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AGENDA

Committee CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date and Time of Meeting TUESDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2020, 4.30 PM

Venue REMOTE MEETING VIA MS TEAMS

Membership Councillor Lee Bridgeman (Chair)
Councillors Cunnah, Hopkins, Joyce, Melbourne, Molik, Phillips,
Mia Rees and Singh

Patricia Arlotte (Roman Catholic representative), Carol Cobert (Church in Wales Representative), Karen Dell'Armi (Parent Governor Representative) and Matthew Richards (Parent Governor Representative)

Mia John (Youth Council Representative)

Time approx.

1 Apologies for Absence

4.30 pm

To receive apologies for absence.

2 Declarations of Interest

To be made at the start of the agenda item in question, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct.

3 Minutes (Pages 3 - 8)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting.

4 Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Regional Adoption Service Annual Report 2019/20 (Pages 9 - 54)

4.35 pm

To enable Members to review the Annual Report of the Regional Adoption Service for 2019-20

5 School Organisation Plan Proposals 5.05 pm

(Papers to follow)

To enable Members to undertake pre-decision scrutiny in relation to:

- Cathays High School
- Ysgol Mynydd Bychan

6 Way Forward 6.35 pm

To review the evidence and information gathered during consideration of each agenda item; and agree Members comments, observations and concerns to be passed on to the relevant Cabinet Member by the Chair

7 Committee Business Report (*Pages 55 - 62*) 6.50 pm

For Members to note correspondence received and any other Committee Business.

8 Urgent Items (if any)

9 Date of next meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee is on Tuesday 19 January 2021 at 4.30 pm via MS Teams.

Davina Fiore

Director Governance & Legal Services

Date: Wednesday, 9 December 2020

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This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12 OCTOBER 2020

Present:

Councillor Phillips (Vice Chairperson),
Councillors Cunnah, Hopkins, Melbourne, Molik, Phillips,
Mia Rees, Singh and John

Co-opted Members:
Mia John (Youth Council Representative)

32 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence had been received from the Chairperson – Councillor Lee Bridgeman, therefore the Vice-Chairperson – Councillor Mike Phillips chaired the meeting.

33 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Molik declared a personal interest in Item 4 as she has children in a school referred to as being impacted by Covid.

34 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th September 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

This was proposed by Karen Dell'Armi and seconded by Councillor Mia Rees.

35 : SERVICES UPDATES

The Chairperson advised that this item enabled Members to consider service updates from Children's Services and Education & Lifelong Learning, including performance information, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on services, and how services are responding to challenges arising from the pandemic.

This item would be considered in two parts. Part 1 would be Children's Services; Part 2 would be Education and Lifelong Learning.

Children's Services

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Graham Hinchey, Cabinet Member for Children and Families; Sarah McGill, Corporate Director, People and Communities; Deborah Driffield, Assistant Director of Children's Services; and Kim Brown, Service Manager, Policy & Performance to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited Cllr Hinchey to make a statement in which he said that he was pleased to introduce the Children's Services Performance Report, detailing performance through Quarter 1 and one of our most challenging times ever. He asked that Members of CYP allow him some time to provide everyone with a more up

to date position on performance and other important areas, particularly given the changing position with Covid-19 restrictions.

Cllr Hinchey stated that the commitment of our social care workforce during this incredibly difficult time, adapting to new ways of working, whilst safeguarding our children and working with families must be commended.

The report shows that following lockdown, the number of referrals to MASH fell initially, before gradually increasing back to previous levels. It is anticipated that the return of children to school will lead to a further increase.

The number of children on the Child Protection Register (CPR) has increased over the period. Initial Conferences were being prioritised and the majority were held on time.

After an initial decrease in the numbers of looked after children following lockdown, there has been a steady increase to 983 looked after children as at 21st September. This is being closely monitored.

We will also provide members with the CLA position of other Wales LAs to provide some context and pressures being experienced in terms of meeting WG "reduction expectations" whilst managing ongoing Covid-19 pressures.

Recruitment has been ongoing and successful during the period, with 33 new social workers starting during the year to date.

The report advises that a survey of children and families was undertaken to understand the impact of changes made as a result of Covid-19 and to inform recovery planning. 70% of families were positive about the virtual experience and as a result a hybrid model is being developed for review meetings.

Members were provided with a presentation after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments.

Members were concerned about the number of children on the Child Protection Register and asked if there were any specific reasons for this and whether there are some categories that are more difficult to intervene in. Officers advised that there had been a shift in the balance and it needed to happen. There were now more Children on Care and support, protection plans, more living at home on protection plans rather than being a Looked After Child. With regards to categories, Officers explained the challenges with neglect and criminal exploitation but were concerned they were not picking up on cases on child sexual abuse. They explained this was a National issue and there was a National work stream taking place to train up specialist social workers; Cardiff was engaged in this and would be a pilot City.

Concern was expressed over the length of time Children's Services were taking to get back to schools on issues raised, and Officers were asked if Covid was having an impact on this. Officers were not aware of this issue and asked that they be contacted outside of the meeting with the specific information. The Cabinet Member stated that MASH can act very rapidly when notified of issues and if the matter was critical then the school could ring 999.

With regards to MASH, Members asked about categories of referrals into it and whether there have been any delays or any missed. Officers were not aware of any delays on initial response but would look into it. The Cabinet Member added that almost half of the referrals into MASH were from the Police; MASH had now been

operating for 3 years so it may a good time to carry out a review to see how things have changed in that time.

Members referred to the 14 social workers that had left and asked if there was any more information around this. Officers explained that 6 months ago people were leaving to the level of work load; in the last 3 months only 3 people have left and all of them were relocating so there has been a change in the reasons. The Cabinet Member added that the introduction of the Market Supplement has also helped with retention.

Members asked what consideration had been given to high risk staff and whether there had been any positive cases among social care staff. Officers were not aware of any staff testing positive but there had been family members of staff who had tested positive. With regards to high risk staff, some staff had been shielding, all staff had been risk assessed. After some time, some staff members stated that homeworking was impacting their mental health, so they were invited to attend touch down Hubs, to remote coffee morning and to take part in quizzes etc. There were a very very small minority of staff who were concerned about making home visits but the majority were keen to carry on with them.

Members asked about the numbers of Children entering the care system later due to Covid and whether this had been reviewed in terms of impact. Officers stated that the numbers may look high but this was more of a legacy issue, however they noted that it had taken too long in some cases.

Members referred to the Market Supplement and that it seems to be working well for retention. Members asked if this would be kept under review. The Cabinet Member explained it was a year on year rolling review. There had been 33 new staff recruited but this was not enough, it was important to keep numbers up and caseloads down as Cardiff cases are complex. It was important that social workers have a recognised rate of pay, this was also important to maintain the culture in the organisation.

Members asked for more information on the Citadel. Officers explained it had been developed for a while, it was purpose built and was a wraparound for young people where care has broken down; it provides support to get them through a tough few years.

Members asked about the percentage of Children who are 16+ years of age in residential care and whether this was an increasing trend. Officers agreed that there had been a significant rise in numbers, some new cases and some where care placements have broken down. Officers considered there should be a different offer for this age group and they were looking at wraparound support, linking young people to activities that interest them, this would prove challenging during Covid though. Move on support for 16-24 year olds was something that was discussed and considered every week.

Members discussed the shift in balance with children in regulated placements in Cardiff and the likely impact of reducing out of county placements and impacts on targets and timescales. It was noted that there are new providers in Cardiff for 16+ years of age, not all of which are regulated but they don't need to be. It was important to work with partners such as Llamau. The Cabinet Member added that it was important that everyone does the right thing whatever the cost including having residential care properties in all wards across the City.

Members discussed the percentage of vacant posts at 38.7% and noted this was now improving but asked how much of a threat the Covid second wave would be. Members also asked about the grant funding. Officers explained that the slides look like the numbers haven't improved but they have. Officers explained that there were 9 agency staff posts that were grant funded. Officers further explained that sometimes they increase the number of posts when they have temporary funding. The Intermediate Care Fund that comes from the Regional Partnership Board is on a year on year basis which makes it difficult to plan long term. However under that funding there are various work streams such as Unification where they have brought in staff and provided training as its very resource intensive; and Intake and Assessment where the work undertaken there would mean a cost neutral move of some agency staff to permanent staff. The Cabinet Member added that they are always looking for funding even if temporary to make a difference in Children's services.

Education & Lifelong Learning

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Sarah Merry, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, Employment & Skills; Mike Tate, Assistant Director of Education & Lifelong Learning; and Suzanne Scarlett, Partnerships & Performance Manager.

Members were provided with a presentation after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments.

Members noted the difficulties and challenges that schools have faced during the pandemic and asked if there was any evidence of transmissions in schools as it seemed to be mostly single cases in schools. Officers agreed that it was important to draw the differences between positive cases and outbreaks/incidents. Officers added that at present there were 53 schools with a positive case; some schools have had a number of cases in a bubble; there have been 2 incidents but no outbreaks. Officers were not seeing transmission across bubbles. Schools are relatively safe due to the measures in place such as one-way systems, masks, bubbles, low movement and staggered start and finish times. However, officers added that after school some people are mixing more freely so the number of community based transmissions are increasing.

Members asked if the Council was monitoring the continuity and quality of home learning. Officers stated that there has been some inconsistencies not only in home learning but in the guidance provided. Schools had to be ready overnight so it was challenging. Now however they are sharing best practice across the City. There has been discussion between Head Teachers and the Consortium around utilising staff in schools to develop a bank of digital learners.

Members discussed exams and were advised that the first series were scheduled in November and Welsh Government consider it to be achievable. These would usually be smaller subject exams or re-sits at this time of year so social distancing would be easier to adhere to. There is an update meeting schedule for next week with Qualifications Wales to look at what exams will look like next summer. Officers considered some form of exam period baked up with centre assessment for final marks to be the best case scenario.

Members asked about School based counselling, how it is accessed and distributed to schools. Officers agreed to obtain this information and get back to Members.

Members were concerned about losing professionals and teachers and about staff well-being. Officers advised that Principal Improvement Partners are undertaking work on sustainability; groups of schools work together to look at appropriate backfill, support needed etc. There are virtual well-being meetings for staff. Head Teachers are able to call the Education department and decisions can be taken quickly if needed. There was local community testing available for Head Teachers and symptomatic pupils, also on weekends. Wellbeing is critical, Officers agreed that Head Teachers and staff are feeling down, Covid is not going away so there was a need for strategic thinking.

Members asked about vulnerable learners and whether their attendance was monitored and whether there was work undertaken with families for those vulnerable learners who were not engaging. Officers advised that there were no fines currently being issued for non-attendance. There has been an increase in elective home education and this was being monitored. Officers have identified most vulnerable learners and they are tracked and supported through the Education Welfare Service. Numbers are currently fluctuating and there is lower attendance so the reasons for this are being looked at so that they can build confidence back into the system and get the message out that schools are safe due to the mitigation factors taken in schools.

Members discussed positive cases in schools and when more rigorous interventions would take place. Officers reiterated the current mitigating factors that schools take and added that in general around 30 pupils are affected by one positive case; this was being drilled down further to try and reduce the numbers impacted. If needed there would be an emergency meeting with the School, Head Teacher, Health and Safety, Public Health Wales and the management team; they would look at all elements and see if anything more could be done; all cases are different and they are learning lessons from each one.

Members asked about blended learning and the level of engagement with parents and pupils when looking at best practice. Officers explained that they engage with Pupil Voice; they have a team in the Youth Service; they work towards Child Friendly City Status; they have ongoing contact with schools and pupils with PIP's.

Members asked about engagement with vulnerable learners and officers advised that vulnerable learners are often the most difficult to engage with but digitalisation has helped with that.

Members asked about Pupils mental health and wellbeing and Officers said this was at the fore front of what pupils will be doing going forward; the school building are the same but the experience is alien, schools are doing all they can to keep as much of it as normal as possible. There is counselling support in schools and there will be a focus in the curriculum.

Members asked if there was any data on cases by Ward or postcode. Officers advised this was an area to focus on and revisit.

Members asked whether there was a tipping point for schools when they may have to lock down. Officers advised that Welsh Government wanted to avoid school closures/lockdown at all costs and for the sake of wellbeing and the local economy this would be a final measure. A tipping point would be the sustainability of staffing

and leadership and whether this could be mitigated; each school would be looked at on an individual basis.

Members asked if consideration had been given to setting up direct groups with learners rather than engaging via i.e. Child Friendly Cities. Officers explained that is how they engage, they do liaise with the Youth Council and all policy decisions etc. have feedback from pupil representatives.

AGREED: that the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the way forward.

36 : WORK PROGRAMME 2020/2021

Noted.

37 : COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Noted.

38 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received.

39 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 9th November 2020 at 4.30pm

The meeting terminated at 7.00 pm

**CYNGOR CAERDYDD
CARDIFF COUNCIL**

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15 December 2020

**VALE, VALLEYS & CARDIFF REGIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE – ANNUAL
REPORT 2019-2020**

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a copy of the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff (VVC) Regional Adoption Collaborative Annual Report 2019/20. A copy is attached at **Appendix A**, with further Appendices as follows:
 - *Appendix 1* – Family Finding - sets out key performance data in respect of children by quarter and local authority.
 - *Appendix 2* – Recruitment and Assessment - provides information in respect of adopter enquiries and recruitment of adopters.
 - *Appendix 3* – Adoption Support - provides information in respect of Adoption Support
 - *Appendix 4* – Adoption Panel - provides information in respect of Adoption Panel activity
2. The report set out at **Appendix A** is the fifth VVC Annual Report and covers the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. The report seeks to combine the reporting requirements set out in regulation, and the governance arrangements for the region in one report.

Background

3. As a key part of the implementation of the Social Services and Well Being Act (Wales) 2014, the National Adoption Service for Wales was created to bring together existing local government services into a three tier system,

with partnership arrangements for services provided in other sectors, to co-ordinate and deliver adoption services in a different way. These tiers are:

- local authority level – where all local authorities will continue to identify and meet needs of children for whom adoption is the most appropriate plan;
 - regional level – where five local authority collaboratives have been created to deliver agreed adoption functions and develop operational links, as appropriate, with voluntary sector and other services to develop and improve service delivery; and
 - national level – a small team to co-ordinate and drive improvement and consistency, while maintaining strategic and planning links with Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) and the delivery of certain national functions.
4. The Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Adoption Collaborative (VVC) brings together the adoption services of the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Cardiff Council and Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council. It is one of the five regional Collaboratives which form part of the National Adoption Service in Wales (NAS). The Vale of Glamorgan Council host the Regional Collaborative.
 5. In March 2015, Welsh Government published the (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015, known as “The Directions Powers”, which prescribe the regional areas and the governance structure for the service at a national and regional level. The merger of the adoption services within the region in June 2015 was the culmination of much co-ordinated effort and joint working on the part of all partners in progressing the plan to implement the service.
 6. The Annual report brings together into one document a review and analysis of the activities of the Collaborative, together with a number of performance measures which monitor performance in relation to the key stages in the adoption process for children, with particular emphasis upon the overall

timeliness of the process. The report also provides the annual review of the service as required by Regulation 22 of the Local Authority Adoption Service (Wales) Regulations 2007 and section 15 (c) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Direction 2015.

VVC Report 2019/20

7. The report, attached at **Appendix A** focusses on the following areas of the region's work:
 - i. Service Development and Governance (*pages 1 – 5 of the report*)
 - ii. Service Functions:
 - Family Finding (*pages 5 – 9 of the report and Appendix 1*)
 - Recruitment & Assessment of Adopters (*pages 9 – 12 of the report and Appendix 2*)
 - Adoption support (*pages 12 – 15 of the report and Appendix 3*)
 - Adoption Panel (*pages 7 – 8 of the Report and Appendix 4*)
 - iii. Complaints and Compliments (*page 16*)
 - iv. Conclusion and 2020-21 priorities (*page 16 – 17*)

8. The Regional report also acts as the Regions Annual Report to the Director of Operations for the National Adoption Service, the Management Board and Joint Committee.

VVC Priorities for 2020/21

9. As well as the results of performance for 2019/20, the report also sets a number of priorities for the current year (*pages 16 & 17 of the report*). These are:
 - The need to continue to recruit more adoptive parents to meet the needs of children requiring placements will remain constant features of the service we provide. Considerable improvement in both these areas was achieved during the reporting period which hopefully can be built upon year on year.

- The ongoing challenge for the service is being able convert more (prospective adopters) enquiries into applications to ensure that they continue to build on its existing pool of adopters and to improve placement choice.
- Following successful recruitment into specialist roles..... These posts will continue to be evaluated in terms of service improvement and therefore will need to be further embedded across the region to ensure that performance targets are met. This is particularly important in respect of the provision of life journey work for the region due to the large amount of the investment secured for this work
- Just prior to the end of the reporting period the impact of the pandemic and national lockdown was beginning to take effect with staff working from home and key services temporarily halted. The service however adapted quickly to the challenges presented and has been able to deliver its core business partly on a virtual basis or via risk assessed face to face contact. This has enabled key functions to continue to be delivered although it is too early to assess the impact upon overall performance during this year. Going forward the service will need to continue to evaluate the effect upon services and develop plans to mitigate the overall impact upon service delivery.

Previous Scrutiny

10. The Committee has scrutinised the Annual Report over a number of years, with 2018/19 Regional Adoption Service proposals being considered in December 2019. A copy of the Chair's letter is attached at **Appendix B**.

Scope of the Scrutiny

11. The report will provide the Members with the opportunity to review the progress made in the management and operation of the Regional

Adoption Service. Members may wish to evaluate the following aspects of the reports:

- i. How well has the VVC Regional Service progressed against the targets and performance measures;
- ii. The progress that the VVC Region has made in addressing the improvements and priorities highlighted in paragraph 9;
- iii. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the service and its resilience going forward; and
- iv. What are the plans for the future for the VVC region?

Way Forward

12. Angela Harris, Regional Adoption Manager, VVC, will present the report on the implementation and performance of the regional Collaboration. This will be followed by a Q&A. Councillor Graham Hinchey, Cabinet Member for Children and Families and Deborah Driffield, Assistant Director of Children's Services will also be available to answer any questions.

Legal Implications

13. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly

informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

14. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. These financial implications will need to be considered before any changes are implemented. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members review the information contained in **Appendices A, 1, 2, 3 and 4** together with any additional information provided at the meeting and submit any comments, concerns or recommendations about the services to the Cabinet Member for discussion with the Regional Manager.

Davina Fiore

Director of Governance and legal Services

8 December 2020

VALE, VALLEYS AND CARDIFF ADOPTION COLLABORATIVE (VVC)

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1st APRIL 2019 TO 31 MARCH 2020

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 fifth annual report and covers the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. This report seeks to combine the reporting requirements set out in regulation and the governance arrangements for the region in one report.

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 the same during this period with service delivery structured around three functional teams. A managerial vacancy within the service was filled in September 2019 by the appointment of a new Adoption Support Manager. The existing postholder transferred to manage the Family Finding Team.

