

Cabinet – 14 September 2011

Walsall Adoption Service Annual Report

Portfolio: Councillor R. Andrew, Children's Services

Service: Children's Services

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: No

1. Summary

- 1.1 It is a requirement of the Adoption National Minimum Standards 2011 that the Executive side of the Council receives written reports on the management and outcomes of the adoption agency every six months. Therefore, in line with these standards, the Adoption Service report for the period April 2010 to March 2011 (**Appendix 1**), highlights the progress of the Adoption Service within this period.
- 1.2 The most significant matter to report is that the Adoption Service was judged to be "Good" following the Ofsted inspection in August 2010.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That it is recommended that Cabinet note the good progress made particularly in relation to the 'good' Ofsted rating in August 2010 for the Adoption Service.

3. Report Detail

- 3.1 The report, found at **Appendix 1**, summarises the work of Walsall Children's Services Adoption Service from April 2010 to March 2011.
- 3.2 The general overview of 2010-2011 can be best summarised as another busy and progressive year for the Adoption Service. The most significant success has been the outcome of our Ofsted inspection in August 2010 which saw the Adoption Service move from a judgement of 'Satisfactory' in 2007 to a judgement of 'Good' by August 2010. The following comments summarise the report:

'The service has effective systems in place to recruit suitable staff and robust and thorough procedures for assessing adoptive families. It is good at family finding and matching children and works well with consortium members in doing so. The panel processes are well organised, professional and thoughtful';

'The agency is well managed and has a good strategic approach to the provision of adoption services';

'This is a good service that has a clear focus on the needs of the child and on providing safe and secure adoptive families';

'There is strong and effective management at all levels of the service'.

- 3.3 The report highlights the recruitment and training of adopters and the role provided by the Black Country Consortium (Adoption across the Black Country – ABC) Partnership. This partnership has secured successful adoption placements for children and adoptive families from the Black Country Local Authorities (LA). The number of enquiries received during this period has increased by 10 to 79, and of these, 25 offers were made resulting in 21 referrals sent to the adoption team. 18 adoptive families were approved which is an increase of 5 from the previous year. 15 families were white British, one dual heritage and one Asian.
- 3.4 During April 2010 to March 2011, a total of 36 children were suitable to be placed for adoption. This is a large increase to last year's figure of 26. As detailed in last year's report, the decrease in the number of children presented to adoption panel during the previous year was a direct result of the restructure of Children's Services and the relocation of court work from Looked After Children's Service to Safeguarding and Family Support Service. Now that the court work has embedded itself in Safeguarding and Family Support Service, children are now being presented to panel more speedily and this year's figure is similar to previous years where on average, 35-39 children have been presented to panel on a yearly basis.
- 3.5 On this basis, it is likely that more children will be placed for adoption and adopted this year 2011/12 despite April 2010 and March 2011 figures of only 19 children who were placed for adoption; compared with 27 for the previous year.
- 3.6 Other key performance outcomes show there were 28 adoption orders made during this period of time, which is a slight decrease in last year's figure of 30. The number of adoption orders is reflective of the number of children placed for adoption in the previous year, this figure was 27.

Of the 28 children adopted, 27 were placed for adoption within 12 months of the agency deciding that the child should be placed for adoption. This gives a success rate of 94.6%, which is higher to last year and demonstrates the success of structured and timely family finding.

- 3.7 Panel recommended 22 matches from April 2010 to March 2011 which is a decrease in previous years and is a direct correlation to the low number of children presented to adoption panel the previous year.

12 matches were made with Walsall approved families and 10 with inter-agency families. Of those 10 inter-agency placements, the vast majority were with other local authority approved adopters; 2 of which with families from Adoption in the Black Country Consortium and 3 from within Adoption West Midlands Consortium, 1 from another Local Authority and 3 with Voluntary Adoption Agencies. The reasons for the high number of inter-agency placements were the children's diverse racial and cultural background, the number of children with complex needs and those within sibling groups.

- 3.8 Adopters themselves attend panel for their approval and also attend when they are matched with children and find this a positive experience. The medical and legal advisors continue to support the activity of the panel by providing relevant advice and training.
- 3.9 The adoption panel is effective and members regularly receive information and guidance in relation to key issues in adoption, trends, policies, procedures and new legislation.
- 3.10 Partnership working and networking continues to develop for adoption and adoption support within the Black Country Consortium, Adoption UK, Adoption Support across the West Midlands and the Birth Parents Advocacy Service.

4. Council priorities

Key Council priorities emerging from the report relate to ensuring that all children for whom Adoption is the correct and appropriate option are taken through the planning and matching procedures in an effective and timely manner.

This priority will be met through effective recruitment of prospective adopters who are able to meet the diverse range of needs of children who are suitable for adoption and by timely presentation, for approval of all appropriate cases to panel on a yearly basis.

Ensuring that prospective and adoptive parents are appropriately supported, trained and skill matched to the right children is central to achieving the Council priorities in terms of quality care and value for money.

5. Risk management

The key risks emerging from the Adoption Service Report (**Appendix 1**) include securing effective management systems to ensure that more Walsall families are recruited to meet the needs of children with complex needs and those from specific religious and cultural backgrounds. Measures to respond positively to these risks are integral to the Corporate Parenting Strategy and its risk register, which covers the priorities and work of the Adoption Service.

6. Financial implications

The financial implications for the Council for managing effectiveness, outcomes for children and adoption agency services are considered during the annual budget setting process and are in line with the medium term financial plan and new operating model for Children's Services.

7. Legal implications

The report satisfies the requirement under Standard 25(6) of the Adoption National Minimum Standards that the executive side of the Council receives written reports on the management and outcomes of the services of the adoption agency, and in order to monitor progress.

8. Property implications

None

9. Staffing implications

None

10. Equality implications

These continued improvements will ensure that Looked After Children can be placed with suitable adoptive carers within timescales which meet their long term needs and in a manner which minimises the risk of placement breakdown. The report specifically reports on the number of children adopted in terms of ethnicity, gender, age and sibling group matches placements secured for children.

11. Consultation

The annual reporting process has been informed by consultation and feedback from relevant stakeholders; most importantly adoptive children, adoptive parents and adoption panel members. This report is a public document, which can be accessed by anyone wishing to do so, and will be available on the Council website.

Background papers

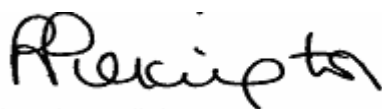
Annual Report (**Appendix 1**)

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Pauline Pilkington
Executive Director
Date: 2 August 2011



Councillor Rachel Andrew
Portfolio holder
Date: 1 September 2011



Walsall Council

Children's Services

WALSALL COUNCIL ANNUAL ADOPTION SERVICE REPORT

2010/2011

Author: **Lisa Preston**
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Adoption Panel
(Statistics and commentary relating to adoption support activity
provided by Penny Nicola-Adoption Support Senior Practitioner)

1 Introduction

This report details the work of Walsall Council Adoption Service from April 2010 to March 2011 inclusive. The purpose of the report is to consider the activity of the service in relation to the implementation and progression of children's care plans, the service offered to those seeking to adopt and the services offered to those affected by adoption through the provision of adoption support. It is also to identify any significant trends within adoption and how Walsall can continue to meet the changing demands within adoption.

The report will initially look at the statistical information gathered during the course of the year, identifying the success of the service, key trends and any particular challenges Walsall Adoption Service may have faced or will face within the next year. It will then move on to consider the partnerships Walsall has with other key agencies and how as a collective, the needs of children and their birth families and prospective adopters are met.

The report will also look at the role and function of Walsall Council Adoption Panel, identifying key issues for consideration for the adoption agency, with a particular emphasis on Walsall's preparation for the introduction of New National Minimum Standards for adoption, new statutory guidance and new regulations affecting adoption panels which are all due for implementation in April 2011.

To begin, the general overview of 2010-2011 can be best summarised as another busy and progressive year for the Adoption Service. The number of adoption orders has remained steady with a final figure of 28 and we attained a success rate of 94.6% for the number of children adopted who were placed for adoption within 12 months of their adoption decision being made. The most significant success however has been the outcome of our Ofsted Inspection in August 2010 which saw the adoption agency move from a judgement of 'Satisfactory' in 2007 to a judgement of 'Good' by August 2010. The 5-day field work inspection observed the broad range of adoption service delivery and everyone involved worked extremely hard to show case the success of the service and the positive outcomes achieved for Walsall children, adoptive families and those affected by adoption. This will be discussed in more detail later on in the report.

