

**AdoptionRegister**  
FOR ENGLAND

# Annual Report 2013/14

[www.adoptionregister.org.uk](http://www.adoptionregister.org.uk)





## Foreword

Sue Brunton, Interim Director, Child Placement

### I am pleased to provide the foreword for the 2013/14 Annual Report for the Adoption Register for England and Wales.

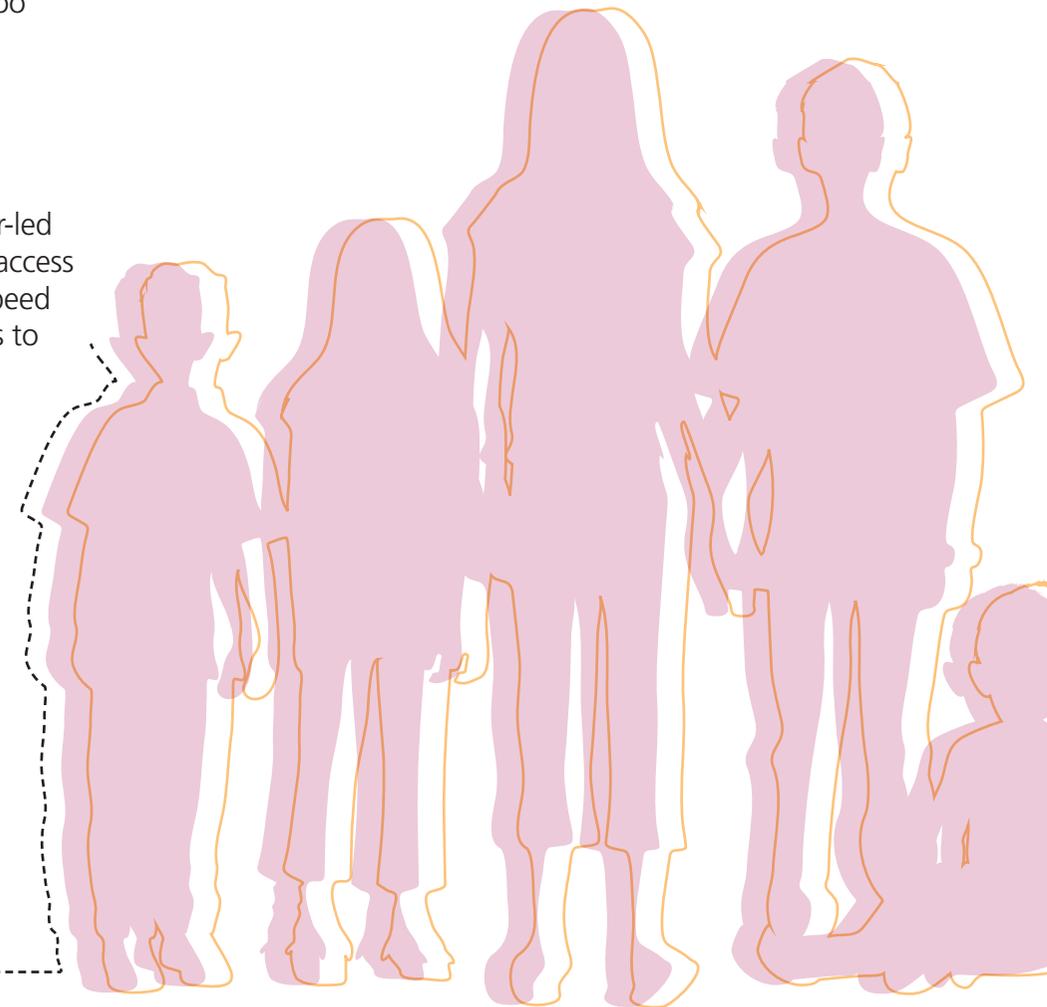
The Adoption Register has had another successful year and continues to provide the largest database of children waiting to be adopted and of approved adopters in England and Wales. We believe that these numbers can only increase with the support of Government, which has placed referral to the Register on a statutory footing. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of Andy Stott, Register Manager, and his team, the Register continues to hold a central and important position in adoption practice.

After nearly 10 years of operating the Register, we were delighted to be awarded the contract to run the new Adoption Register for England for three years from April 2014. This service will cover England only but there will be protocols in place with Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland in order to allow the sharing of appropriate information on adopters and children

awaiting adoption so that the chances of adoption are maximised.

As the adoption agenda develops, so too does the Register, and 2014 will be an exciting year for us. We will introduce a version of the Register which can be accessed and searched by approved prospective adopters. The Register has always been at the forefront of adopter-led initiatives and we believe that adopter access to the Register will both increase the speed of matching, and enable more matches to be made. We are looking forward to another productive year.

**There were 2,996 children referred and 1,332 adoptive families which means that the Adoption Register provides the largest database of children waiting to be adopted and of approved adopters**





## Overview

Andy Stott, Adoption Register Manager

**I am pleased to welcome you to the 2013/14 Annual Report of the Adoption Register for England and Wales. This report covers the period from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014.**