- 2.2** In April 2019, as part of the Welsh Government award of £2.3M to improve adoption services in Wales, the region received a substantial investment of new monies which has enabled a number of new posts to be recruited across the service. The grant was allocated to national and regional services to support key priorities for improvement which were utilised by VVC Management Board in determining the distribution of the grant. As a result of these monies, VVC has been able to recruit two full time Social Workers to specialise in Transitions and Life Journey Work and a part time Social Worker to support birth parents. These posts were recruited from experienced staff within the service. VVC was however able to successfully recruit to the vacancies created by these appointments enabling the service to be fully staffed by the end of the reporting period.
- 2.3** The service has also recruited two new unqualified posts, a Children and Young People Co-ordinator to support adopted children and young people and a TESSA (Therapeutic Education Support Service in Adoption) Co-ordinator to support adoptive families. Both posts are linked to the national programmes being delivered by Adoption UK; the Connected service which supports young adoptees and the TESSA programme which supports adoptive families.
- 2.4** In addition to the posts located within the Collaborative, 10.5 practitioner posts have been created from the grant to support the provision of life journey work for children with a plan of adoption. These posts are distributed across the four partner authorities and link to the Life Journey Co-ordinator within VVC. All these posts had been successfully recruited to at year end with the exception of one authority. Contingency arrangements were however put in place within that authority to cover the work, pending the appointments being made.
- 2.5** As part of the deployment of the grant an Implementation Plan was developed by Welsh Government requiring reports to be submitted monitoring spend against the grant and the areas of improvement in service delivery as a result of the investment. The Regional Adoption Manager co-ordinated the response on behalf of the region and submitted monitoring reports to Welsh Government in October, December 2019 and at year end to secure continuation of the funding. The National Adoption Service (NAS) will, on behalf of regions, prepare the bid for the grant in

2020-1 and take over the monitoring function in conjunction with Welsh Government requiring regions to report upon progress to NAS. All posts created as part of the grant within the region are permanent positions.

- 2.6** Temporary arrangements have been put in place to cover a vacancy within our Business Support Team created during the first quarter of the year. This will enable a review of the structure of team roles to be undertaken to ensure that the service can continue to adapt to business need. VVC's office within the Dock Offices underwent refurbishment in the Autumn of 2019 to create some individual and meeting room space.
- 2.7** Following the revisions to the Legal Agreement agreed in April 2019, VVC's Management Board has continued to meet on a quarterly basis. The composition of the Board has remained the same although a new Medical Adviser was appointed following the retirement of the other representative. The Board has continued to be chaired by the Director of Social Services for Cardiff Council. The Vale of Glamorgan Director will take up this post in October 2020. This is in advance of the planned rotational change due to the departure of the current Director in Cardiff. In order to improve business continuity, the four partner authorities have agreed to change the rotation of the chair from an annual basis to a three-yearly cycle with the transfer taking effect at the end of the first quarter of the fourth year.
- 2.8** The overall remit and accountability of the Management Board is prescribed within regulation and the Legal Agreement underpinning the Collaborative. VVC's Management Board continues to play a key role in monitoring the performance and business plan of the regional service highlighting areas for improvement.
- 2.9** The second tier of governance within the Collaborative is via the Operational Group which comprises of senior managers from each of the four local authorities and regional managers from VVC. This group meets on a quarterly basis with meetings being scheduled a couple of weeks following Management Board to enable any matters remitted by Management Board to be considered. The Operational Group

provides a further mechanism for monitoring the performance of the region and is a vehicle for raising standards and improving practice consistency across the region. The Operational Group in conjunction with Independent Reviewing Officers across the region have developed a revised format and process for conducting reviews of adoption placements which is being piloted across the region.

- 2.10** The overall governance of the region remains via a Joint Committee which meets twice a year. Meetings were held in July and December 2019 as per requirements to approve the annual accounts, the annual budget and annual plan for the Collaborative. This structure is unique in Wales for adoption services but has been supported by NAS as the preferred model for regional governance.
- 2.11** The budget for the Collaborative is managed by the Vale of Glamorgan and is monitored closely by the Management Board and Joint Committee. The end of year position reported an underspend in the budget for 2019 -20 partly created by grant slippage monies and staff vacancies. A proposal to retain the underspend within VVC has been agreed by Management Board and Joint Committee. These monies will be used to upgrade IT equipment for staff to enable more agile working across the region, improve support systems for adoptive families by facilitating specialist training and provide additional staff resource to undertake additional work as may be required due to COVID-19 .
- 2.12** 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 at the end of the reporting period and concluded that the "effectiveness of the internal control environment within the service was sound and Substantial Assurance could be placed upon the management of risks".
- 2.14** VVC is required to report to the National Adoption Service on a range of performance measures which are collected on a quarterly and annual basis under the NAS Performance Framework. VVC has complied with all reporting requirements during the period and has continued to develop more comprehensive

mechanisms to capture the measures, which have increased each year. Data Cymru have been commissioned by NAS to develop the Framework and each region is required to upload data onto this new system each quarter enabling performance data against specific measures for each regional service to be visible across Wales.

- 2.15** The National Adoption Service provide the region with mid-year and end of year reports. The draft report for 2019-20 was delayed due to COVID restrictions and the meeting with the Director of Operations and VVC to discuss the report and our mid-year position had to be rescheduled to early November 2020.

3. SERVICE FUNCTIONS

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

4. FAMILY FINDING

- 4.1** 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. As the largest regional Collaborative, the level of demand placed upon this area and our ability to meet the needs identified remains challenging.
- 4.2** The number of children referred for adoption totalled **143** which marks a 34% decrease on the previous year. There has been a continued downward trend in referrals which has also been observed across Wales. The reasons for this are likely to be varied and will reflect the work being undertaken by local authorities with the Welsh Government to reduce numbers of children looked after in Wales.
- 4.3** A similar pattern of withdrawn referrals was seen with **41%** withdrawn within the period (compared with 43% in 2018-19). There remains a commitment to develop alternative permanency plans for children and positively **88%** of those children who were withdrawn from adoption had the option of either a positive parenting or positive

connected person's assessment. Just 12% of those referrals (7 children) had a change of care plan to long-term fostering based on an assessment of their individual needs or sibling attachment relationship. Withdrawn referrals in many instances do not equate to a decrease in workload for the service as a lot of work has been undertaken to progress the adoption plan prior to it being discontinued.

- 4.4** The number of 'Should be Adopted' decisions made in respect of children reduced in 2019-20 by **34%** from the previous year. This is to be expected as the number of SBA decisions made will reflect the referrals made during that year and the previous year, as the number of referrals declines so will the number of SBA decisions. All but 1 region within Wales also experienced a downturn in SBA decisions during 2019-20.
- 4.5** The region has recorded **71** Placement Orders being made within the year, a 30% reduction from the previous year and again can be viewed in the context of a reduction in referrals over the past couple of years.
- 4.6** VVC placed **101** children for adoption during the year, a 1% increase on the previous year. This is particularly pleasing when considering the reduction in the number of Placement Orders over recent years. Continuing to place a high number of children reflects our continued commitment to securing permanence for children through adoption where this is the best outcome for the child. This includes successfully identifying adopters for children who have been waiting for a considerable length of time. The number of children waiting less than 6 months between Placement Order and matching for adoption is **24%** in VVC compared with **36%** across Wales as a whole and we have seen the average waiting time in VVC increase by 1 month since the previous year to **11.9 months**. It is important to note that this *mean* average time includes some high outliers of children waiting a significantly higher period of time than others with some 8 children waiting between 6-15 months longer than any other child, somewhat skewing the picture. A *median* average instead shows closer to **9.8 months** waiting time.

- 4.7** It has been very positive to see the increase in the number of children being able to be placed within the region (**72%** up from 65% last year) and this is a clear benefit from the increased recruitment of adopters within VVC. There is also a slight increase in placements made elsewhere in Wales (**10%** up from 9%) and a reduction in the placements made outside of Wales (**18%** down from 26%).
- 4.8** At the end of the year there were **73** children on Placement Orders awaiting an adoptive placement which is a reduction of **22%** from the previous year. A further 13 children had a very strong link proceeding but not yet matched as at the end of March 2020 and another child was awaiting a Placement Order revocation and so the number actually waiting was **59**. Of these as may be expected a significant proportion (40%) have additional factors i.e. aged 4 plus, BME, complex needs or a part of a sibling group which makes being able to secure appropriate matches more challenging.
- 4.9** There were **82** Adoption Orders granted during the year which is on a par with the previous year (83).
- 4.10** The level of placement breakdown continues to be low with two placement disruptions during the year, one of a 5-year-old girl who was placed for 9 months and the adopters felt that they could not continue with the placement. The second breakdown was a sibling group of two girls (aged 4 and 6) where again adopters advised that they could not continue with the placement.
- 4.11** The number of birth parents referred to the service for counselling fell during the year to **139**. **63%** of parents took up the service from VVC during this year which is significantly higher than the Welsh average of **25%**. This reflects the work of the Family Finding Team in offering this service to parents of children referred to us.
- 4.12** Performance in relation to the provision of Life Journey Material for children being placed for adoption has improved considerably over this past year although remains short of the 100% target as is the case across Wales. **84%** of VVC children (up from

44% in 2018-19) had life journey materials available at matching panel. This is the second highest in Wales and higher than the average of 59% across Wales. **60%** of VVC children (up from 46% in 2018-19) had finalised life journey materials available at the 2nd adoption review. This is the highest in Wales and higher than the average of 57% across Wales. There remain issues with ensuring that these figures are being accurately captured within the local authorities and we are seeking opportunities to work with them to ensure a robust system for data capture is in place. The increase in performance can clearly be linked to the additional Welsh Government funding which has enabled us to recruit a full time Life Journey Work Co-Ordinator from 1st October 2019 and the provision of life journey work practitioner posts within the local authorities which has been rolled out over 2019-20 and into 2020-21. As of September 2020, all practitioner posts have now been filled.

- 4.13** The Life Journey Work Co-ordinator offers regular support, advice and guidance to the life journey work practitioners and in addition has offered workshops/briefings to local authority teams and was integral in the recruitment panels for the practitioner posts. Further work is being undertaken to develop training opportunities within this role as well.
- 4.14** As previously outlined the additional investment from Welsh Government has enabled the creation of a Transitions Worker post within the Family Finding Team as of 1st October 2019. **31** children were referred to this service within the first 6 months of operation. For **22** of these children, direct work was provided to support their transition to an adoptive family, with an 'Understanding the Child' day being provided for several of these children to enable the adoptive parents to be provided with a detailed history of the child's early experiences. For **6** children these were younger children where work was being completed with the older children within the adoptive family to support the transition running smoothly and for a further **3** children work was being offered directly to the foster carer on a 1:1 basis to support them in their understanding of the child's needs. In addition, training has been developed for foster carers as well as ad hoc advice and support to other practitioners. This role has been of incredible value to the region in terms of the service we are able to offer to children

and to improve the overall transitions experience. There are many opportunities to further develop this role over the coming year.

- 4.15** VVC has continued to embrace the use of all available family finding methods over this 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 also made use of the national Exchange Day event in October 2019 and the Welsh Adoption Activity Day in March 2020, each of which produced matches for children.
- 4.16** St David's Adoption Agency and Barnardo Cymru developed a new family finding service in 2018, Adopting Together. Adopting Together focuses upon the recruitment of adopters for children with additional needs who have been waiting for adoptive placements over six months. The scheme targets recruitment for specific children and provides ongoing specialist support to those children for a year following placement. The Vale of Glamorgan, as host authority has entered into a service level agreement with Adopting Together on behalf of our regional partners. As at March 2020, VVC has referred **27** children to the scheme since its' inception; **6** children were placed initially with a further **1** being placed last year. The Regional Adoption Manager and Family Finding Manager presented an overview of VVC's experience of working with the service at a national conference on Adopting Together held in March 2020. The Regional Adoption Manager is also a member of the Steering Group which oversees the development of the service.

5. RECRUITMENT AND ASSESSMENT

- 5.1.** VVC's Marketing and Recruitment Strategy has been further developed during the year and much progress has been seen in furthering its goal of raising the profile of the Collaborative with the wider public and in doing so increasing the number of enquiries received. The Recruitment and Marketing Officer's role has continued to prove crucial in creating the content and activity associated with the Strategy ensuring that this is co-ordinated with NAS' Marketing Strategy to increase the

number of adoptive families. The Marketing Officer has closely liaised with 'Cowshed', the marketing company commissioned by NAS to undertake national campaigns and represents the region on a national workgroup to promote activity. Links have also been established with local Comms Departments across the region to ensure that adoption features as part of their local advertising features. The Marketing Officer's role was made permanent in December 2019.

- 5.2.** Whilst also benefitting from the NAS' co-ordinated marketing campaign, VVC has also focused efforts in connecting with members of the public in our local areas. This has involved having both a physical and online presence. During 2019/20 VVC attended a variety of community events including Cardiff Pride, Barry Pride, Vale of Glamorgan Agricultural Show, the Big Wedding Show , Vegan Winterfest, St Donat's Craft Fair as well as attending a variety of faith settings in order to discuss adoption. We have enjoyed positive engagement at these events which have all contributed to raising the profile of the service.
- 5.3.** VVC has also developed its' online marketing and it now has a well-established presence on two social media platforms – Facebook and Instagram. These profiles are coordinated and managed by the Marketing Officer and these tools are useful in order to target a wider yet purposeful audience. These platforms are also used to promote the post adoption support services. Pay-Per-Click (PPC) advertising has been used to promote adoption and raise the awareness of our information events. Whilst the cost implications for PPC are relatively small, the audience we are able to reach, and the data captured to inform future advertising is significant. The social media presence is beginning to show dividends in terms of actual enquiries as we specifically capture where an enquirer heard about us. A pleasing and growing number of people are referencing the fact that they saw our profile or advert online, and this led them to read more about our service and adoption more widely.
- 5.4.** The recruitment activity has had a specific goal to increase the number of enquiries the agency receives. 2019/20 saw a significant and sustained increase in the number of enquiries – **340** in total compared to **259** received during 2018/19. This is a

pleasing outcome and our ability to provide a professional and structured approach to receiving, recording and tracking enquiries has led to this important increase in performance. The national marketing work in conjunction with regional input is also having a positive impact in providing a consistent and coherent message to the wider public.

- 5.5.** 2019/20 saw the Collaborative hosting six Information Evenings for prospective applicants. These events have always been well attended and feedback has continued to be positive.
- 5.6.** VVC's three day 'Preparation to Adopt' training course continues to be provided by an Independent Social Worker. Questionnaires have been developed by the Vale of Glamorgan's Participation Officer and are distributed at the end of training to gather views of the process from enquiry through to training. These questionnaires are collated and the feedback in respect of the training from participants is unanimous in its praise and appreciation for what they learn. In 2019/20 **six** courses were held. **51** households attended the course. Out of those **51** households **four** did not go onto submit applications to progress onwards to an assessment. These potential applicants have been followed up. Three households' feedback that they wished to take more time to consider their future plans and one household has not responded to follow up enquiries.
- 5.7.** During 2019/20 a total of **75** adopter approvals were presented to VVC's Adoption Panel and positive recommendations were made. **69** of these approvals were ratified within the reporting year. The approvals are broken down as follows: **RCT – 18, Cardiff – 29, Vale of Glamorgan – 14, Merthyr Tydfil – 1 and Other (Newport, Caerphilly and Kent) – 7**. This represented a pleasing increase of **35%** when compared to 2018/19's approval performance. In comparison to other Welsh regions who reported experiencing increases ranging from **8%** to **44%**, meaning VVC was one of the higher performing services.

- 5.8.** A total of **5** assessments were commenced and concluded with the applicants withdrawing / being counselled out. The level of work involved even where assessments don't conclude is considerable. This is not reflected in the performance figures but evidences the robustness of the decision-making process which supports this work.
- 5.9.** Out of the **69** ratified approvals achieved in 2019/20, **5** were foster carers assessed to adopt a specific child, **8** were second time adopters and **56** were first time adopters.
- 5.10.** **3** approved adopters have since withdrawn following approval for family reasons.
- 5.11.** The majority of the applicants approved during 2019/20 have gone onto be matched with children from within VVC. One has had a child placed from outside of our region from SEWAS. A further two are in the matching process of adopting non VVC children (a second child from SEWAS and a child from Scotland).

6. ADOPTION SUPPORT

- 6.1.** Referrals into the service for adoption support services had remained at a consistent rate for the past couple of years. However, the increased funding and support injected into adoption support services at a national and local level has in turn created an increase of adopters coming forward earlier for services following the making of Adoption Order.
- 6.2.** 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 **£207,470.6**. This is showing a rise in spending, however when this is consistent with the increase in the number of referrals into the service. The average spend per child is reduced and is only **£992.68** although this varies across LA the costs for

services are higher in Cardiff and the Vale compared to providers in RCT and Merthyr. On average **40%** of children referred from the region go on to receive funding requests, meaning **60%** are managed with in-house support such as direct work, training, and TESSA support. The emphasis of the service has been to continue to develop the skills of practitioners within the Adoption Support Team to be able to manage families by way of inhouse support without the need to rely on external input. The provision of external funding is monitored via the Operational Group and individual decision making arrangements have been agreed between the respective Operational Manager and the Adoption Support Manager. Discussion has taken place to further progress joint working across the region with the development of a preferred provider list.

- 6.3.** The largest funding costs are for attachment-based therapeutic work, complex emotional and behavioural therapeutic work and therapeutic life story work. These are the most frequently commissioned service and are in line with the types of need children present with. We anticipate that although the need for therapeutic life story work remains high at present, over the coming years with the investment in life journey work across the region this demand will reduce as the quality of the support being provided at an earlier stage improves. The spend on Non-Violent Resistance (NVR) training has reduced as VVC are now able to offer this training in-house and an NVR was provided during the year. A Nurturing and Attachment course was also facilitated in-house reducing the reliance on an external service provider and significant costs.
- 6.4.** **54** referrals for Access to Birth Records for adopted adults were received during the reporting period showing a small increase. **36** referrals for Intermediary Services have been received which are comparable to the previous year. There are two part time Social Workers aligned to this work which is by its very nature time consuming and requires dedication in being able to search and access information from historical records and a range of sources.

