

## **Isle of Wight Annual Adoption Report April 2021 - March 2022**

### **1. Recruitment Activity**

All Marketing Activity, enquiries, pre-stage visits, RIFs and Adopter assessment activity is 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 and the Adoption Information Exchange is also within the remit of Adopt South.

### **2. Interagency**

During this year all adopters have been from within the RAA, Adopt South. Since we have been part of the RAA (April 2019) we have needed to fund just one interagency placement for a hard to place child with specific needs. All other hard to place children have been adopted by Adopt South adopters.

### **3. Complaints and Allegations**

One complaint was received during quarter 1. This was in respect of a birth mother seeking direct contact with her child who was adopted. The complaint was not upheld due to the complainant having no legal context to request further assessment. A response was sent to the complainant within the required timeframe. During quarter 2 we received one complaint from the same birth mother who complained during quarter 1. The complaint was not upheld, and a response was sent to the complainant within the required timeframe.

No complaints were received during quarters 3 or 4.

### **4. Stepparent Adoption**

The team received a total of 14 stepparent adoption enquiries during the year; 3 during quarter one, 4 in quarter two, 3 in quarter three and 4 during quarter 4. This is higher than the previous year when the team received 8 enquiries.

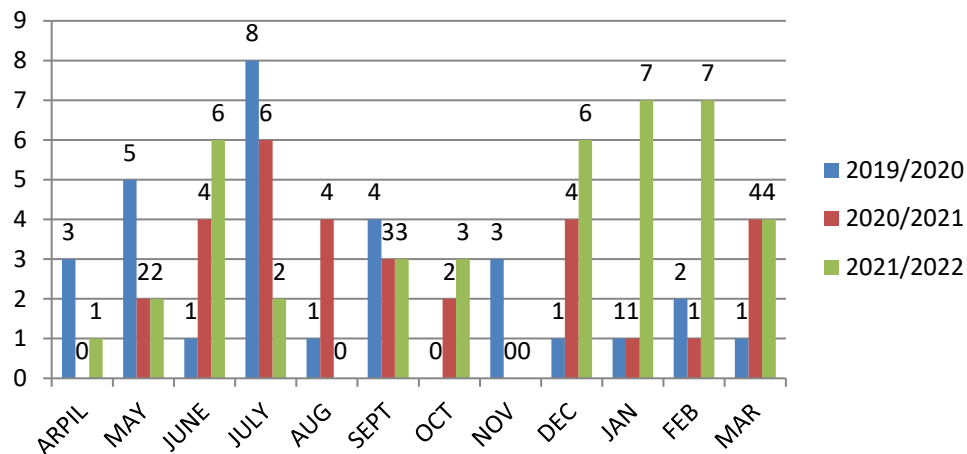
The team continues to actively support families at point of contact to positively explore alternative, lesser orders. This is in line with the advice and guidance being issued through the courts. Of the 14 enquiries received during the year, only 1 progressed to assessment. This evidences that the team continue to take a robust approach to this area of work. This area will continue to be monitored.

### **5. Special Guardianship.**

During the year the team received 7 stand alone and 31 joint referrals with Fostering. This represents an increase in work compared the previous year when the team received 10 stand alone and 25 joint referrals. The courts appear to be asking as a matter of routine for special guardianship to be considered alongside the majority of family and friends assessments.