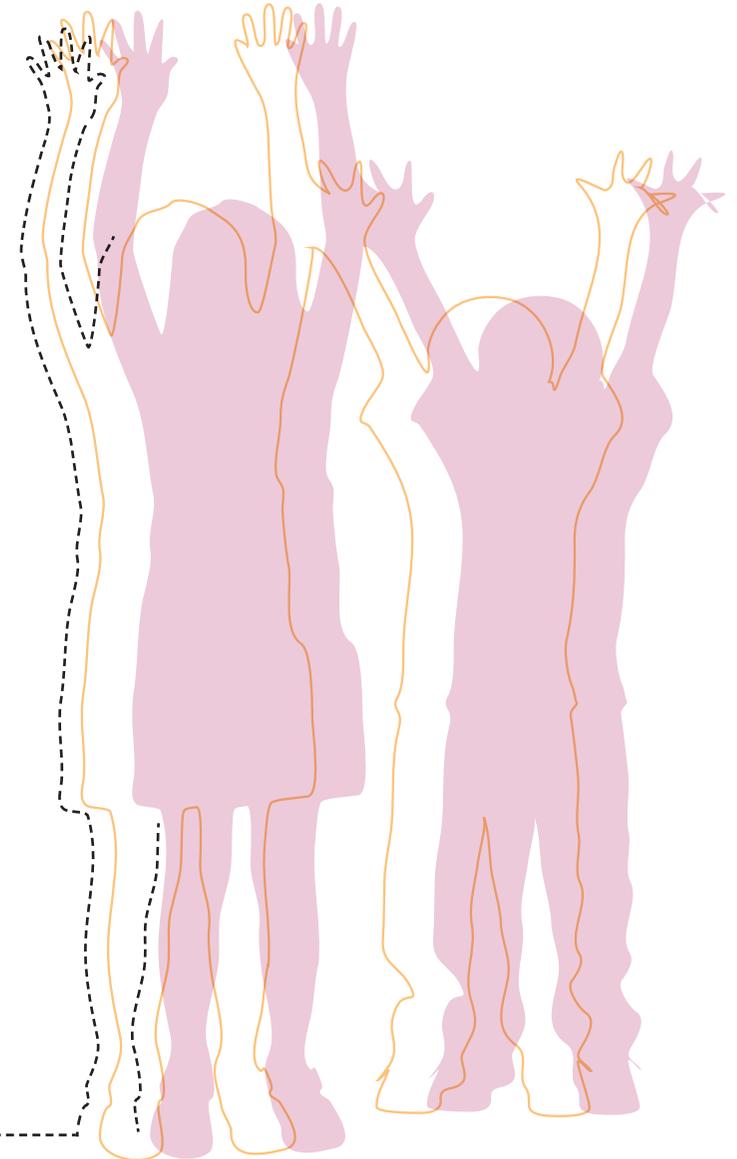
One of the most interesting things about writing the introduction to the Annual Report is to reflect on what I wrote last year. Twelve months ago, I reported that after a period of several years of an increasing number of children being referred with fewer adopters available, I felt that there was evidence that the picture might be slowly changing. Although we had still seen an increase in the number of children referred, the rate was slowing. Alongside this, we saw an increase in the number of adopters referred for the first time in four years. This change has continued at quite a pace, meaning that the Register is in a far different place to this time last year.

2013/14 also brought a continuation of our success in finding families for children, with a record number of 432 children matched at panel as a result of links identified by the

Register. This is a rise of 22 per cent on the previous year and an impressive achievement. In addition, a further 89 children have been matched through Register exchange days. These events are extremely popular and in line with the increase in adopters approved, mentioned below, we are now experiencing record numbers of adopters attending – over 150 at our last event in London.

The number of referrals of children to the Register last year showed a decrease for the first time in four years, this being most evident in the final quarter. Some agencies are experiencing a reduction in their looked after children population and many are reporting a similar reduction in the number of adoption plans and placement order applications agreed in the courts. They also comment that the children with adoption plans are getting younger; this is corroborated by the increase over the last two years in the proportion of children aged four and under who have been referred to the Register.

**A record number of 432 children matched due to Adoption Register links**



The increase in the number of prospective adopters referred continued with a rise of nearly 50 per cent compared to 2012/13; we now have the highest number of adopters on the Register for five years. This increase is being reflected in general in the world of adoption, with the vast majority of agencies, particularly local authorities, reporting that they are recruiting many more adopters than in recent years. The reasons given for this include investment in recruitment through the adoption reform grant, and collaborative working between small groups of agencies, involving joint recruitment campaigns and preparation groups.

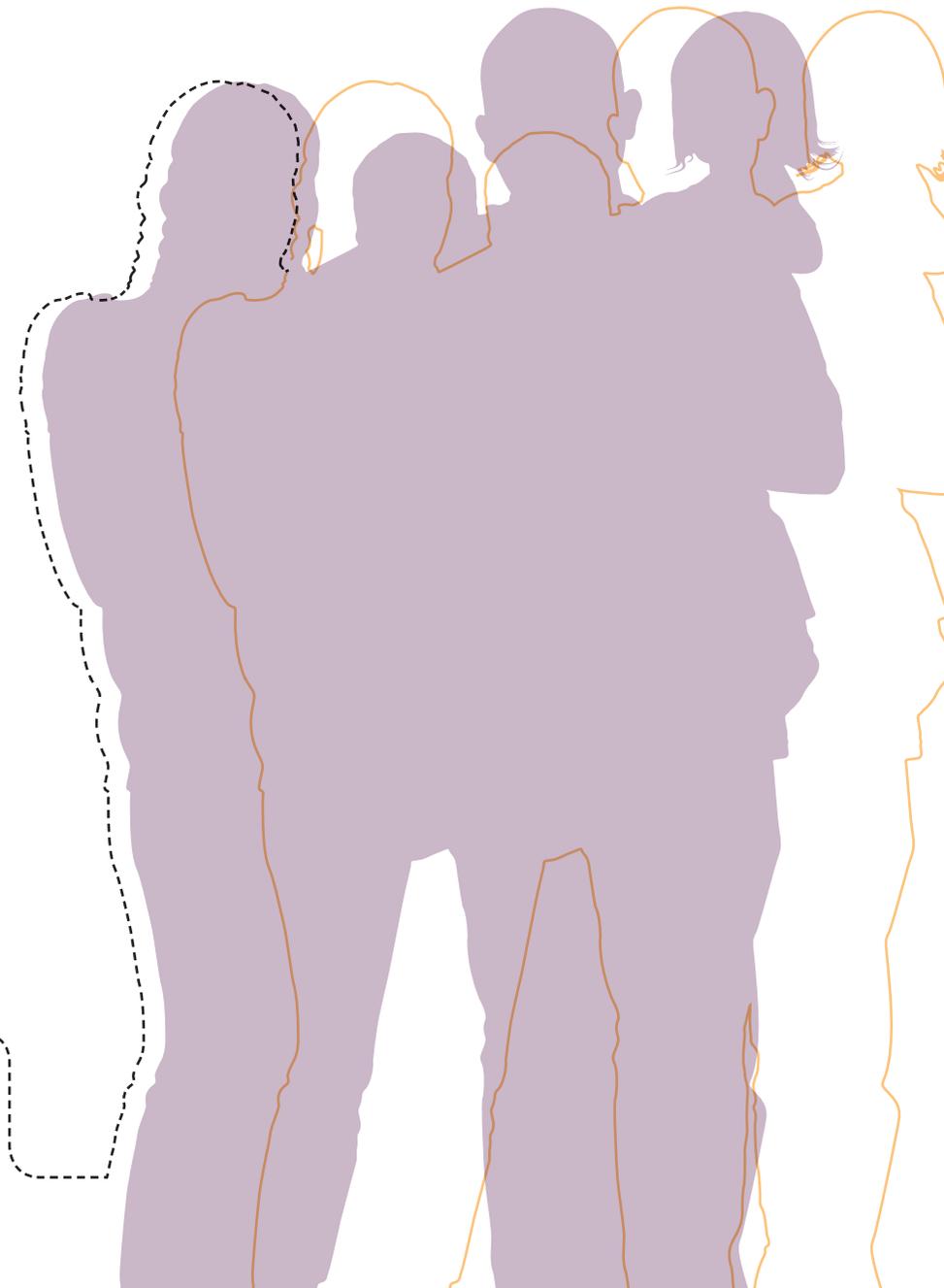
An Adoption Register pilot project will commence in September to allow adopters from selected agencies to access the profiles of all children on the Register and follow up interest in specific children. The pilot is intended to operate for nine months and the results will be evaluated to inform future policy.