- 6.5.** Waiting lists for these services and allocation times have been managed so that applicants do not wait longer than two months for a service. The provision of an intermediary service is a power not a duty and therefore the service is not provided in all areas. It remains a significant strength of our service that intermediary requests are being supported and allows a natural follow on once the letterbox exchange ceases at the age of 18 and reaches out to support young adopted adults with understanding their identity post 18.
- 6.6.** The Birth Parent Advisor is a new role within the Adoption Support Team with the postholder taking up the position from November 2019. A referral process and information leaflet for Social Work colleagues across the region and an information leaflet for birth parents has been developed and disseminated. Nine referrals for individual birth parent support have been received and supported. The post is of benefit to parents post Adoption Order supporting them with a range of issues, contact matters and writing letterbox reports. It is hoped that some support to birth parents can be offered on a group basis going forward and that the role will continue to be promoted across the region.
- 6.7.** The TESSA Co-ordinator was also appointed in November 2019 shortly after the national launch of the service by Adoption UK. The aim of the service is to provide support services prior to adoptive families reaching crisis point. The Co-ordinator undertakes assessments of need and processes referrals of families who may be eligible. 17 referrals had been made to TESSA at year end by VVC.
- 6.8.** The Children and Young People Co-ordinator also took up post at the same time and since this time has been directly involved in running Connected groups on a Saturday once a month with staff from the Connected service. The service caters for children and young people 7 upwards and so the Saturday groups are into three groups according to age. During 2019-20 the service catered for 42 children from VVC. The aim of the service is to reach more young people who might benefit from such support and so the Co-ordinator's role is key to promoting the service across the region. In addition the postholder has provided direct support sessions to 11 children from the

region and has also supported a number of direct contact sessions for adopted children. Both Co-ordinators have taken over the running of the monthly toddler group for adoptive families which consistently supports eight families at a time.

- 6.9.** Evaluation forms have been developed within the team during the year to evaluate the service pre and post provision of therapeutic support and in terms of the new areas of service provision. The team also ask participants to evaluate the training which has been provided. The main objective is to ascertain the benefits of the service provided and to needs within families which may not have been addressed. It is however hoped going forward that the findings can be collated in a more systematic way to enable the feedback to be used constructively to improve service delivery.

7. ADOPTION PANEL

- 7.1.** The Collaborative has continued to operate a joint regional Panel from two sittings held on a fortnightly Monday and Wednesday basis. Work has continued in merging the central list to service both sittings and to spread Panel activity to enable the Panel to operate on a more equitable, unified basis.
- 7.2.** Panel business has remained at a high level during the year with 43 Panel meetings being held and 149 cases being heard. Two scheduled meetings were cancelled due to quoracy. Appendix 4 to the report provides a breakdown of the work of Panel.
- 7.3.** Maintenance of the central list of Panel members continues to pose challenges in terms of maintaining a sufficient number of Social Work members and a range of independent members. Ten new Panel members have been successfully recruited during the period and one Panel member resigned due to personal reasons.
- 7.4.** A programme of reviews of Panel members was developed at the beginning of 2020 and six reviews were conducted by the end of the reporting period.

- 7.5.** Panel training was provided for Panel members in March 2020 focusing upon the role and function of Panel and the requirements of the new regulations governing the approval of adopters due to be implemented in April 2020.

8. COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS

- 8.1** VVC has received three complaints during the period. Each complaint has been investigated by the Regional Adoption Manager and two were resolved at Stage 1 of the Vale of Glamorgan Social Services Complaint process. The third complaint has been referred to Stage 2 of the process and a stage 2 investigation has been commissioned.

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, share it for recording as part of the Collaborative's record, as contribution to their own personal development plans, and to promote the service more generally.

9. 9. CONCLUSION AND 2020-21 PRIORITIES

- 9.1** The priorities for VVC, alongside other regional Collaboratives stem year on year from our core business. The need to continue to recruit more adoptive parents to meet the needs of children requiring placements will remain constant features of the service we provide. Considerable improvement in both these areas was achieved during the reporting period which hopefully can be built upon year on year.
- 9.2** Significant progress has also been made in raising the profile of the region as a result of a consistent marketing strategy and this has produced results in attracting more enquiries from prospective adopters. The ongoing challenge for the service is being able to convert more of those enquiries into applications to ensure that we continue to build on our existing pool of adopters and to improve placement choice.

- 9.3** The other area where positive improvements have been seen is in the area of adoption support. The investment received from Welsh Government has been a significant, positive development for the service as a whole. VVC has during this time successfully recruited to all the specialist roles and there is already evidence of the benefits these posts have had on the service. These posts will continue to be evaluated in terms of service improvement and therefore will need to be further embedded across the region to ensure that performance targets are met. This is particularly important in respect of the provision of life journey work for the region due to the large amount of the investment secured for this work.
- 9.4** Just prior to the end of the reporting period the impact of the pandemic and national lockdown was beginning to take effect with staff working from home and key services temporarily halted. The service however adapted quickly to the challenges presented and has been able to deliver its core business partly on a virtual basis or via risk assessed face to face contact. This has enabled key functions to continue to be delivered although it is too early to assess the impact upon overall performance during this year. Going forward the service will need to continue to evaluate the effect upon services and develop plans to mitigate the overall impact upon service delivery.

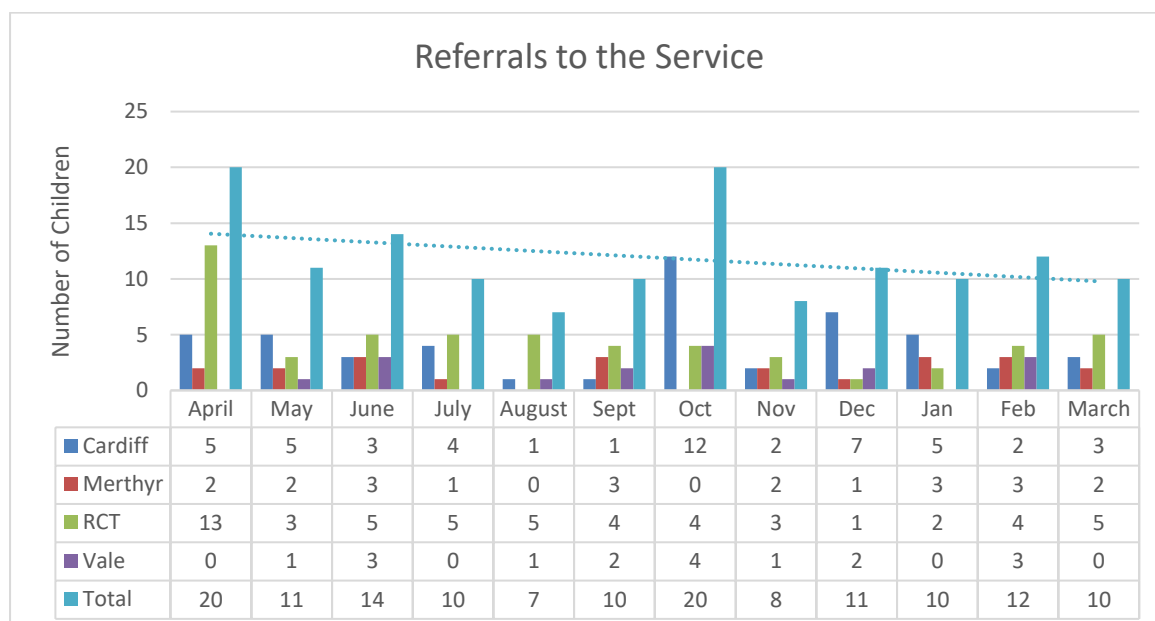
Angela Harris
Regional Adoption Manager
October 2020

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Appendix 1 – Family Finding

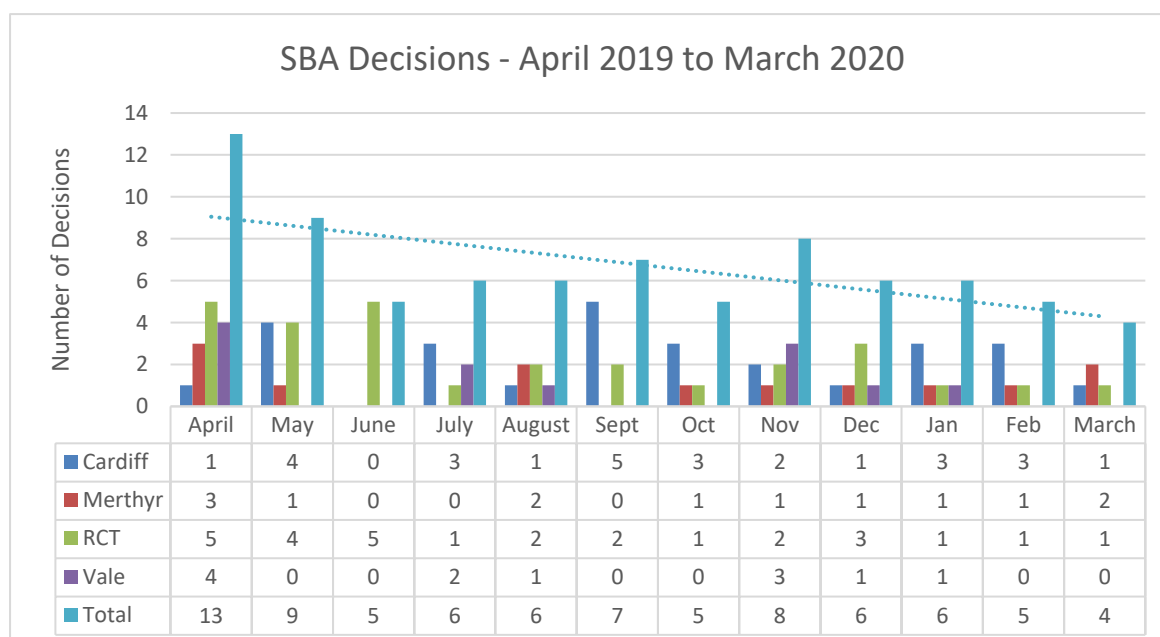
Children Referrals

143 children were referred to VVC during the reporting period. On average 12 referrals were received each month with 38% and 35% of referrals received from RCT and Cardiff respectively. 15% of referrals were received from Merthyr and 12% from the Vale.



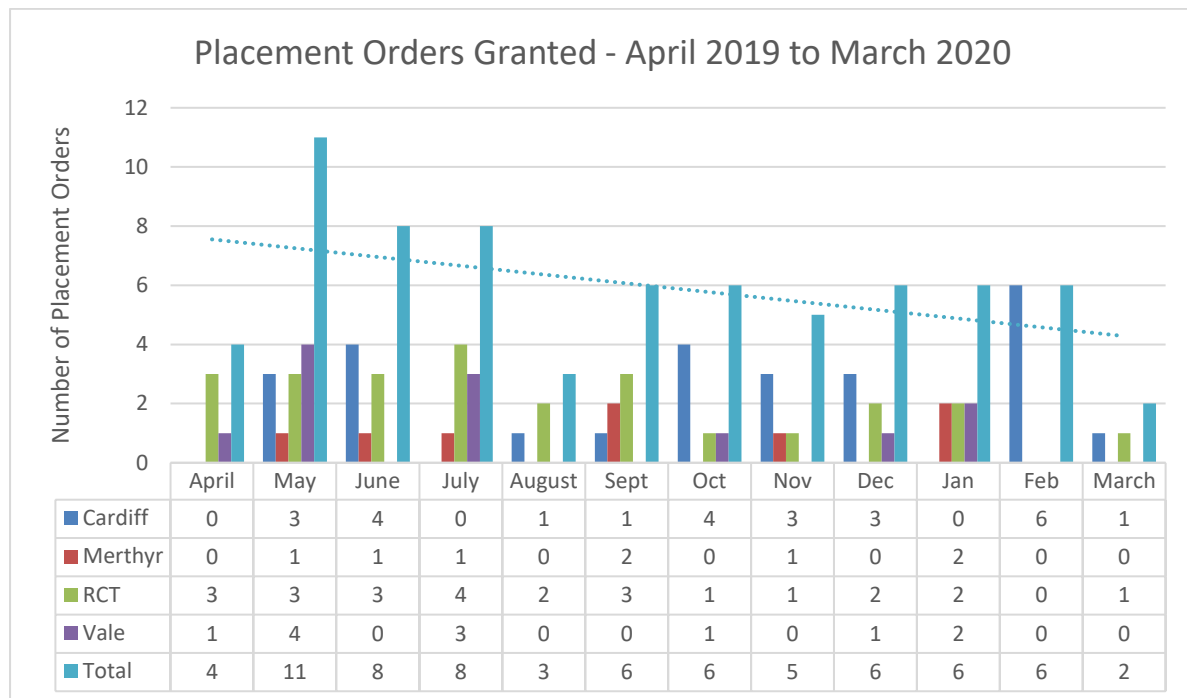
‘Should be placed for Adoption’ decisions

80 SBA decisions were made during the reporting period.



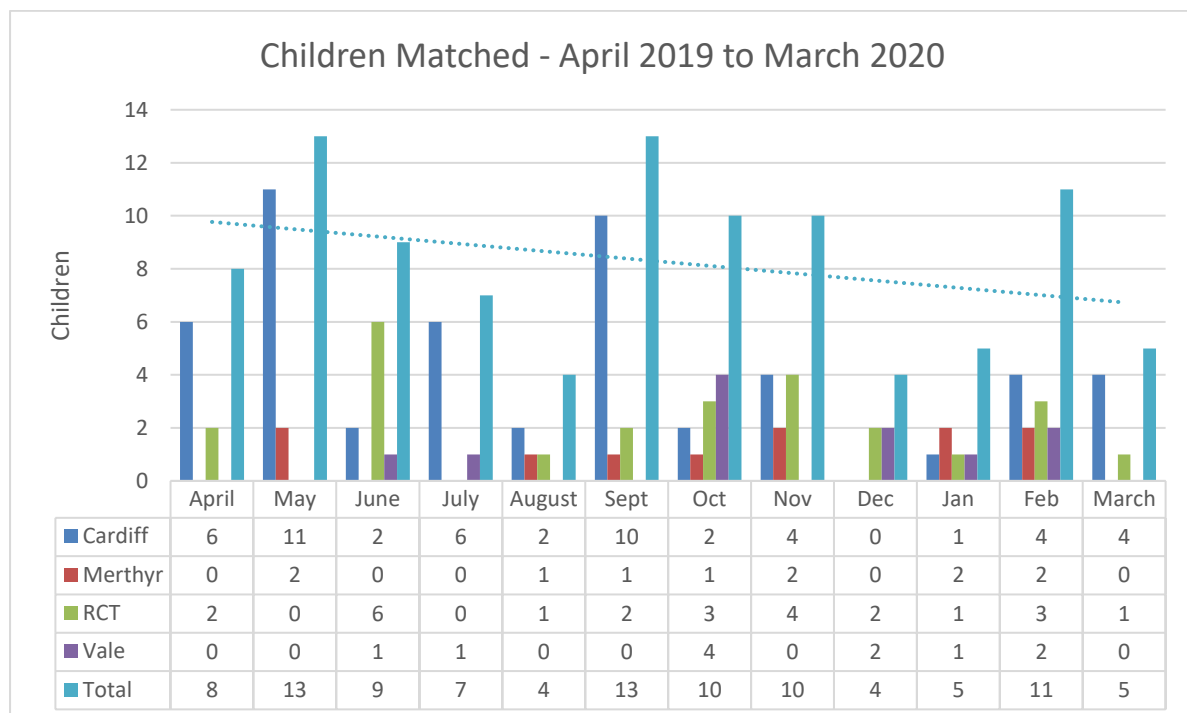
Placement Orders granted

71 Placement Orders were granted during the reporting period with an average of 6 Placement Orders granted each month.



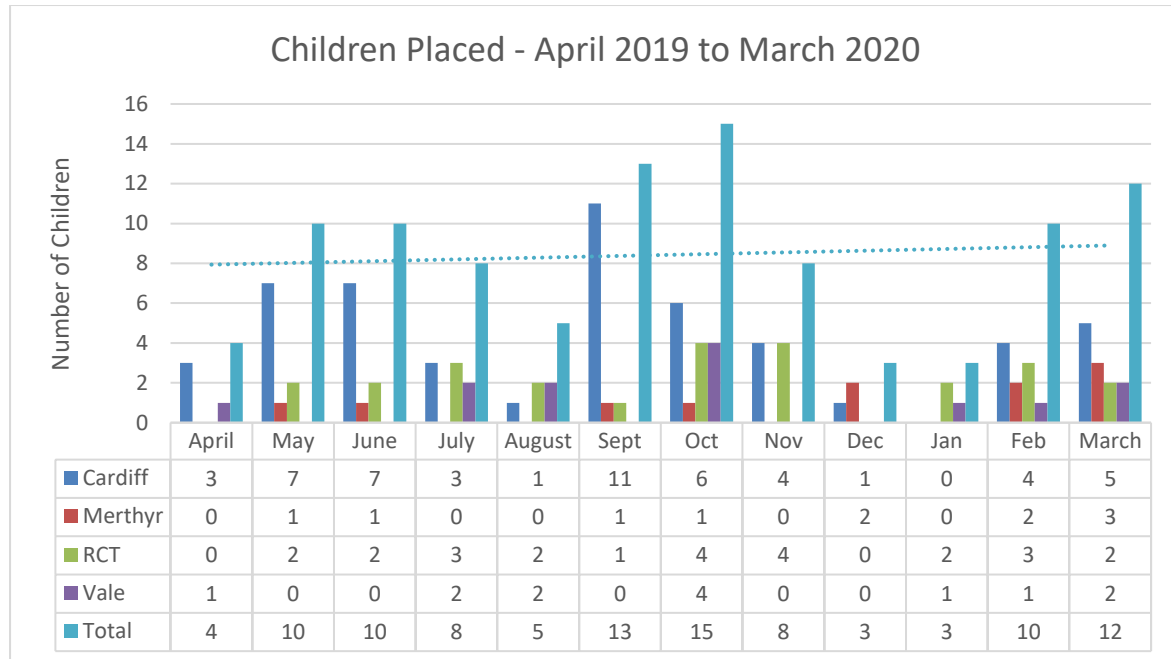
Children matched

98 children were matched with adopters during the period.