## 6. CPRs / Parallel Planning

### Child Permanence Reports Requested



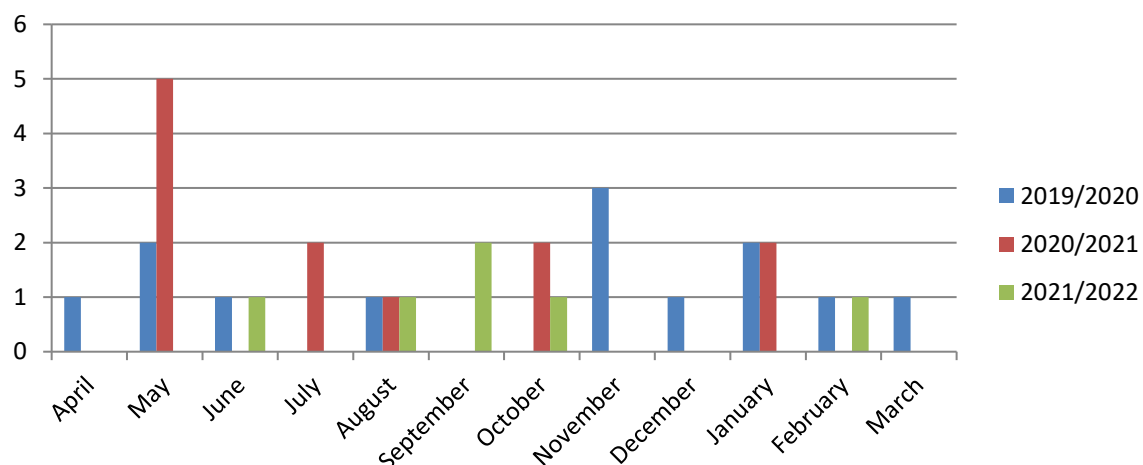
**APRIL 2020 – MARCH 2021 Total: 32**

**APRIL 2021 – MARCH 2022 Total: 41**

The work in this area has seen a significant increase in referrals when compared to the same period last year. However, this will have been impacted by having a higher number of sibling group referrals than during the previous year.

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.

## 7. Number of New Children's Plans for Adoption



**April 2020 – March 2021 Total: 12**

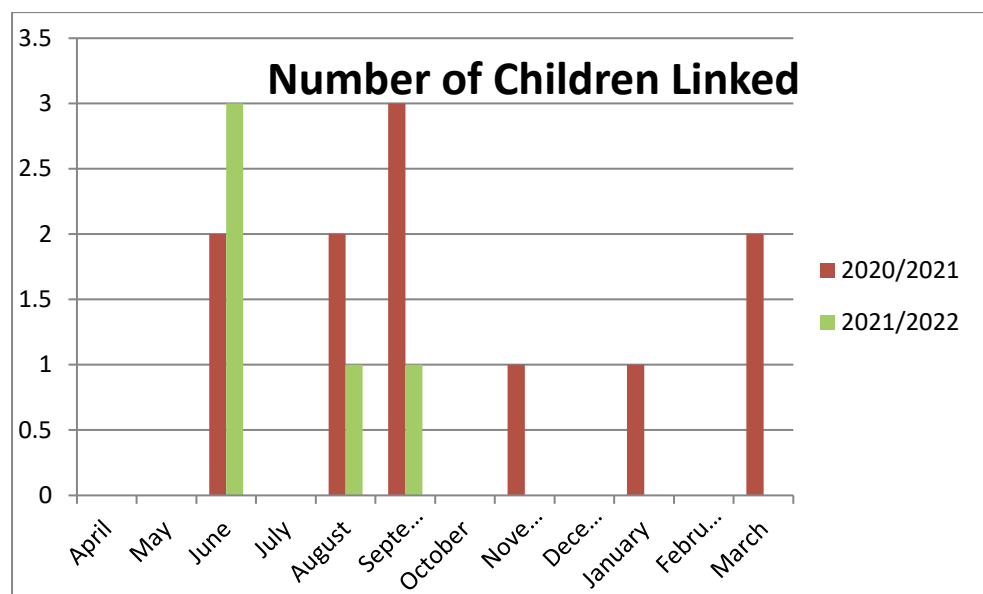
**April 2021 – March 2022 Total: 6**

**Summary:**

The team have progressed 8 children's plans to the agency decision maker during the year, including a sibling group of 2 whose plans were not approved for adoption. The plans for these 2 children are being reviewed and may be referred to the team again during the next quarter. This leaves a total of 6 plans for adoption made during the year.