Other areas of development for the Register service this year will be the continuation of work with First4Adoption, the dedicated information service, to

inform recruitment planning; and work with the CVAA's 'It's All About Me' (IAAM) project to help find suitable placements for children who have been on the Register for over six months and who are in one of the harder-to-place groups. Also, for the first time, children being considered for Fostering for Adoption will be included on the Register, in a separate section. This will run as a pilot study, and the learning from referrals of these children to the Register will inform the first national picture we have of this practice and how it is being used.

The Register is an established service that has proved itself to be effective by matching over 2,500 children with families during its operation. Over the next 12 months, we will work with our partner agencies to continue the increase in the number of children placed for adoption that we have seen in the past year. I am confident that with the new developments we plan for our already successful service, we will be able to deliver just that.

**Number of adopters referred increased by nearly 50 per cent**

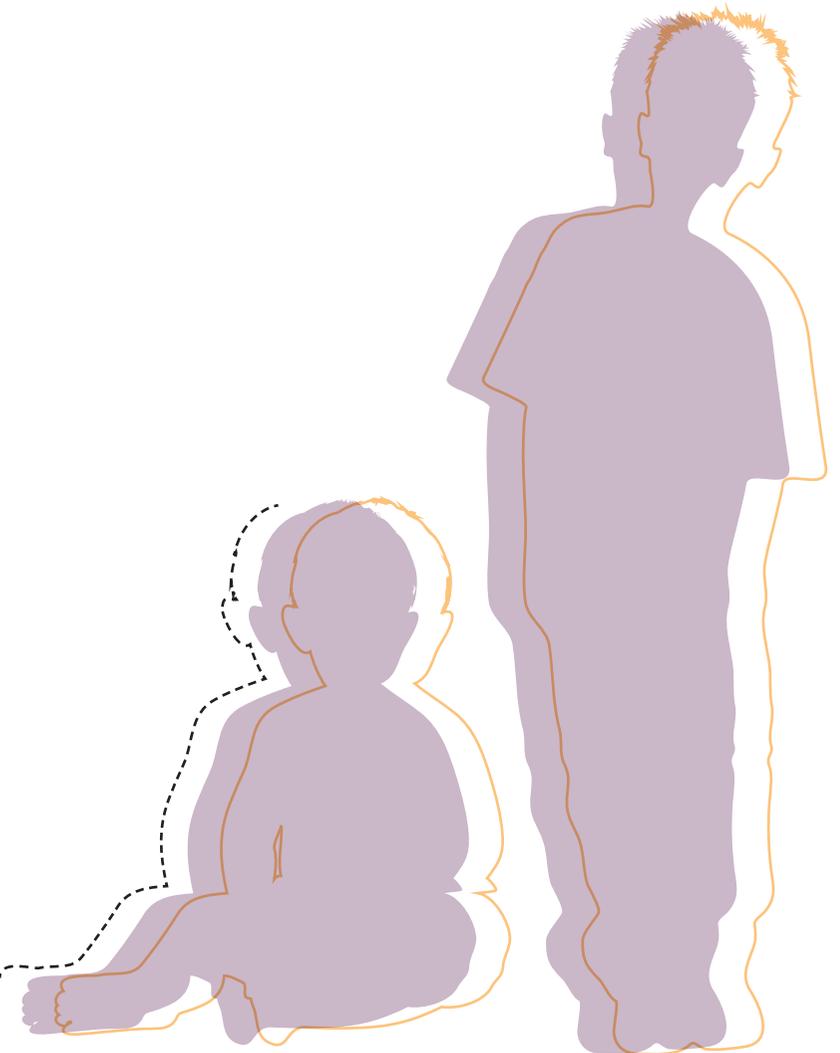


# National adoption exchange days

The Adoption Register has arranged national adoption exchange days, at which prospective adopters can see the details of waiting children and talk to their social workers, for over eight years and we are committed to holding six events per year at different venues throughout England. These events are very successful and popular with both agencies and prospective adopters, and offer a real opportunity for adopters to consider a wide range of children waiting to be adopted and to speak to social workers who know the child. Prospective adopters who have attended an event often report feeling better connected to the linking and matching process, feel able to lead in the process to a greater degree, and are happy to have had an opportunity to network and meet other adopters and professionals.