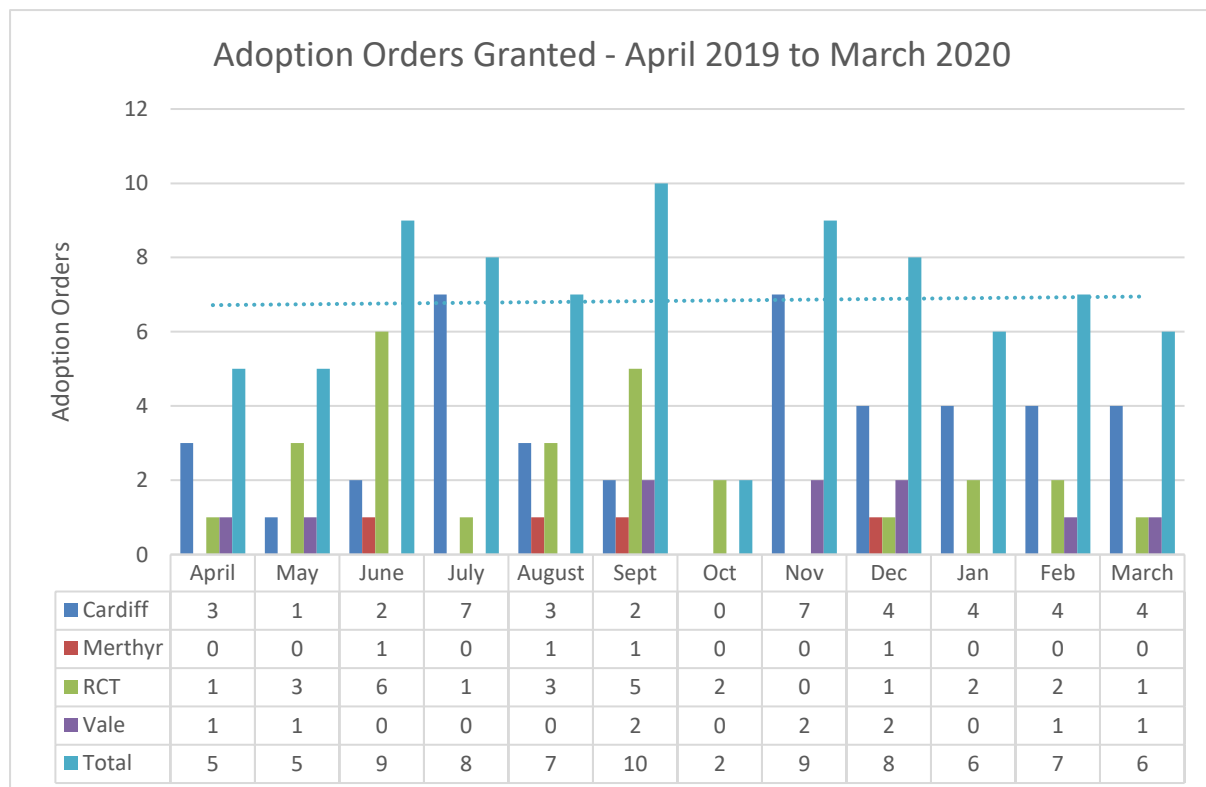
Children placed for Adoption

101 children were placed in adoption during the reporting period.



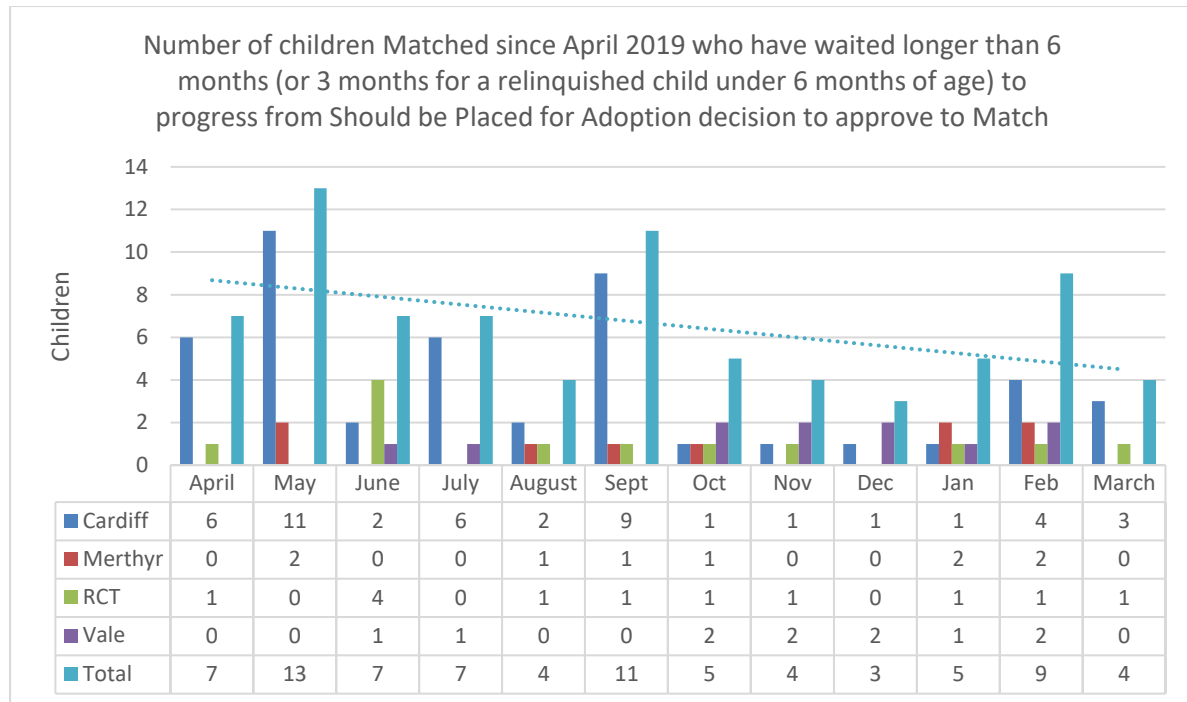
Adoption Orders

82 Adoption Orders were granted during the reporting period.

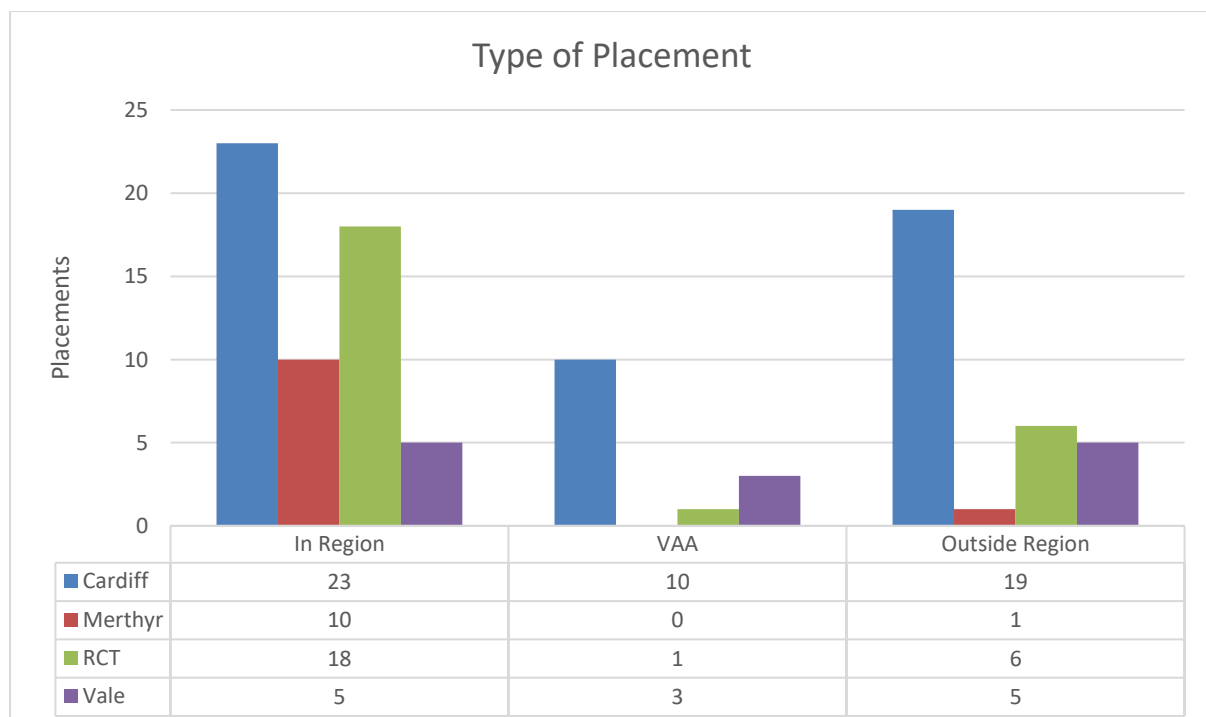


Number of children Matched since April 2019 who have waited longer than 6 months (or 3 months for a relinquished child under 6 months of age) to progress from Should be Placed for Adoption decision to approve to Match

79 of the 98 children matched had waited longer than 6 months to progress from a 'Should be placed for Adoption' decision to 'Approve to Match'.



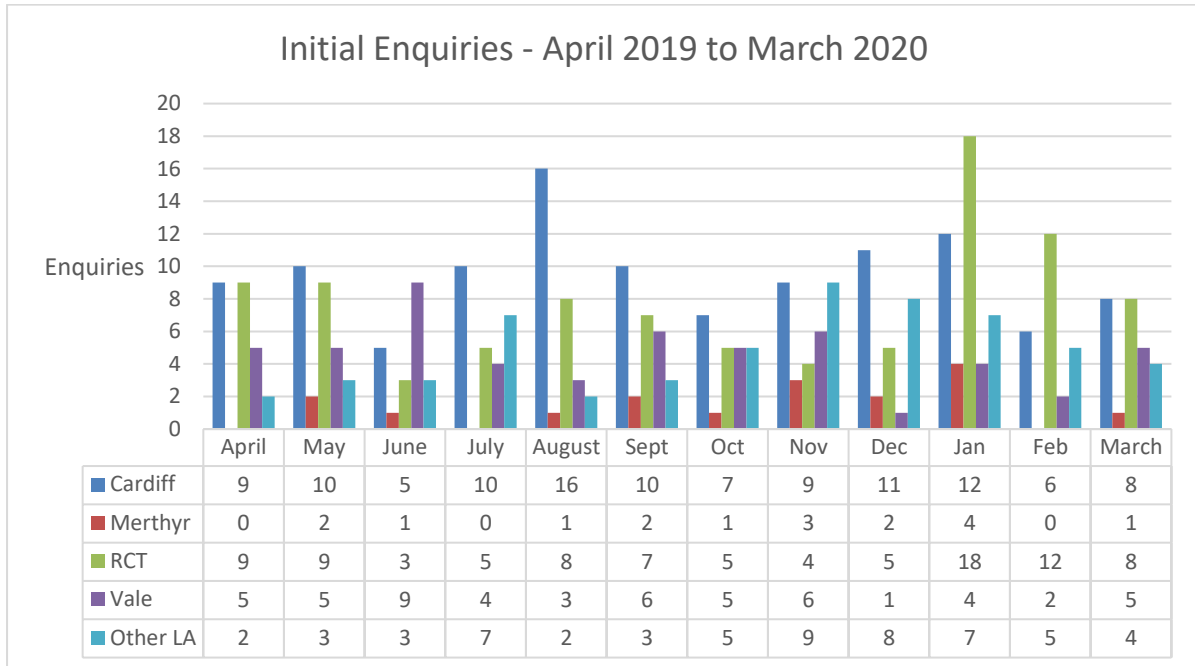
Type of Placement



Appendix 2 – Recruitment and Assessment

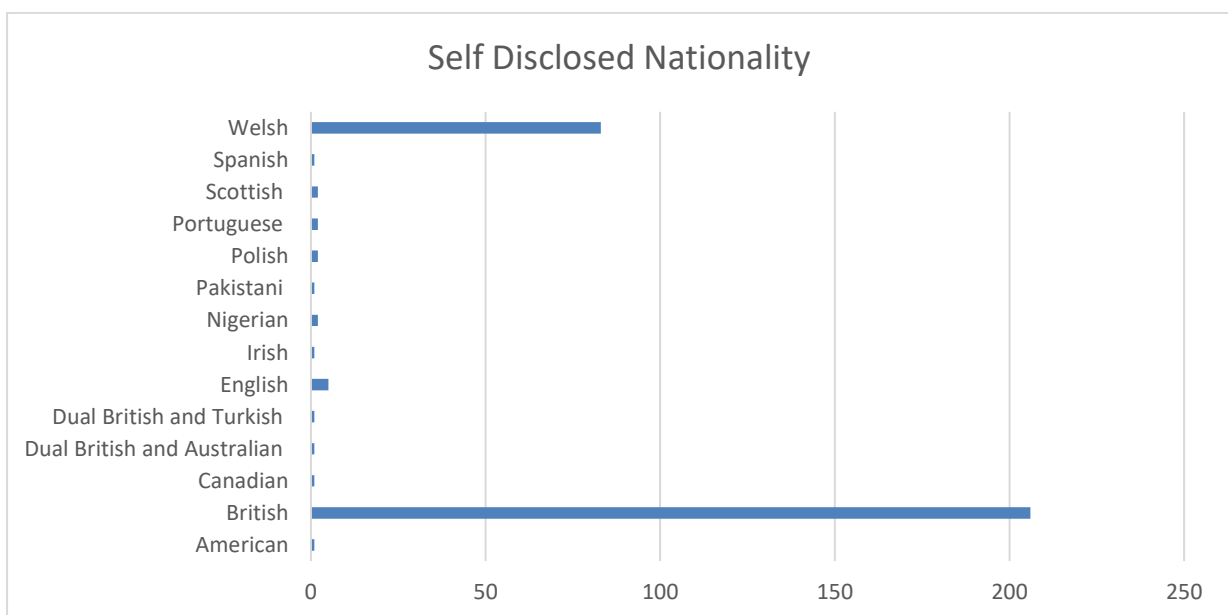
Initial Enquiries

278 enquiries were received from people living within our region. In addition, 58 enquiries were received from people living outside our area. There was a total of 336 enquiries.

