

Isle of Wight Annual Report **Adoption Service** **April 2019 – March 2020**

1. Recruitment Activity.

- 1.1 All Marketing Activity, enquiries, pre-stage visits, RIFs and Adopter assessment activity is now reported in the Adopt South report. This includes Panel Activity and Available Adopters.
Any interagency placements are considered by Adopt South.
Children's Post Adoption support is also within the remit of Adopt South

2. Interagency.

- 2.1 The Isle of Wight have not required any placements outside of the Regional Adoption Agency this year.

3. Complaints and Allegations

- 3.1 There were no complaints or allegations in quarter 1. There have been two complaints in quarter 2. Both were related to SGO families who were challenging the financial reviews and reduction of allowances. Following investigations into both cases neither was upheld. There have been no complaints in quarters 3 and 4.

4. Step-Parent Adoption

- 4.1 The team have received 16 enquiries this year. This is higher than last year when we received 14 enquiries.
- 4.2 The team have maintained the stance of actively supporting families to positively explore alternatives (lesser orders) in line with the advice and guidance being issued through the courts.
- 4.3 The guidance states that applicants have to reside together for two years and do not need to be married. We have been made aware that when seeking legal advice as promoted by ourselves, solicitors are advising applicants that they meet the criteria to apply. Therefore, once notice is given, we are obliged

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to conduct the assessment even if the applicants have been advised that we are unlikely to support this.

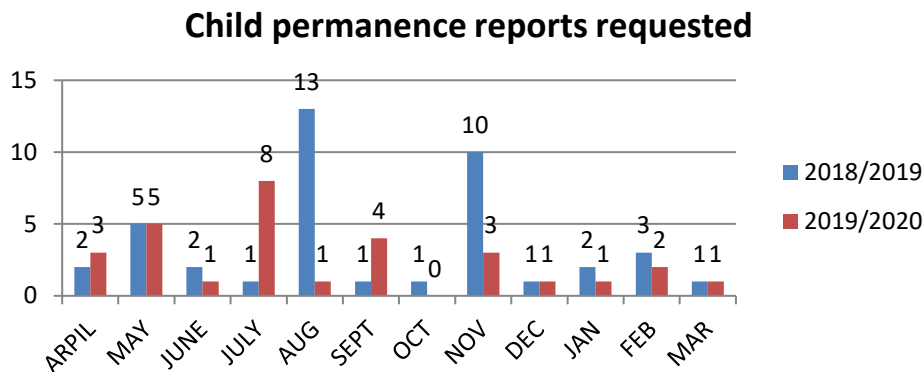
- 4.4 The team have progressed one assessment this year. The other enquirers were given advice and have not returned to the team. This would evidence that the team maintain a robust approach to this area of work.

5. Special Guardianship.

- 5.1 The team have received 6 SGO referrals and 11 joint applications with Fostering. This compares to 11 SGO referrals and 15 joint applications during the same period last year.

This is a slight decrease in this area of work.