A total of 89 children have had families found for them as a result of the exchange days held by the Register in the past 12 months.

Overleaf are three accounts of the role exchange days play in different parts of the adoption process – from the point of view of a prospective adopter, an adopter who has been matched with a child, and a local authority worker.



## Case study

### Steve Powick – prospective adopter

#### **Steve is still waiting to be matched with a child, and feels that Adoption Register exchange days offer his best chance.**

The Adoption Register organises exchange days across England, allowing prospective adopters to see past basic profile information and gain a sense of a child's individual personality. But the same can be true for social workers meeting adopters. As a single male prospective adopter who uses a wheelchair, Steve is acutely aware of this.

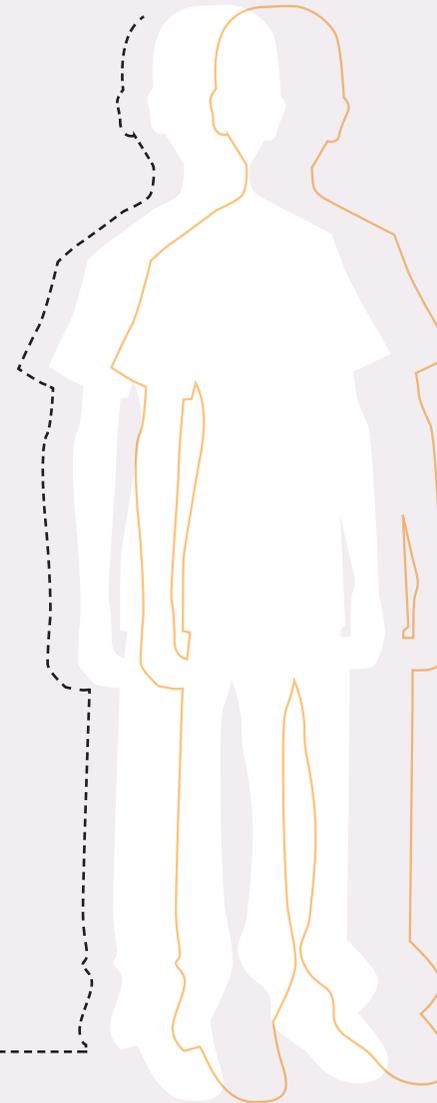
On several occasions, his social worker, Judy, has put him forward as a possible link for a child, only for them to be told that the child will be "too active" for Steve. Despite the fact that he is a very active wheelchair user, helping to look after several nieces and even renovating his house by himself, it can be hard for workers to "see past the wheelchair" when all they have are the bare facts. But when meeting Steve himself at an exchange day, it's a different matter – as

Steve says, most workers he meets are 'fantastic, and quickly see the amount that I'm able to do, rather than focusing on what I can't do'.

Judy referred Steve to the Adoption Register as soon as he was approved, as they both knew that finding the right match for him could take some time. And they were right – a year later, despite Judy's determination and Steve's enquiries about a number of children, he's still waiting for the call that will change his life. When Judy first suggested that he attend an exchange day, he found it 'nervewracking, to start with', but was quickly won over by the sheer enthusiasm of the social workers for the children they are hoping to place. Meeting other adopters at the event let him see that he wasn't the only one waiting, and also gave him a chance to be proactive in the search for a match. He feels that for prospective adopters, being able to have a positive influence on their own cases and the decisions made about them is vital in helping to sustain

momentum and optimism through these difficult months of waiting.

Steve has attended three exchange days now, and says he will definitely attend more – to 'blow his own trumpet' about what he can offer to a child, and to help break down barriers for disabled adopters. He is convinced of their importance for placing children, and also for helping social workers to see adopters' true worth. Hopefully the Adoption Register and the opportunity to attend further exchange days will give him the chance to make a world of difference to a waiting child.



## Case study

Anna Chesterton – local authority worker

**I am a Campaigns and Communications Officer for the London Borough of Barnet, which is a member of Adoption North London, a consortium of six local authorities – Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey and Islington. My job is quite varied – I help our adoption team with advertising and promotion, to hopefully recruit more adopters, edit film footage to produce video clips for children who are waiting to be adopted, and also attend the Adoption Register's exchange days on behalf of Barnet.**

I have to organise Barnet's attendance at exchange events – booking a stand, sorting out dates and who's going to attend – and the Adoption Register staff have always been friendly and helpful, and made this an easy process for us, leaving us free to concentrate on the important work – finding matches for our children and prospective adopters.

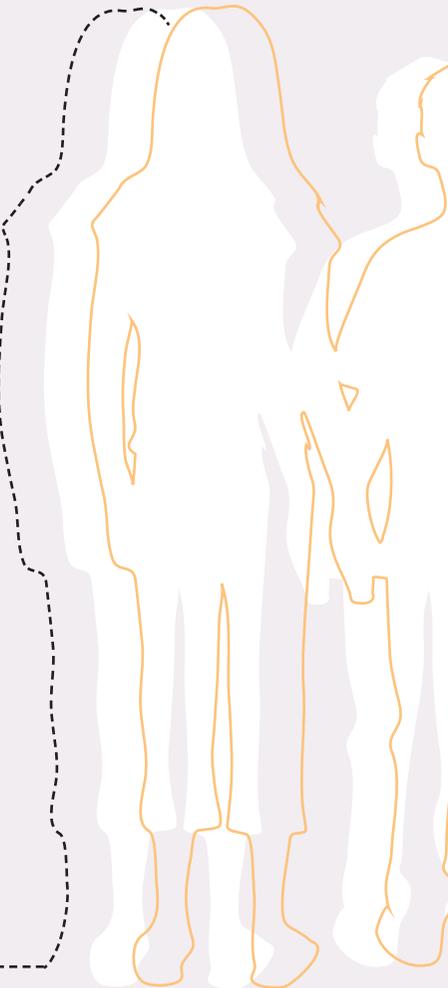
I have been attending exchange days for the last four years. The first time I came to an event, I was quite shocked because it really brought home just how many children are waiting for a family. Talking with prospective adopters attending exchange events for the first time, a lot of them do find it overwhelming initially, but they also say how beneficial the events are as they enable them to really feel part of the family-finding process.