The partnerships with our neighbouring agencies through Adoption in the Black Country consortium and Adoption West Midlands Consortium continue to grow from strength to strength, both seeing significant developments over the past year. Walsall continues alongside other Adoption in the Black Country Consortium members to have a productive service level agreement with Adoption Support Birmingham and Adoption UK and both continue to offer important services on behalf of Walsall.

One of the particular challenges facing the agency last year had been the progression of children's care plans where the plan had been adoption. Evidence gathered from adoption panel agendas suggested that whilst children had had their permanency considered and slots had been booked to present the cases to adoption panel, some children had later been removed from the agendas. One of the reasons for this, and will continue to be the case, is the changes in circumstances for children - for example further assessments of birth family members. However, there had also been some children whose cases were subject to delay for other reasons, for example social workers caseloads and competing priorities, which are often complex court cases. This however, had to be seen in the context of the changes Children's Services had experienced during that time frame, most significantly the relocation of court work from Corporate Parenting Service to Safeguarding and Family Support Service. This year it has become evident as time has progressed that children's care plans are now being progressed in a timely fashion and we have had an increase of 10 children being presented to adoption panel during this time frame. The quality of the work being

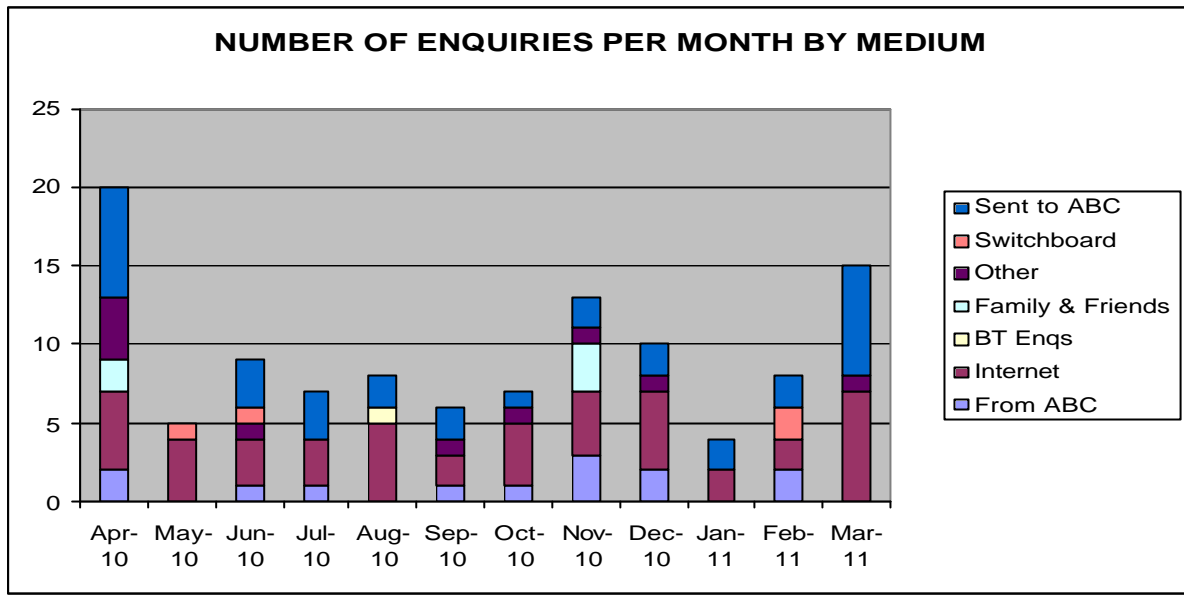
presented to adoption panel has also improved, the two main factors for this being that social workers who know the children the best are writing the CPR's and all social workers in the service have been trained in the writing of CPR's and adoption related matters.

2 Internal Recruitment Activity

Walsall accepts referrals from both Adoption in the Black Country and also individual applicants who make contact with the council. The majority of referrals however are now received through Adoption in the Black Country and all those making direct contact with Walsall are re-directed to the consortium to attend an information evening. All direct marketing activity is now generated through the consortium, there are two main reasons for this, the first being the marketing officer for adoption and fostering in Walsall took a period of maternity leave which left the post uncovered and upon her return she was relocated to the Council's Communications Department and some of the focus on marketing for adoption was lost. However, due to the success of ABC there has been no loss in the number of referrals received or the number of applicants approved. The internet also continues to be a significant source of our referrals and as can be seen from the chart below, a lot of these referrals are sent through to ABC consortium if the enquiry is not considered to be a good resource for Walsall.

Marketing Campaigns do have an impact on the number of enquires received but because of placement needs of some children looked after by Walsall Council, many enquiries from Walsall residents cannot be processed. However, those enquiries are passed onto Adoption in the Black Country for consideration by our other partners and in turn we receive enquiries back that are more able to meet the identified placement needs of Walsall children. During April 10-March 11 Walsall Customer Services officer received 79 adoption enquiries; this is 10 more than the previous year. Of those 79 enquiries, 25 offers were sent out and as a result 21 referrals were made to the adoption team for consideration. These statistics are important as the quality of the referrals received has improved and it is now more likely those applicants returning their offers are more likely to proceed through to a referral to the adoption team for consideration. This is mainly due to the screening process in operation across the ABC in which all those making an enquiry are directed to attend an information evening. Inevitably there is a high drop-out rate following attendance at the information evenings and it is now more likely that those who eventually become enquiries are more likely to become referrals and then more likely to become an approved adoptive resource.

The table below shows the numbers of enquiries received each month by medium; it is clear to see not only the significant contribution of the Adoption in the Black Country Consortium but also the success of social workers co-ordinating and running events to publicise adoption and also the role of the internet.



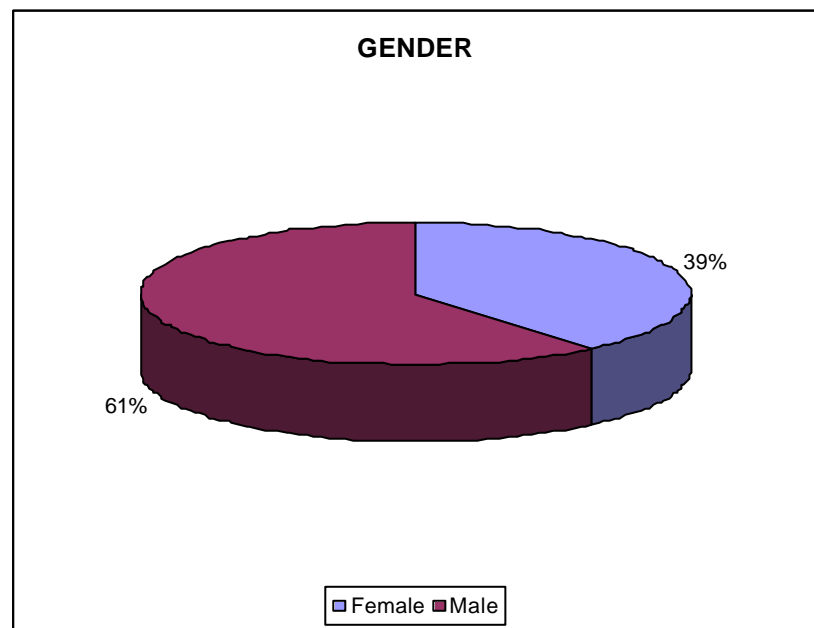
	Apr -10	May -10	Jun -10	Jul -10	Aug -10	Sep -10	Oct -10	Nov -10	Dec -10	Jan -11	Feb -11	Mar -11
From ABC	2	0	1	1	0	1	1	3	2	0	2	0
Internet	5	4	3	3	5	2	4	4	5	2	2	7
BT Enqs	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Family & Friends	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
Other	4	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1
Switch- board	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Sent to ABC	7	0	3	3	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	7

3 **Number of children suitable to be placed for adoption April 2010 and April 2011**

Gender

During April 2010 to March 2011 a total of 36 children were suitable to be placed for adoption. This is a large increase to last year's figure of 26. As detailed in last year's report the decrease in the number of children presented to adoption panel during the previous year was a direct result of the re-structure of Children's Services and the relocation of court work from Looked after Children's Service to Safeguarding and Family Support Service. Now that the court work has embedded itself in Safeguarding and Family Support Service children are now being presented to panel more speedily and this year's figure is similar to previous years where on average 35-39 children have been presented to panel on a yearly basis.

