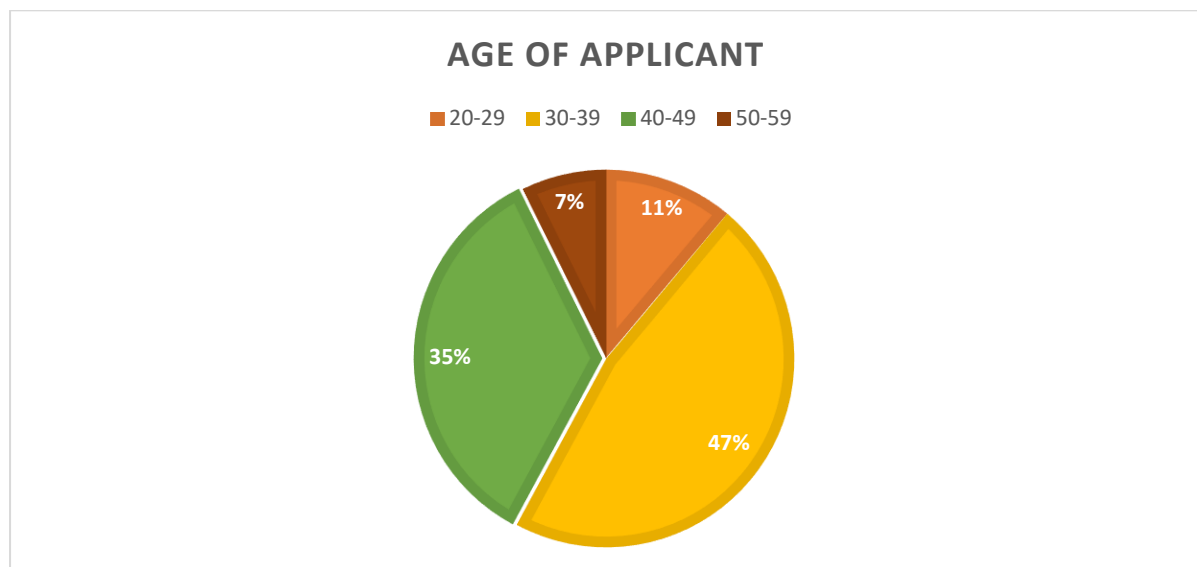
### Initial Enquiries

**369** initial enquiries were received during the reporting period. 100% of enquiries received a response by phone, e-mail, or letter within 5 working days. Comparative data continues to demonstrate an upward trend in the number of initial enquiries received. **48%** (178 initial enquiries) did not progress after requesting further information.



### Age

Of the 369 initial enquiries, **47%** of applicants were aged between 30-39 years of age, **35%** were aged between 40-49 years of age.



## Ethnicity

**94%** of all applicants identify as WHITE. **6%** of applicants identify as BBAC, ASAB or MIXD.

Definitions are taken from Children looked after census 2021-22, Office for Statistics, Welsh Government as follows:

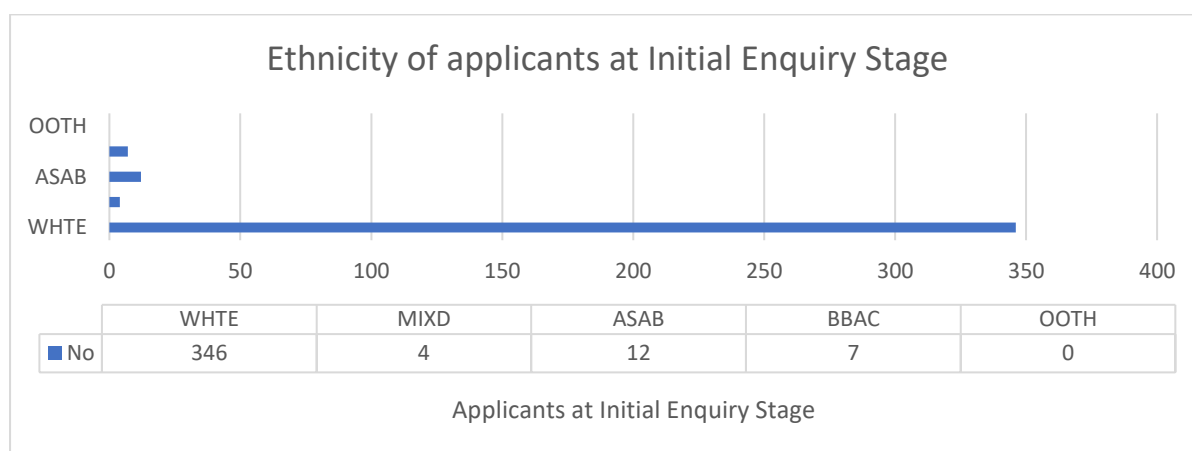
WHITE - White

MIXD - Mixed ethnic groups

ASAB – Asian or Asian British

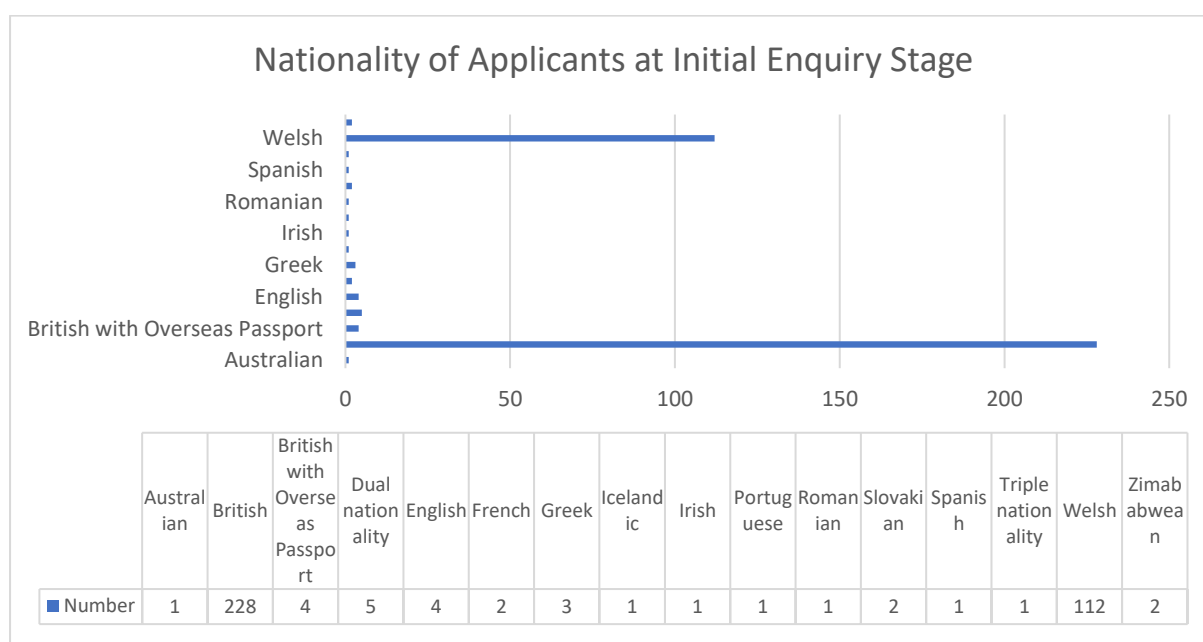
BBAC – Black, African, Caribbean or Black British