6. CPR's / Parallel Planning



APRIL 2018 – MARCH 2019 Total: 42

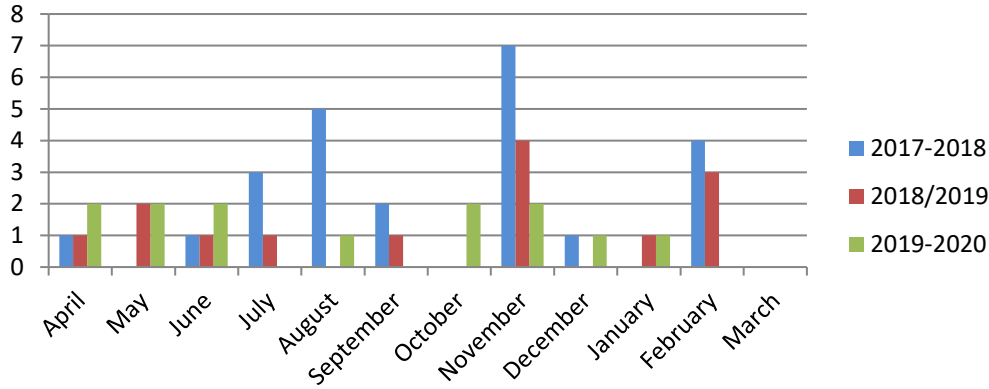
APRIL 2019 – MARCH 2020 Total: 30

- 6.1 There has been a decrease in referrals for child permanence reports from 42 last year to 30. However, through attending legal planning meetings it is apparent that there are several cases in PLO (pre-proceedings) that are likely to progress in the next quarter. Therefore, this level of work remains relatively constant. The impact of the Corona virus on the community may also have an impact across the range of services.

- 6.2 All referrals require an element of work and there are very few where limited work is required. This is not fully reflected in the number of agency decisions completed as indicated in the following graph. this has increased this quarter

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7. Number of New Children's Plans for Adoption



APRIL 2018 – MARCH 2019 Total: 14

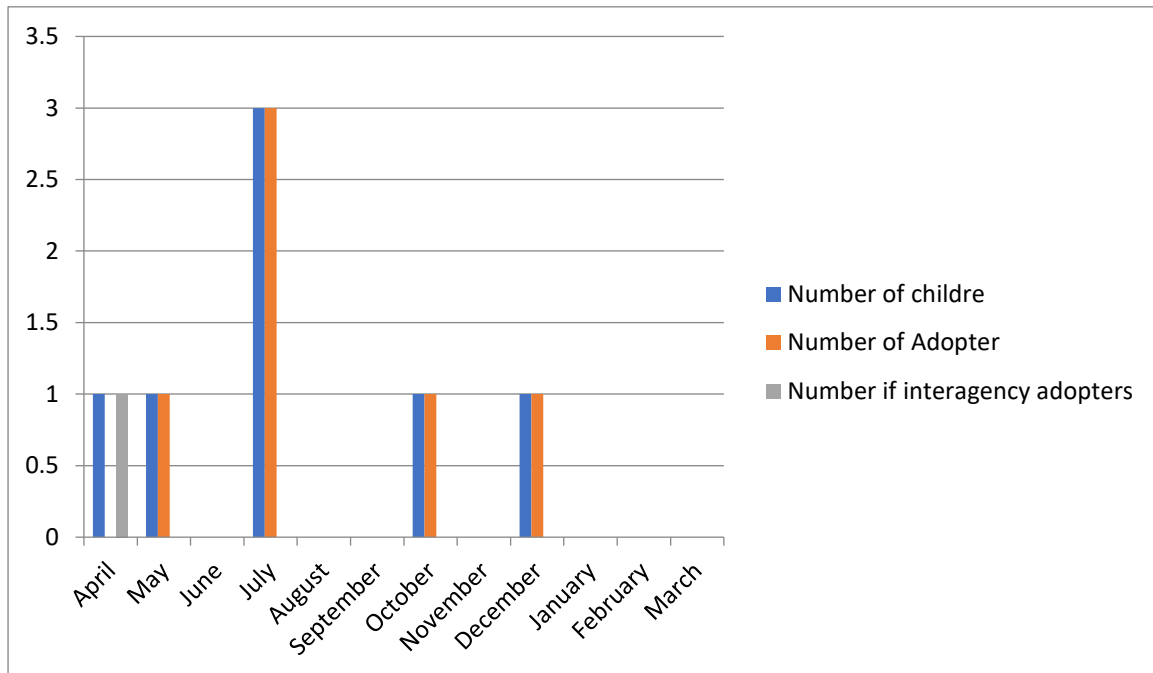
APRIL 2019 – MARCH 2020 TOTAL 13

7.1 There has been a decrease in agency decisions of 1 during this year compared to last. So although we have seen a reduction in the number of CPR's being referred the ratio to ADM decisions is higher. The workflow continues to be high in this area.