There were significantly more boys than girls, 14 girls and 22 boys, which is a similar picture to previous years. Nationally boys feature more in adoption statistics; this is an on-going trend as reported by the Commission for Social Care Inspectorate in 2006 in its publication 'Adoption: messages from inspections of adoption agencies'.



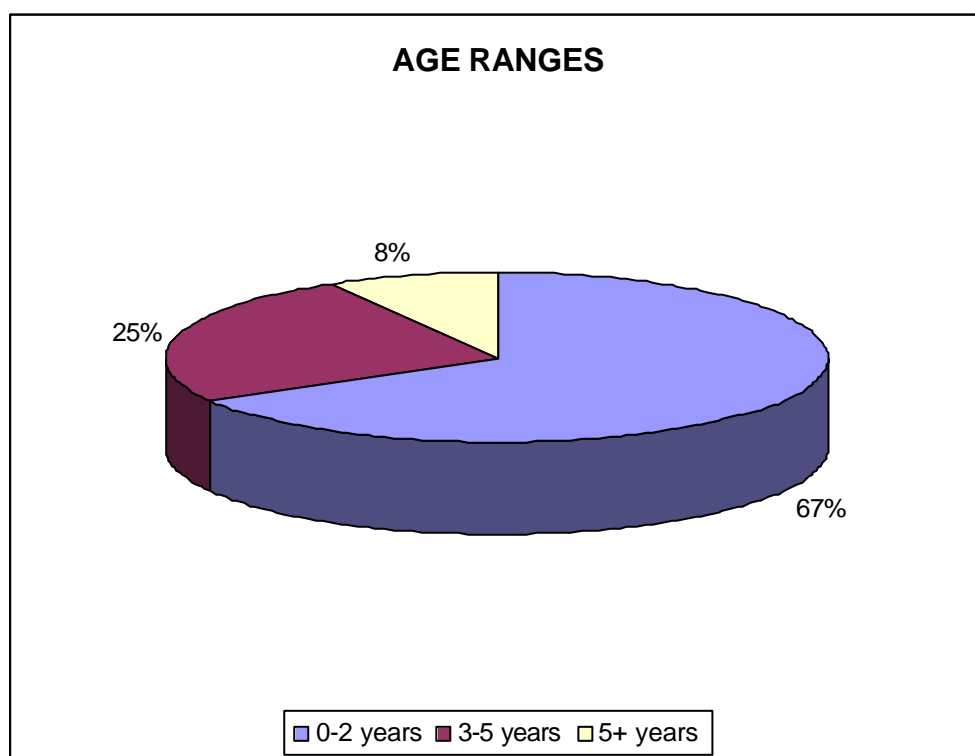
Gender of Children Approved	
Male	22
Female	14
Total	36

Age

The majority of those children requiring adoption in Walsall continue to be aged 2 and under, this year the figure is 67% compared to last year's figure of 94%. The drop in this statistic is best accounted for by the increase in the number of children presented to adoption panel with complex needs, some of whom were significantly older children. However, panel felt very strongly those children should be offered the opportunity of adoption and time-limited extensive family finding was recommended for those particular children to see if adoption could be achieved for them.

Walsall's statistics continue to differ slightly to the national picture; in 2005 only 62% of children nationally were under 4 yrs 11 months at the point of being placed for adoption and the average age at the point of adoption was 4 yrs 2 months (CSCI 06) It has been an ongoing trend within Walsall for the vast majority of our children with a care plan of adoption to be under the age of 3 years, and this year is no different.

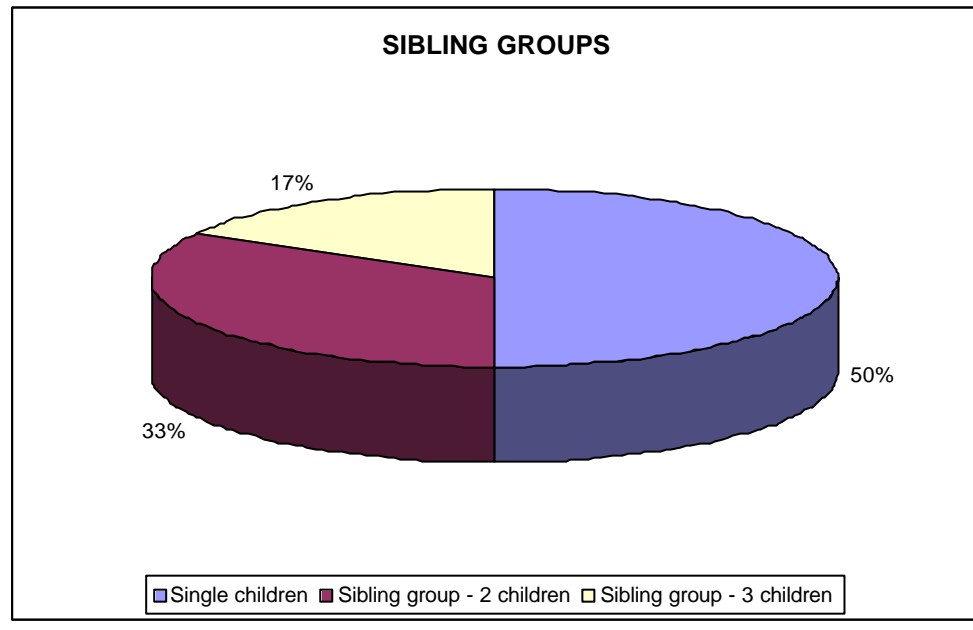
The remaining 33% were children over 3 yrs, three of which were over the age of 5 years. Of those aged over 5, they were presented in the latter part of the year and family finding is active, at the time of writing this report matches for two of these children were being pursued.



Age Ranges of Children Approved	
0-2 yrs	24
3-5 yrs	9
5+ yrs	3
Total	36

Sibling placements

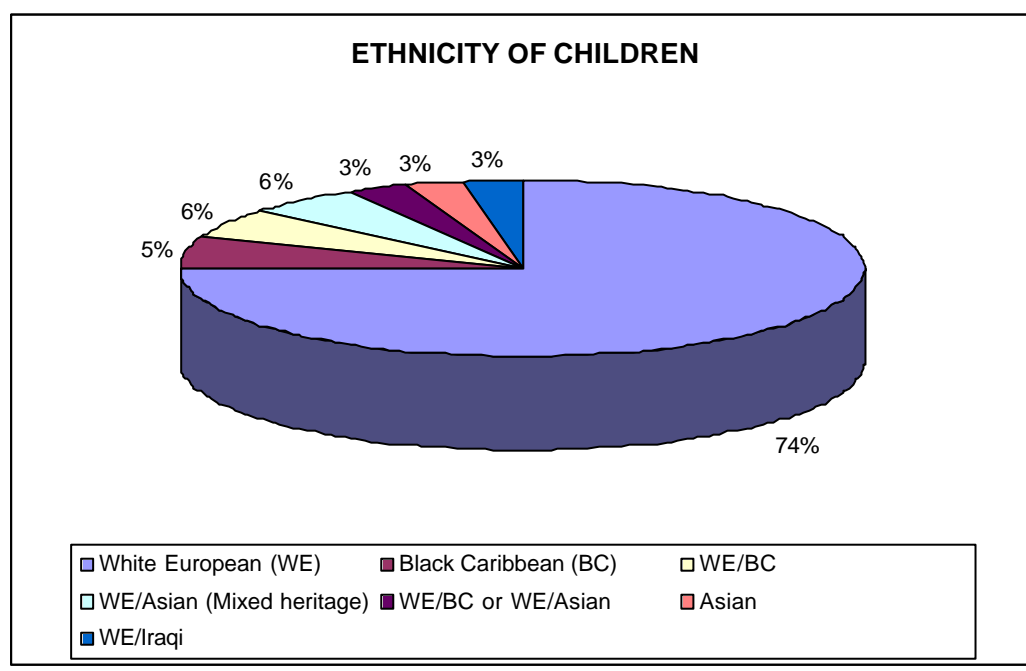
There continues to be a large number of single children needing adoptive placements; which represented 50% of the children with an adoption plan. However, this year Walsall saw a significant rise in the number of sibling groups requiring adoptive placements, this continues to be challenge not only for Walsall but nationwide, as the numbers of families coming forward to adopt sibling groups is still relatively low.



