HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Panel:	Children and Families Advisory Panel					
Date:	8 th June 2021					
Title:	Adopt South – Year 2 End of Year Report – 2020-2021					
Report From:	Director of Children's Services					

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Purpose of this Report

This report seeks to provide members with information on Adopt South's Year 2 performance for the financial year 2020/2021 which includes the journey of adopters from enquiry to approval and Children's Information.

Adopt South is the partnership Regional Adoption Agency for Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton local authorities.



Adopt South End of Year 2 Report 2020-2021

Presented by

Rachel Reynolds Head of Adopt South

May 2021













Since we started in April 2019:

- 298 children have had families identified
- 106 of these children have been Hard to Place
- 226 children formally linked
- 238 families approved
- 3,918 enquiries to the Adoption Support Team
- Stage 1 timescales reduced by 24% (under Government threshold)
- Stage 2 timescales are 3.8 months (under Government threshold)
- All 4 LAs Scorecard 1 under Government threshold
- Post Adoption Disruption Rate <81% (National Average)
- 554 children and young people accessed an Adoption Support Plan in 2021/21















Executive Summary

Adopt South's fourth and final quarter has seen, yet again, some significant outcomes, including successes with recruitment, matching children to approved adopters and supporting a high number of families in crisis during the pandemic.

Year 2 Headline Stats

- 150 children have had families identified
- 62 of these children have been Hard to Place
- 108 children have been formally linked to 98 families
- 236 new families progressed to assessment
- 117 families approved
- 3,268 Enquiries to Adoption Support
- 554 children and young people have accessed direct support from an adoption support social worker
- 63 adoptive parents have attended Adopting Little Changes
- 32 adoptive parents have attended Adopting Changes
- Just 2 children with no potential links at the end of Year 2

Q4 2021 Headline Stats

- 39 children have had families identified
- 18 of these children have been Hard to Place
- 61 new families progressed to assessment
- 32 new adoptive families approved
- 22 children formally linked to 21 families
- 2 Hard to Place children have no potential links compared to 39 before Adopt South

Excellent Results this quarter

- 143% above quarterly target for Adoption Information Sessions
- ↑ 57% above quarterly target for Pre-Stage Visits
- ↑ 38% conversion rate from Enquiry to Pre-Stage Visit
- † 22% above quarterly target for Registration of Interest Forms
- 1 22% of annual target achieved for RIFs
- 1 25% Enquiry to Assessment conversion rate
- Enquiry to Assessment 24% 20% above target
- 15% increase from RIF to Assessment (61) from last quarter
- ↑ 32 Approved Adopters 86% of Quarterly Target
- Spend on buying vs selling adopters/training equates to nearly zero
- ↑ Stage 1 timescales 1.3 months
- ↑ Stage 2 timescales 3.8 months











244 RIFS received in Year 2 – 22% above Annual Target £42,395.52 Training Income

Adoption Support Team Stats Q4 2021

The continued increase in support was unabated in the final quarter of Year 2. The team continued to deliver innovative parenting solutions delivered on Zoom/MS Teams.

- ↑ 6% increase in post adoption support enquiries compared to Q3 2020
- 1 402% increase in post adoption support enquiries compared to Year 1
- ↑ 97% increase in Adoption Support Needs Assessments (ASNA's) and reviews compared to last year
- 1 27 consultations to 40 adoptive parents. 14 Coffee and Chat Sessions to 86 attendees
- ↑£573k on approved therapeutic interventions and Covid-19 schemes

Notable outcomes for Adopt South

- Placed heavier emphasis on digital advertising with the use of more focussed messaging and placement in regional press, parish magazines, 3D Reach and digital news networks
- Evolving strategies both in recruitment and placement for greater diversity including increased number of BAME, ethnic and LGBT+ adopters
- Low number of disruptions at just 2 this year
- Evaluation of Adoption Support's intervention increased adopters rating of their average day by
 85%
- 186 applicants/adopters now being supported by 35 Volunteer Mentors
- Stage 1 continue to encourage new applicants to consider placements of siblings, older children and children with additional needs, giving greater scope for placement
- Training pathway increasing applicant's knowledge
- Speedier matching Family Finding Team continue matching. Scorecard 1 for all 4 LA's has continued to be under Government thresholds
- Centralizing the Adoption Support Fund and the COVID-19 Scheme totalling £572,555.07

The recent RAA Evaluation in October 2020, recognized Adopt South's use of Virtual Reality and the Mentoring Scheme as a crucial aspect of both adopter preparation and adoption support.