OOOTH - Other ethnic group



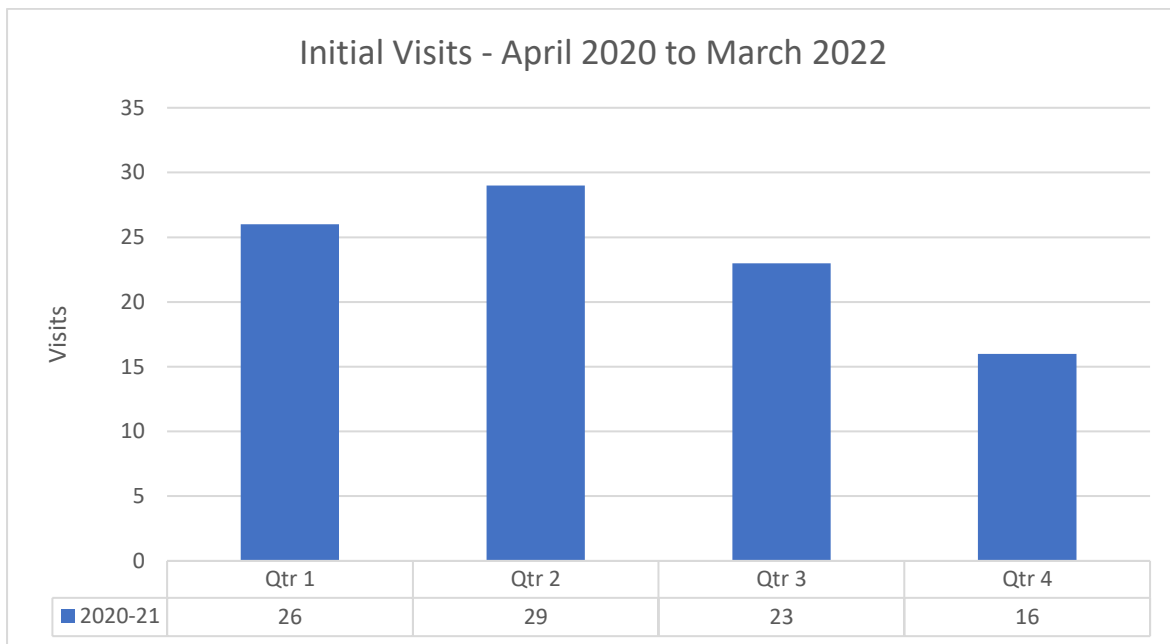
## Nationality

**62%** of applicants disclose they are British. **30%** of applicants disclose they are Welsh.



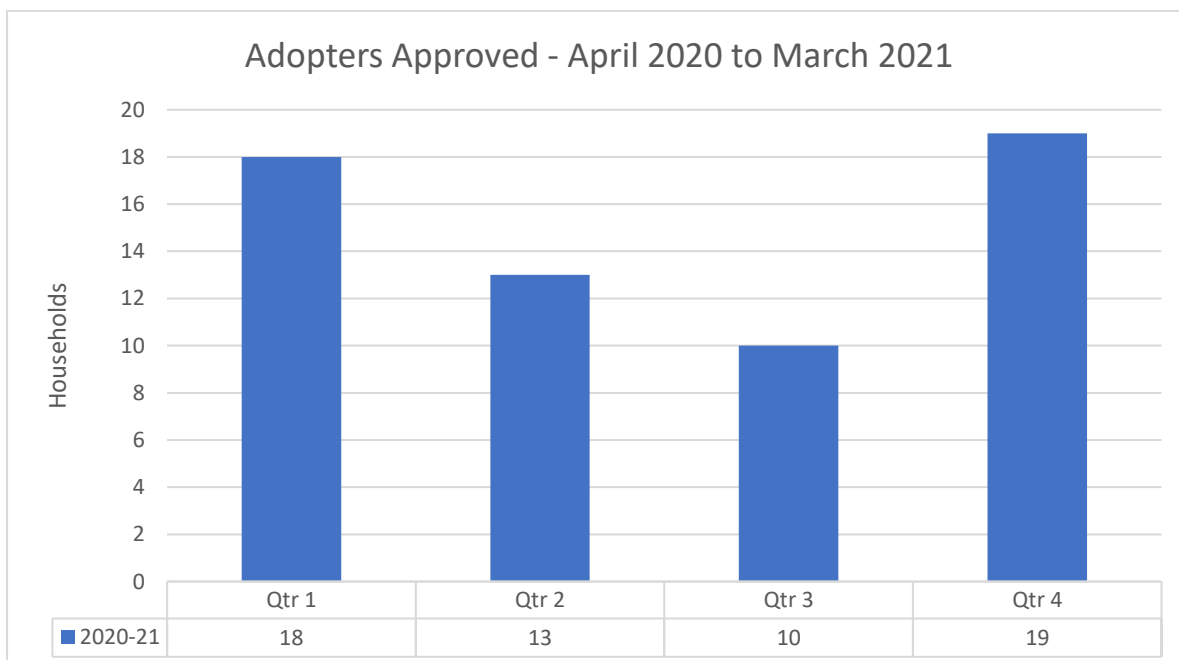
## Initial Visits

**93** initial visits took place during the reporting period. When compared to previous years, the number of initial visits is consistent with previous years.



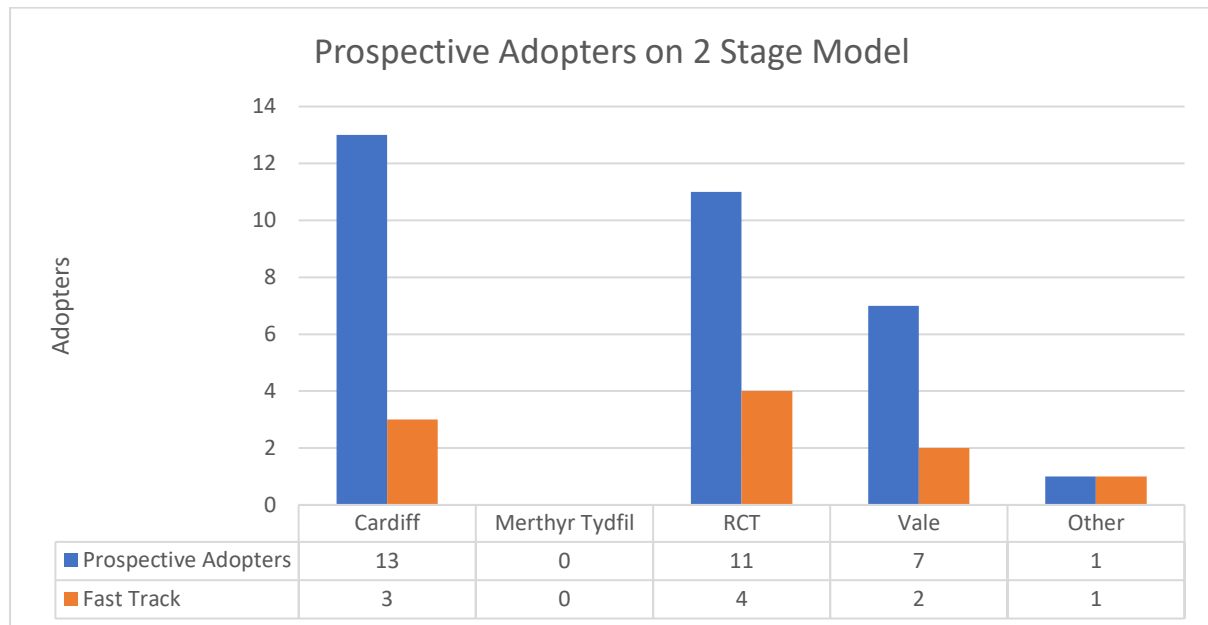
## Adopter Approvals

**59** adoptive households have been approved to adopt during the reporting period. **60** adoptive households were presented at panel, 1 of which was awaiting ratification at the end of Quarter 4.



## 2 Stage Model

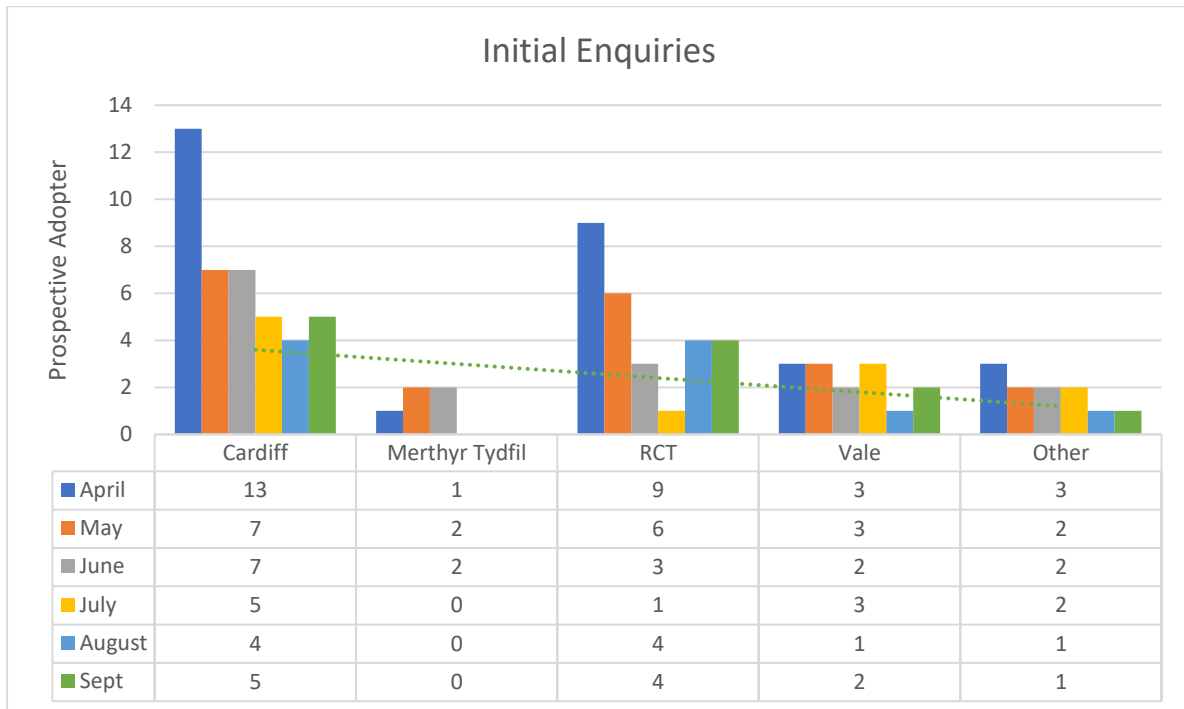
With effect from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021, the 2-Stage model for Recruitment & Assessment of Adopters came into effect. **32** prospective adopters have started Stage 1 of the process. **31%** of prospective adopters are fast tracking as 2<sup>nd</sup> time adopters.



## Recruitment & Assessment – April to September 2023

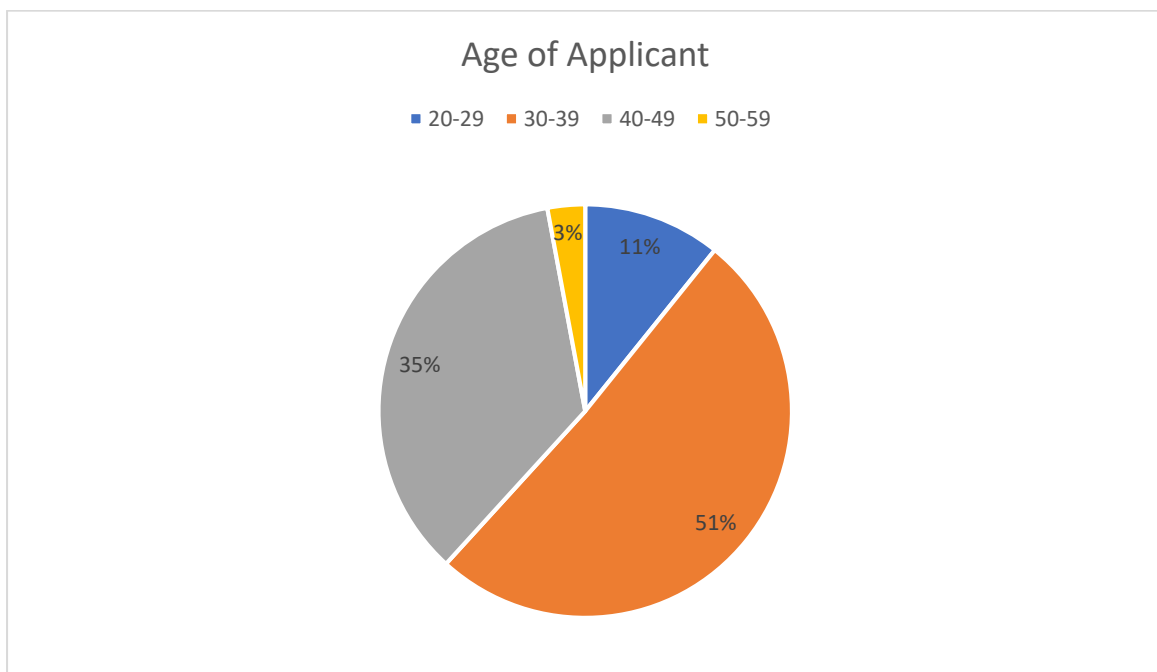
### Initial Enquiries

98 enquiries over the six-month period.



### Age

Of the 98 enquiries, **51%** are aged between 30-39 and **35%** are aged between 40-49.