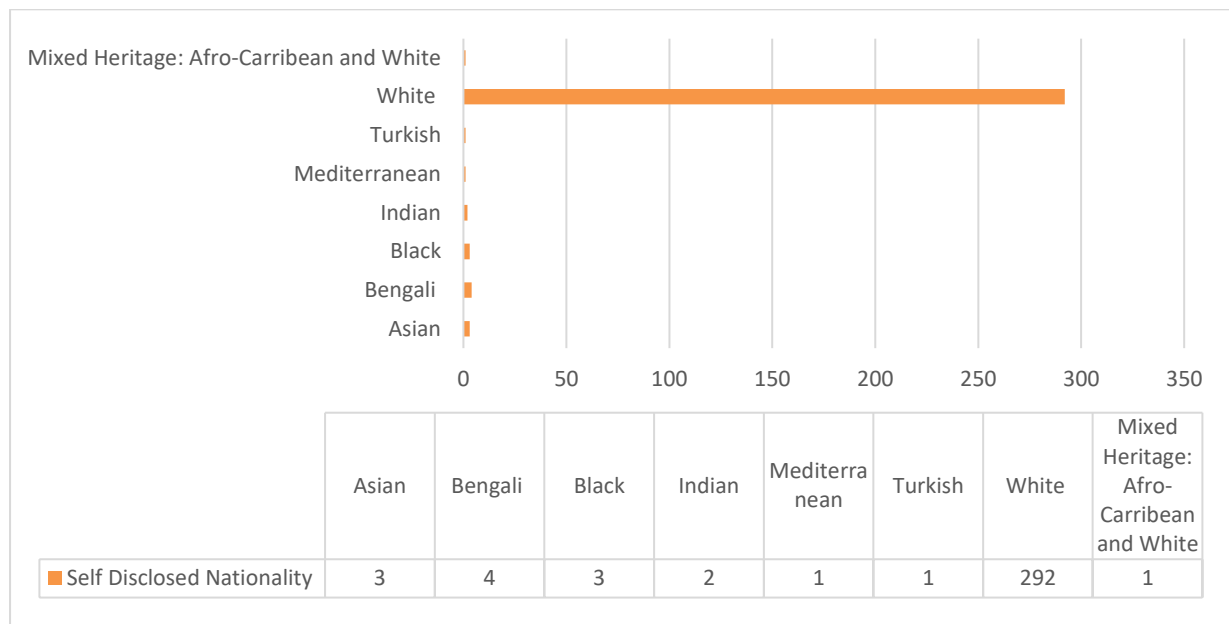


Demographics of Initial Enquiries

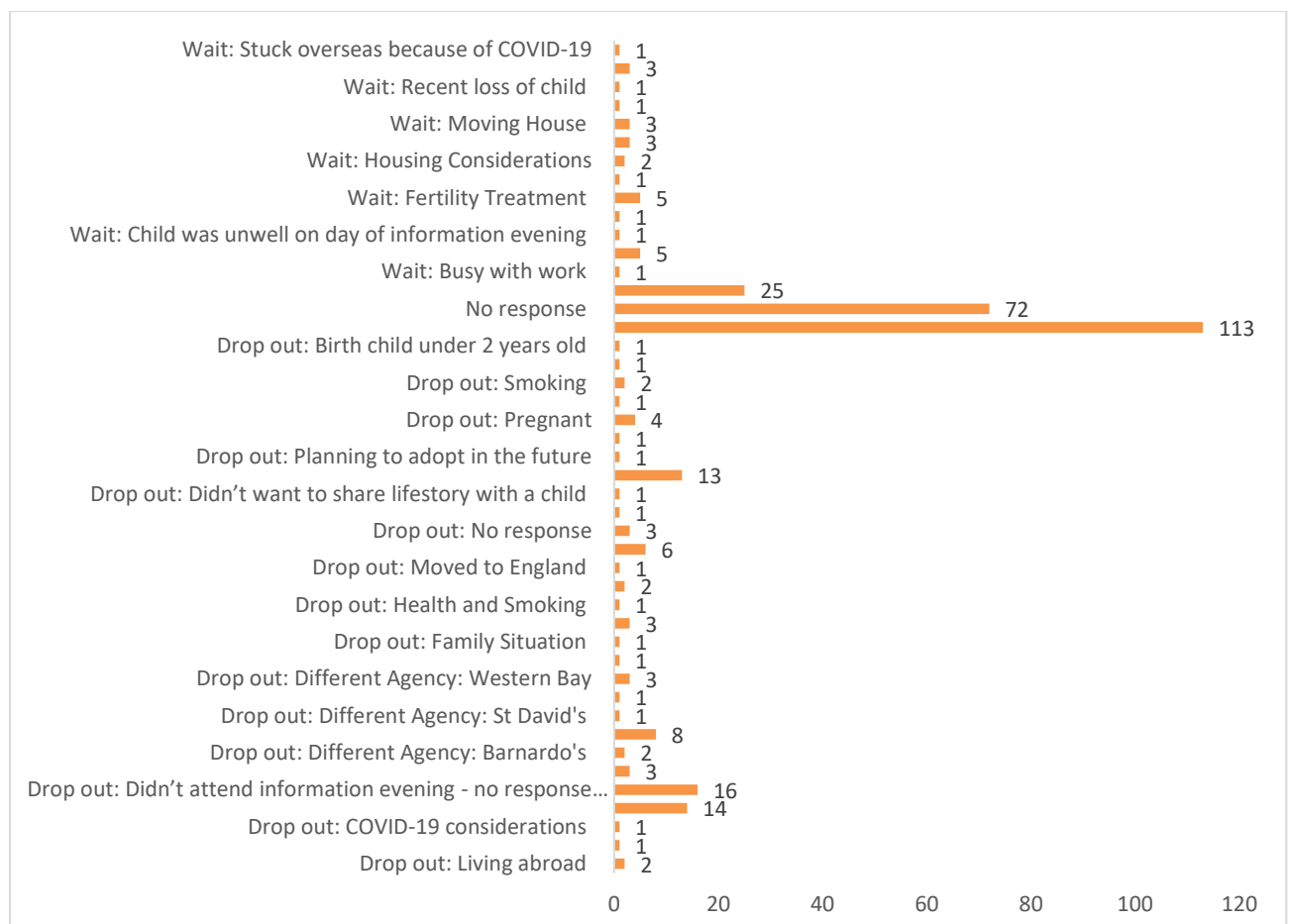
Self-disclosed Nationality



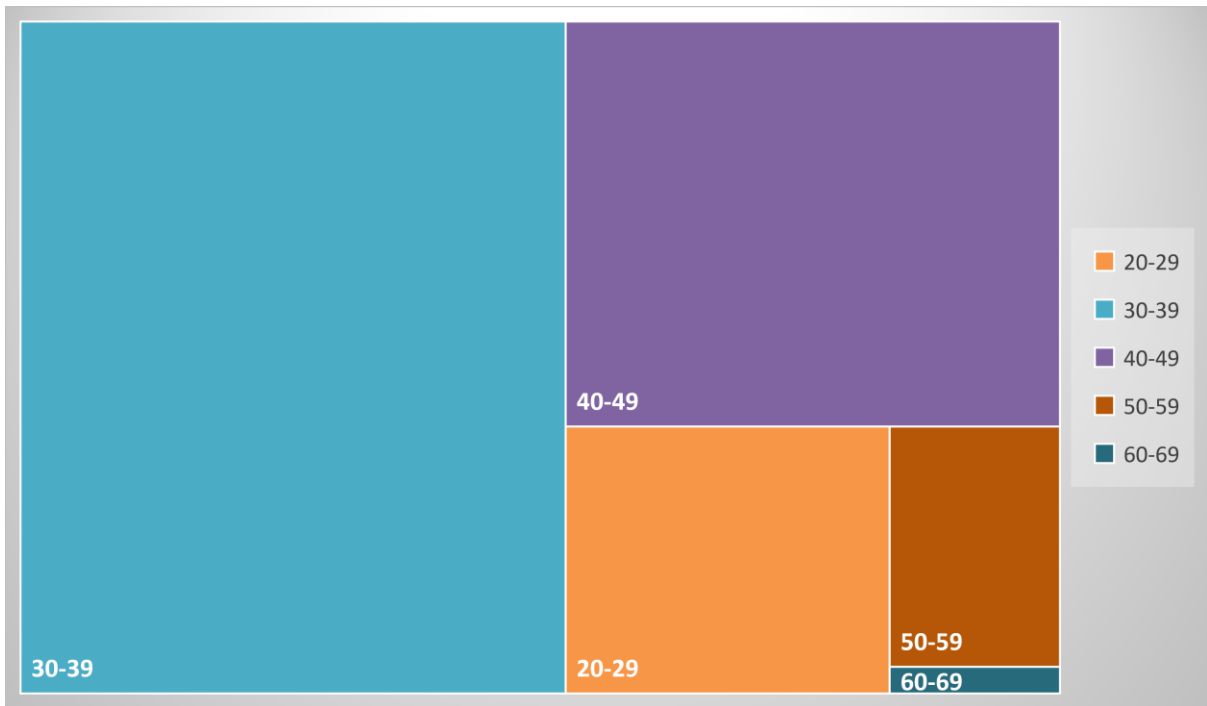
Self-disclosed ethnicity



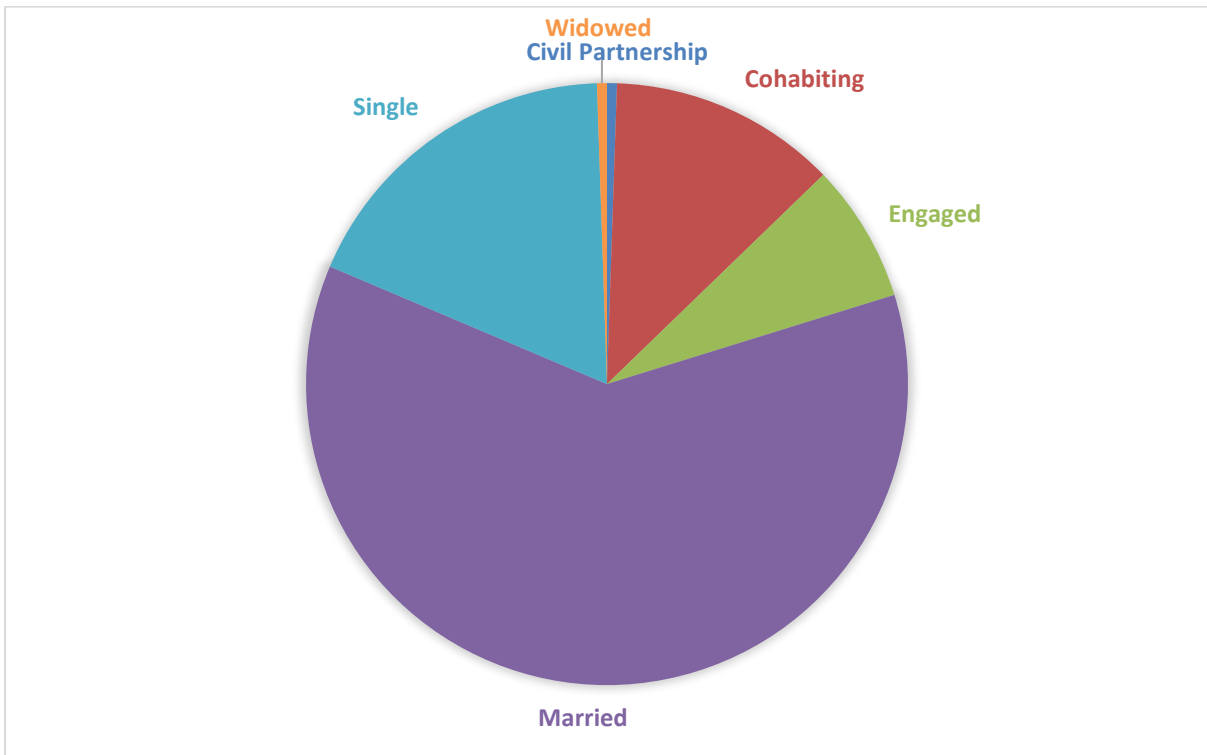
Self-disclosed Follow up - reasons for delay or withdrawal from adoption process before Information Evening



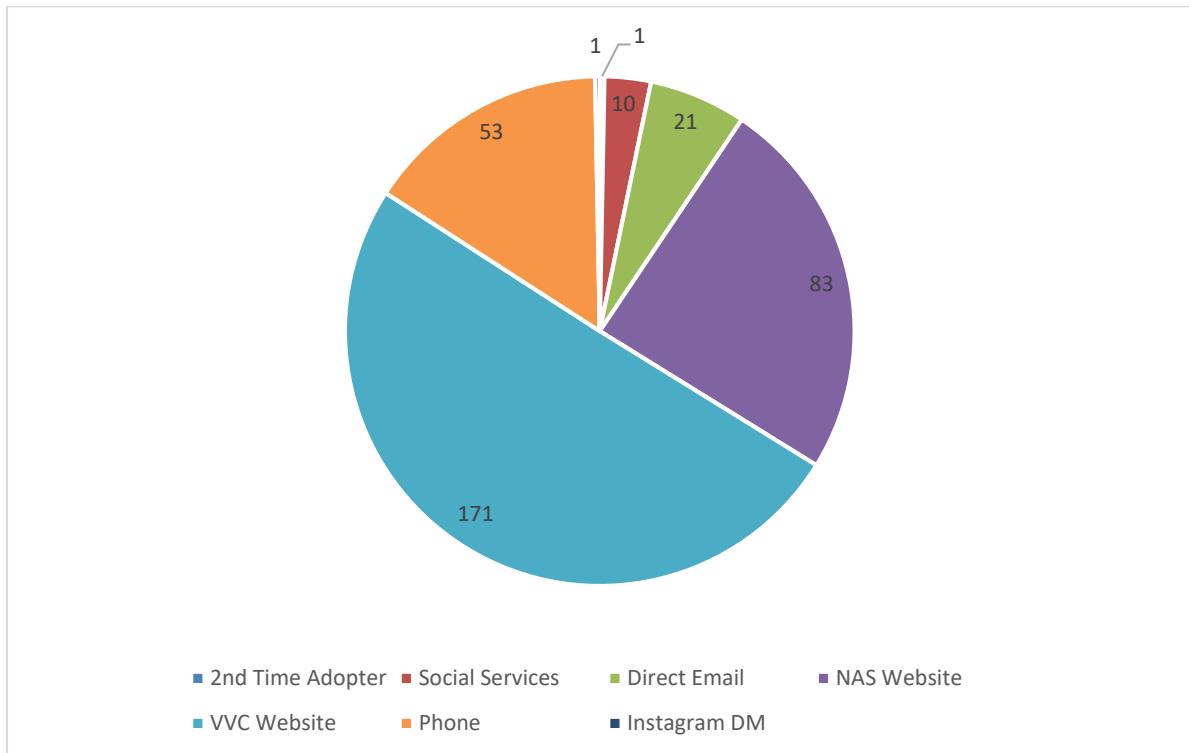
Age



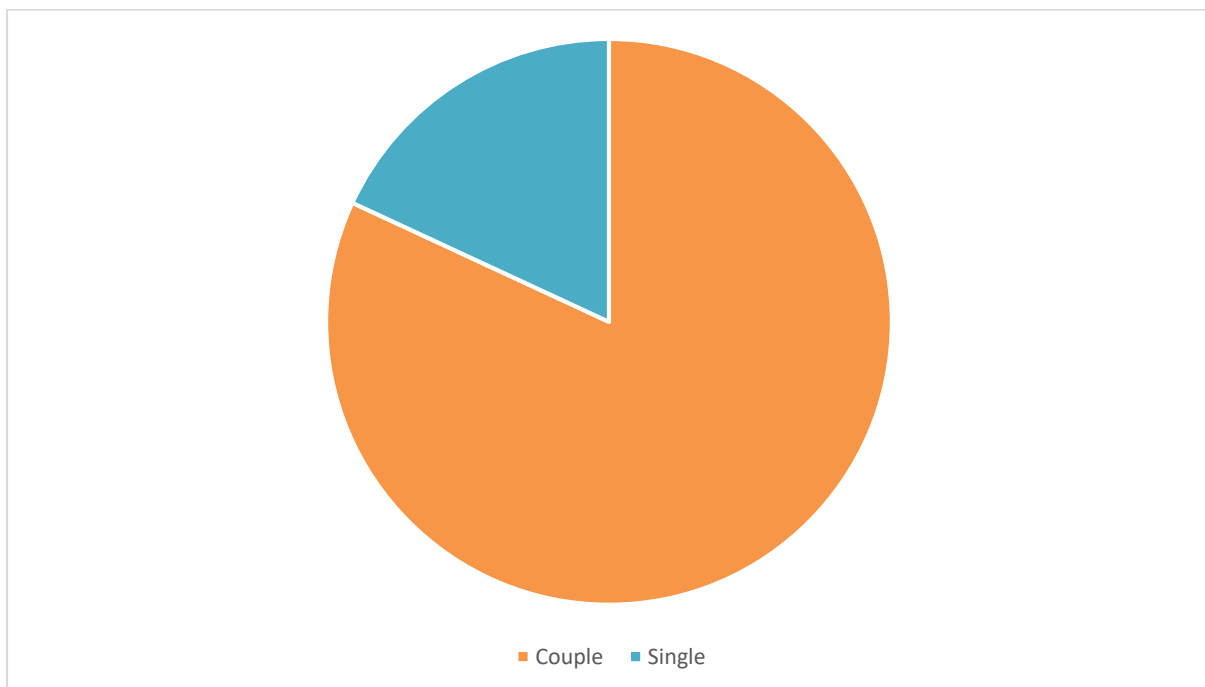
Relationship Status



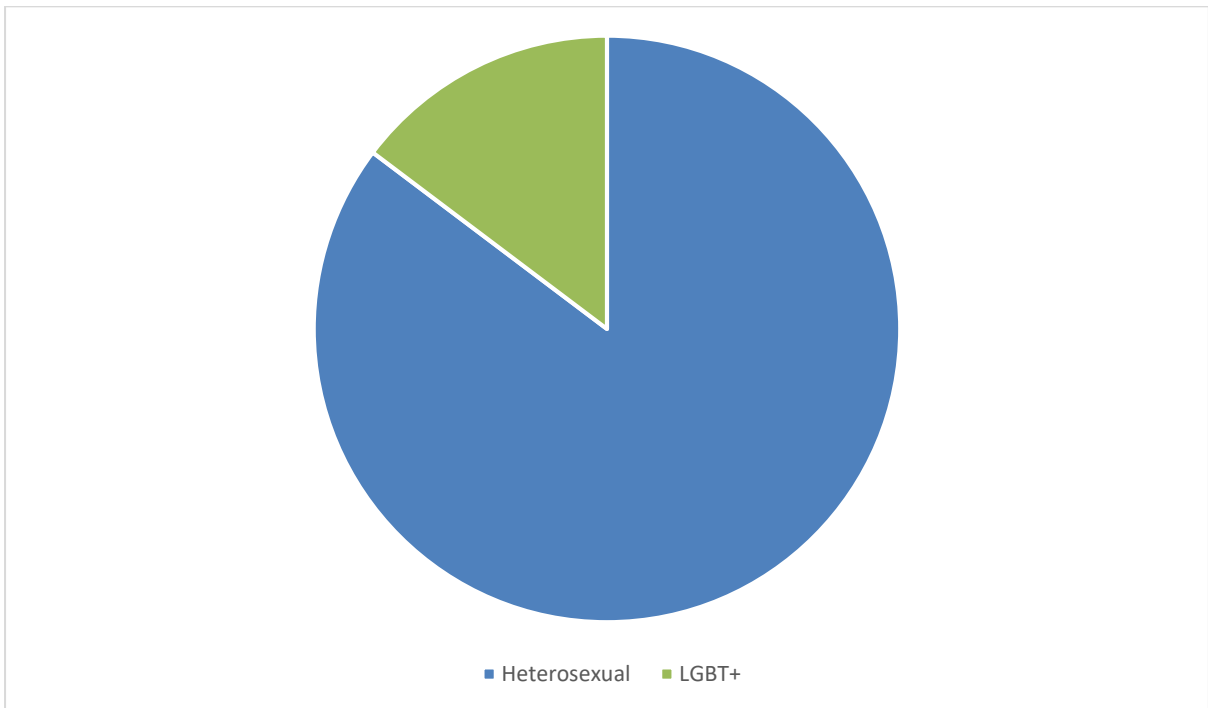
How they contacted us



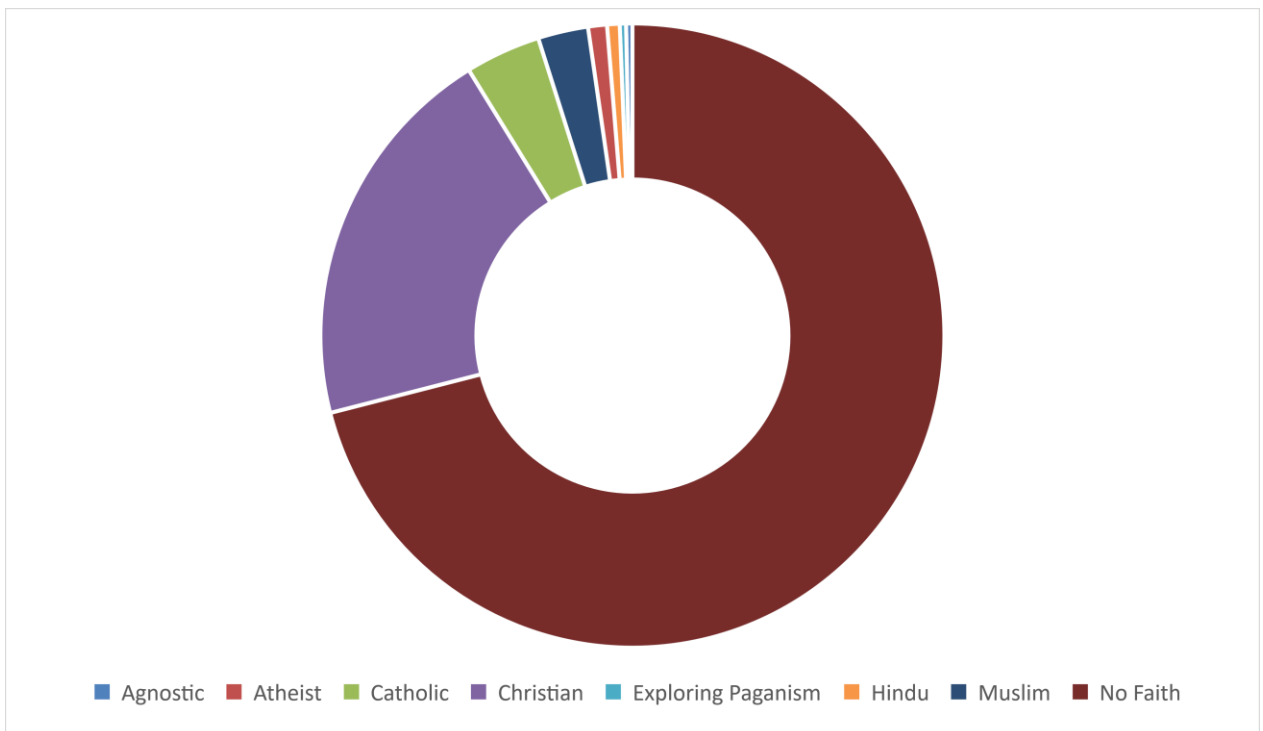
Couples and Singles



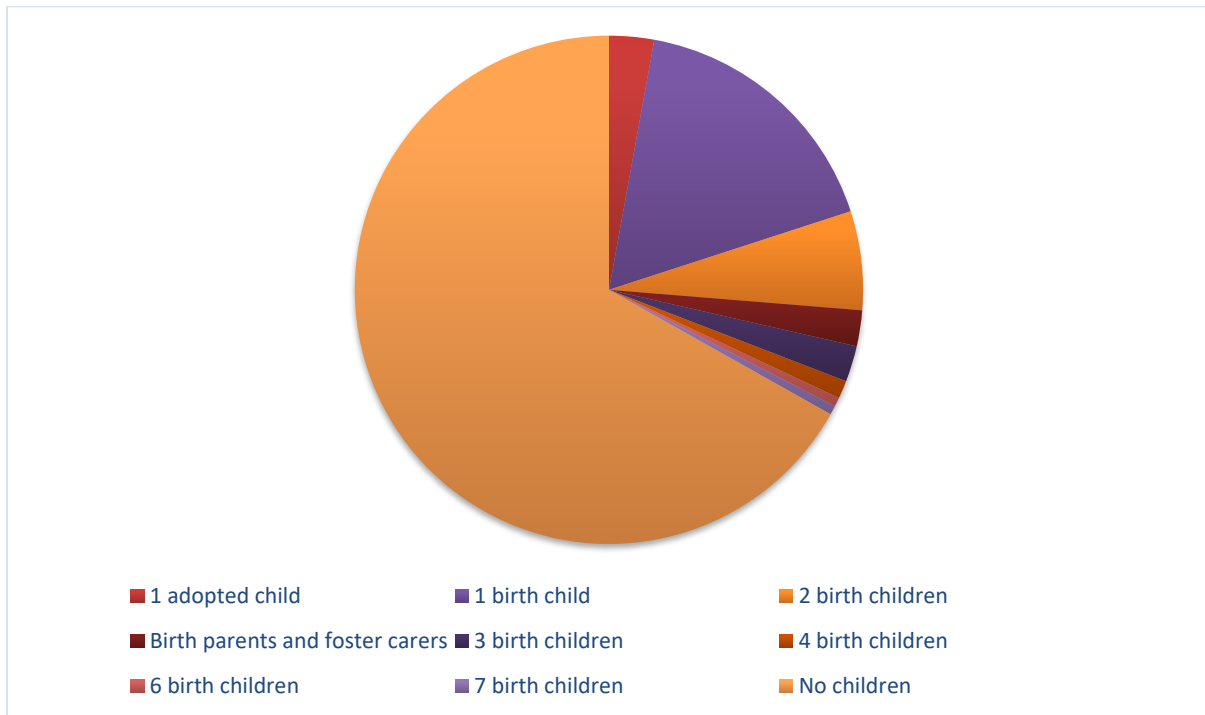
Couples: self-reported LGBT+ and Heterosexual