Sibling Groups – Children Approved	
1 child	18
Sibling group of 2 children	12
Sibling group of 3 children	6
Total	36

Ethnicity

This year has seen an increase in the number of black, dual heritage and multi heritage children needing adoptive placements. Last year's figures indicate that 20% of children were either, Black, Asian or Dual heritage, this year this figure has increased to 26%, which includes some children of multi ethnic origin. The placement of black, dual heritage and multi heritage children presents a particular challenge not only to Walsall but nationally, as the numbers of Black; Asian and Dual Heritage children far outweigh the number of adopters with similar ethnic backgrounds who can meet the needs of these children. Two of these children have been successfully matched with Walsall approved adoptive families; two returned to birth family members, three have been successfully placed with inter-agency families and family finding for the remaining two is still active.



Ethnicity of Children	
White European (WE)	27
Black Caribbean (BC)	2
WE/BC	2
WE/Asian (Mixed heritage)	2
WE/BC or WE/Asian	1
Asian	1
WE/Iraqi	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>36</i>

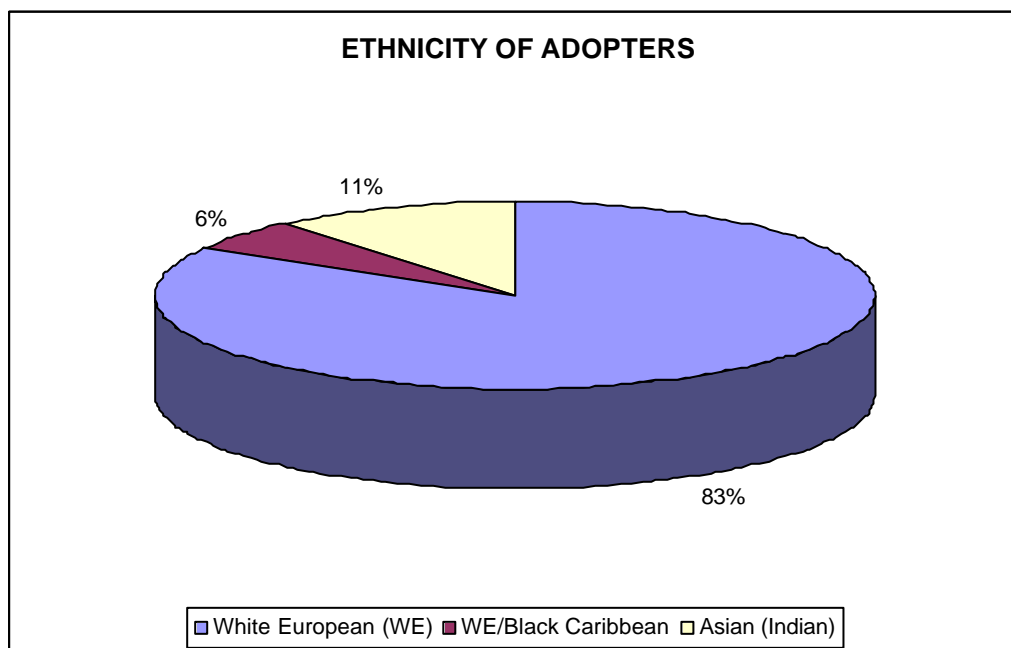
4 Children Adopted 2010/2011

Between April 2010 and March 2011, 19 children were placed for adoption; this is a significant decrease in last year's figure of 27. However, this is as a direct result of the reduction in the number of children presented to panel in 2009-2010. In total there were 28 adoption orders made during this period of time, which is a slight decrease in last year's figure of 30. The number of adoption orders is reflective of the number of children placed for adoption in the previous year, this figure was 27.

Of the 28 children adopted, 27 were placed for adoption within 12 months of the agency deciding that the child should be placed for adoption. This gives a success rate of 94.6%, which is higher to last year and demonstrates the success of structured and timely family finding.

5 Adopters

18 prospective adoptive families were presented for approval; this is an increase in last year's figure of 13 families. All 18 families presented were approved. Of the approved families, 15 were white British; one a dual heritage family and the other an Asian family.

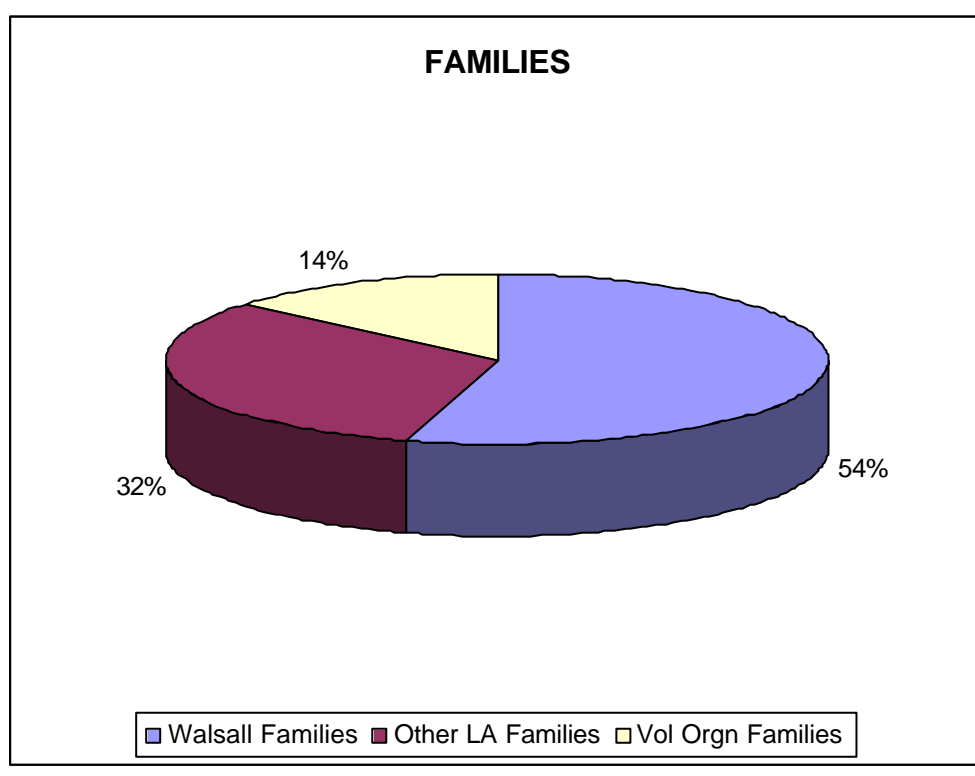


Ethnicity of Adopters	
White European (WE)	15
WE/Black Caribbean	1
Asian (Indian)	2
Total	18

6 Children Matched 2009-2010

Panel recommended 22 matches from April 2010 to March 2011 which is a decrease in previous years and is a direct correlation to the low number of children presented to adoption panel the previous year.

12 matches were made with Walsall approved families and 10 with inter-agency families. Of those 10 inter-agency placements; the vast majority were with other local authority approved adopters, 2 of which with families from Adoption in the Black Country Consortium and 3 from within Adoption West Midlands Consortium, 1 from another Local Authority and 3 with Voluntary Adoption Agencies. The reasons for the high number of inter-agency placements were the children's diverse racial and cultural background, the number of children with complex needs and those within sibling groups.



Families for children matched	
Walsall	12
Other Local Authorities	7
Voluntary Agencies	3
Total	22

7 Walsall Council Recruitment Strategy

The data that is collated as part of this report supports Walsall's recruitment strategy, which is;

'The Adoption Team will consider white/European families who could preferably take 2 or more children of Pre School or school age. We will also consider those who can take 1 child, but this should be children of up to 5 years of age.