## Ethnicity

**84%** of all applicants identify as WHITE. **6%** of applicants identify as BBAC, ASAB or MIXD.

Definitions are taken from Children looked after census 2021-22, Office for Statistics, Welsh Government as follows:

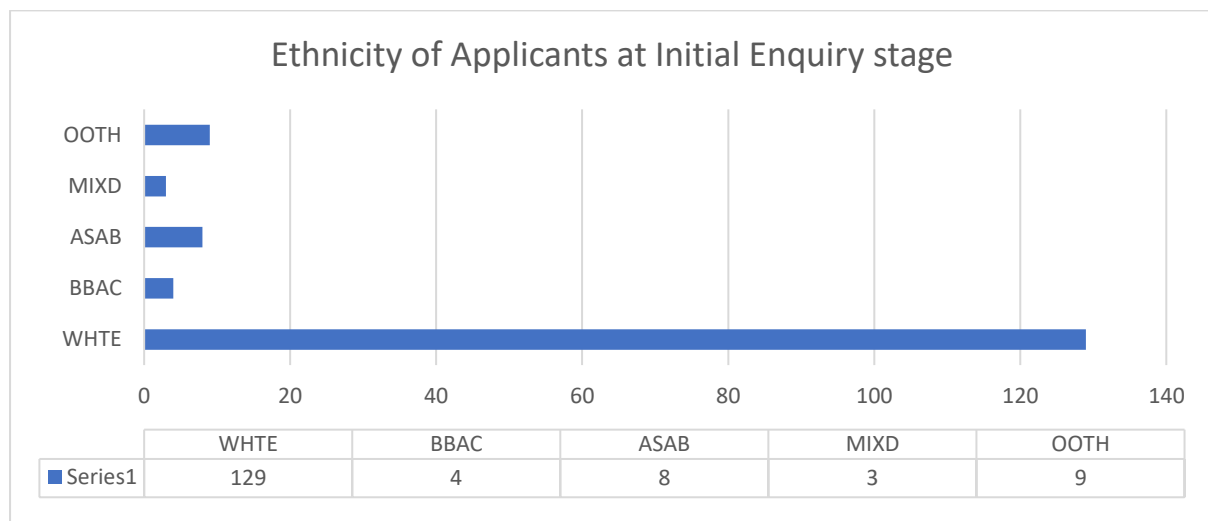
WHITE - White

MIXD - Mixed ethnic groups

ASAB – Asian or Asian British

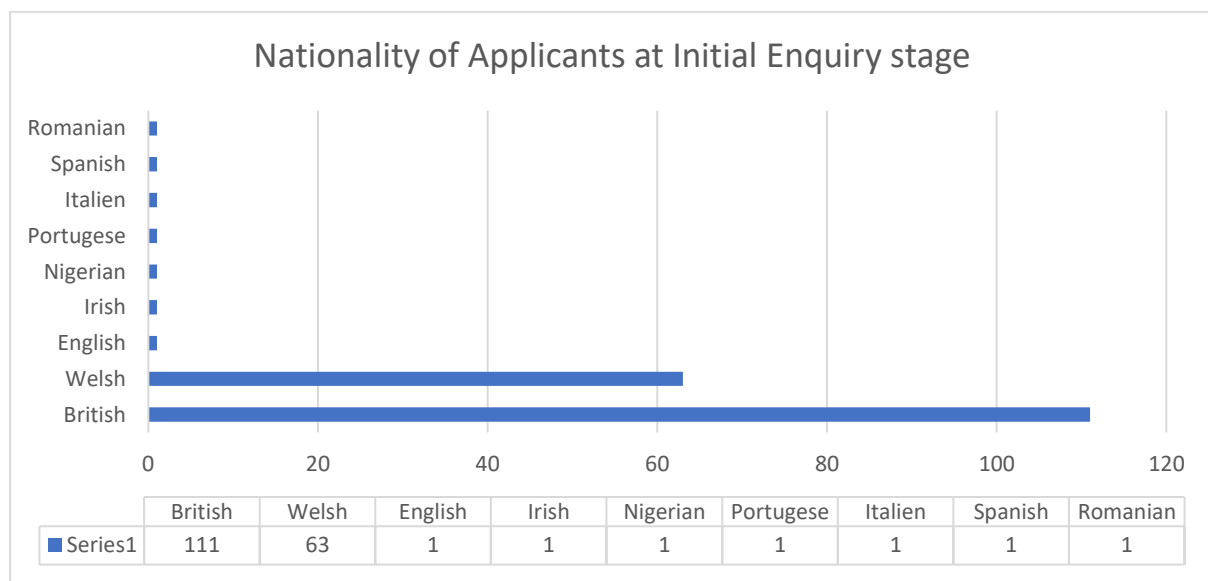
BBAC – Black, African, Caribbean or Black British

OOTH - Other ethnic group



## Nationality

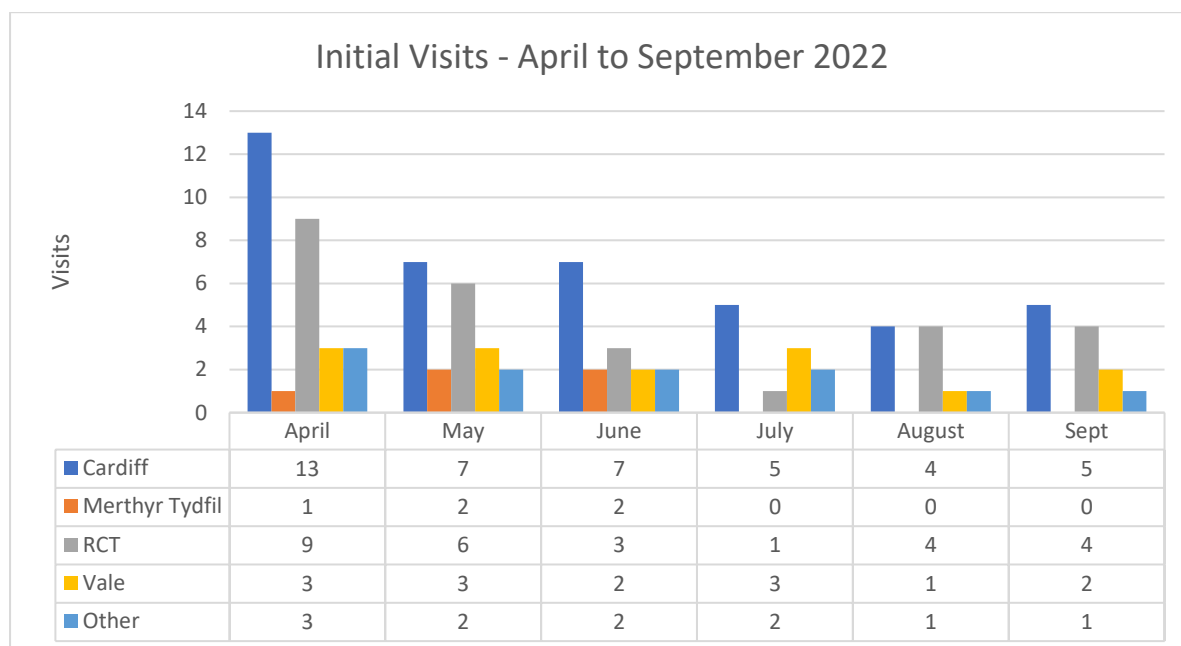
**61%** of applicants disclose they are British, **35%** disclosed they are Welsh and **4%** disclosed other nationalities.