Quarter 4 2021 has again, produced exceptional outcomes from recruitment to approval. Post Adoption support continues to support many families, maximizing the Adoption Support Fund and utilizing resources as proactively as possible.











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Introduction

Success Outcomes

The fourth quarter of Adopt South's second year has continued to be strong with significant results achieved again across every stage of the adoption process. This has resulted in **39** children (20- HCC; 3- IOW; 9- PCC; 7- SCC) having a family identified (Table 1.3), **32** new adoptive households being approved (Table 2.1) and **22** children being formally linked with **19** families at panel.

The excellent news is that this has included matches being identified for **18** hard to place children, including 5 sibling groups. There are currently just **2** children who have no potential links across the region and who Adopt South are actively family finding for. This compares to the commencement of Adopt South when there were 39 children with no potential matches.

During Adopt South's second year, **150** potential links have, therefore, been identified. **62** of these, have been for harder to place children.

- 84 Hampshire children
- 19 Isle of Wight children
- 23 Portsmouth children
- 24 Southampton children

108 children have been formally linked with **96** families during the year and **117** adopters approved. Adopt South continues to buck the national trend and, despite the challenges of lockdown, has been able to recruit and develop prospective adopters.

Since the launch of Adopt South, 238 adopters have, therefore, been approved and 226 children have been linked. Of these, 113 have been HCC children; 19 IOW children; 40 PCC children; 54 SCC children.

The comparison data which has recently been published by the ASGLB for the period October 2019 - September 2020, shows that out of the 31 Regional Adoption Agencies, Adopt South approved the most adopters and had the lowest number of children waiting. In addition, only 3 RAA's placed more children than Adopt South.

Quarter 4 has continued to see a very encouraging level of enquiries at the recruitment stage, resulting in **242** enquiries being received, an average of **81** per month, and a **53%** increase on last quarter. **91** of the 242 progressed to a pre-stage visit, an excellent conversion rate of **69%**, compared to 49% in Quarter 3. This suggests our more targeted marketing is continuing to show very effective results and that the quality of applicants are more likely to proceed along the adoption journey.

Adopt South's second year has, therefore, ended strongly with **719** enquiries, a **5.4%** increase on last year (**682**).











Due to COVID-19 and the Recruitment Team no longer being able to hold weekly face to face Adoption Information Sessions, an Adoption Information Session link has been sent to all prospective adopters progressing from a duty call instead. **168** links were sent during Quarter 4, an increase of 59% on Quarter 3 (**106**) and compares to **81** in Quarter 4 last year.

This is, therefore, the seventh quarter where our target of requiring 69 households per quarter is above target at **143%** (**53%**,**70%**, **102.9%**, **17%**, **11.5%** and **10%** increase) to attend an Adoption Information Session to achieve 150 approvals per year.

531 households, therefore, attended an Adoption Information Session/received a link in Adopt South's second year, which compares to **291** in our first year. This is a substantial increase of 82% and is 93% above the annual target of **275**.

91 pre- stage visits were undertaken in Quarter 4, compared to **77** in Quarter 3. This is an increase of 18% and is a 60% increase above the target of 57 per quarter. Year on Year for the same period, this is a 51% (348) increase on last year (230).

This is the sixth quarter, therefore, that the number of visits undertaken exceeded our target of requiring 57 pre-stage visits (39% increase Q3; 30% increase Q2; 86% Q1 Y2. 22.8% Q4 and 10.5% in Q3 Y1) to achieve 150 approvals per year.

230 pre-stage visits were undertaken in the first year of Adopt South. This year, a total of **348** pre-stage visits/virtual video calls have been completed, achieving a **51%** increase on last year, and **53%** above the **228** target for the year.