Self-reported Faith

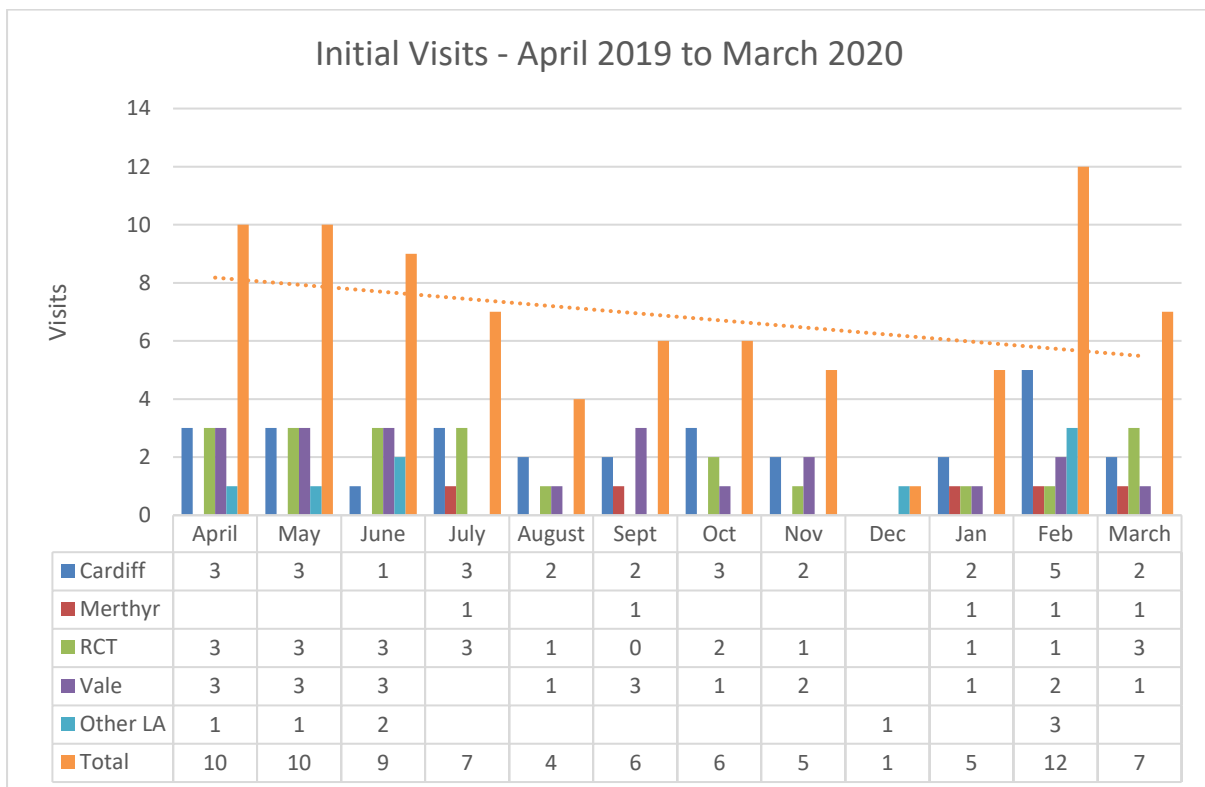


Adopting with children already in the household



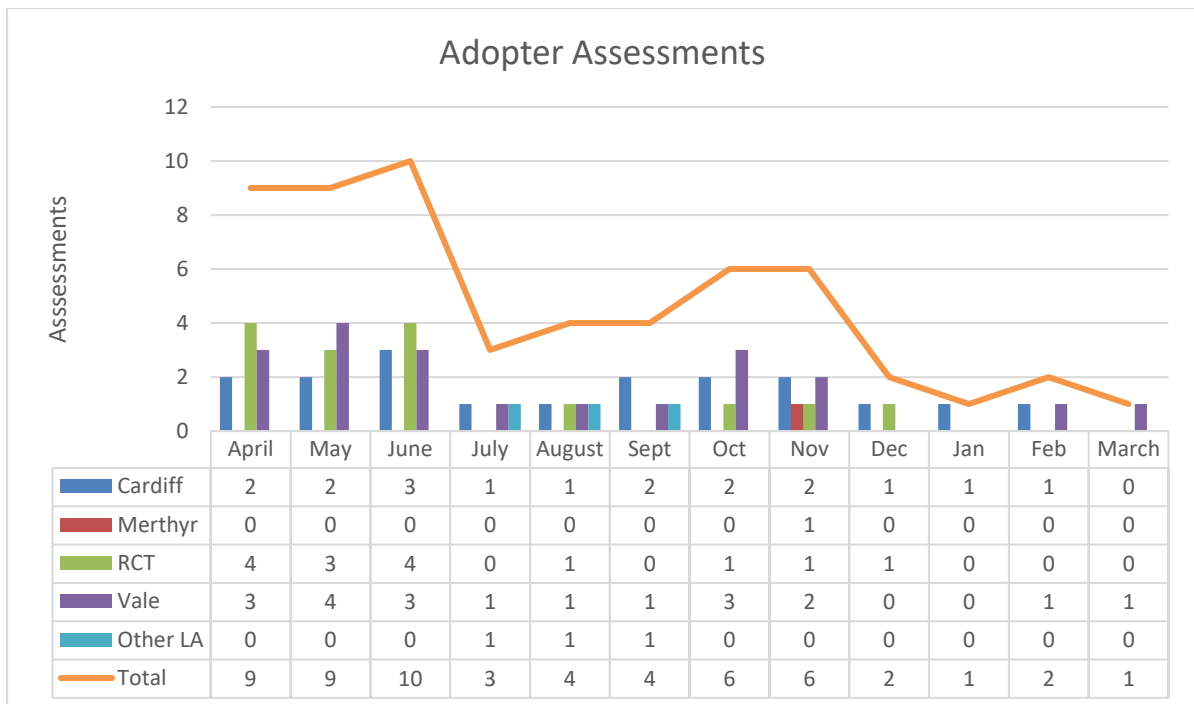
Initial Visits

82 initial enquiries took place during the reporting period.



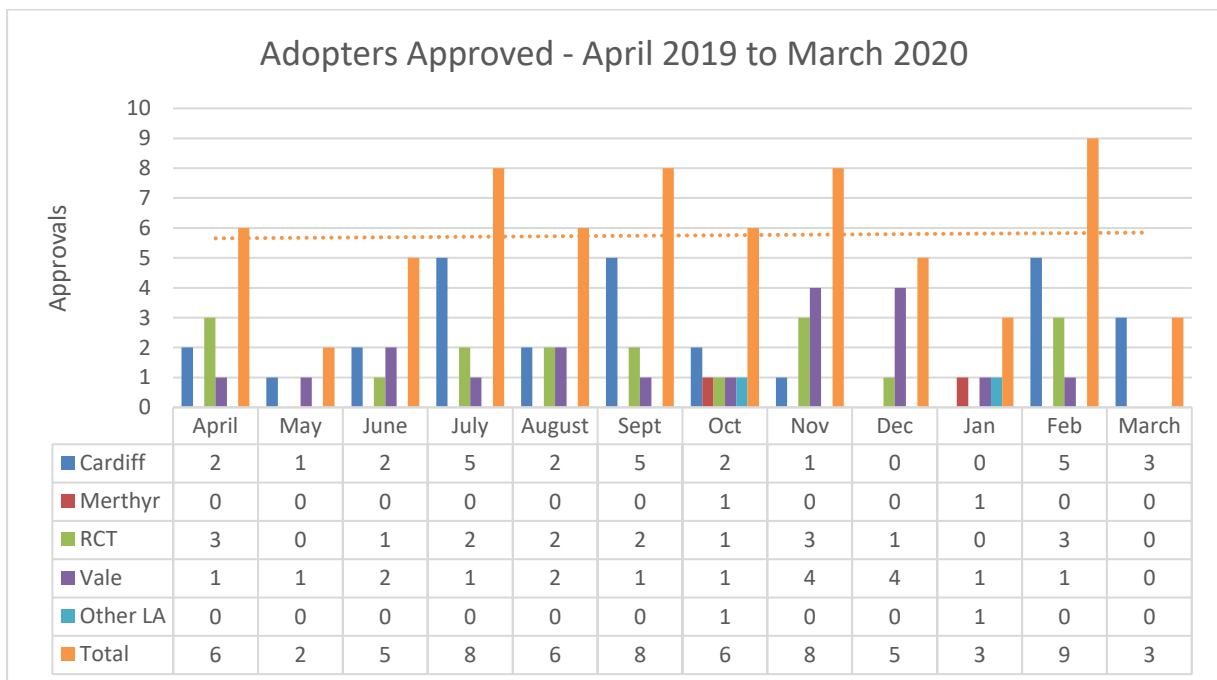
Adopter Assessments

57 adopter assessments were carried out during the reporting period



Adopter Approvals

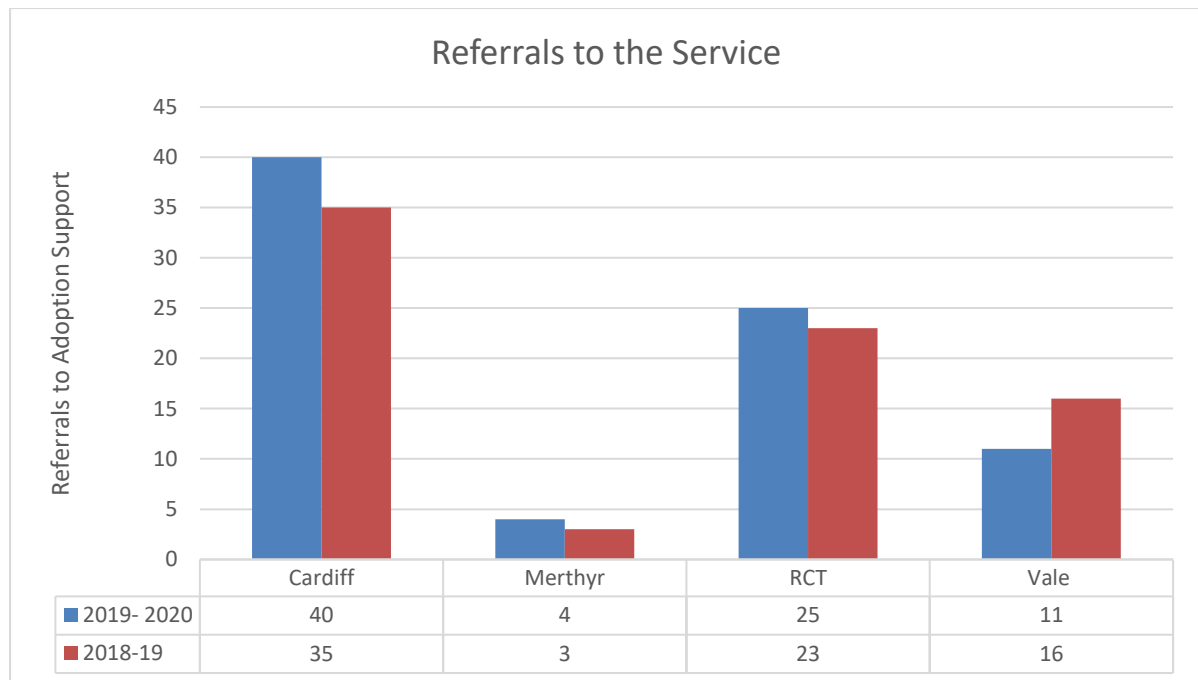
75 adopter approvals were presented to the adoption panel, of these 69 adopter approvals were ratified during the reporting period.



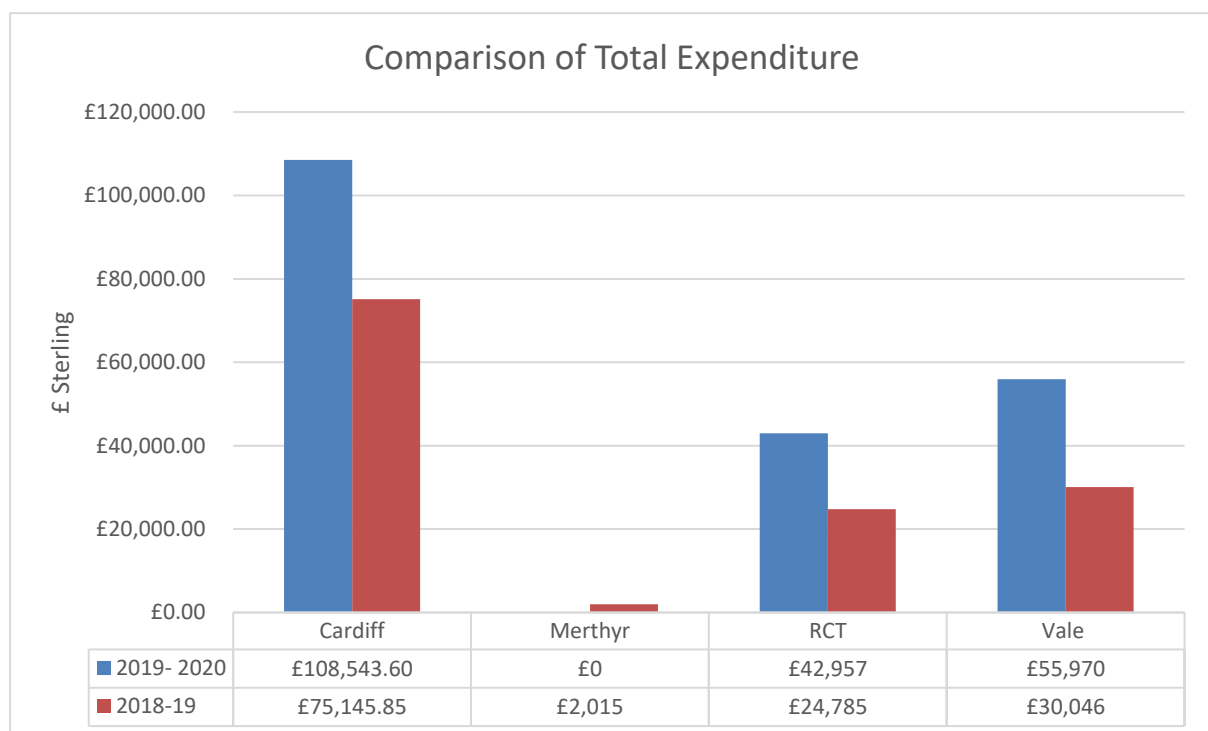
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Appendix 3 – Adoption Support