## Initial Visits

**26** initial visits were carried out during the reporting period.

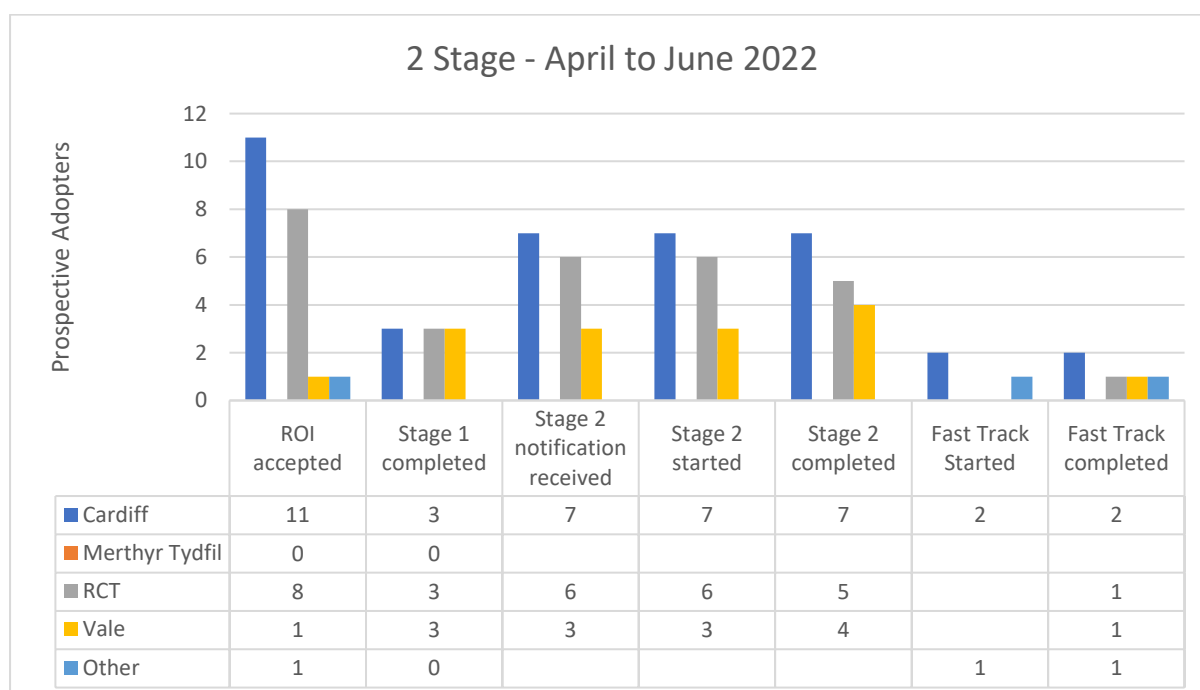


## 2 stage model

**21** Registrations of Interest were received during the reporting period.

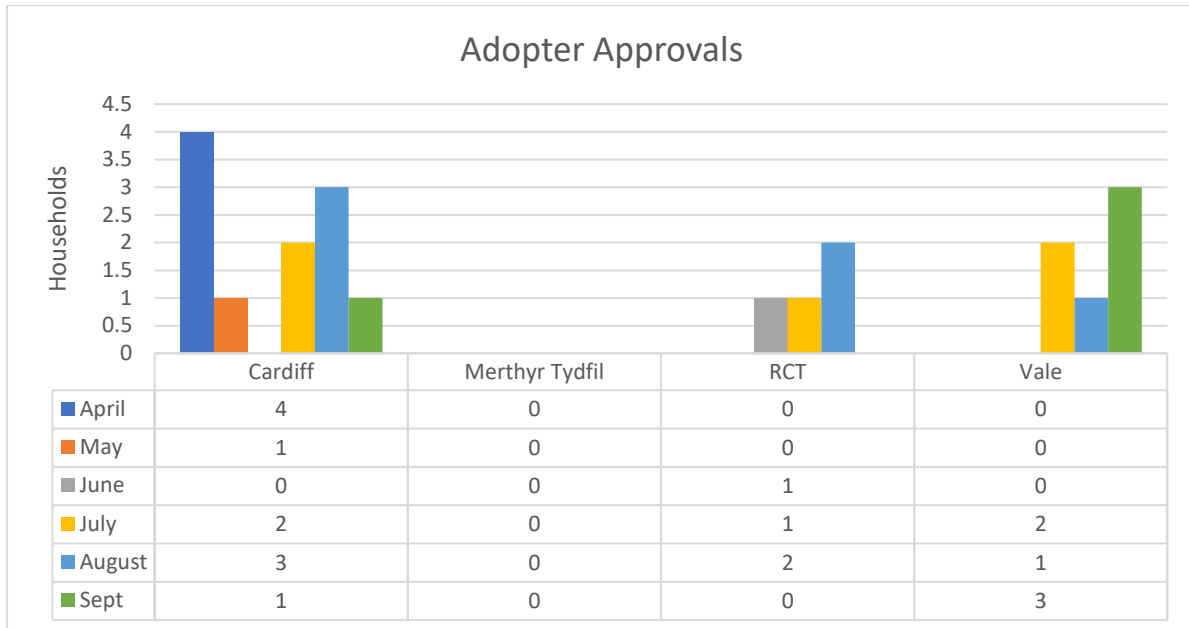
**9** prospective adopters completed Stage 1 of the process and progressed to Stage 2.

**3** prospective adopters fast-tracked their application, and **5** prospective adopters completed the fast-track process.



## Adopter Approvals

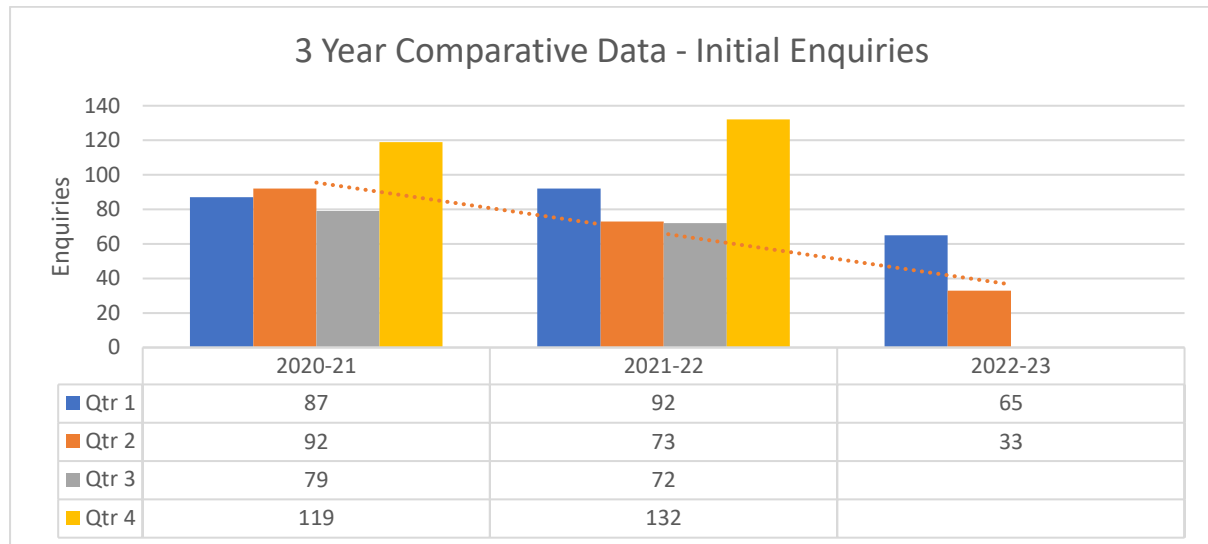
30 adopters have been approved during the reporting period.



## Comparative Data April 2020 to September 2023

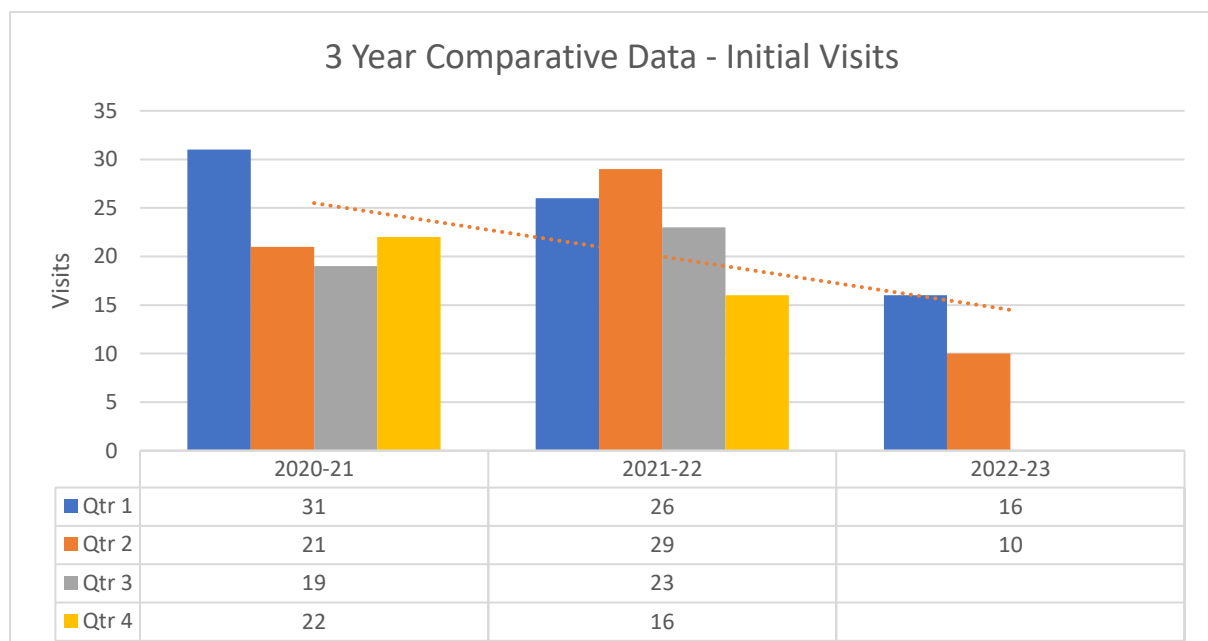
### Initial Enquiries

A national trend has been observed over the past year in the number of enquiries for adoption. VVC however, are only just starting to see a reduction in the number of enquiries received.



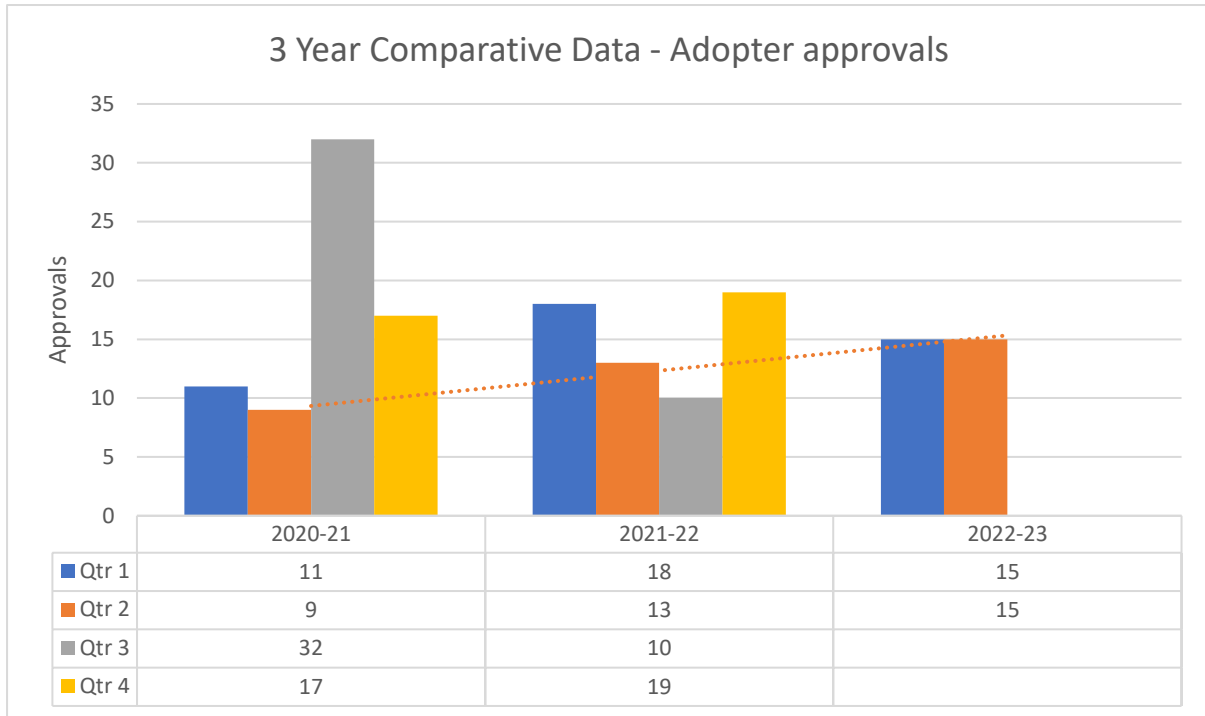
### Initial Visits

Comparison of data held over the three years at the mid-year point indicate a year-on-year decrease (**50%**) in the number of initial visits being carried out. This is, however, consistent with the number of enquiries being received.