I feel that exchange days really are unique – they give adopters access to a vast array of children's profiles, film clips and social workers who know the children. Chatting directly with social workers helps to bring the children to life for the adopters, and allows them to explore potential matches that they may not necessarily have considered from just reading a short children's profile. They are also a good way for newly approved adopters to see the range of children waiting, and to extend their ideas and preconceptions about the sorts of children who they may be able to parent.

I'm sure that many matches between children and families might never have been made if it wasn't for exchange days.

As with any event, some are more successful than others in terms of the interest our waiting children receive. It can be a little disheartening when there seems to be not much interest in some of the children's profiles we have brought with us. But at the same time, when you do get a match it makes it all worthwhile because you know you are helping to make a positive difference to a child's life.

I hope to remain a regular at Adoption Register exchange days in the future.



## Case study

### Sophia Durrant, adopter

#### **It only took one exchange day for Sophia to find the child she would go on to adopt.**

My contact with the Adoption Register began when I was referred to it by my social worker; I had been approved to adopt an eight-year-old child. Only a few months later, I attended my first adoption exchange day. It was also my last exchange event, as it was the day when I first saw a photo of the child I went on to adopt.

I attended with two other single adopters who had been on my preparation course. I really didn't know what to expect from the event. My initial thoughts on arrival were that it was completely overwhelming and I didn't have a clue where to start. I hung around on the edges for ages before being approached by a few workers asking me what kind of child I was approved for. Because I was looking for an older child, many agencies weren't relevant to me as they only had profiles of younger children. But workers

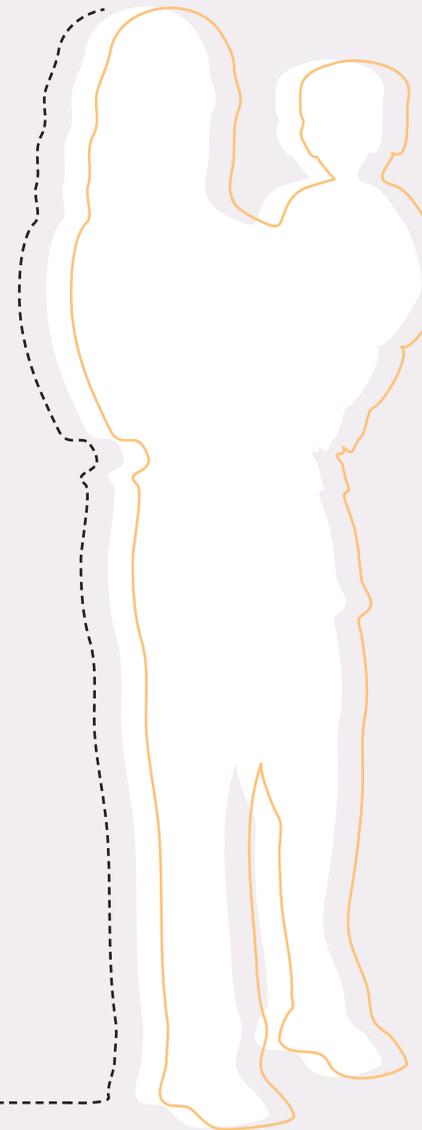
were quick to give me contact details of agencies which they felt would be glad to hear from me.

I found the day intense and exhausting, both emotionally and physically. I had to focus hard on the kind of child I had been approved for, rather than be pulled into looking at profiles of other younger children. It was really nice that there was quiet space available where I could meet with my friends, have a coffee and discuss how we were doing. These can be difficult events – there is an element of “marketing” in the children's profiles, with all the workers hoping that their child will receive interest. But despite these reservations, I found the process easier than looking at paper profiles that my social worker had selected for me. Seeing film clips and pictures of children and talking to their workers was ultimately a more comprehensive and positive way of looking at the types of children who were available. I felt empowered that I was able to do this for myself and found profiles of three

possible children to follow up afterwards, with the child I eventually adopted top of the list.

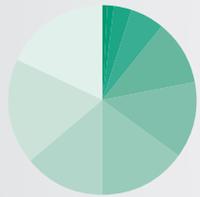
I feel that Adoption Register exchange days are a great way of matching adopters with children. They aren't for everyone, and I know some adopters can be distressed and overwhelmed by them. However, it was very different to waiting at home to hear from a social worker – workers don't know everything about adopters, and can't always find the right child. Most adopters will say that they got a feeling as soon as they saw their child that this was the one for them. Attending the adoption exchange day was like that.

Quite possibly, I will not have any contact with the Adoption Register again. For me, it was excellent. The service was efficient and purposeful and I feel very grateful for the support and excellent job all the staff involved with the Register have done.