8. Number of Children Linked/Placed.

APRIL 2018 – MARCH 2019 TOTAL: 10

APRIL 2019 – MARCH 2020 TOTAL 7



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8.1 Adopt South have dedicated Family Finders. The team work closely with them to explore early family finding to prevent drift and ensure early permanence for all the children within our region. During this year we have linked and placed seven children, six with Adopt South Adopters and one with interagency adopters (Diagrama) this link was in process prior to Adopt South 'going live'. The new arrangements have embedded and are meeting the needs of Island children with 'in-house' placements being more readily accessible.

9. Number of Disruptions (Pre-Order)

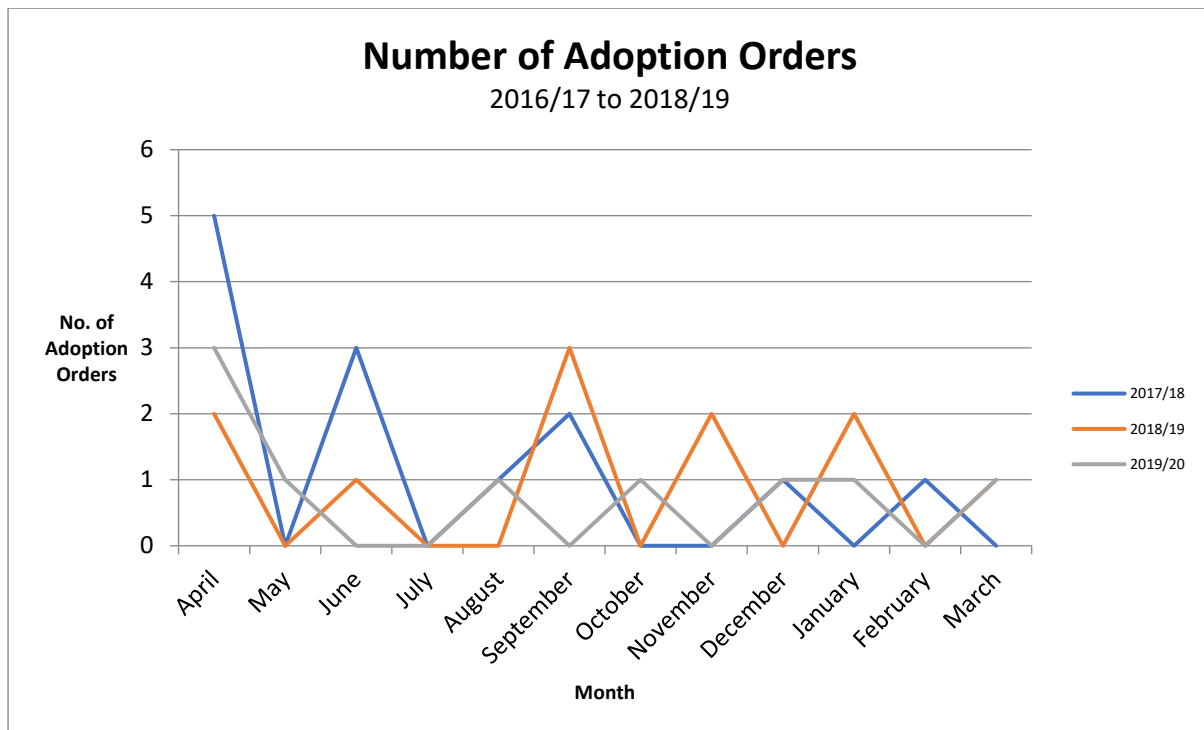
APRIL 2016 – MARCH 2020: Number of Children/Number of Adopters

