

## Adopting Together Theory of Change

### Adopting Together Purpose

Through the embedding of new knowledge, capabilities and methodologies, St David’s Children Society and its partners will work collaboratively across the third and statutory sector to develop effective innovative interventions that proactively meet the needs of children who wait the longest to be adopted and their families.

<b>Rationale</b>	<p>There is a growing gap between the number of adopters being recruited and the number of children waiting. This has led to an increase in ‘priority’ children waiting over 12 months to find a family. These ‘priority’ children are often children aged 4 and over, BAME children, sibling groups, children with medical needs or medical uncertainty and children with additional needs.</p> <p>The Wales Adoption Study found that exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) is common among children adopted from care. 52% of children in their study had been exposed to four or more ACE; notably higher than the figure of 14% reported by Bellis et al., (2015) from a national survey of Welsh adults (Shelton &amp; Anthony, 2018).</p> <p>This research reinforces a sector identified need for increased adopter recruitment which not only raises awareness and understanding of ‘priority’ children, but also establishes an appropriate approach to adoption support which ensures effective early interventions for both the child and adopters. A collaborative approach between and across the third and statutory sectors within adoption can most effectively support this identified need and in doing so also meet requirements in Welsh Government legislation.</p>
<b>Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priority children to be identified and referred by the Regional Collaboratives and Local Authorities to the Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs).</li> <li>• Based on referral information received VAAs to seek, recruit, assess, train and support appropriate families which meet the needs of priority children.</li> <li>• VAAs establish and deliver child-centred recruitment strategies for children where no match can be found at point of referral.</li> <li>• VAAs co-ordinate Team for the Child meetings. The child care social worker will decide which professionals are invited to attend the meeting based on their knowledge of the child. The present and, where appropriate, previous foster carers will be invited to the meeting.</li> <li>• Team for the Child meeting is facilitated by a clinical psychologist and a report with recommendations is produced to inform and support adopters, and future adoption support plan.</li> <li>• Structured play-based sessions delivered with the child, foster carer and prospective adopters, to enable the child to develop a coherent narrative about moving from foster care to adoption.</li> <li>• Three follow-up consultation sessions conducted in the year following the child’s placement with the adopters. These are facilitated by a clinical psychologist and recommendations from these meetings will be shared at Adoption Support Review meetings.</li> <li>• As identified in the Team for the Child meeting or follow-up consultation meetings, therapeutic interventions will initiated as appropriate.</li> </ul>

Change process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the Team for the Child meeting, multi-disciplinary professionals who know the child best meet to share information on the child and gain understanding of their needs and the tasks involved in parenting the child.</li> <li>• Team for the Child meeting is attended by the adopters and the foster carers to ensure that the prospective adopters are fully informed about the child with the foster carer sharing a 'lived' experience of parenting the child.</li> <li>• Prospective adopters and foster carers meet earlier in the adoption process allowing them to build a relationship that will enable them to work together, with support, on moving the child from foster care to adoption.</li> <li>• Team for the Child meeting allows the prospective adopter to consider, before formal matching what is required to parent the child from those who know the child best.</li> <li>• Clinical Psychologist report can inform adoption support planning as early as possible.</li> <li>• Structured transition work can allow adults and child to explore through play the transition of care from the foster carer to the adopter, providing an emotionally coherent narrative that will make sense throughout childhood and beyond.</li> <li>• Follow-up consultation meetings give opportunity and permission for adopters to discuss their experiences and their feelings, allowing adoption support to be normalised and access to early interventions openly explored.</li> <li>• The Adopting Together Model brings together four components:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Child specific recruitment</li> <li>2) The Team for the Child meeting</li> <li>3) Transition support</li> <li>4) Follow-up consultation meetings</li> </ol> <p>These four components provide a structured process of planning, preparation and support from pre-placement matching, through to introductions and post-placement support for both the child and the adopters that does not currently exist within our service or any clearly defined structure.</p> </li> </ul>
Intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in the number of children waiting the longest to find a family.</li> <li>• Increase in the number of adopters willing to explore adopting children who wait the longest.</li> <li>• Increased understanding with adopters of the types of children waiting for a family.</li> <li>• Adopters experience pre-placement: early opportunity to explore the needs of children with those who know the child best.</li> <li>• Children's experience pre- and post-placement: supported in their move from foster care to adoption.</li> <li>• Adopters experience post-placement: opportunity to reflect on the lived experience of the child.</li> <li>• Professional experience: using collective expertise to meet need.</li> </ul>
Long term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tailored support packages that recognise the children placed through the project are likely to need the most support in the short and longer term.</li> <li>• Increased parental efficacy to meet the needs of their child and to regard adoption support as the norm.</li> <li>• The long-term impact of a traumatic move from one primary care giver to another is mitigated through primary attachment figures supported to work together. This will allow the child to develop an emotionally coherent narrative that makes sense throughout their childhood and beyond.</li> </ul>

Author: Coralie Merchant and Wendy Keidan

Date: 7<sup>th</sup> March 2018.

Please do not duplicate without permission.

Email: [wendy@stdavidscs.org](mailto:wendy@stdavidscs.org) or [coralie@stdavidscs.org](mailto:coralie@stdavidscs.org)

Cymdeithas Plant Dewi Sant



St David's Children Society

Credwch  
mewn plant  
Believe in  
children  
Barnardo's  
Cymru

after  
adoption

adoptionuk  
for every adoptive family

AFA CYMRU  
association for fostering and adoption  
cymdeithas ar gyfer maethu a mabwysiadu