**GENDER**

- MALE CHILDREN [1,537]
- FEMALE CHILDREN [1,211]

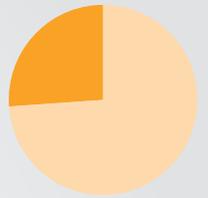
**AGE RANGE**

- 9 YEARS OR OVER [16]
- 8 YEARS [27]
- 7 YEARS [88]
- 6 YEARS [163]
- 5 YEARS [304]
- 4 YEARS [356]
- 3 YEARS [421]
- 2 YEARS [384]
- 1 YEAR [485]
- UNDER 1 YEAR [504]

2,748  
CHILDREN REFERRED BY LOCAL  
AUTHORITIES IN ENGLAND

**ETHNICITY**

- WHITE CHILDREN [2,030]
- BLACK & MINORITY ETHNIC CHILDREN [718]

**NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN SIBLING GROUPS**

- 2 CHILDREN [1,090]
- 3 CHILDREN [213]
- 4 CHILDREN [12]





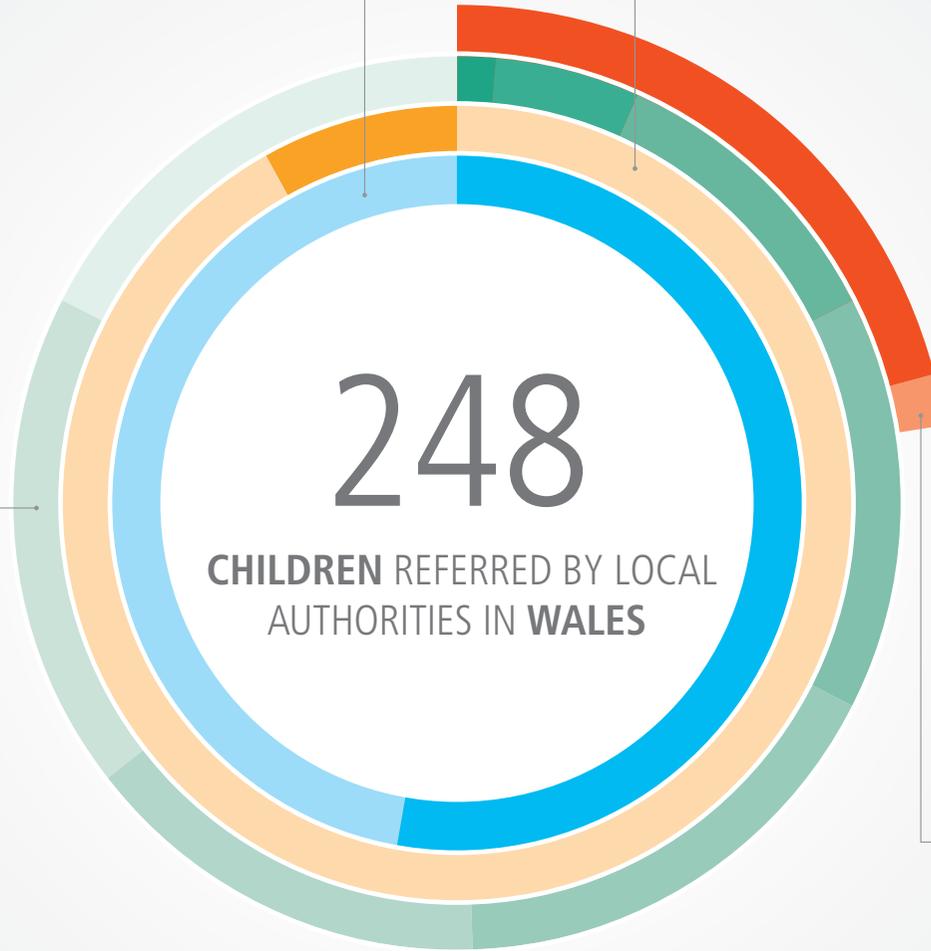
**GENDER**

- MALE CHILDREN [132]
- FEMALE CHILDREN [116]



**AGE RANGE**

- 7 YEARS [4]
- 6 YEARS [13]
- 5 YEARS [27]
- 4 YEARS [37]
- 3 YEARS [42]
- 2 YEARS [37]
- 1 YEAR [45]
- UNDER 1 YEAR [43]



248

CHILDREN REFERRED BY LOCAL  
AUTHORITIES IN WALES

**ETHNICITY**

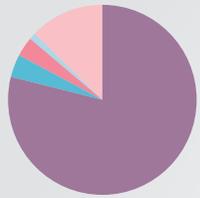
- WHITE CHILDREN [229]
- BLACK & MINORITY ETHNIC CHILDREN [19]



**NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN SIBLING GROUPS**

- 2 CHILDREN [53]
- 3 CHILDREN [4]





**SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

- HETEROSEXUAL COUPLE [1,016]
- MALE COUPLE [78]
- FEMALE COUPLE [44]
- SINGLE MALE [12]
- SINGLE FEMALE [163]

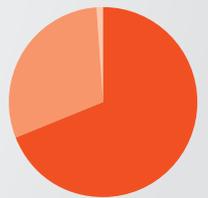
**ETHNICITY**

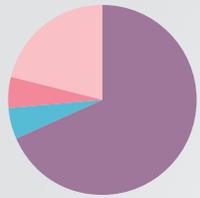
- WHITE ADOPTERS [942]
- BLACK & MINORITY ETHNIC ADOPTERS [371]



**NUMBER OF CHILDREN ADOPTERS CAN CONSIDER**

- 1 CHILD [890]
- UP TO 2 CHILDREN [413]
- UP TO 3 CHILDREN [9]
- UP TO 4 CHILDREN [1]