For families able to meet the needs of dual heritage, black or Asian children, we would positively consider these families who can consider 1 or 2 children aged 0-3 and over. We especially have children of Caribbean/White and Asian/White heritage.

Families expressing an interest in disabled children should be responded to positively regardless of the age or ethnicity of the child'.

Last year Walsall had begun to take on families who only wanted to take one child 0-3, as consistently over the last few years the majority of our children requiring adoptive placements are aged less than 3 years. This works well with the Adoption in the Black Country Consortium as the marketing officer is able to quickly sign post families to the agency who can most appropriately meet their needs. However, this year we have seen an increase in the number of siblings groups, the majority of which are young sibling groups under the age of 4. This has resulted in us having to explore with families early on in their approval process their ability to parent two children and whether financial support packages can be put in place to encourage more families to consider two children.

8 Adoption in the Black Country Consortium

Adoption in the Black Country is now in its 8th year and the partnership between the four authorities involved continues to grow from strength to strength. The success of the partnership lies in the high level of communication achieved by the respective managers and the marketing officer. There are monthly meetings to discuss the development of the consortium and to share practice issues.

Adoption Support social workers also meet regularly with their peers to exchange information and consider practice issues. The four authorities now also provide an annual programme of post approval training, currently this is 6 courses a year and topics covered include 'Telling Course', 'Attachment and Trauma' This shared programme of training is proving very successful and ensures adopters, whichever stage of the process they are at, are provided with a continued programme of training. The co-trainers from all four authorities who provide adoption preparation training also meet regularly to review the annual programme of training and update the course as and when necessary and to share materials between the four authorities.

The consortium continues to offer prospective adoptive applicants the opportunity to attend an 'Information Evening' to hear more about adoption and to give them the opportunity to speak directly to an adoption social worker. These events are run bi-monthly. This frequency enables the consortium to implement **Standard 10** of the National Minimum Standards, which states prospective applicants should be invited to attend an information meeting within two months of their initial enquiry. The

events are co-ordinated by the marketing officer and supported by adoption social workers. For every event each agency sends two adoption workers; management oversight is always available on a rota system shared between the four managers across the consortium. These bi-monthly events have always been well attended, which is a direct result of effective marketing. On average the events attract anywhere between 12-16 families. We have recently changed the format of the information evenings to try and ensure those attending are seen more speedily. There is now a short presentation on adoption issues to all those attending, they are then asked to complete as fully as possible the referral form about themselves and their interest in adoption. This completed form then enables the social workers to target their discussion with the family about their particular circumstances as opposed to providing a broader discussion about adoption; this has reduced the amount of time social workers are spending with individual families and generally means those waiting to speak to a social worker are waiting for a shorter time period.

'Meet the Children' Events continue to prove effective as a means of placing children for adoption. The events are organised to try and meet the needs of older more complex children, children who are part of sibling groups and children from minority ethnic backgrounds, by raising their profile with approved adopters. DVD's of the children - which are now professionally edited - are shown, as is their artwork and their identified placement needs. This year only one event ran on 11th May 2010 due to the West Midlands Adoption Consortium also running a similar event on 22nd September 2010. A number of Walsall children were featured at both events and a high number of Walsall adopters attended. As a direct result of the 'Meet the Children' event Walsall successfully matched and placed one of the children featured with one of our own approved adoptive families. During the initial family finding for this child, we did not consider this in-house family as we did not feel they would be willing to consider a child with complex needs. However, when the family saw the little girl come to life on the cinema screen in their words 'we felt an immediate physical connection to her and knew she was the right little girl for us'. The success of this match, subsequent placement and now adoption is clear evidence of the role for such events and their place in more modern initiatives with regard to progressive family finding techniques. The events are also well received by those attending as it gives adopters the chance to meet up with other adoptive families, some of whom they will have undertaken adoption preparation training with. It also gives them the opportunity to meet with social workers from all four authorities who may in the future be looking for adopters for a particular child.

Since Adoption in the Black Country was first launched, the number of enquiries has increased year on year as a result of integrated strategic campaigns. As the 'brand' has become more established results have increased. The marketing officer is innovative in his approach and tries a variety of mediums to increase adoption activity. The previous years have seen a steady increase in the number of referrals received and the conversion rate to approved adopters has improved year on year. During the period 2010-2011 the number of enquiries received dropped from 283 to 268. The explanation for this decrease is due to a change in the marketing strategy of the ABC consortium. All those making initial contact about adoption are now immediately asked to attend an information evening, predictably once people attend an evening to hear information about adoption, some of them drop out of the system and therefore never reach an enquiry stage. What has been evidenced; is this change in strategy has improved the quality of those who then become enquiries and ultimately subsequent referrals to consortium members. Of the 268 enquiries, 68 resulted in referrals to one of four local authorities; the breakdown is as follows Sandwell 19, Dudley 17, Walsall 16 and Wolverhampton 16. The overall conversion rate from initial enquiry to approvals is approximately 1 in 5 becomes an approved adoptive resource.

9 Regional Developments

Walsall continues to be a member of the West Midlands Regional Family Placement Consortium (WMRFPC), along with 13 other West Midlands Local Authorities, and 1 voluntary agency, namely adoption focus. WMRFPC is in the process of being renamed Adoption West Midlands, the brand name and website are due to be launched within the coming months.

The Consortium continues to meet on a bi-monthly basis and discusses and develops policy, procedural and practice issues. The consortium organises at least one training event a year for all social workers and managers.

Walsall is also a member of the Midlands Family Placement Group (MFPG), which is hosted by BAAF on a quarterly basis. Again this group shares practice, policy and procedural issues. This group is well attended by all agencies from across the Midlands region and provides excellent opportunity for networking with colleagues. This group organises at least one training event a year for social workers and managers. During this year I was elected as a committee member for MFPG and as such I am involved in the organising of training events, purchasing resources for the group and assisting in the delivery of new practice initiatives.

10 Adoption Support

Walsall continues to purchase a service from Adoption Support across the West Midlands (ASAWM), which, in accordance with our current service level agreements offers up to 6 sessions to anyone living in the Walsall Borough, who is affected by adoption (more sessions can be offered on a negotiated basis). They also offer activity days for adopted children, including an Easter and spring camping holiday.

The Adoption Support Service level agreement has been agreed to provide Intermediary, Access to Birth Records services and Independent Social Work support to birth parents and birth family members.

The development of a more cohesive adoption support service has seen the beginnings of a closer working relationship with Adoption Support, they have been instrumental in advising us of how to further develop our support to birth parents and those affected by adoption. Adoption support activity will be addressed further on in this report. This closer working relationship ensures a smooth transition of service provider, following initial counselling and access to birth records for service users in relation to Intermediary services.

The take up of Adoption Support service for birth parents has over the years been low. However, Walsall has now introduced an opt-out system as opposed to opt-in system. Essentially this means that unless birth parents specifically ask not to be referred to the service they are automatically referred and Adoption Support then initiate contact with the birth parent to offer support. This system is now fully operational and is proving effective in ensuring birth parents receive adequate support.

Birth Parent's Advocacy Service

This service provides birth parents that have learning difficulties support, advice and advocacy regarding adoption processes and adoption contact arrangements.

Midlands ASSA Group.

The designated agency ASSA and the Adoption Support Senior Practitioner attend the Midlands Region ASSA Group which meets quarterly. The group has become an invaluable forum to be able to consider common adoption support difficulties, issues and to share information and ideas.

11 Adoption UK

The partnership between Adoption UK and Walsall Council is still active and fully operational. The service level agreement - commissioned jointly with the other Black County agencies - has extended the partnership with Adoption UK, which now provides support, information, advice and encouragement to adopters, carers and practitioners as follows:

- Telephone Helpline, offering up to date information on all aspects of adoption and the adoption process
- Local Support Groups, run by adoptive parents, regular meetings and events, both locally and nationwide
- Adoption Today Magazine, 10 editions per year
- Information Leaflets and Publications
- Contact Networks, databases of over 800 adoptive parents willing to speak to others about specific aspects of adoption
- Lending Library, over 400 books and videos
- Adoption UK's on-line community inter-active website
- Training Courses, for parents and practitioners, including "A Piece of Cake" training
- Buddy Schemes
- Parent consultants
- Regular Newsletters

The Buddy scheme which was introduced by Adoption UK in the latter part of 2006 continues to promote a level of support to new adoptive parents. The take up of the service has continued to progress slowly. In order to address this Adoption UK are making more attempts to engage with adopters through local support groups and sharing information with them about the benefits of the Buddy scheme. Adoption UK has also introduced the Parent consultant; the idea of this new scheme is to provide more intense support which perhaps the Buddy scheme is unable to provide to adoptive families who may be experiencing a more acute period of difficulty.