This reflects a decrease from 12 decisions made during the previous year. As noted previously, the number of agency decisions is not a reflection of the level of work within the team as the referrals for child permanence reports increased this year.

## 8. Number of Children Linked/Placed.



**April 2020 – March 2021 Total: 11**

**April 2021 – March 2022 Total: 5**

### Summary:

Adopt South undertake all family finding for Isle of Wight children with a placement order in conjunction with the Isle of Wight children's adoption social workers. Fostering for Adoption (FfA) placements are also sought via Adopt South.

This is working well, and we are collectively working on early family finding to prevent drift and ensure early permanence for all the children within our region.

During this period we have linked and placed 5 children with Adopt South adopters. Of the three LAC children currently held by the team; two will move to FFA placements in April 2022 and family finding is underway for the remaining child, with prospective adopters already identified.

## 9. Number of Disruptions (Pre-Order)

**April 2016 – March 2020: 0**

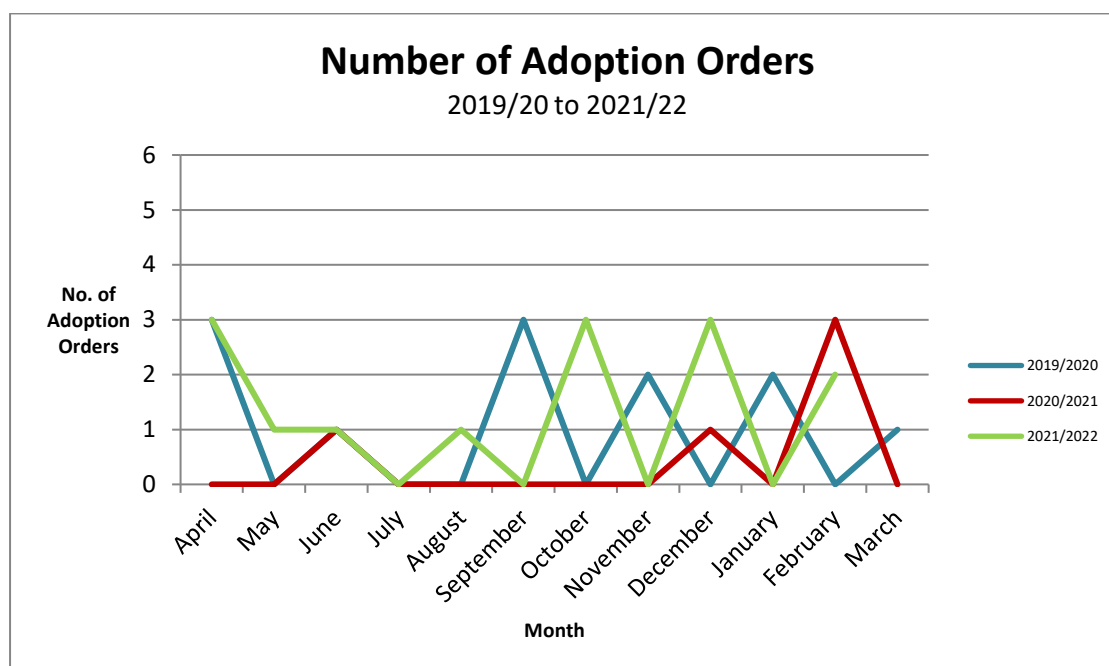
**April 2020 – March 2021: 0**

**April 2021 – March 2022: 0**

### Summary:

There have been no disruptions again this year.