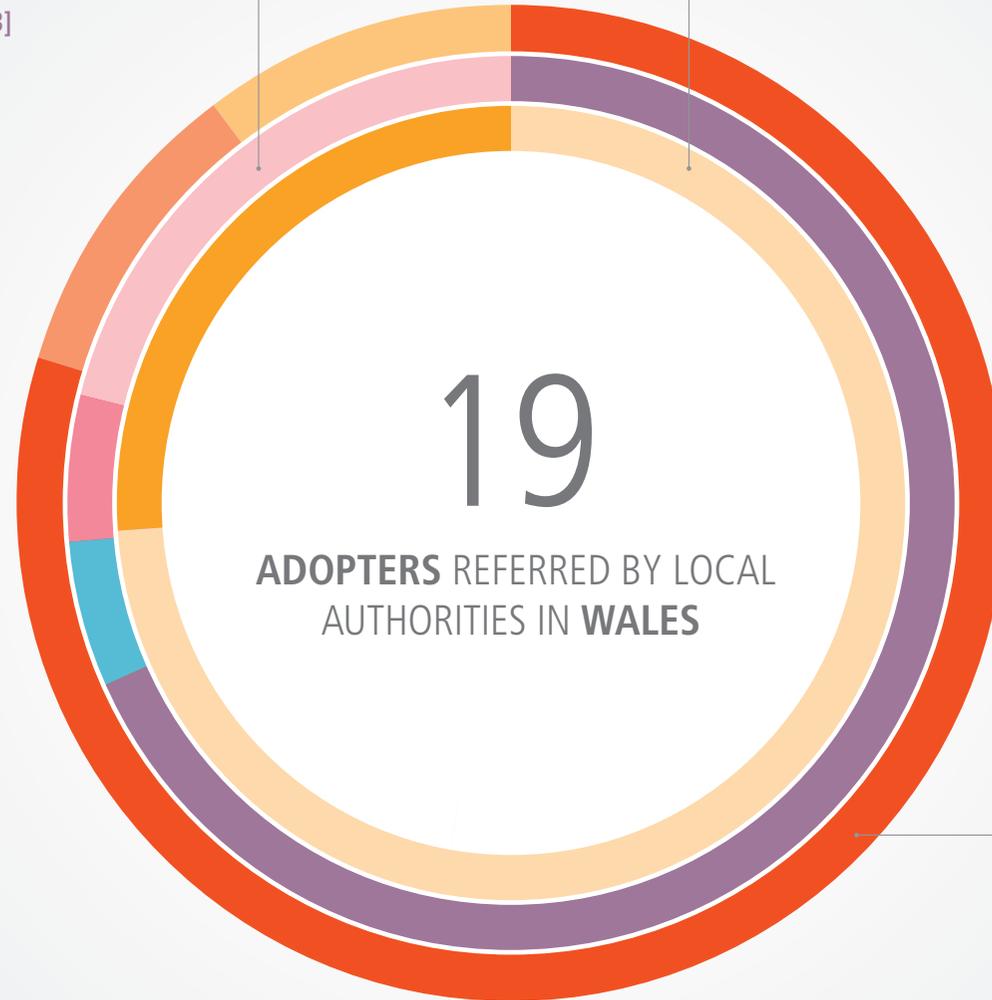


**SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

- HETEROSEXUAL COUPLE [13]
- MALE COUPLE [1]
- FEMALE COUPLE [1]
- SINGLE MALE [0]
- SINGLE FEMALE [4]

**ETHNICITY**

- WHITE ADOPTERS [14]
- BLACK & MINORITY ETHNIC ADOPTERS [5]

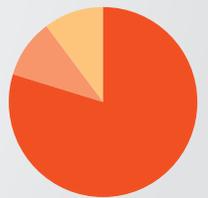


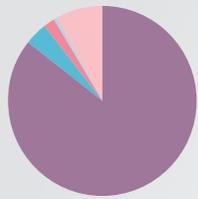
19

**ADOPTERS REFERRED BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN WALES**

**NUMBER OF CHILDREN ADOPTERS CAN CONSIDER**

- 1 CHILD [15]
- UP TO 2 CHILDREN [2]
- UP TO 3 CHILDREN [2]





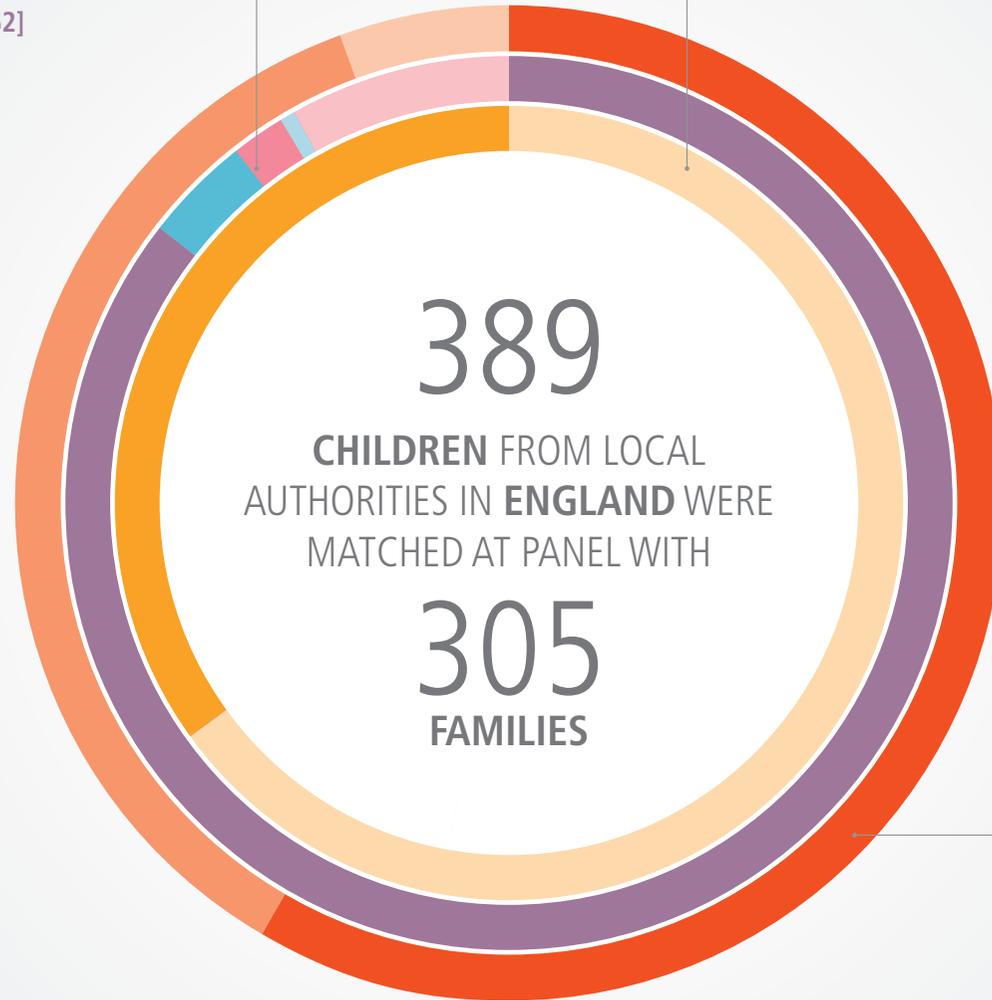
**SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