Walsall Council has continued to have an increase in its membership of Adoption UK as all newly approved Adopters are automatically given one year's free membership to Adoption UK; which includes adopters receiving up to date information on new research and development in the arena of adoption. All adopters, once members, are invited to Adoption UK support group meetings. As a supportive measure to some adoptive families we have on occasion agreed to fund a further year's membership to enable continued support to families who we identify would benefit from this.

In order to increase our use of the Buddy scheme, those families who are about to go through the matching process with a child or children are encouraged to have a referral made to the Buddy Scheme to ensure they have independent support during the critical stage of introductions, this new system has increased our take up of the service.

Adoption UK continues to run quarterly support groups at the Village Hotel in Walsall, approved adopters from Walsall and Wolverhampton are invited as are other approved adopters who subscribe to Adoption UK, who may also live within close proximity to Walsall and surrounding areas. The groups give adopters the opportunity to meet with other adopters at all stages of the process; it also facilitates the use of outside speakers to advice on specialist areas of adoption.

12 Adopters Attending Panel

Walsall continues to encourage the attendance of adopters to adoption panel at both the approval and the matching stage. Of all the approvals and matches presented to adoption panel during this period, full attendance was achieved bar one family who were unable to attend the match between them and a second child placed with them. Adopters continue to give us positive feedback about their experience of attending adoption panel.

We were fortunate that in the last report I was able to confirm that following a good practice recommendation from Ofsted in 2007 we had managed to secure the use of two further rooms within the council house, one of these acted as a waiting room and the other to allow those attending panel the option to hear their panel recommendation in private. Unfortunately this arrangement has not continued due to other competing council priorities with regard to the booking of rooms within the council house and we now only have the use of one additional room. In order to continue to offer those attending adoption panel a positive experience and also in keeping with the good practice recommendation made by Ofsted, the venue for panel meetings will be changing within the near future. We are currently investigating other suitable locations and it is likely the venue will change in the latter part of 2011.

13 Disruption Following Placement

There has been one disruption for a child in a pre-adoptive placement this year. The disruption took place approximately 3 months into the placement. The disruption meeting took place, the findings from this were that the placement had disrupted as a result of the female adopter being unable to bond with the child and that adoption was not fulfilling her life as she had expected. The child was removed from the placement and at the time of writing remains in foster care whilst alternative plans are made for him. Direct work is being undertaken with him on understanding his care plan and on achieving his care plan of adoption.

The use of Child Appreciation Days for all children 18 months and older, has continued to be instrumental in the prevention of further adoption breakdowns. Child Appreciation Days continue to better prepare adopters for the realities of caring for a child. Child Appreciation days take place prior to the match being presented to Adoption Panel so that adopters hear all available information to enable them to

carefully consider if they wish to proceed to a match. Child Appreciation Days will not prevent all adoption breakdowns as is evidenced by the details of the above disruption. However, when an adoption disruption takes place for a child for whom there has been a Child Appreciation day, the information provided to the family is well documented and for children who later access their files as adults there is a clear record of the events leading up to the disruption including the level of detail included in a Child Appreciation Day, this may assist children to come to terms with the history of the disruption and may prevent them apportioning blame to themselves for the breakdown of the placement.

14 The Role of Medical Adviser

The medical adviser continues to undertake a key function in the work of panel. Dr Vidya Rao is now into the eighth year as medical adviser. Dr Rao continues to offer panel members invaluable advice when considering the medical needs of both children and prospective adopters. She ensures medical reports for children are always available for panel members and will follow through with any medical issues if they arise following panel. She is also available to meet with adopters if they request this to answer any particular questions about the medical needs of a child prior to placement. From April 2011 it will be possible to have two medical advisors for an adoption agency, as a result of this change in adoption agency regulations Dr Rao will be assisted in her duties by Dr Santi Rambhatla.

15 Significant Issues and Developments Affecting Legal Services

Panel has received advice and assistance from Legal Services throughout from Lynn Levesley. However, since April 2011 legal advice and assistance has been provided by Gill Ross as Lynn Levesley has taken up the new position as Head of Legal Services.

The introduction of the Public Law Outline (PLO) initially impacted on service delivery with the re-location of all court work cases to Safeguarding and Vulnerable Children Service. From February 2010, all new applications for care and placement orders were issued by Safeguarding and Family Support Service. Now that the court work is embedded into the new service, there has been an improvement in the progression of children's care plans and since training has been offered to social workers on the completion of CPR's there has been an improvement in the quality of the CPR's being presented to adoption panel.

Towards the latter part of this year, Walsall Adoption Service has been preparing itself for the introduction of new National Minimum Standards for adoption, new adoption agency regulations and new statutory guidance, all of which are due to come into operation on the 1st April 2011. In summary this will see significant changes to the set up and operation of adoption panels, it will see renewed emphasis on children being the focus of the adoption process including new guidance and standards regarding the completion of Life Story Books and Later Life Letters, it will see a new emphasis on increasing adoption placements and making matches for children which do not focus so heavily on appropriate ethnic matching, it will see the implementation of more robust family finding activity and will provide a general revision of the 2002 Adoption and Children Act and accompanying guidance.

16 Ofsted Adoption Inspection August 2010

Walsall Adoption Service was inspected by Ofsted from August 12th to August 15th 2010 and observation on Adoption panel took place in July 2010. The verbal feedback to managers was extremely positive with a particular emphasis on the good planning and preparation for the inspection. The summary of the inspection report is best summarised by some of the following headlines;

‘The service has effective systems in place to recruit suitable staff and robust and thorough procedures for assessing adoptive families. It is good at family finding and matching children and works well with consortium members in doing so. The panel processes are well organised, professional and thoughtful’

‘The agency is well managed and has a good strategic approach to the provision of adoption services’

‘This is a good service that has a clear focus on the needs of the child and on providing safe and secure adoptive families’

‘There is strong and effective management at all levels of the service’

Ofsted commented that all actions and recommendations had been implemented from the last inspection apart from two which had been partially met. These were the location of the panel advisor and the focus on adult disclosure of historical abuse, both of which are addressed in the improvement plan for the coming year. The recommendations they made were as follows;

- Ensure the written procedures for dealing with allegations of historical abuse are updated to include disclosure by an adult
- Ensure that efforts are made to obtain for the child clear and appropriate information from the birth parents and birth families about themselves and life before the adoption, with particular reference to the consistent quality of CPR’s, life books and later in life letters.
- Consider the role within the service of the panel advisor.

These recommendations have already started to be addressed within the service and will be addressed in the improvement plan for the coming year.

In summary the inspection highlighted the significant improvements the adoption service has made over the past three years, it emphasised our commitment to ensuring positive outcomes for children and also highlighted the good strategic approach taken to service delivery in Walsall.

17 Good Practice Requirements

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 introduced new requirements to be monitored by panel. The monitoring forms which were designed to take into account the National Minimum standards for adoption tell us the following;

Prospective adopter’s assessments

- Prospective Adopters Reports – **39%** of assessments were completed within the required 8 month timescales

- For the **61%** that did not meet the timescales relevant reasons given were –the need to undertake more work with the family, waiting for a preparation training course and other more pressing case issues for adoption social workers.

Adoption Decision

- **61.5%** of children who were presented to panel had their permanence plan agreed at the 4 month review. The remaining **38.5%** did not have their permanence plan ratified at the 4 month review for the following reasons, outstanding assessments, no allocated social worker on one case and the overall impact of the PLO and the need to have all assessments completed prior to the initiation of proceedings, which therefore delays the requirement to consider permanence at the 4 month review.
- **50%** of children were presented to panel within 2 months of the 4 month review. For the remaining **50%** who did not meet the timescales, reasons cited were outstanding assessments, delay in care proceedings and no allocated social worker for one case.

