

Children and Young People Committee

AD07

Inquiry into Adoption

As adoptive parents three times over we would like to express our thanks to the Committee for launching this inquiry in Wales as we believe this is a vital step towards improving the support offered to adopters and in turn improving the outcomes for children who are adopted.

How effectively do you feel you as prospective parents were supported during the assessment and approval process?

We were very lucky with the social worker we were allocated to for the assessment process. As she was a freelance social worker she was able to give us the time and focus that we needed. We are aware that this is not the case for a number of prospective parents and the quality of the support you receive is down to the individual social worker and the organisation of the adoption service in your locality. We were also lucky with the social worker we were allocated to for the approval stage, however, having different social workers for the assessment and approval stages did not make the process smooth and left us feeling uncomfortable to ask for help post placement as we felt the second social worker didn't know us as well as the former.

What action is needed to encourage more people to pursue adoption?

More opportunity for experienced adopters to become actively involved in the recruitment of prospective adopters. To work alongside social workers to explain the benefits of adoption first hand and give prospective adopters the opportunity to ask the questions they need to without worrying that their questions may reflect unfavourably on their application to adopt. And to provide real life examples of the range of different types of people who adopt. Social workers are led by legal process where as prospective adoptive parents are focused on the emotional and practical nature of adoption and more input from experienced adoptive parents would help refocus the process without distracting social workers from the legal necessities.

Anything that removes the insulting and archaic view that adoption is 'second best' to any other family. More stories of adopters who decided to adopt as a very definite 'first choice'.

What could be improved either in the adoption assessment and approval process or in the support given to you and other adoptive families?

Definitely more service-user involvement at all stages – from recruitment through to post placement. The support of other adopters is invaluable and at times is the only type of support that will do. Without providing the opportunity for adopters to support each other, adoption services are failing in their duty to provide post adoption support

Social workers need to listen to adopters more and involve them in service design, planning, delivery and review, including the provision of training and continuing professional development for adoption social workers by adopters. After completing the adoption process for a third time, we feel our knowledge and experience is a valuable resource that is significantly underused. A standardised CPD programme across Wales would reduce the current inequity in the preparation of adopters that is so largely dependant on the make up of individual adoption teams in local authority areas.

What improvements could be made to the adoption process or support offered in relation to your adopted children?

TO BE GIVEN THE SAME ACCESS TO SUPPORT SERVICES ONCE ADOPTED AS THEY HAD PRIOR TO ADOPTION. This is vital and needs to include school admissions, health referrals, (e.g. speech and language therapy, CAMHS), access to education support services (e.g. educational psychology, behaviour support, learning support). Adoptive parents need a central point of referral to access the types of services available to LAC.

New multi-agency services need to be developed that assess and address the holistic needs of adopted children and empower adoptive parents to support their children more effectively.

An adoption order does not change a child's needs, although they are no longer LAC they still have the same issues.