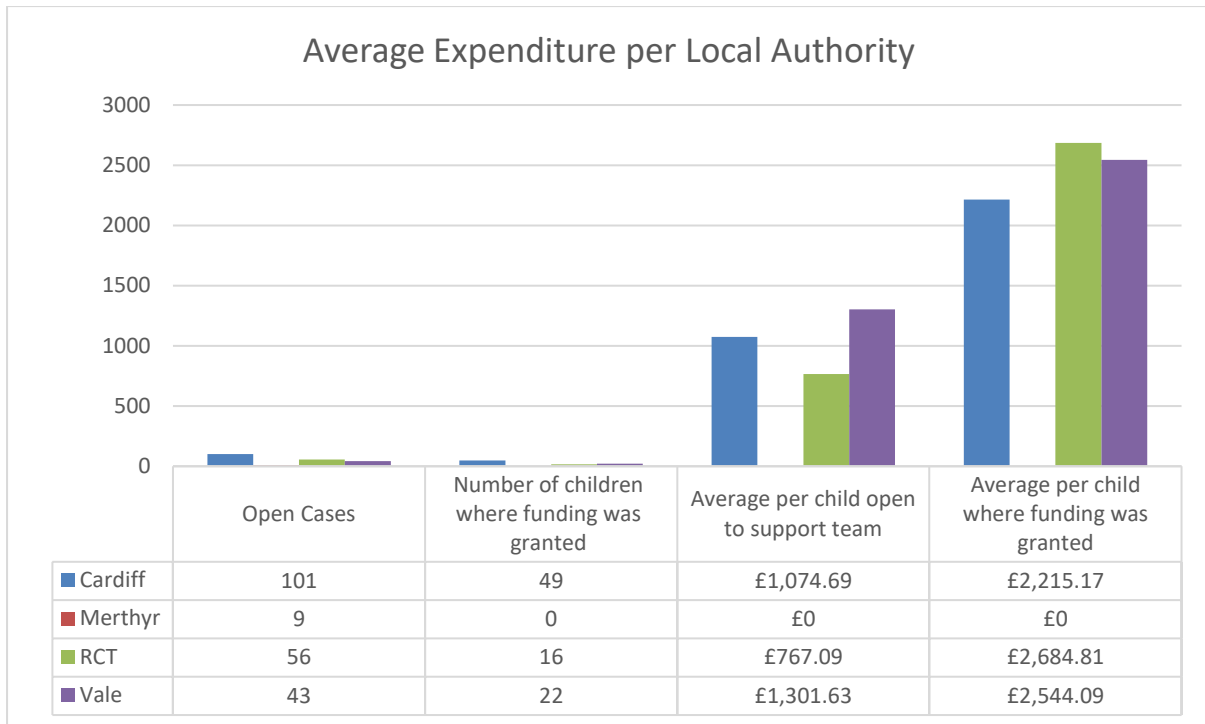
Referrals



Expenditure per Local Authority

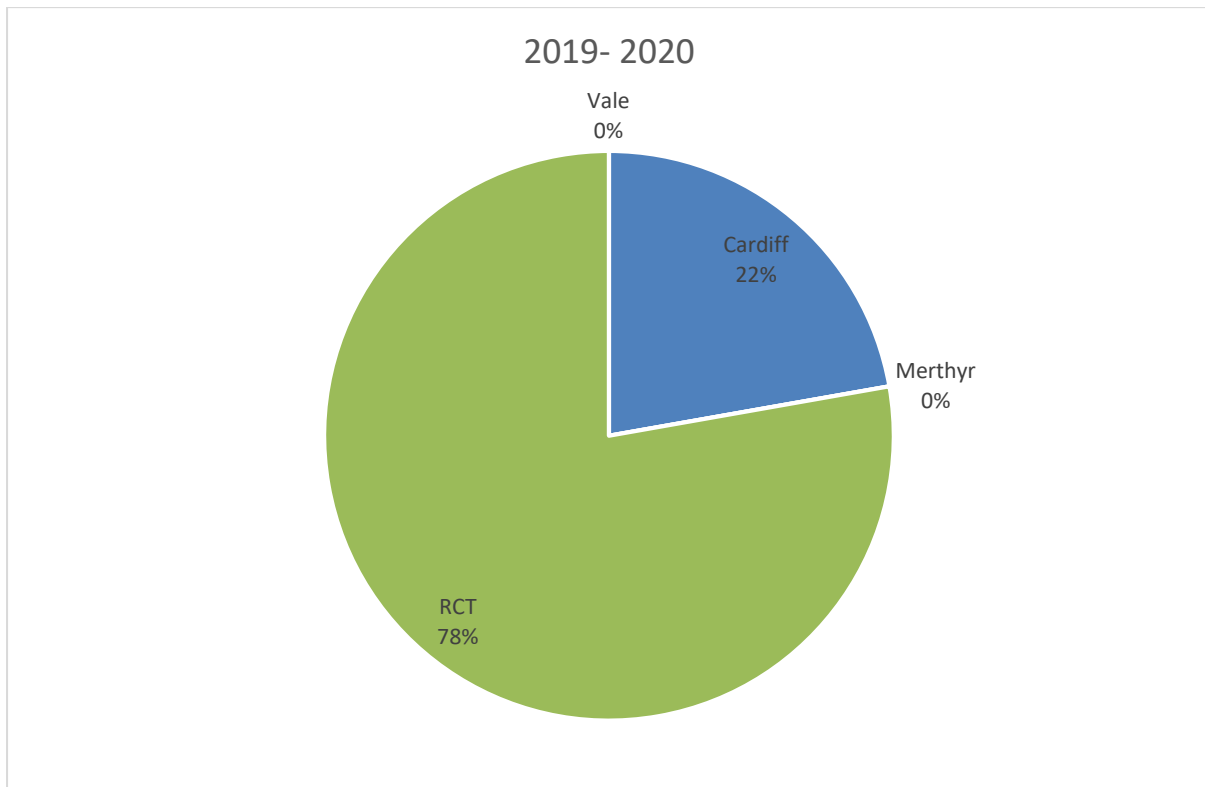


Average Expenditure per Local Authority

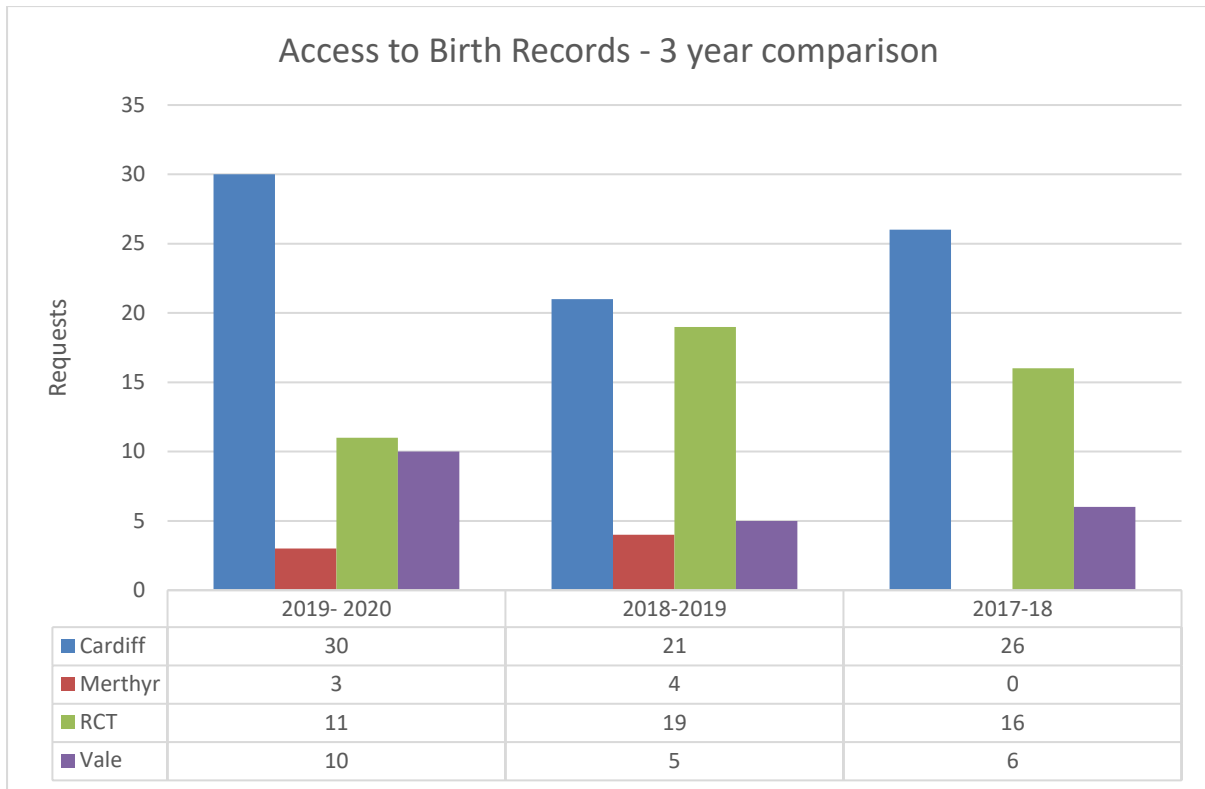


Other Services

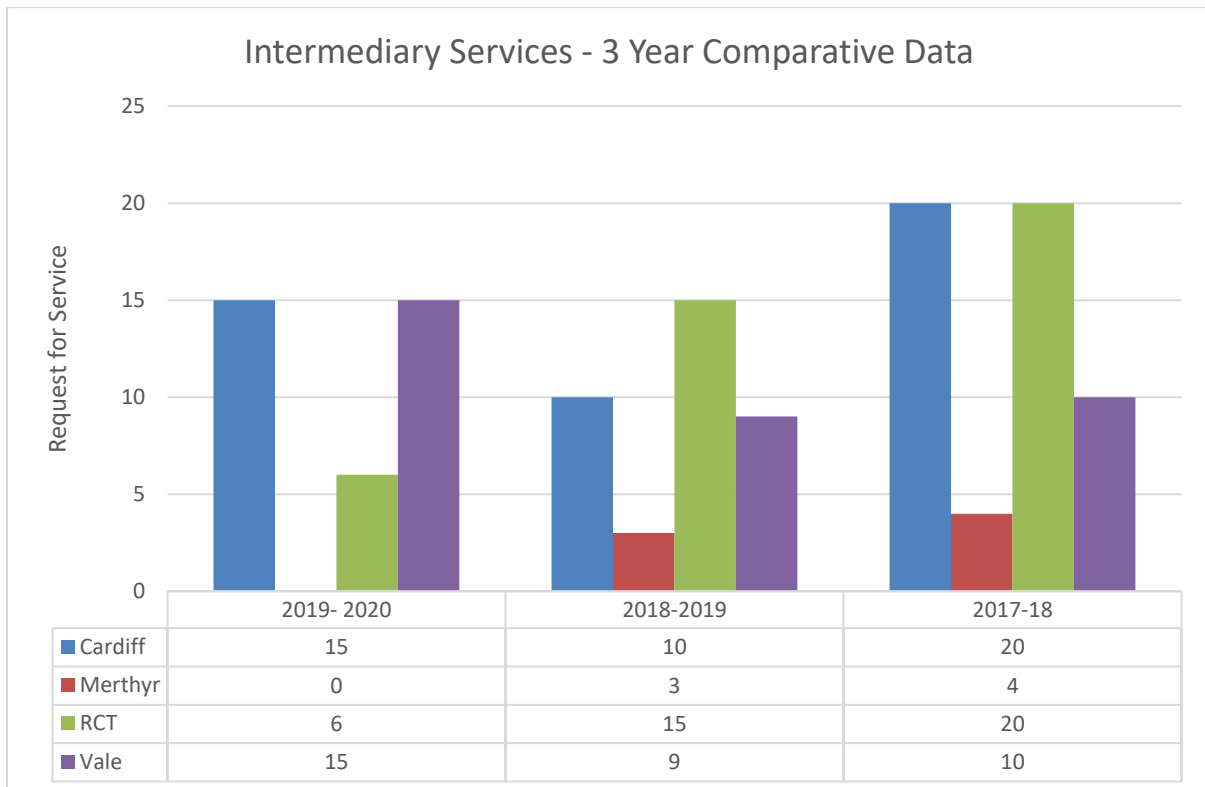
Birth Parent Support



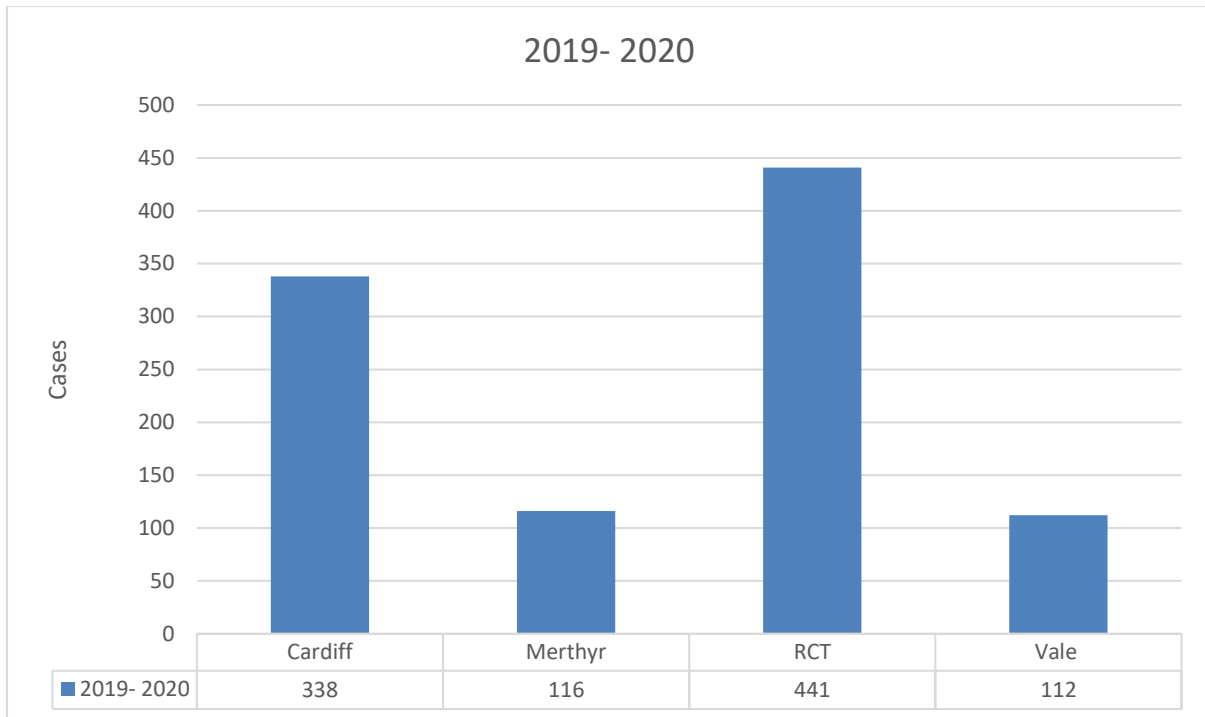
Access to Birth Records



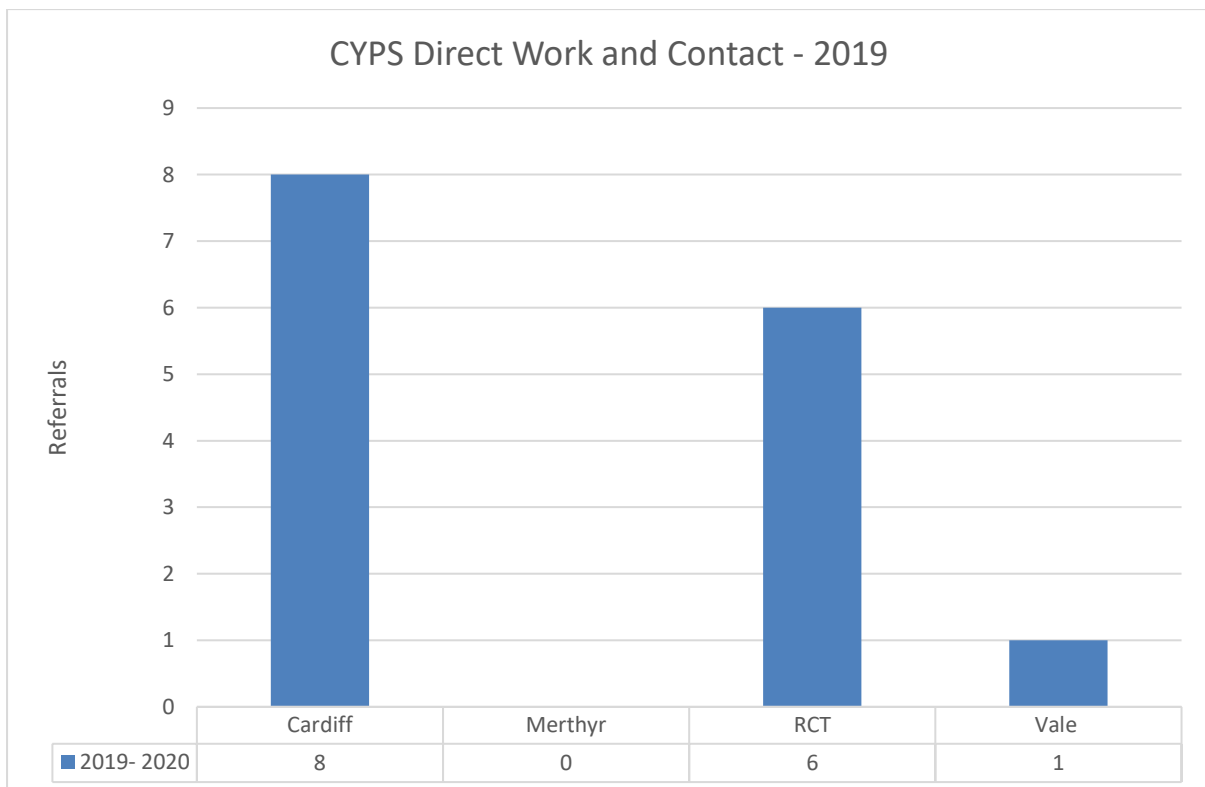
Intermediary Services



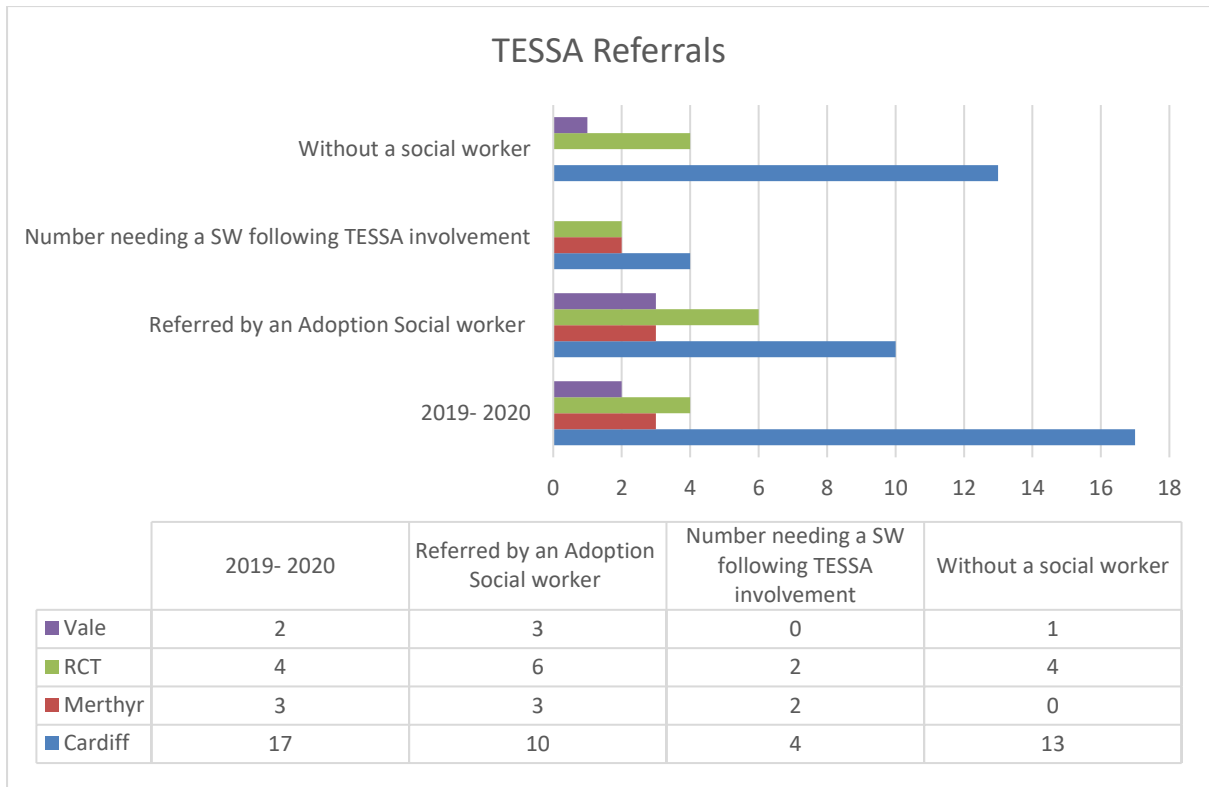
Letterbox



Children and Young People's Service



TESSA



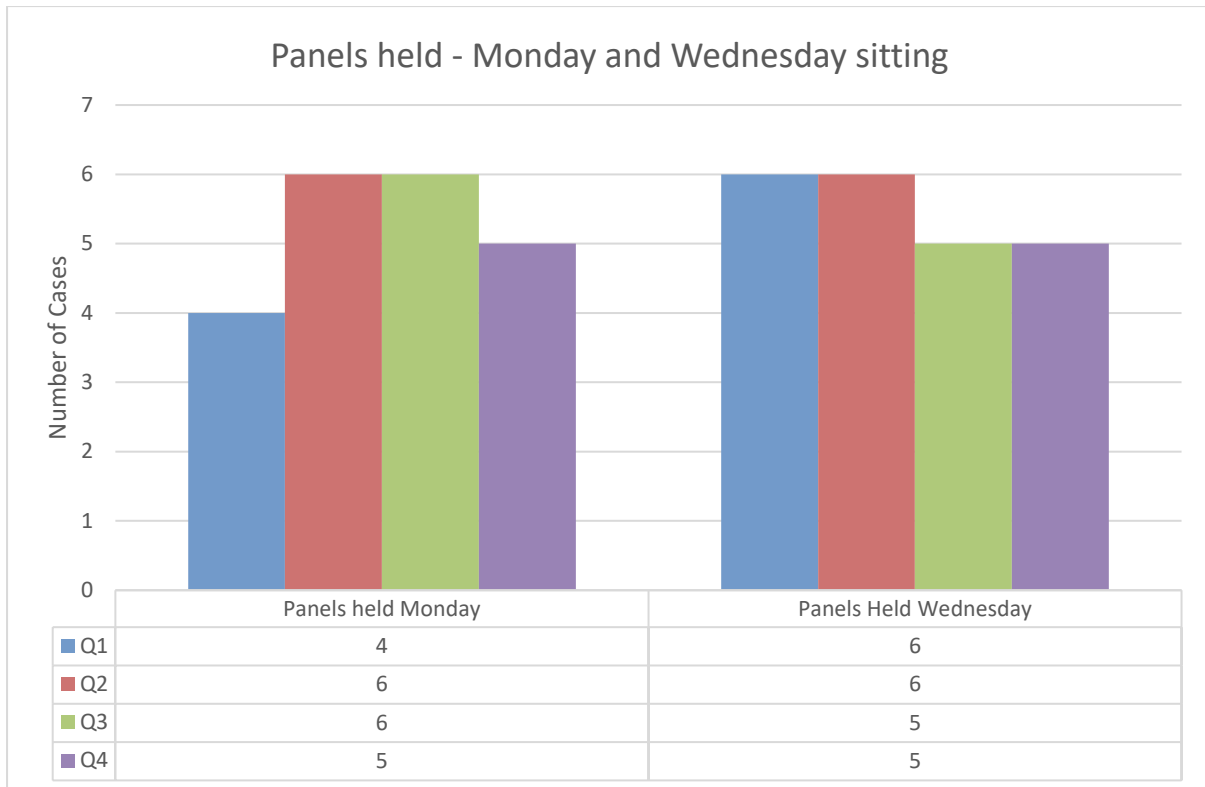
Training



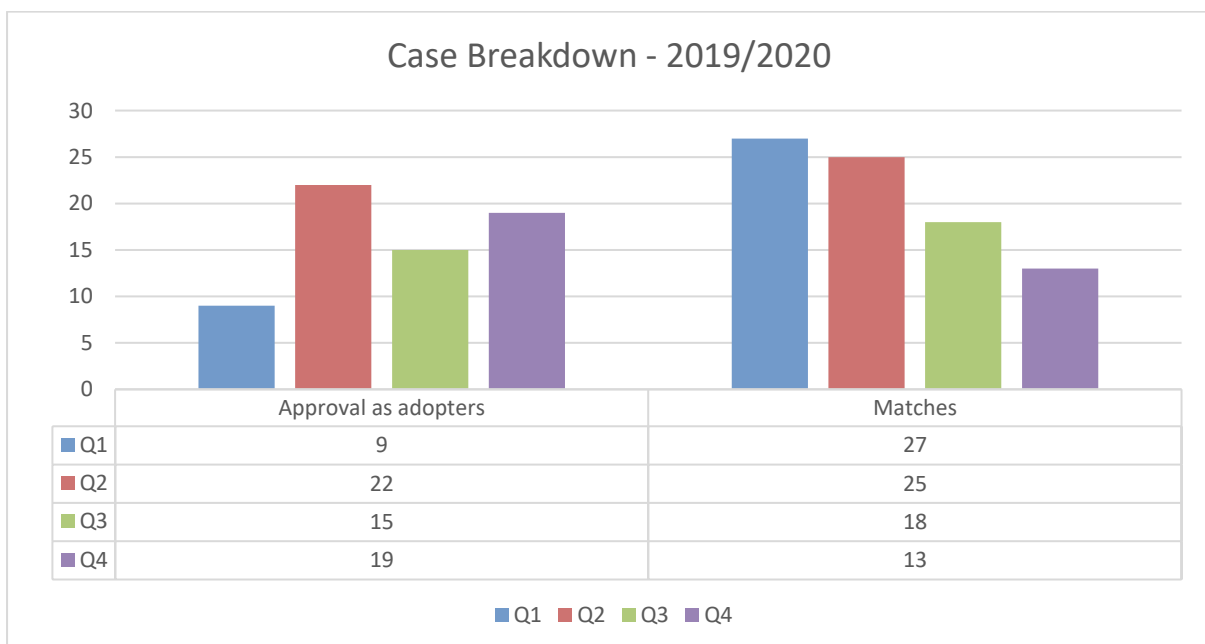
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Appendix 4 – Adoption Panel

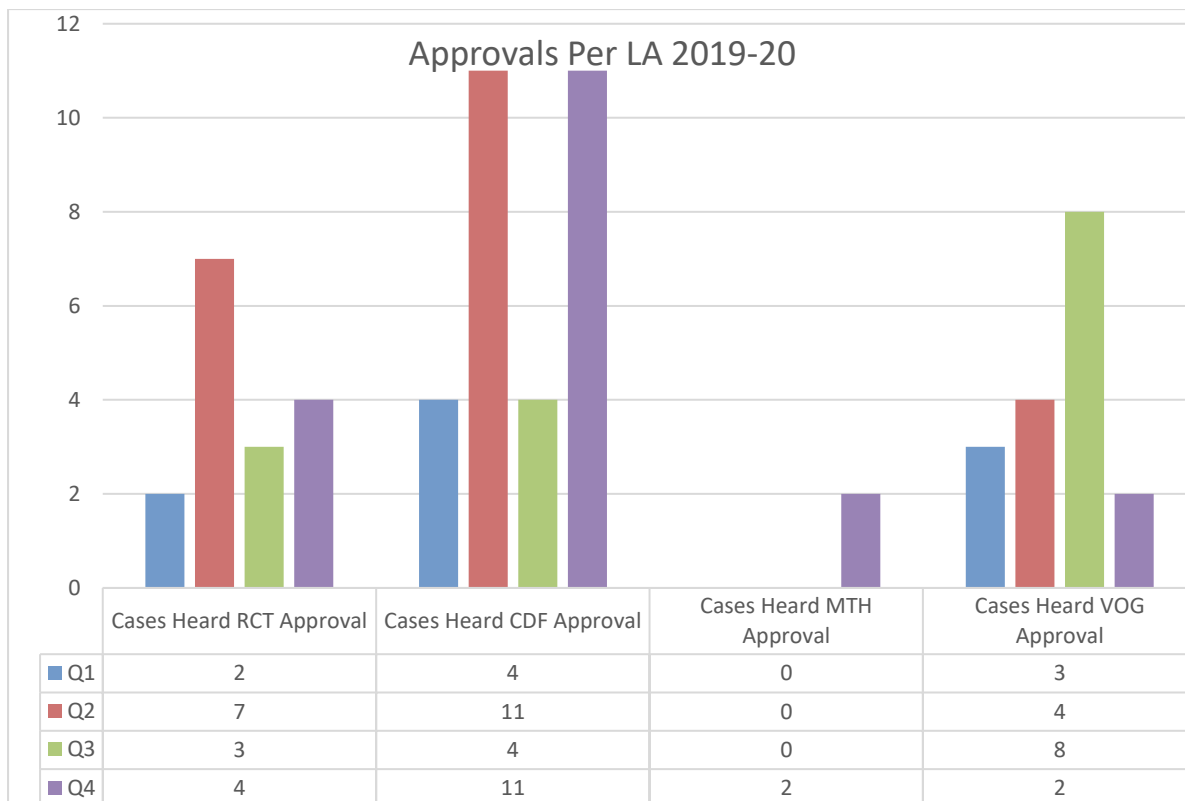
Panels convened



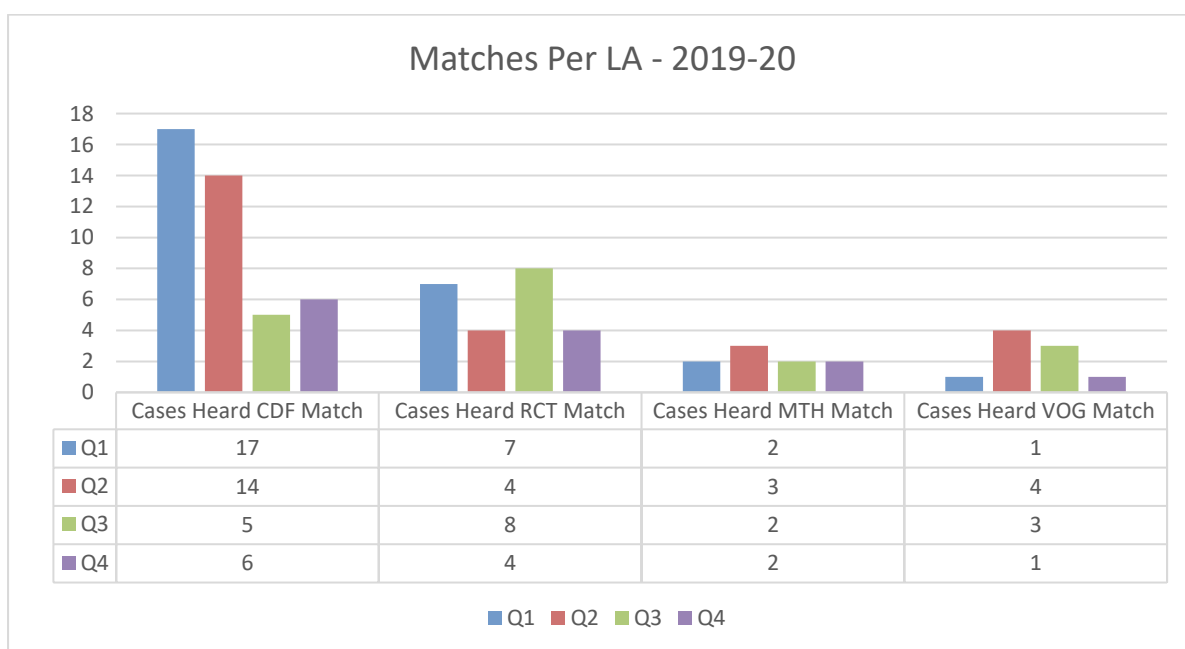
Case distribution



Approvals per Local Authority



Matches per Local Authority



My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/MJH

7 January 2020

Angela Harris
Regional Adoption Manger
Vale, Valley and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative
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Barry
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CF63 4RT



County Hall
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CF10 4UW
Tel: (029) 2087 2087

Neuadd y Sir
Caerdydd,
CF10 4UW
Ffôn: (029) 2087 2088

Appendix B

Dear Angela

The Members of Cardiff Council's Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee would like to thank you for providing them with a copy of the Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Adoption Service's Annual Report, and answering the Members questions.

The Committee also wished to thank, Councillor Graham Hinchey, Cabinet Member for Children & Families, Deborah Driffield Interim Assistant Director Children's Services, for their attendance and the answers to the Members questions.

The Committee welcomed the report and agreed to commend it to the Management Board and Joint Committee for their approval. During the way forward the Members requested that in future there is a need to better engage with both Faith and BME sections of society.

I hope that the comments, and advice, detailed above, will be of use and support in the adoption of children across the region and in particular in Cardiff, and such this letter does not require a formal response.

Yours sincerely

COUNTY COUNCILLOR LEE BRIDGEMAN
Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

CC Councillor Graham Hinchey, Board Member
CC Claire Marchant, Board Member

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CYNGOR CAERDYDD

CARDIFF COUNCIL

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15 DECEMBER 2020

COMMITTEE BUSINESS REPORT

Background

1. This report sets out a summary of the Committee's business and sets out the following:
 - A correspondence update arising from recent scrutiny meetings;
 - Work Programme Update; and
 - The latest position in relation to the CYPSC Task & Finish Inquiry on Child Mental Health & Well-being Support and Services.

Correspondence update

2. Following most Committee meetings, the Chair writes a letter to the relevant Cabinet Member or officer, summing up the Committee's comments and recommendations regarding the issues considered. Set out below is the latest position in terms of correspondence:

- *Response Received* – from Councillor Hinchey to the Chair’s letter regarding Q3 Performance (2019/20) and Out Of County Placements Update considered at Committee on the 10 March 2020.
 - *Response awaited* – from Councillor Hinchey to the Chair’s letter regarding the Service Update and Performance Report for Children’s Services (2020/21) considered at Committee on the 12 October 2020.
 - *Response awaited* – from Councillor Merry to the Chair’s letter regarding the Service Update and Performance Report for Education (2020/21) considered at Committee on the 12 October 2020.
3. Copies of the public Chair’s letters and responses received can be found on the Council’s website page for the relevant Committee meeting, with a hyperlink provided at the top of the page, entitled ‘*correspondence following the committee meeting*’.

Q2 Performance

4. Prior to today’s meeting, Members will have received via email the results of 2020/21 Q2 Performance for Children’s Services. Members will be invited at the meeting to raise any issues or concerns arising from the results.

CYPSC Forward Work Programme January – March 2021

5. The Head of Democratic Services has requested each Scrutiny Committee agrees the provisional items proposed for the next three months, as set out in **Appendix A**. Members will have the opportunity at the meeting to raise any issues or concerns at this meeting, and to sign off for publishing.

CYPSC Task & Finish Inquiry - Child Mental Health & Well-being Support and Services

6. The report arising from this Scrutiny Inquiry was approved by Cabinet on the 19th March 2020. Due to the re-focussing of work to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic and standing down of standard committee meetings (including Cabinet), a response on the recommendations is awaited and will be considered by this Scrutiny Committee in due course. It is anticipated that the recommendations will be considered by the PSB in January 2021.

Way Forward