## Approved Adopters

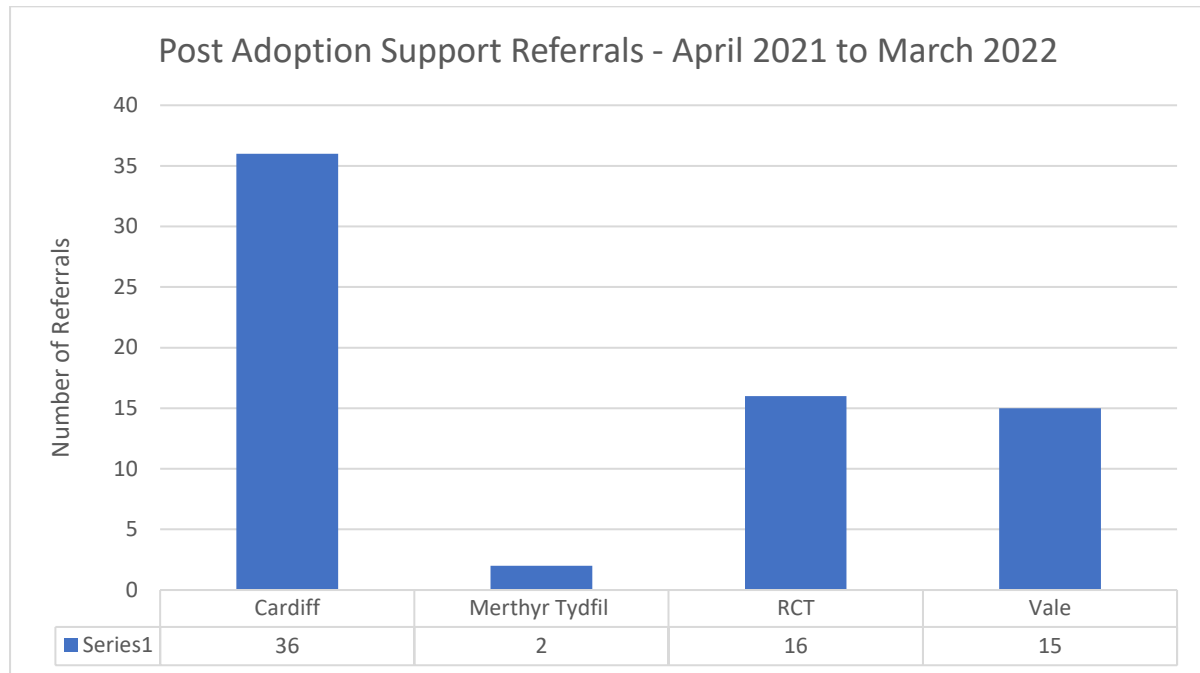
Adopter approvals for the first half of year remain stable when compared to 2021-22, with an increase in approval when compared to the same period in 2020-21.



## Appendix 3 – Adoption Support

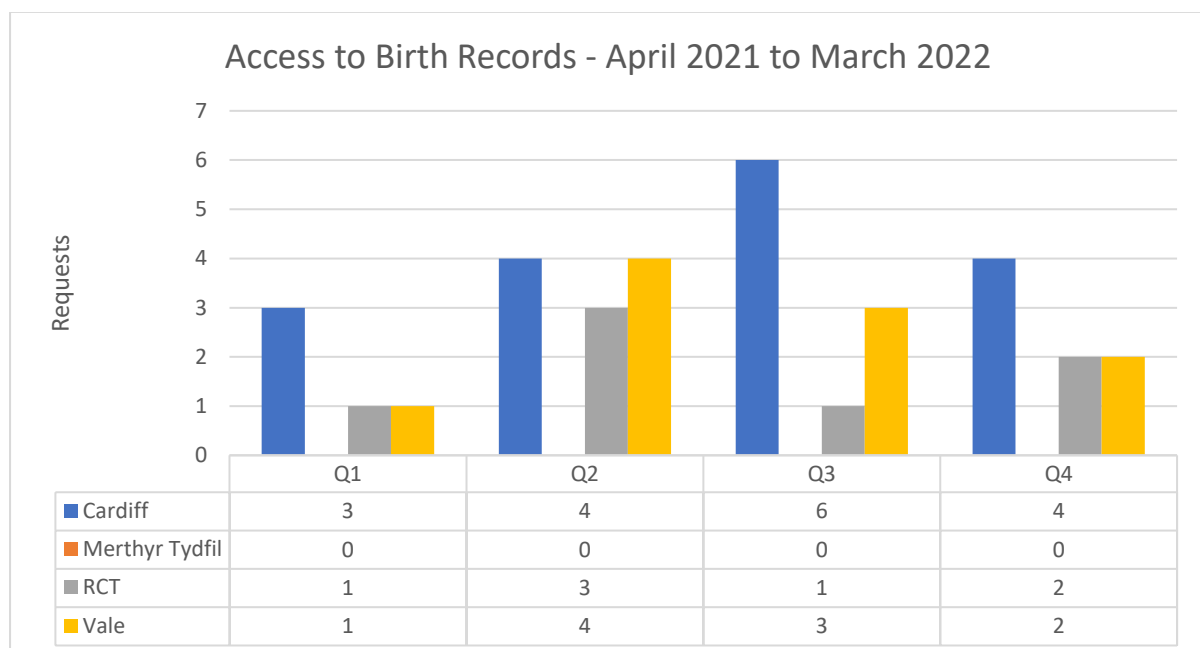
### Referrals

**69** Post Adoption Support referrals were received during the period 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022. **52%** were received from Cardiff, **24%** were received from RCT, **21%** were received from Vale of Glamorgan and **3%** were received from Merthyr Tydfil.