## 10. Number of Adoption Orders



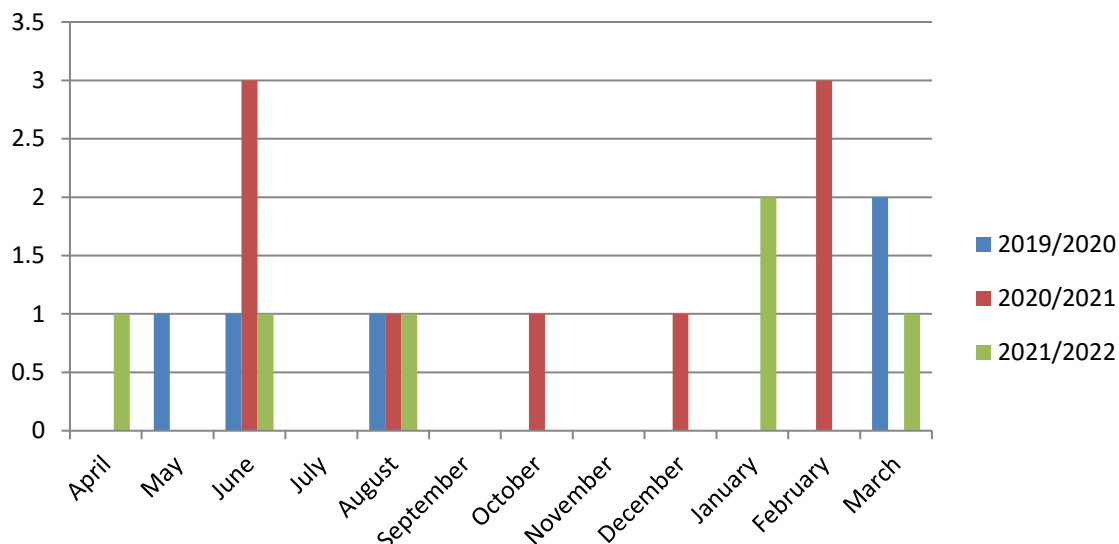
### Summary:

The team have achieved 14 Adoption Orders during this period. This is a significant increase from the 5 orders granted during the previous year.

The team achieved five adoption orders during the first quarter, compared to one during the same quarter last year. During quarter two, one adoption order was granted compared to 0 during the same quarter last year. Six adoption orders were granted during quarter three, bringing the total orders granted during the first three quarters to 12. During quarter four, 2 further adoption orders were granted. Adoption order hearings are now scheduled quarterly within the Courts.

The team are monitored to ensure that applications are filed at the appropriate time to ensure timeliness.

## 11. Number of Placement Orders



### Summary:

The total number of placement orders granted during the year was 6 which represents a decrease when compared to the 9 orders granted during the previous year.

## 12. Adoption Scorecards.

### Scorecard A10

**Average time (in days) between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family adjusted for foster carer adoptions, for children who have been adopted**

For the 14 children adopted between April 2021 and March 2022 the average time in days between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family was 449 days which is higher than the government's threshold of 426 days. This compares to 319 days during the previous year.

For eight of the children, the average time in days between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family was 316 days which is significantly within the government threshold of 426 days. This year the Isle of Wight has successfully adopted a number of children that took longer due to more complex situations and we are very pleased that we were able to successfully place these children.

One child was identified as 'harder to place' due to additional needs. For this particular child there were 1016 days between them entering care and being placed with their adoptive family. This child has a disability, and it was unclear whether it would be possible to find adopters able to meet his needs. It did take longer to find the right family but they were found by Adopt South and they have now adopted him. This is a really good outcome for this child and it is right that we continued to look for the right family for him and pursued a plan of adoption for a child with such complex needs.

Three of the children placed were subject to delays through extended proceedings to complete further assessments which increased the time before the placement order was made but once this had been achieved the adopters were identified and there were no additional delays.

Two of the children were placed with foster carers who applied to adopt them, so whilst it took a little longer for them to be adopted (646 days each) they have been settled with their family throughout this time and this was a really good outcome for the children.

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

For the 14 children adopted between April 2021 and March 2022 the average time between Placement Order and the Local Authority identifying a match was 153 days which is higher than the government's threshold of 121 days. This compares to 84 days in the same period last year.

This figure is impacted by the children mentioned above – in particular the child who had waited longer for a match due to his complex needs and the two children whose foster carers applied to be assessed as adopters for them. Without this impact the average for the remaining 11 children is 64 days.