9.1 There have been no disruptions this year.

10. Number of Adoption Orders

APRIL 2018 – MARCH 2019 Total: 11

APRIL 2019 – MARCH 2020 Total: 9

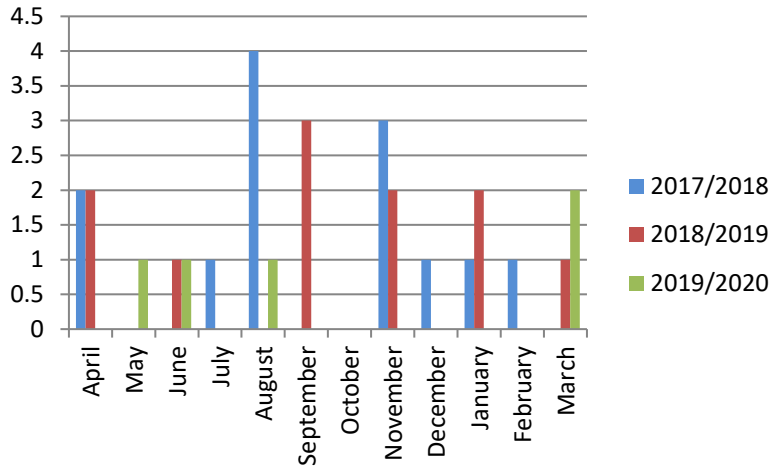


10.1 The team have achieved 9 adoption orders this year which compares to 8 last year. The team are monitored to ensure that applications are filed at the

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appropriate time to ensure timeliness. There are no applications that have been delayed.

11. Number of Placement Orders



- 11.1 The number of placement orders granted has decreased again this year from 11 last year to 5 this year. The team are aware of the increased length of time in court care proceedings and have noticed that there are fewer placement orders being granted. However, with Adopt South, we need to ensure we have sufficient placements/Adopters for children across the Region. It is also of note that our neighbours are experiencing the same drop in placement orders being granted. The impact of the Covid virus on communities may impact across all of children's social care including Adoption.

12. Adoption Scorecards.

- 12.1 **Scorecard 1 – Average time between a child entering Care and moving in with their adoptive family.**

For the 9 children adopted between 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020, the average time in days between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family was **395** days which is within the government's threshold of 426 days.

This compares to **337** days in the same period last year.

- 12.2 **Scorecard 2 – Average time between the Local Authority receiving Court Authority and the Local Authority identifying a match.**

For the 9 children adopted between 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020, the average time between Placement Order and the Local Authority identifying a

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match was **225** days which exceeds the government's threshold of 121 days. This is predominantly due to an older sibling group of two boys that required more extensive family finding activity, 9.6 months, to achieve a match. One child with a disability of Curzon's syndrome that required 26.6 months to achieve a match. One child required 7.2 months to achieve a match. The other five children were all placed well within the target. One was placed at 111 days, 2 x 62 days, 1 at 131 days and 1 at 46 days. It is positive that we found adoptive families for these children.

This compares to **100** days in the same period last year.

12.3 **Scorecard 3 – % of children who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with an adoptive family.**

For the children adopted between 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020, 88.8% (8 of the 9) waited less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with an adoptive family.

This compares to **85.7% (6 out of 7)** in the same period last year.

13. Life story books and later life letters.

- 13.1 Of the 9 children adopted this year, all the Life story books were completed and with Adopters prior to the order being granted.
- 13.2 Of the 9 children adopted this year, all 9 later life letters were finalised and were with adopters prior to the three-month deadline.
- 13.3 This activity is monitored by the team manager and within the adoption LAC spreadsheet which is reviewed at every team meeting. This is also reviewed within the lac review process by the independent reviewing officers.

14. Adoption Support

- 14.1 Post adoption support is divided between Adopt South and the IOW Adoption Service.
- 14.2 Adopt South are responsible for post adoption referrals for children, adoption support needs assessments and post adoption training.
- 14.3 The IOW service remains responsible for adult post adoption work, access to birth records and managing the letterbox exchange. Adopt South will

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eventually take responsibility for the Adoption Support Fund when we have a unified ICT system across all four authorities however in the interim, the IOW will continue to manage this activity locally.