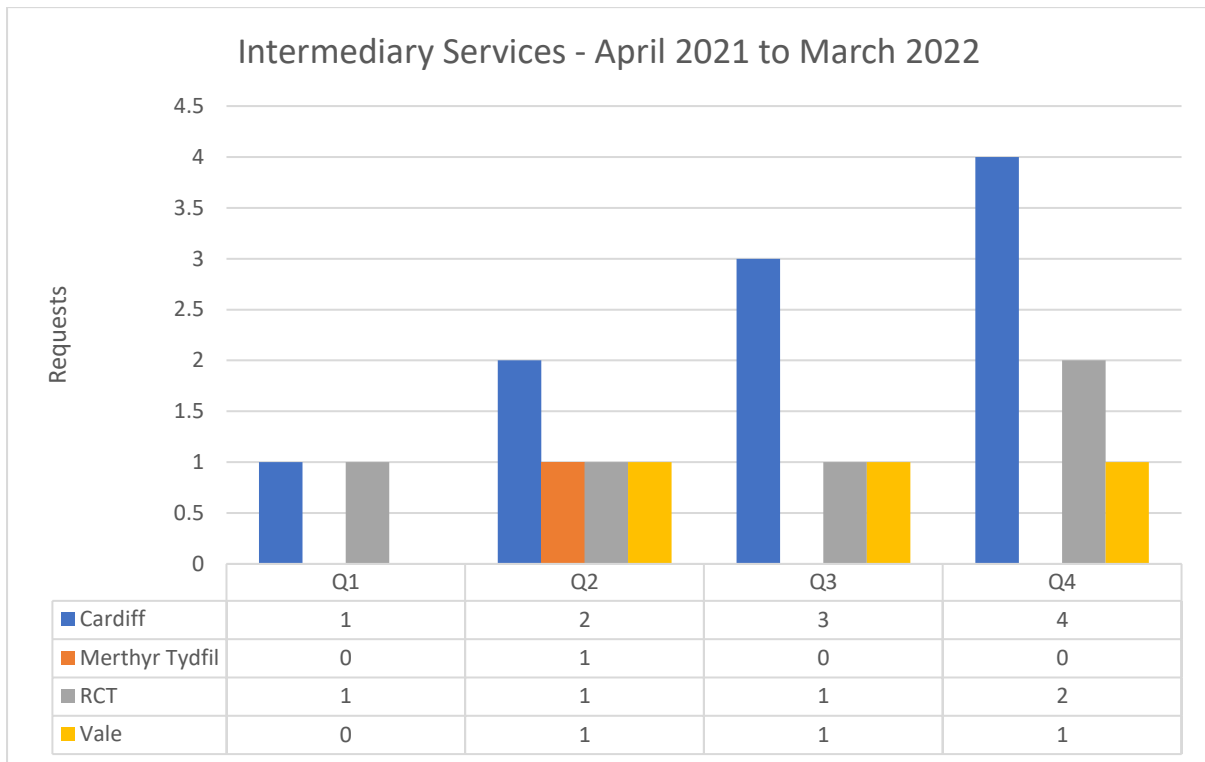


### Access to Birth Records and Intermediary Services

**34** referrals were received for Access to Birth Records.

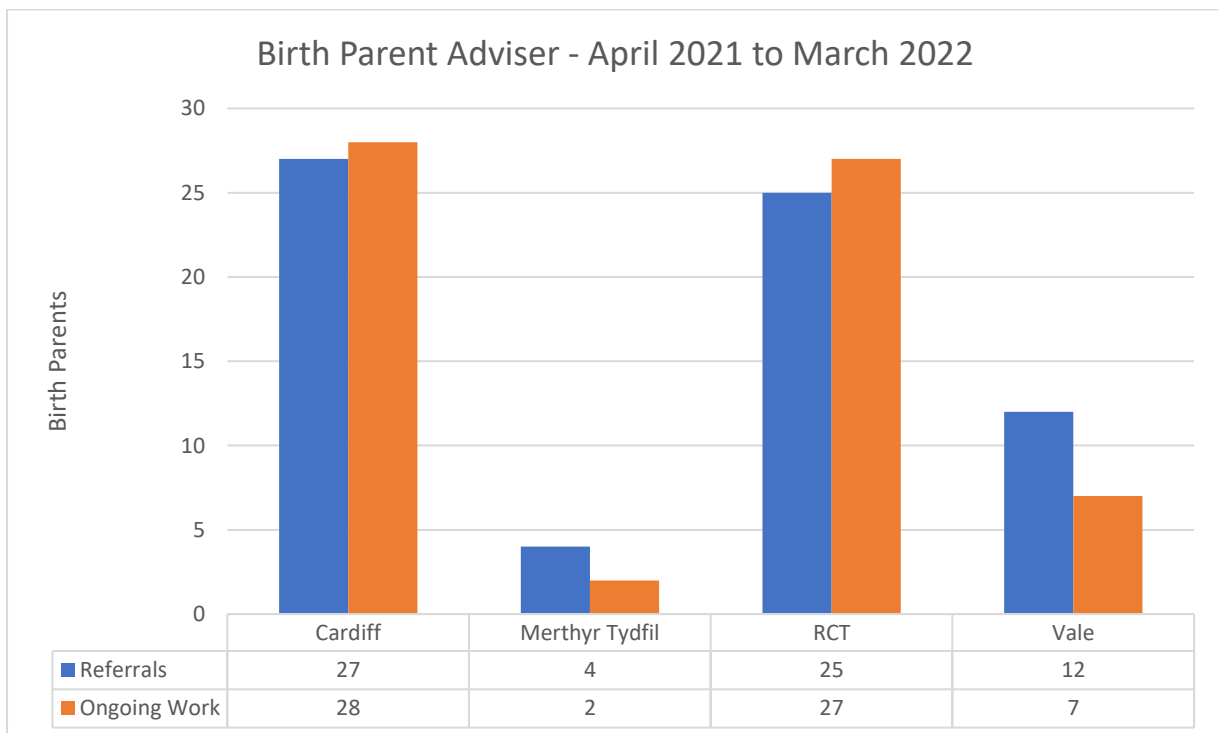


**21** requests for Intermediary Services were received during the reporting period.



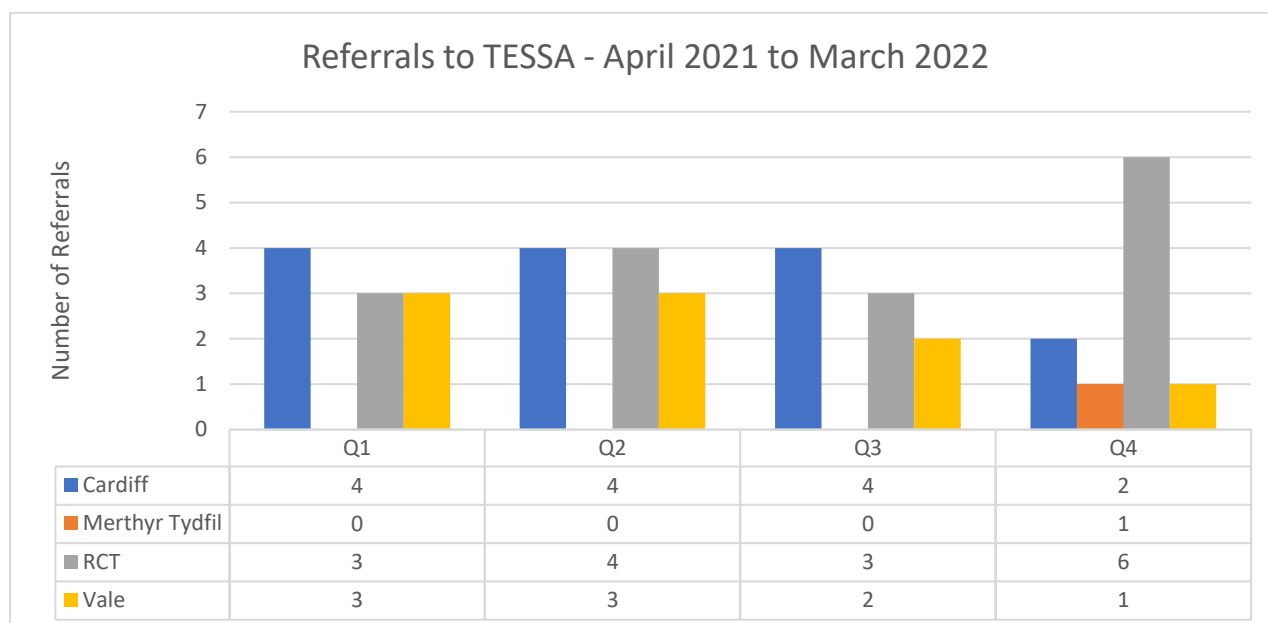
### Birth Parent Adviser

**68** referrals were made during the reporting period April 2021 to March 2022. **64** birth parents continue to receive ongoing support from previous referrals.



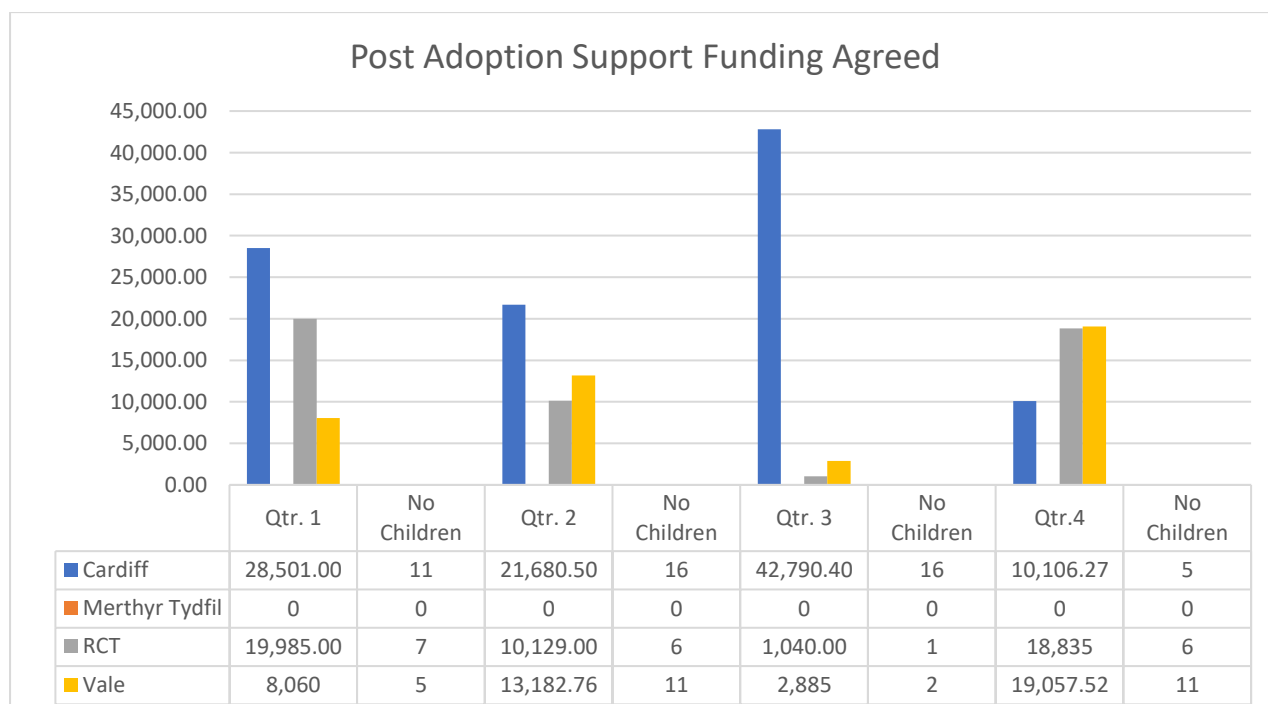
## TESSA

**40** Referrals were received for TESSA during the reporting period (April 2021 to March 2022).



## Financial Expenditure

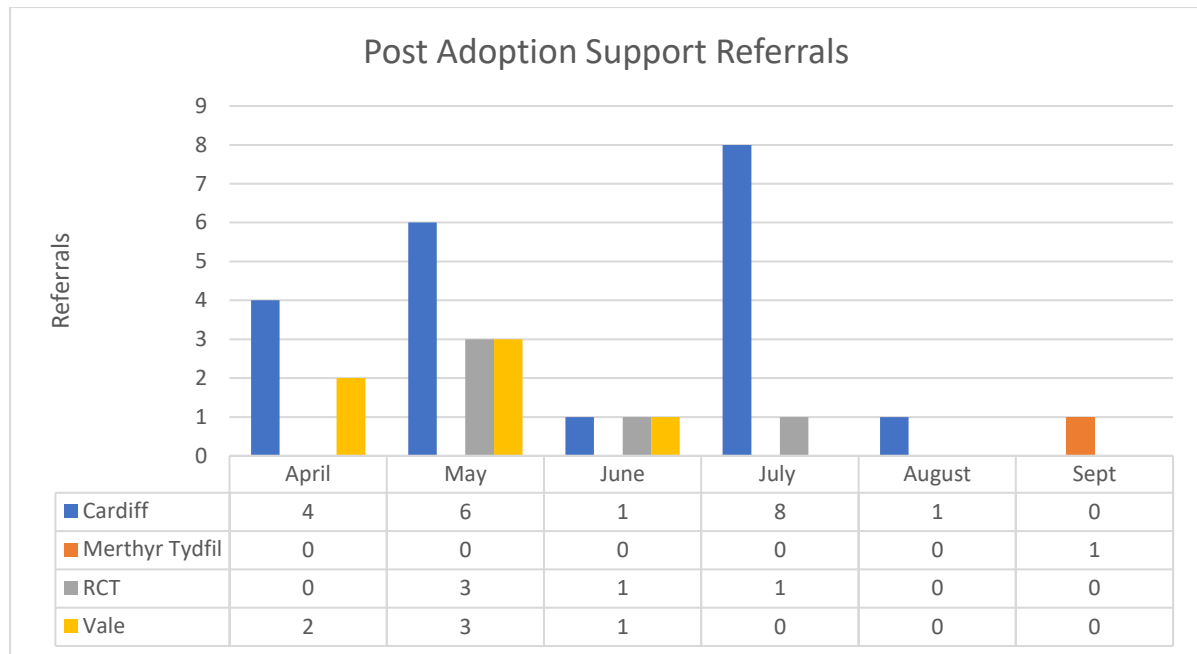
During the reporting period April 2021 to March 2022, 97 children were approved to receive funded therapeutic support packages.