Children's wishes and feelings be recorded

- Of the 36 children presented to panel, **13** children had their views clearly represented within their Child's Permanence Report, which represents **36%**. **23** children (**64%**) did not have their views recorded. However, of these remaining 23, the vast majority were young children (mostly babies under the age of 3 years and 00 months). For the children older than 3 years the reason was the work was still to be undertaken.

Parents being given the opportunity to give their account of events and to see and comment on what has been written about them

- **61%** of parents were given the opportunity to give their account of events, which was then recorded in the Child's Permanence Report.
- **39%** of birth parents did not have sight of the reports presented. Reasons cited were parents' non co operation and parents' whereabouts unknown and on one occasion parents not consenting to giving information.

Adoption support plans

- Similarly to 20010/2011, **100%** of adoption support plans were presented to panel; they continued to be of a good standard.

Child's Permanence Reports

- Training on the completion of CPR's was provided to social workers across the service during the year. There has been an overall improvement in the quality of the CPR's being presented to adoption panel. However, given the high turnover of staff the training will need to be a rolling programme to ensure all new social workers joining the authority are provided with appropriate training.

Matches

- **45%** of children were matched within 6 months of either the court or adoption panel recommending that they were suitable to be placed for adoption. Reasons cited for the **55%** who did not meet the required standard were for children with more complex needs, those in need of sibling placements, those of dual heritage and those whose assessments of birth family members were not complete and delays in identifying appropriate adoptive placements. One delay was due to foster carers expressing a wish to adopt the child in placement, they had to then be assessed and attend training prior to the match being presented to adoption panel.

- However, in comparison, **73%** of children were matched within 12 months of adoption panel recommending that they were suitable to be placed for adoption.

18 Adoption Panel Functions

The following information remains unchanged from the Annual Report of 2009/2010. However, as discussed earlier these functions will drastically change from April 2011 and will be reported in the next annual report.

- Tenure for all members, with the exception of the medical adviser, has been extended to 3 consecutive terms, each with duration of 3 years.
- Independent panel chair
- New structure to reports presented; child permanence report; prospective adopters report; adoption placement report and adoption support plan
- Panel quoracy is now 5 members previously this was 6 members
- No 'in principal' recommendations can be made.
- Considering the plan for the child is now referred to as 'whether a child is suitable to be placed for adoption'.
- Suitability of prospective adopters – when recommending the suitability of prospective adopters panel can only give advice regarding numbers of children their ages, genders and background factors prospective adopters can consider. (This excludes inter-country adoption approvals)
- Brief reports should be presented to panel where following an application the assessing social worker is not minded to recommend approval. Applicants can access the independent review mechanism.
- Prospective adopters have 40 days (previously 28 days) to decide whether to accept a decision made by the agency, or consider making representations to the agency OR apply to the independent review mechanism, they can't do both.
- Panel will monitor arrangements for informing the prospective adopters, the child and, where appropriate, the parents of panel's recommendation and decision.

19 Attendance and Performance

At the time of writing this report in July 2011, all panel members have either had their performance reviewed for the fourth time or are in the process of having it reviewed.

Regular attendance in 2010-2011 was one the most important objectives which required monitoring. This year the minimum attendance requirement of 75% was fulfilled by all of its members.

For the period covered by this report, there were 13 Adoption Panel meetings Attendance details are recorded in the attached grid situated at the back page of this report. (See Attached)

The overall feedback from social workers/prospective adopters and other professionals attending panel and completing the feedback forms was generally very positive.

The overall feedback from Panel members has continued to reflect the following:

- The written information can sometimes be insufficient to assist, inform discussion and make recommendations. However, they have seen some improvement in the quality of the reports presented since training has been provided to all social workers completing Child's Permanence Reports.
- Members felt that exceptionally good reports were generally presented by the adoption team in the form of the Prospective Adopters Reports.
- Panel members have provided positive feedback about the processes involved for the organisation of adoption panels, particularly the quality assurance role that is undertaken to ensure reports presented are as comprehensive as possible.
- All panel members felt they are allowed to express their views and that their views are respected and acknowledged.
- Panel members have consistently commented they feel the skills and experience of the panel chair compliment the effective running of adoption panel, they have also continued to compliment the skills of the panel administrator in ensuring panel minutes give an accurate record of the discussions held by members.

20 Adoption Agency

During the period 2010-11 Kay Child, interim Assistant Director for Children's Services fulfilled the role of Agency Decision Maker. From June 2010 Michelle Whiting joined Walsall Council as the new Assistant Director for Children's Services and now fulfils the role of Agency Decision Maker.

The ASSA for Walsall Council is Louise Watts, operational manager for Family Placements.

21 The Adoption Team

There were some staff changes during 2010-2011, Yvonne Lynch Adoption Support Social Worker leaving the department in March 2011 to return to work in London. Her post has been filled by Amy Cauvain who will be joining the service in the near future. Tracy Jenkins, outreach worker joined the service in February 2011 with the remit of undertaking all direct work with children who have an adoption plan and who require intervention to help them prepare for moving onto adoption. Diane Rollinson, life story worker also joined the service in February 2011 with the remit of working on the backlog of children who are without a life story book.

Since joining the team, Tracy has undertaken some extremely positive work with older children in preparing them for adoption placement and she has been instrumental in the matching process for some of these children by accompanying social workers to visits to potential adopters and providing these adopters with some real insight into the needs of these children and the level of skill required to eventually parent them. The role and function of this post within the adoption service has already proved to be very beneficial and positive outcomes have already been achieved for a number of children. The importance of direct work to help children understand their adoption plan and to help them move on successfully should never be underestimated. The addition of this post in the service will continue to deliver on the objectives of placement stability and discharge through adoption, particularly for children whom

without this support may have struggled to make the successful transition through to adoption.

The team continues to be supported in its activities by Eve Edwards, family support officer, who organises all the photo and DVD profiling for children for whom we are family finding. Eve also co-ordinates the 'Meet the Children' events and has also undertaken some direct work with adopters in helping them prepare for the arrival of children in placement, all of which has been extremely successful. Eve also co-ordinates the running of Child Appreciation Days and is given the task of ensuring these events are meaningful for adopters. Liz Perry our customer service officer undertakes all initial enquiry work for those seeking information about adoption and works very closely with the marketing officer from Adoption in the Black Country in ensuring a good level of service delivery.

22 Training and Development

In February 2011 the adoption panel and the adoption team attended a one day training event on 'Disruption', this training highlighted placement breakdown factors and provided useful tools to use in the assessment of prospective adopters. This training was well received by all panel members and adoption service staff.

23 Information

A number of consultation, skills and knowledge information/articles have been distributed to panel members which continue to help panel members stay abreast of changes in law, practice and research.

24 Miscellaneous Figures

Number of approved adopters who have been their suitable to adopt decision rescinded : 0

Number of children who had a decision they were suitable to be placed for adoption which was subsequently rescinded : 3

Number of adopters in representation process : 0.

Number of non-agency adoption orders : 4.

Number of adoptions of children from other agency placed with Walsall approved adopter's : 0

25 Statement of Purpose

There have been no changes to the statement of purpose

26 Adoption Support Services

Introduction

Walsall's Adoption Support Team is located within the Adoption Service at Pinfold Health centre.

The staff composition is as follows:

A fulltime adoption support co coordinator (position filled)

A full time social worker (position filled)

A full time life story worker (position filled)

There is evidence of increased activity on all aspects of adoption support services, with the steady increase in the numbers of adopted family's eligibility for support and generally adopters being more aware that support is available. Adopted adults and birth relatives are also more aware that services are available to them.

A duty system is in operation whereby callers to the service can receive an early response to their enquiries.

There is joint working with the three other agencies in the Black country Consortium, particularly around training for adopters.