7. During the meeting, Members will have the opportunity to reflect on the correspondence update; Q2 Performance; CYPSC Work Programme; and note the update on the CYPSC Task & Finish Inquiry.

Legal Implications

8. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

9. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is recommended to reflect on the update on committee correspondence; Q2 Performance; CYPSC Forward Work Programme; and note the update on the CYPSC Task & Finish Inquiry.

DAVINA FIORE

Director of Governance and Legal Services

8 December 2020

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - DRAFT FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

19 January 2021 – 15 March 2021

If you would like to share your experiences or views regarding the items being considered please contact Scrutiny.viewpoints@Cardiff.gov.uk

Meeting Dates	Type of Scrutiny	Title and Description of Report	Invitees & Consultees	Directorate Contact Officer
(a)		(b)	(c)	(d)
19 January 2021	Pre-Decision Scrutiny	<p>Corporate Parenting</p> <p>To undertake a pre-decision scrutiny of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel's proposals in relation to the Corporate Parenting Strategy, Protocol and Terms of Reference</p>	<p>Chair, Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee</p> <p>Corporate Parenting Officer</p>	<p>Alison Jones Principal Scrutiny Officer Alison.Jones5@cardiff.gov.uk</p>
19 January 2021	Pre-Decision Scrutiny	<p>Early Years, Primary and Secondary school provision to serve Adamsdown and Splott</p> <p>To undertake the pre-decision scrutiny of the Cabinet proposals in relation to Early Years, Primary and Secondary school provision to serve Adamsdown and Splott</p>	<p>Cabinet Member – Education and Lifelong Learning</p> <p>Director of Education and Lifelong Learning</p>	<p>Alison Jones Principal Scrutiny Officer Alison.Jones5@cardiff.gov.uk</p>

Meeting Dates	Type of Scrutiny	Title and Description of Report	Invitees & Consultees	Directorate Contact Officer
(a)		(b)	(c)	(d)
19 January 2021	Pre-Decision Scrutiny	<p>Whitchurch High School – Development of Art, Maths & Science – Upper School Site</p> <p>To undertake the pre-decision scrutiny of the Cabinet proposals in relation to developments at Whitchurch High School</p> <p><i>(CONFIDENTIAL AGENDA ITEM)</i></p>	<p>Cabinet Member – Education and Lifelong Learning</p> <p>Director of Education and Lifelong Learning</p>	<p>Alison Jones Principal Scrutiny Officer Alison.Jones5@cardiff.gov.uk</p>
19 January 2021	Monitoring Performance & Progress (reputational)	<p>Youth Justice Service – Progress Update</p> <p>To receive an update and monitor progress in relation to the Youth Justice Service, following the HMIP visit in December 2020.</p>	<p>Independent Chair of the Youth Justice Board</p> <p>Cabinet Member for Children and Families</p> <p>Corporate Director People & Communities</p> <p>Assistant Director of Children's Services</p>	<p>Alison Jones Principal Scrutiny Officer Alison.Jones5@cardiff.gov.uk</p>

Meeting Dates	Type of Scrutiny	Title and Description of Report	Invitees & Consultees	Directorate Contact Officer
(a)		(b)	(c)	(d)
19 January 2021	Monitoring Performance & Progress	<p>South Central Education Consortium Annual Report 2019/20</p> <p>An item to review, assess and comments on enable the Committee to review and assess the performance of the Consortium in supporting Cardiff's schools.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member – Education and Lifelong Learning</p> <p>Director of Education and Lifelong Learning</p>	<p>Alison Jones Principal Scrutiny Officer Alison.Jones5@cardiff.gov.uk</p>
23 February 2021	Pre-Decision Scrutiny	<p>Draft Corporate Plan and Cabinet Budget Proposals 2021/22</p> <p>To enable Members to undertake the pre-decision scrutiny of the draft Corporate Plan and Cabinet budget proposals and to assess their impact on Children & Young People in Cardiff.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance</p> <p>Corporate Director Resources</p> <p>Corporate Director People & Communities</p> <p>Cabinet Member – Education and Lifelong Learning</p> <p>Director of Education and Lifelong Learning</p> <p>Cabinet Member for Children and Families</p>	<p>Alison Jones Principal Scrutiny Officer Alison.Jones5@cardiff.gov.uk</p>

Meeting Dates	Type of Scrutiny	Title and Description of Report	Invitees & Consultees	Directorate Contact Officer
(a)		(b)	(c)	(d)
15 March 2021	Monitoring Performance & Progress (reputational)	<p>Youth Justice Service – Progress Update</p> <p>To receive an update and monitor progress in relation to the Youth Justice Service.</p>	<p>Independent Chair of the Youth Justice Board</p> <p>Cabinet Member for Children and Families</p> <p>Corporate Director People & Communities</p> <p>Assistant Director of Children's Services</p>	<p>Alison Jones Principal Scrutiny Officer Alison.Jones5@cardiff.gov.uk</p>
15 March 2021	Monitoring Performance & Progress (reputational)	<p>Education & Schools Resilience Update</p> <p>To receive an update in relation to how Education and Schools are adapting and progressing in light of the Covid-19 pandemic</p>	<p>Cabinet Member – Education and Lifelong Learning</p> <p>Director of Education and Lifelong Learning</p>	<p>Alison Jones Principal Scrutiny Officer Alison.Jones5@cardiff.gov.uk</p>