A high percentage of those receiving home visits returned forms expressing a wish to proceed to assessment and **62** Registration of Interest Forms were returned in Quarter 4, achieving above our target (**50**) by 24%. This was also an increase on Quarter 3 (**56**) by 11%.

244 Registration of Interest Forms were, therefore, returned in Adopt South's second year, a 22% increase on the **200** target, compared to **196** in our first year.

The success of the quarter resulted in **61** new households being forwarded to progress their assessment. This is an excellent number and compares to **53** in Quarter 3, an increase of 15%. This is 22% above our quarterly target of **50** to achieve **200** RIF'S during the year to meet our **150** approvals.

198 households progressed to assessment in the first year of Adopt South which resulted in a conversion rate from enquiry (682) to assessment (196) above target, 29% compared to a predicted 20%, and a conversion rate from enquiry (682) to approval (121) above target, 17.7% compared to a predicted 15%.

Adopt South's second year has ended even more strongly, with 236 households progressing to assessment. This is a magnificent conversion rate from enquiry (719) to assessment (244) above target at 33%, and a conversion rate from enquiry (719) to approval (117) above target, 16% compared to a predicted 15% (Table 3.1).











Adopt South's second year has achieved outstanding results despite a very challenging and difficult year. Every target from Adoption Information Session to RIF to assessment has been surpassed.

The Recruitment Team from the 'front door' to customer service has been exceptional in managing expectations, supporting people both through to the next stage and considerately counselling out those who could not continue their adoption journey this year for a variety of reasons.

As can be seen from the chart below, Year 2 has achieved significant conversion rates throughout the process with more enquiries propelling the resulting conversion of **236** households to assessment.

Enquiry to Assessment	Stage 1	%	RIF	%	PSV	%	AIS	%	Enq	Enq per month	Conversion
Annual - Year 1	196	99%	198	86%	230	79%	291	43%	682	. 57	28.74
Annual - Year 2	236	97%	244	70%	348	66%	531	74%	719	60	32.82
Average over 2 years	216	98%	221	76%	289	70%	411	59%	701		

Quarter 4 has seen an average of **61** available adopters across the region, which is an increase on last quarter when the average was 50. This is significantly more than all quarters last year, when the average was 46 (Q4), 36 (Q3), 35 (Q2) and 24 (Q1).

During Quarter 4, 1 interagency placement was purchased. This was for 1 child (IoW) who was placed with the London Borough of Bexley.

The total cost of interagency placements for 2020/21 is, therefore, **£121,332** and is made up of the following:

- 1 child placed with Diagrama (VAA)
- 1 child placed with One Adopt North and Humber (RAA)
- 1 child placed with St Francis Child Society (VAA)
- 1 child placed with the London Borough of Bexley

The budget for interagency purchases was £250,000. The underspend of £128,668 will be returned to partners.

The total income from adopters sold during 2020/21 is £97,000 and is made up of the following:

- 1 adopter for 1 child with Aspire (RAA)
- 1 adopter for 1 child with Adoption Now (RAA)
- 1 adopter for 2 children with Adopt North East (RAA)

The income budget for adopters sold was £135,000.

A further £42,395.52 has been created through selling training.











Performance and Timescales

The Stage 1 team have progressed the **61** new prospective adopter households during Quarter 4. They have continued to support adopters to build their skills and have ensured all potential applicants have had at least one session of Virtual Reality to increase their understanding of the needs of adopted children.

Stage 1 timescales averaged 1.3 months, remaining well within the government expectation of 2 months.

The comparison data (published by the ASGLB) for the period October 2019 - September 2020, shows that out of the 31 Regional Adoption Agencies, Adopt South was the only RAA who averaged Stage 1 in timescales. It also shows that Adopt South adopters spend less time than any other RAA from enquiry to Stage 1.

The specialised team have continued to encourage new applicants to consider placements of siblings, older children and children with additional needs, giving greater scope for placement. **186** families are currently receiving mentoring support from our **35** adopter mentors, who offer support to both potential and post order adopters.