- HETEROSEXUAL COUPLE [262]
- MALE COUPLE [12]
- FEMALE COUPLE [5]
- SINGLE MALE [2]
- SINGLE FEMALE [24]



**ETHNICITY**

- WHITE ADOPTERS [254]
- BLACK & MINORITY ETHNIC ADOPTERS [135]



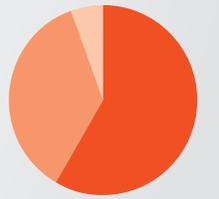
389

CHILDREN FROM LOCAL  
AUTHORITIES IN **ENGLAND** WERE  
MATCHED AT PANEL WITH

305  
FAMILIES

**NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN SIBLING GROUPS**

- 1 CHILD [228]
- 2 CHILDREN [140]
- 3 CHILDREN [21]





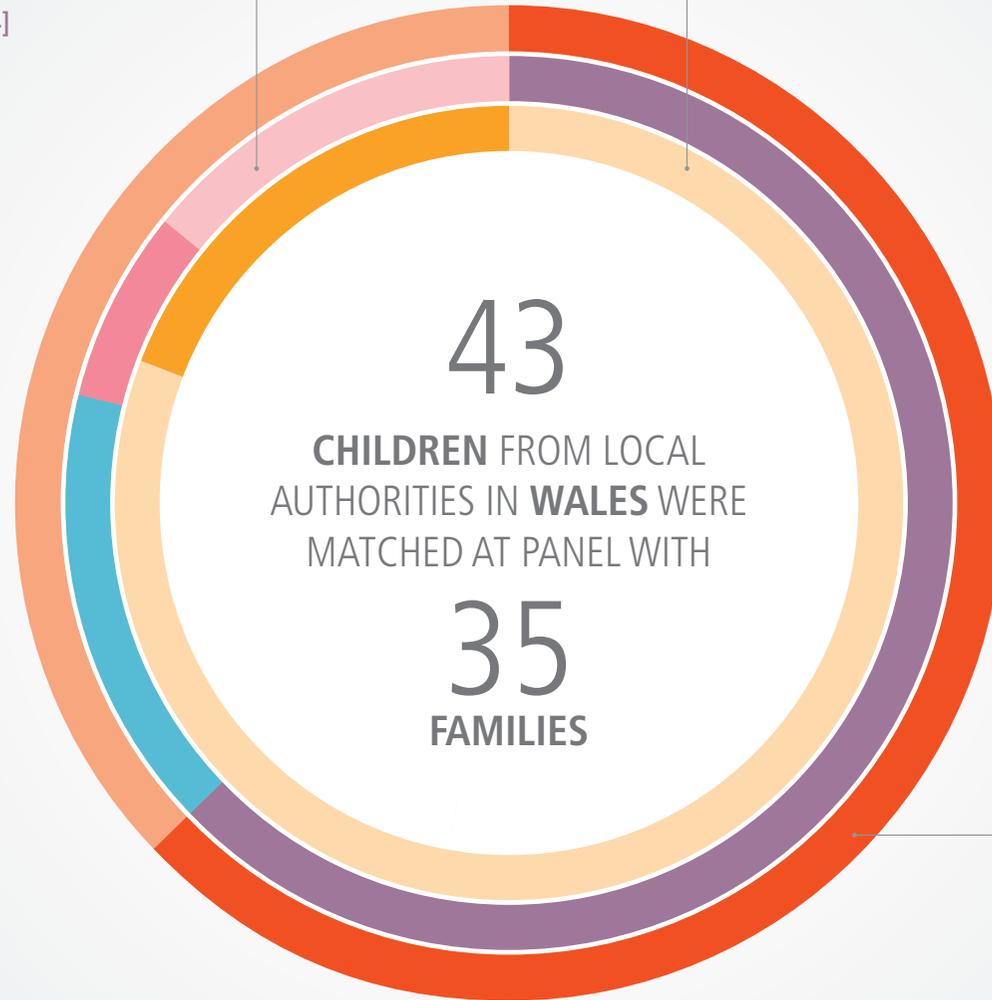
**SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

- HETEROSEXUAL COUPLE [24]
- MALE COUPLE [4]
- FEMALE COUPLE [3]
- SINGLE MALE [0]
- SINGLE FEMALE [4]



**ETHNICITY**

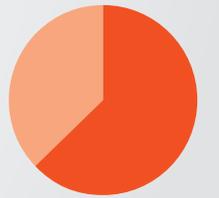
- WHITE ADOPTERS [35]
- BLACK & MINORITY ETHNIC ADOPTERS [8]



43  
 CHILDREN FROM LOCAL  
 AUTHORITIES IN **WALES** WERE  
 MATCHED AT PANEL WITH  
 35  
 FAMILIES

**NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN SIBLING GROUPS**

- 1 CHILD [27]
- 2 CHILDREN [16]





Department for  
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