27 Support to Families and Children under 18 years of age

The adoption support service continues to offer an annual review of children's support plans to adoptive families who are eligible. The number of adoptive families eligible for an annual review for 2010-2011 was **114**. The number of adoptive parents agreeing to or requesting that reviews take place remains the same as the previous year. Assessment of financial support continues to be the greatest number of requests due to family's change of economic circumstances, followed by requests for therapeutic input. Support for the latter has largely been achieved with input from a psychotherapist who is able to work with adoptive parents, supporting them to adapt their parenting style to meet the needs of their children who are likely to have attachment issues.

Training workshops for approved adopters are now available due to the joint working with the Black Country Consortium agencies. Workshops that were offered and taken up by adopters during 2010-2011 covered the following topics; Understanding Attachment; Introduction to Theraplay; Contact and Internet social networking and Explaining Adoption to children. Specific training for adopters may also be arranged depending on need.

The 'Piece of Cake' course, delivered by Adoption UK, continues to be accessible to adopters who already have a child/ren placed with them. The last Piece of Cake course, hosted by Wolverhampton, took place from September 2010 to March 2011 and was attended by three approved adopters from Walsall.

The Family Connections newsletter continues to be distributed three times per year and continues to be valued by adoptive families. Several adoptive parents have now taken a lead on producing and editing the newsletter, which is overseen by adoption support social workers before distribution. This has proved to be successful and the feedback from adopters has been positive.

Walsall Adoption Support Service hosted its own summer day event for adoptive families which took place at a children's activity centre which was hired exclusively for adoptive families. A total of **12** families attended the event.

During 2010-2011 three coffee mornings for adopters were organised and hosted by Adoption Support social workers. Unfortunately the numbers attending has continued to remain low.

The Adoption Support Duty system continues to take a steady stream of enquiries from Adoptive parents, Birth parents/relatives, Adopted adults and professionals. The duty system enables these enquiries to be dealt with rapidly.

28 Disruptions

There were no disruptions for children post adoption order during this period

29 Contact

Contact Agreements from adoptive parents are now being completed earlier and are being lodged with the adoption support team, usually by the time the child has been placed with their new family. Unfortunately many birth parent/relative agreements, which are the responsibility of the child's social worker, are delayed in being completed. The numbers of referrals to facilitate contact agreements grew with the number of children placed for adoption.

The computerised data base system for contact arrangements continues to be an effective working tool and enables us to operate a reminder system for reminder letters to be sent to adoptive parents just before contact is due.

Between April 2010 and March 2011 the contact activity supported by the Adoption support team is as follows:

Total number of indirect contact arrangements supported is **390** from adopted children and **812** exchanges from birth relatives. This is an increase of 33 children from last year.

There are a number of direct contact arrangements within existing contact agreements, which are managed by the respective adoptive parents. These usually involve the promotion of sibling contact between children placed in different adoptive placements.

The adoption support team support/facilitate **8** direct contact arrangements.

30 Schedule 2 and Section 98

The service continues to receive regular referrals from Adopted adults who wish to access their birth/adoption records; adopted adults who wish to trace their birth relatives and birth relatives wishing to contact/ be reunited with adult adoptees. Following initial discussion/interview/assessment we are able to pass on the referrals to Adoption Support (B'ham) in line with the service level agreement for further work that may need to be completed.

Some referrals continue to be held and worked by Walsall Adoption Support service, which may be due to complex issues or risk factors relating to early life experiences which may have a detrimental effect on the adoptee or members of the birth family. Cases may also be held for staff learning and development.

31 Complaints

The service has received two complaints this year;

Complaint one

Adoptive parents complained about the level of support offered to them by children's services and that Walsall had failed to offer assistance to one of the children when he made a disclosure of past abuse.

The majority of the complaint was not upheld as the chronology produced as a result of the complaint did identify a vast array of support services that were made available to the family. However the family were asked for more information about the disclosure to then assist the department to investigate further the latter part of their complaint, this information was never received.

Complaint two

Prospective applicants complained that their initial enquiry and subsequent initial visit did not progress to Walsall accepting an adoption application.

Their complaint was not upheld as the applicants did not meet the needs of Walsall children awaiting adoption. The applicants were not happy with the response and escalated the complaint to the Chief Executive Paul Sheehan. The Chief executive responded by saying all their enquiries had been dealt with appropriately. The applicants then approached the Local Government Ombudsman. The Local Government Ombudsman advised the council had acted appropriately in its dealings with the applicants and recommended no further action.

31 Conclusion

It has been an incredibly successful year for the adoption service, most notably achieving a judgement of 'Good' from Ofsted in August 2010. Everyone in the Adoption Service worked extremely hard to ensure the success of the inspection, which is best summarised as follows;

'This is a good service that has a clear focus on the needs of the child and on providing safe and secure adoptive families' (Ofsted 27/8/10)

The number of adoptions achieved during this year has remained steady, but more significantly is the increase in the number of children being presented to adoption panel, an increase in 10 from last year. This figure is more in line with figures from previous years and will undoubtedly result in an increase in adoption figures in 2011-12.

The strength of the Adoption in the Black Country Consortium continues to grow and more placements are being achieved across the Black Country through structured and creative family finding techniques. Walsall also benefits from 'Adoption West Midlands Consortium', with a good proportion of the inter-agency placements made this year through the consortium.

Walsall's commitment to adopters and children and their birth families has continued to improve with the combined effectiveness of adoption and adoption support. For all involved it is now a more transparent service and families and children are more easily able to move from the services offered by the pre-adoption side to the post-adoption side of the service.

There has been an improvement in the progression of children's care plans for adoption, which is as a direct result of the work being generated by Safeguarding and family support service. Child Permanence Report's are now written by social workers who know children and their families well, which is particularly important as this is a recommendation made in the new Statutory Guidance which was published in April 2011.

One of the main priorities for the coming year will be the implementation of new Regulations, Statutory Guidance and National Minimum Standards for adoption all of which came into effect on the 1st April 2011. The implementation of these changes comes alongside the new Care Planning Regulations which also came into effect on the 1st April 2011. However, I am confident the service will fully embrace the recommended changes and children and their families will continue to receive a good and productive service.

32 Service/Panel Developments 2010/11

Adoption Service targets for this year are to maintain the excellent performance of 2010-11, which will include the following:

- To implement the new Statutory Guidance in relation to adoption with the first revision of the 2002 Adoption and Children Act. Alongside this to ensure the service is compliant with the new National Minimum Standards for Adoption.
- To fully implement the new regulations governing the operation of Adoption Panels and the independent review of determinations. In order to achieve this Walsall Adoption Panel will need to be reconstituted from the 1st April 2011.
- To continue to strive for better outcomes for children with a discharge plan of adoption. In doing so close monitoring through the Activities and Outcomes forum will be maintained.
- To consider the role of panel advisor for both Adoption and fostering panels in the planned re-structure of Adoption and Fostering Services.
- To support foster carers in moving children on for adoption by providing specific training on moving on work; this will be provided by the adoption service.
- To ensure current procedures reflect the actions to be taken with the disclosure of historical abuse.
- To continue to develop the adoption support service and to move to a position where an adoption support social worker attends the first statutory review of all inter-agency placements to improve continuity of service.
- To consider the frequency and length of panel meetings and to consider whether panel meetings are needed on a three weekly basis as opposed to monthly to ensure a more speedy response to the rising numbers of children being presented to adoption panel.

Lisa Preston

**Walsall Council Adoption Service Team Manager and
Adoption Panel Professional Adviser**

ADOPTION PANEL ATTENDANCE 2010/11

	April	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Oct 26th	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	% Attendance
Jan Toplis	X	X	A	X	X	X	X	X	I	X	X	X	X	92%
Lisa Ainsworth	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	A	X	X	X	X	X	92%
Alan Velvett	X	A	X	X	A	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	75%
Rani Mann	-	-	-	-	-	O	-	-	X	X	X	X	X	100%
Dr Vidya Rao	X	X	X	A	X	X	X	A	X	X	X	X	X	85%
Diane Browne	I	I	I	I	I	I	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100%
Bob Heighway	X	X	A	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	92%
Cllr Ronald Carpenter	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	A	X	X	X	X	X	92%
Julie McBride	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	A	X	X	92%
Jane Linton	O	-	-	-	-	X	X	X	X	X	A	X	A	75%

Key:

- X - Attended
- A - Apologies
- I - Apologies (ill)
- O - Observing

Panel members agree to attend 75% of meetings