## Adoption Support – April to September 2022

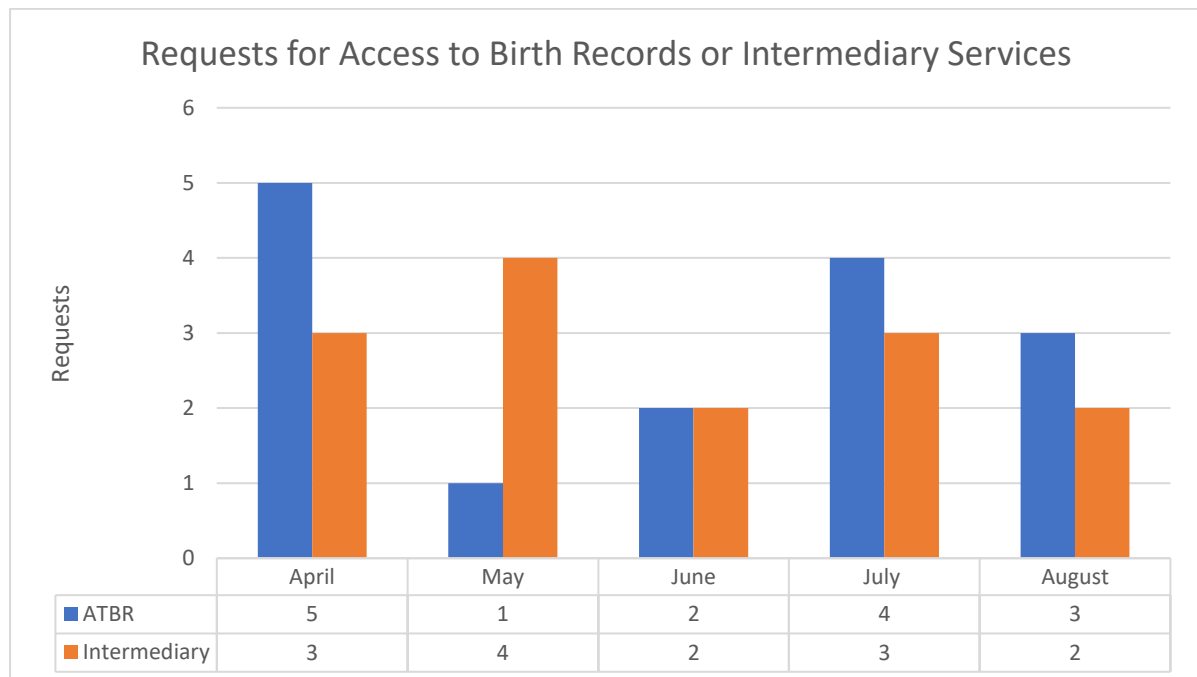
### Referrals

32 new referrals for Post Adoption Support were received during the reporting period.



### Access to Birth Records and Intermediary Services

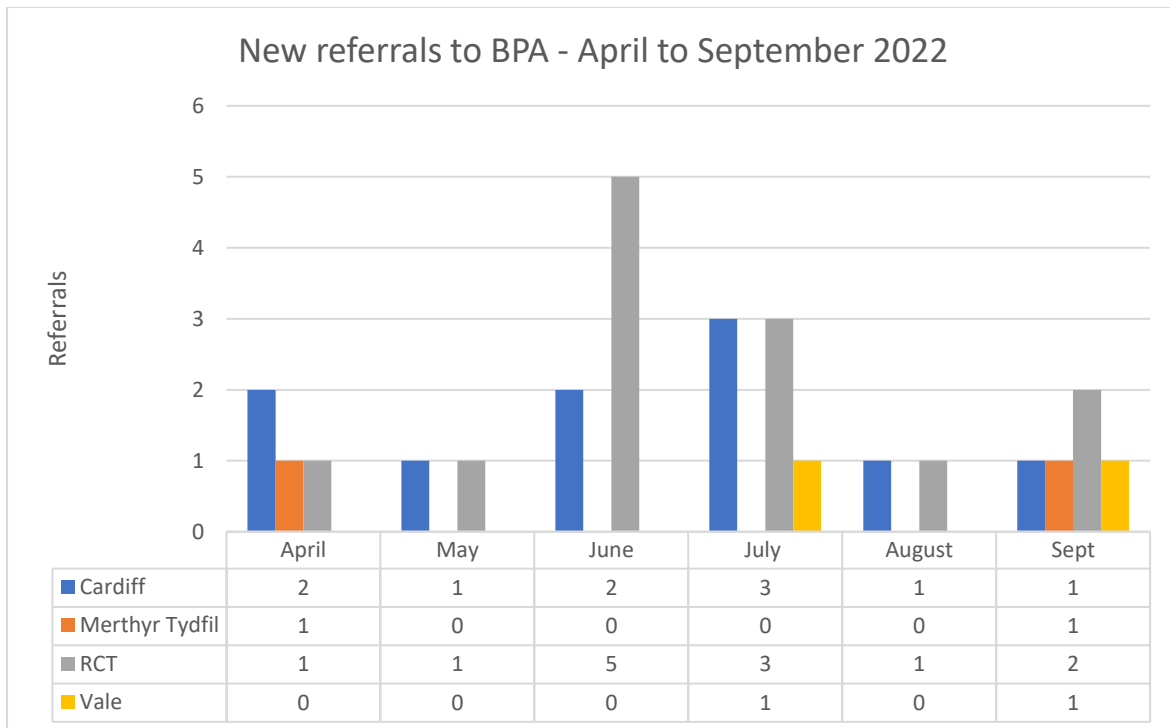
29 referrals were received for Access to Birth Records and Intermediary Services.





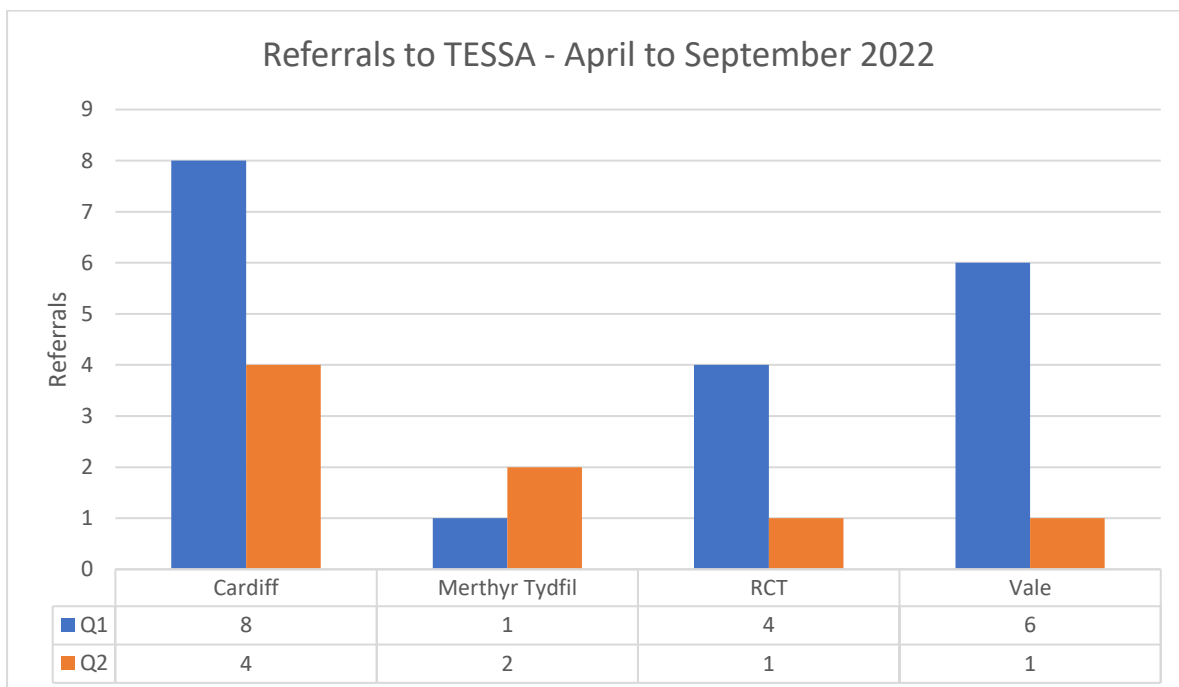
## Birth Parent Adviser

27 new referrals to the Birth Parent Adviser were received during the reporting period.



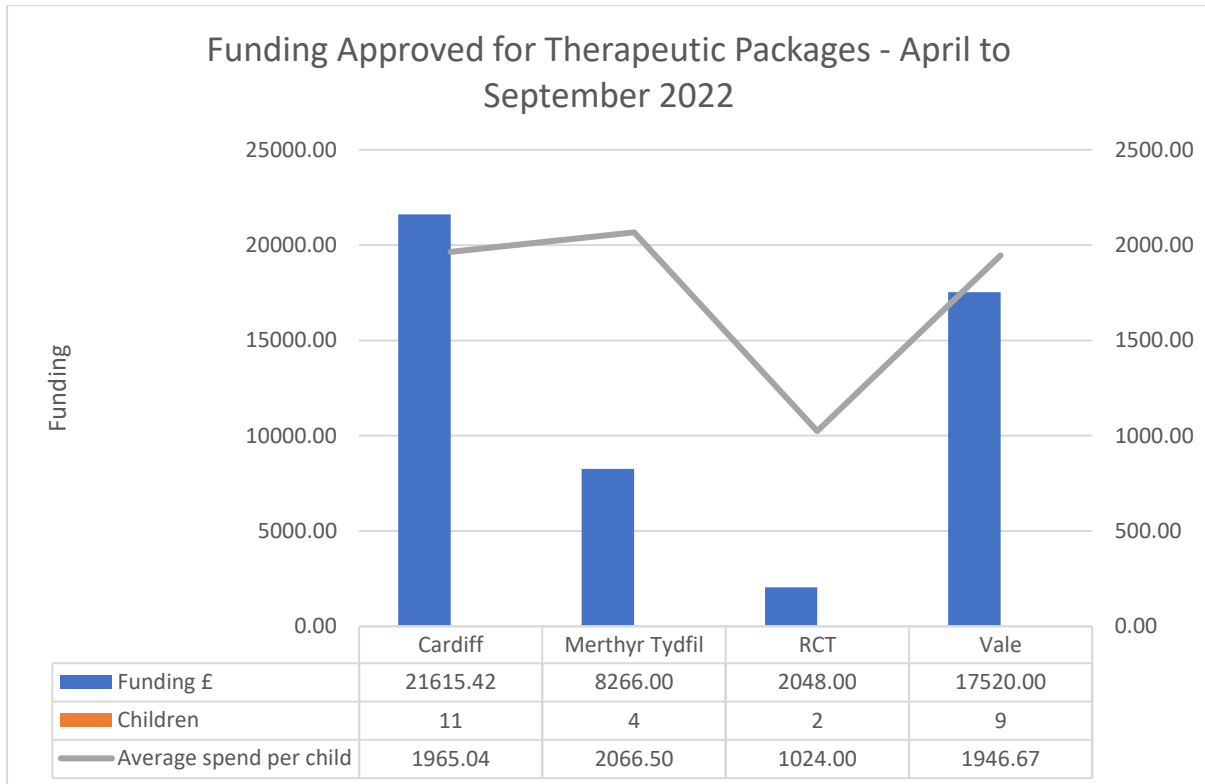
## TESSA

27 new referrals to TESSA were made during the period April to September 2022.