### **Scorecard A20**

#### **Average time (in days) between a child entering care and a local authority receiving court authority to place a child, for children who have been adopted**

For the 14 children adopted between April 2021 and March 2022 the average time between entering care and receiving court authority to place was 329 days.

Two of the children were subject to Full Care Orders and placed with their mother prior to the making of a Placement Order. This impacts on the average for this Scorecard.

### **13. Life story books and later life letters**

For the 14 children adopted between April 2021 and March 2022, the Life story books were completed and with adopters prior to the order being granted.

For the 14 children adopted between April 2021 and March 2022, the later life letters were finalised and with adopters prior to the three-month deadline.

This activity is monitored by the team manager, the Assistant 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**

#### **Summary:**

Post Adoption Support is managed by Adopt South with work being allocated to the Post Adoption Support Social Worker based on the Isle of Wight. This includes all aspects of post adoption work as well as Adoption Information Exchange referrals for children, adoption support needs assessments and post adoption training.

During quarter one, adult access to records work was moved to Adopt South as part of the RAA agreement.

Each Local Authority maintains the responsibility for applications to the Adoption Support Fund for children within their area.

- 2 requests for birth parent counselling were received during the year, one request during quarter two and one request during quarter three.
- During the year the team made 3 applications to the Adoption Support Fund for children living with Special Guardians on the Isle of Wight. This achieved a total income of £6,892.88. During quarter three, one of the applications (for the value of £5,000) was subsequently withdrawn due to the guardian declining the assessment.
- The team received 1 referral for support to Access Birth Records during quarter one, prior to the transfer of this service to Adopt South. All future reporting on work in this area will be made by Adopt South.

## **15. Family Finding**

The team are currently actively family finding for one child, having successfully matched and placed the other children it holds. The team continues to work with family finding to ensure they make timely referrals once it is appropriate to do.

During the previous year the team secured a placement for the child who was considered hard to place and, during quarter one of this year, the adoption order was made.

## **16. Overall Summary and Actions**

The activity within the team has remained high. During the previous 2 years the service underwent a significant restructure followed by the COVID pandemic. This has impacted the way we deliver all aspects of our work and has required significant flexibility as well as learning new skills to manage new ways of working. Aspects of the new skills have been successfully incorporated into this next phase of working now that Covid related restrictions have begun to lift.

The team have worked hard to ensure continuity of service whilst working within national and local guidelines.

During the year the Isle of Wight team received 14 stepparent adoption enquiries, 7 special guardianship referrals, 31 special guardianship joint referrals with fostering, 41 child permanence referrals, 2 birth counselling referrals and 1 request for access to birth records support.

During the year 14 adoption orders were granted and 5 children were linked. Of the three LAC children currently held by the team at the end of the year, two are due to be placed into their FFA placements during April and family finding is underway for the remaining child, with prospective adopters already identified. There have been no disruptions either pre or post order during the year.

## **ACTIONS:**

- To continue to contribute to, promote and participate in, the Regional Adoption Agency, Adopt South.
- To ensure continued compliance with Regulations relating to ADM decisions with respect to their medicals and the Somerset Judgement.
- To continue to monitor and maintain performance across all areas of the team, both Adopt South and Isle of Wight work, to ensure standards are fully met.
- Continue to improve the consistency and performance management of recording in Adoption using Isle of Wight and Adopt South Proformas.
- To support and participate in Adopt South Regional panels
- Continue to monitor and address the timeliness of Scorecard's A10, 2 and A20.
- Continue to promote the Regional Adoption Agency with the Isle of Wight childcare teams to ensure they understand the changes to working practices.
- To maintain the reduction of the number of stepparent adoption assessments in line with the Courts' view and offer families alternatives to achieve permanence.
- To develop and refine the service within the new permanence team to integrate and maximise on skills, resources and delivery across both services.
- To ensure that all team members are up to date with any changes to regulations and/or policy and process changes within the IOW and the RAA.