Overall timescales of Stage 2 assessments achieved **3.8 months**, continuing to be well within the government expectation of 4 months. (Table 4.3).

The comparison data for the period October 2019 - September 2020, shows that out of the 31 Regional Adoption Agencies, Adopt South was the only RAA who averaged Stage 2 in timescales.

Regarding the overall adoption journey (excluding fast tracked assessments) in Quarter 4, the average timescale was **5.5** months (compared to 5.6 months last quarter and 5.4 months the previous quarter), remaining well within the government target of 6 months.

Adoption Support

An overarching theme of last quarter for the Adoption Support Service was the return of children to school in September and, as was predicted, the number of requests for a service increased.

In Quarter 4, the national lockdown created additional pressure for families, which led to a further increase in requests for support. Adopt South's Adoption Support Service maintained the Advice and Support Line with no interruption and have continued to provide a core service, as well as adapting therapeutic parenting programmes to deliver individually via ZOOM/TEAMs.

Adopt South was allocated £244,000 of the £8 million government funding from the COVID- 19 ASF Scheme for adoptive families and those subject to special guardianship. Individual partners made their











own arrangements for their SGO funding once the allocations were agreed across the partner agencies.

£79, 130.91 was allocated to provide a range of short, targeted intervention packages aimed to specifically support adoptive families during COVID-19. The scheme was extended to December 2020 and an evaluation of the scheme is summarised below.

In Quarter 4, **1115** enquiries were made to the Advice and Support Line, compared to **1056** in Quarter 3. This is almost double the number of **563** in Quarter 2 and **534** in Quarter 1.

In Adopt South's second year, the total number of enquiries to the Advice and Support Line was, therefore, 3268. When compared to the total of 650 enquiries in Adopt South's first year, this is a 402% increase.

Whilst acknowledging that approximately 200 of these enquiries related to a webinar that was provided in partnership with the Virtual School, the increase is still significant. The high number may partly be related to increased need due to the COVID- 19 pandemic and the services offered virtually were increased. In Year 2, it has become clear that Adopt South is being recognised as the region's Adoption Support provider, and the number of families who contact individual hubs rather than the Advice and Support Line, has significantly reduced.

In Quarters 3 and 4, the Advice and Support Line duty workers have required back up support from other staff. The Assistant Team Managers who provide the oversight have found that the complexity of the queries have required significantly increased input. There has also been an increase in the number of enquiries from other professionals, and whilst the initial response is within one working day, some can take several days to unpick and resolve.

As we prepare for Adopt South's third year, the Adoption Support Team are expecting the demand for services to continue. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on all children is recognised, but for vulnerable children the costs will be higher. Despite the best efforts of parents, it is likely that progress for adopted children and young people will have slowed, with the secure base and attachments being affected. Therapeutic packages have been interrupted and children and young people's anxiety has increased. The priority will be to enhance and sustain adoptive parents' resilience so they are able to support their children with emotional regulation.

In Quarter 4, 44 new Adoption Support Needs Assessments (ASNA's) were allocated compared to 47 in Quarter 3, 33 in Quarter 2 and 17 in Quarter 1.

141 new ASNA's have, therefore, been allocated in Adopt South's second year.

40 Adoption Support Needs Assessments were completed within Quarter 4, along with an additional **64** ASNA Reviews.











136 Adoption Support Needs Assessments have, therefore, been completed in our second year and 153 ASNA reviews. This is a combined total of 289.

The total number of ASNA's and reviews in our first year was **147**. There is, therefore, an increase in ASNA's of **97%** in our second year, which supports the position that the needs of adopted children and their families have been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the end of Quarter 4, there were **357** adoption support cases open. This compares to **352** at the end of Quarter 3 and Quarter 2, and **332** in Quarter 1.

In Year 2, 554 children and young people were open to a social worker in the Adoption Support Team and accessed an adoption support plan.