- 14.4 We have not received any requests for birth parent counselling this year. This compares to 2 referrals in the last year.
- 14.5 The team made 15 applications to the Adoption Support Fund, all 15 were successful. This achieved an income of £30,836.70; this figure includes £1000 of this income which has come back into the Local Authority for delivering "in-house" therapeutic services to children which will enable us to re-invest this in other services for them.
- 14.6 This compares to 36 applications during the previous year that achieved an income of 49,903.20. The reduction in the need to make ASF applications is in part due to the developing post adoption service within Adopt South where training that we would previously have commissioned is being delivered in house.
- 14.7 The team have received 11 referrals for support to Access to Birth Records this year in comparison to 5 referrals last year which is an increase in activity.
- 14.8 The team have also received 1 Private Adoption referral.

15. Family Finding

- 15.1 The Team alongside Adopt South Family Finders are currently family finding for 3 children.
- 15.2 One child is 2 years 7 months old. He has had a placement Order since 16th May 2019. He has a diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy and has additional needs. He has a high level of support services being provided alongside a foster family who are skilled in promoting his development. He is making progress but is delayed in several areas. This child is regularly considered at the 'hard to place' meetings and additional profiling has taken place at activity days. Adopt South have also undertaken targeted recruitment for him in the media. Given his age, the team are committed to exploring every opportunity to locate a forever family for him.
- 15.3 The other two children are a sibling group aged 5 and 3 years, whose placement order was granted on the 16.3.2020 therefore we are in the early stages of family finding.

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16. Overall Summary and Actions

- 16.1 During 2019/20 The activity within the team has remained High. The regional Adoption agency, Adopt South, has now been established for a Year and the team are positively engaging with the new regional identity and changes to practise are being embedded.
- 16.2 During this year the IOW team have received 16 step parent adoption enquiries, 6 stand alone and 11 joint with fostering special guardianship referrals, 30 child permanence referrals, 0 birth counselling referral, 11 requests for access to birth records support. With the Addition of the Adopt South work for Adopters and post adoption support, the workflow has remained consistent. During this year nine adoption orders have been granted. Seven children have been linked. Of the three LAC children currently held by the Team, two are placed and one subject to family finding. We are also family finding for two children with a placement order that have not yet transferred to the team. There have been no disruptions either pre or post order during this year.
- 16.3 The team has carried a part-time social worker vacancy since June 2019. This post was filled with an existing team member creating a full-time vacancy since 1st November 2019. This has had an impact on caseloads and the team's capacity to meet the service level agreements with Adopt South.
- 16.4 During 2019/20 a new service Manager was appointed to cover children in care on the island which comprises of the fostering and adoption teams, children in care, care leavers and Beaulieu House.
- 16.5 The service manager has worked with the fostering and adoption teams on restructuring the teams to make one permanence team focusing on both fostering and adoption work alongside the work of Adopt South. This team has a higher number of social workers to complete the assessment and support functions in fostering and adoption. The new team will be operational from 1st April 2020.
- 16.5 The focus of the new team is to improve service delivery by increasing communication, streamlining the organisation ensuring there is a focus on caseloads and time management to increase efficiency.
- 16.6 This restructure will facilitate a reduction in management, administration and practitioners' roles. This will enable the employment of additional social workers to increase the case holding capacity within the team. The team will be formed of three distinct hubs who will each focus on one activity. Recruitment and Assessment, support to foster carers or Adoption. This will enable specialisms within each area of work and to enable a more focused approach to timescales, compliance and quality assurance.

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17. ACTIONS:

Action	Responsible Person	Completion Date
Renegotiate the target of 12 prospective adopters' assessments due to the current staff vacancies	Berni Farmer Rachel Reynolds	30 Sept 2020
Renegotiate the target of 50 Adoption Support Needs Assessments, considering the current staff vacancies	Berni Farmer Rachel Reynolds	30 Nov 2020
To continue to work on the actions of the Adoption team Plan Oct 2019 – Mar 2021	All team members	Mar 2021

Berni Farmer
Permanence Team Manager
18th June 2020.