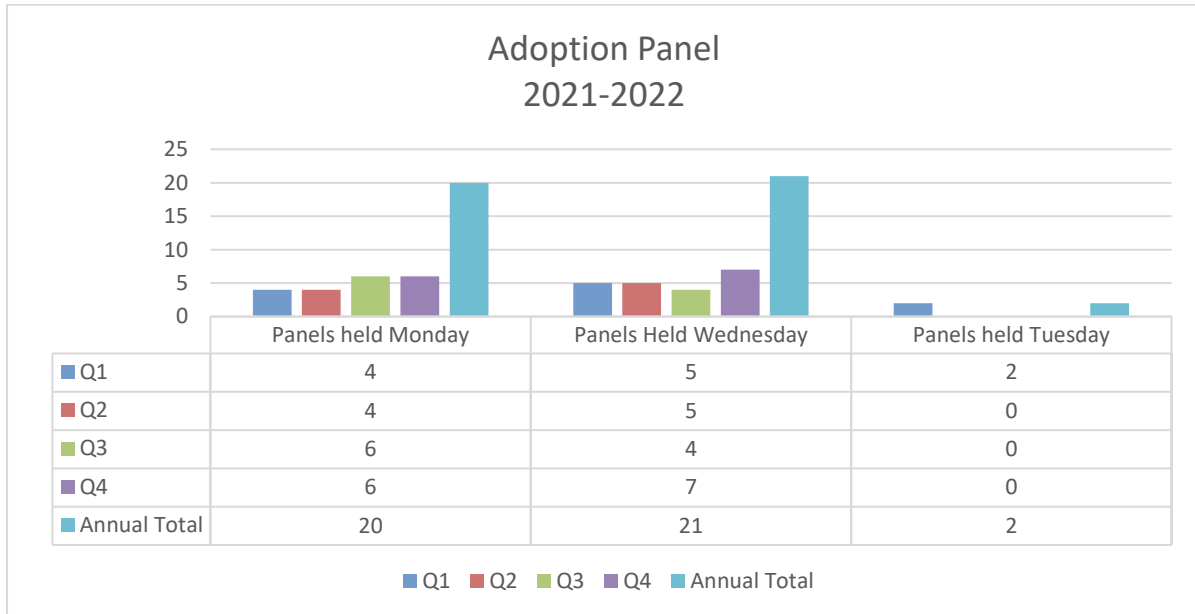
## Financial Expenditure

26 children were approved by local authority for therapeutic packages.



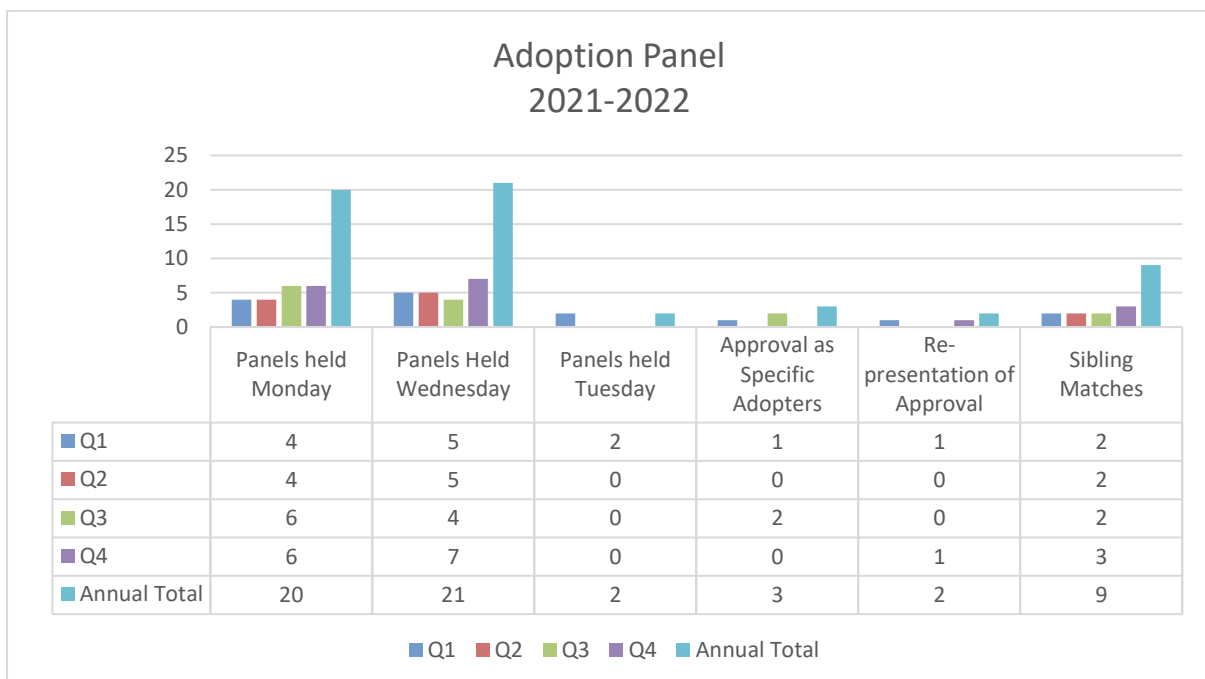
## Appendix 4 - Adoption Panel

43 Adoption Panels took place during the reporting period. 50 Adoption Panels were originally scheduled during the year. 7 panels were cancelled as there were no cases scheduled. 4 all-day panels were held.



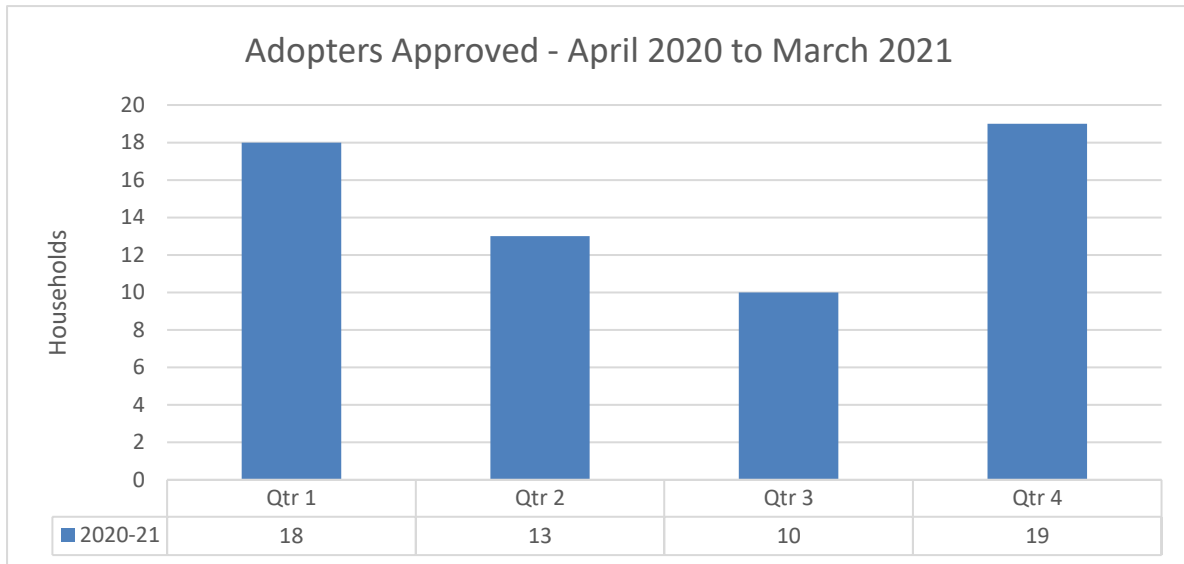
## Adoption Panel cases

126 cases were presented to Adoption Panels. 53 prospective adopters were presented for approval and 70 matches were presented. 3 ratified adopter approvals were carried over from previous quarter.



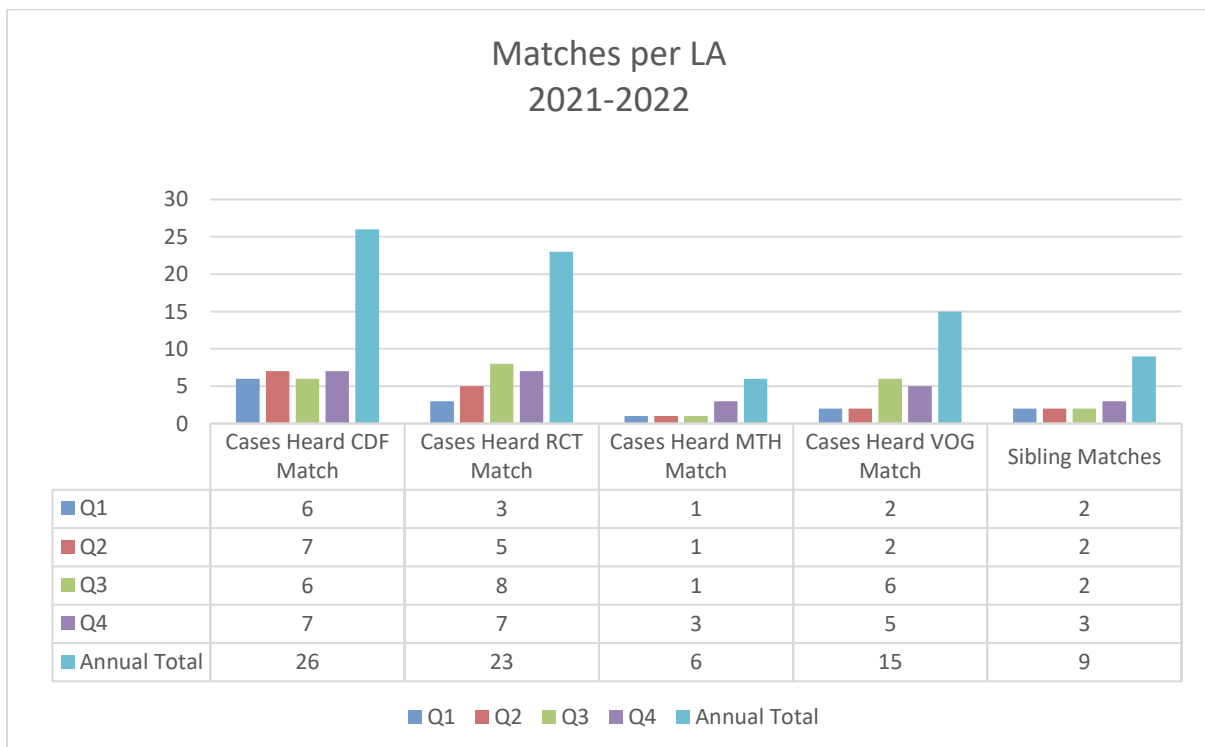
## Adopter approval

**59** adoptive households have been approved to adopt during the reporting period. **60** adoptive households were presented at panel, 1 of which was awaiting ratification at the end of Quarter 4.



## Matches

**70** children matches were presented to Adoption Panel during the reporting period. Of the 70 children matches, 9 sibling groups were matched.



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