The priority in terms of therapeutic parenting support has been the continuation of Adopting Changes delivery. This has been amended to be delivered individually and via ZOOM. However, in Quarter 3 two cohorts of face to face Adopting Changes commenced. This took place after thorough risk assessments were undertaken and a venue was identified by Facilities Management to be COVID-19 Secure. Unfortunately, both programmes had to move to virtual for the final sessions. However, it is noted in the feedback that parents valued the opportunity to meet face to face, despite the risks associated with the pandemic.

To avoid delay for parents requesting therapeutic parenting, who had been unable to attend the programme in the previous quarter, bespoke Adopting Changes individual programmes were delivered to families in Quarter 4.

Evening Question and Answer Coffee and Chat Sessions for adoptive parents via ZOOM have been offered and **84 adopters have attended to date.**

Virtual consultations have also been put in place- with additional capacity in the evenings to provide a more flexible service. **27** consultations have been provided to date to **40** adopters. The feedback has been extremely positive and has included:

Examples of Feedback:

"We found the session very useful and a conversation was good. It was good to talk to people that understand"; "I really appreciated the opportunity to chat things over with you both. I found the meeting incredibly helpful and thought it worked really well via Zoom."

"Many of the wondering strategies I use a lot but we haven't explored anything sensory and I definitely intend to explore this further"; "The ideas to check her understanding by asking her to tell us her own story resonated with me and I think that she has the language to be able to do this, so we will start there. We will also explore some feelings using the roll of wallpaper and pens/stickers etc. It was also very helpful to talk about the EPAC and transition to H School and how the VSH is available to support us. The resources you sent over will be invaluable too."











"I enjoyed the virtual Q&A/chat session. It was good to know I was not alone, to speak/listen to other parents in the same/understand my situation."

"Dear Cathy and the Adopt South Team, I do not think I could have got through the last 8/9 months if I had not attended the Q & A chat sessions. They have helped me to connect to other adopters and receive the help and support that my family needed. "

"My husband has also joined in with a few and this has helped him to see that our daily struggles are a shared experience with others in a similar position. It has helped to get him more on board too with therapeutic parenting and understanding why we experience certain behaviours."

The workshops that have been delivered virtually in Quarter 4 have included:

- Setting Screen Time and Surviving Social Media- 7 attendees
- Our Lives, Our Stories- 6 attendees
- Attachments Strengthening Relationships 7 -attendees
- Terrific Teens 4 -attendees

The use of the Data Base has also proved a crucial aspect of service delivery during lockdown and the following topics have been covered in the regular correspondence that has been sent out:

- Four weeks of consecutive Sensory Attachment and Regulation Activities provided by "More therapy" Occupational Therapy Team.
- "Parenting in the Moment" -Therapeutic parenting that helps children to regulate their emotions, relate, repair and reflect.
- Simple Theraplay activities to do together.
- Understanding sibling rivalry within adoptive families and strategies to manage conflicts.
- Recipes to make with children and therapeutic parenting tips about measures of emotional and developmental progress.
- Supporting conversations about Life Story's.
- Therapeutic parenting "top tips".
- Additional resources and links to help explain COVID-19 to children, including mindfulness tips.
 Links were also sent from CAMHS, Louise Bomber, giving advice regarding parental self-care and emotional/mental health tips for young people.

Examples of Feedback:

"Thank you for all your resources you've shared over this time. They've all been interesting to receive, some have been more useful and applicable than others, some have been very timely and it's been very helpful to feel supported."

"Many thanks for these activities. It is very useful having these reminders of ideas on things to do."











"Thank you, I find this really helpful."

"Morning all, I just wanted to thank you for putting this together and sharing with us."

"I have found it a really useful resource over the weekend. It has helped with perspective and helped with reaffirming the soft skills and therapeutic approach that is so important."

Adoption Support Fund

The total amount approved by the Adoption Support Fund in Quarter 4 was £128, 367.19. This compares to Quarter 3, when it was £114,452.15, Quarter 2, £97,290.45 and Quarter 1, £153, 314.37. This was for standard applications and does not include the Adoption Support Fund COVID- 19 Scheme.

In Adopt South's second year, £493,424.16 has, therefore, been approved in relation to regular applications for therapeutic interventions.

The total including the COVID - 19 Scheme is £572,555.07.

COVID-19 Adoption Support Fund Scheme Support

In April 2020, the Department for Education announced emergency support to adoptive families to meet the needs arising from the outbreak of COVID-19. Adopt South was allocated £244, 000 out of the £8 million available. This included the allocation for SGO families.

The funding enabled Adopt South to block purchase virtual interventions in advance to provide direct support to up to **122** families and share COVID related information and resources to **450** adoptive parents on Adopt South's database. Initially, the scheme was due to run until the end of September 2020, however it was later extended until the end of December 2020. The extension in timescales came with no opportunity to apply for additional funding or flexibility to use existing funds to alter packages to meet the identified needs of families.

In total, Adopt South administered £68,962 directly. However, an application was also made on behalf of our partner organisation PACT for £12,750 which, upon approval, was passed to PACT to administer.











Adopt South assessed the COVID-19 situation would likely impact adoptive families in the following ways:

- Increased anxiety
- Isolation
- Attachment difficulties
- Loss & Bereavement

- Relationship difficulties
- Escalating behaviours
- Emotional and sensory dysregulation
- Ability to manage change

The Adoption Support Team worked with a range of providers to commission 122 virtual interventions to form the COVID-19 package:

EP Consultations

Commissioned from HIEP, 1-hour virtual consultation with two Educational

Psychologists, parents, and other professionals as required.

Behaviour Support

Block of 6 virtual sessions for parents with specialist providers covering preschool, primary and secondary age children. The intervention used strategies from the Great Behaviour Breakdown parenting approach as well as support around crisis co-regulation, mindset change, conflict resolution, trauma driven response.

Sensory Regulation

Block of 6 virtual sessions for parents with specialist Occupational Therapists focusing on emotional regulation.

Therapeutic Support Block of 6 virtual sessions for parents to provide support strategies specifically to support the COVID-19 situation. The strategies drew upon DDP, therapeutic parenting and the neuro sequential model to support parents. Therapeutic support also included two Teen groups of 6 sessions specifically aimed at teenagers, facilitated by a Clinical Psychologist. The groups focus was on stress management, mindfulness, building self-esteem and self-compassion, distress tolerance and emotional regulation.

Counselling

Block of 6 virtual sessions for parents to support with issues around social distancing, employment pressures, relationship difficulties, loss & bereavement. An increased range and volume of in-house interventions provided by Adopt

In-House Parenting Support

South's Post Adoption Team, including virtual support groups, bespoke consultations, the Adopting Changes programme (adapted to be delivered to individual families virtually), and weekly information sent out on Adopt South's database. The underlying theme of the in-house parenting support was focused on attachment and trauma informed parenting.







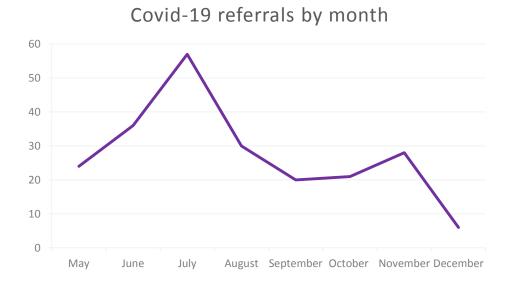




The Referral Process

The COVID-19 scheme was launched via Adopt South's database, and case holding Social Workers were asked to share details with their families. A completed enquiry form was used to access the scheme, which was subsequently shared with the provider as a referral.

From May 2020 until December 2020, **612** enquiries from parents, providers and professionals resulted in the allocation of **222** interventions. As can be seen from the referrals month by month graph, the peak of referrals was in July.



Support with behaviour issues received the most enquiries. Parents were supported with in-house parenting support, EP Consultations, specialist behaviour and therapeutic support to identify specific strategies to meet immediate needs. The high level of requests for in-house parenting support was unexpected. Virtual Coffee and Chat sessions were particularly popular with parents throughout the Covid period, whereas previous face-to-face support groups offered around the region have been poorly attended.



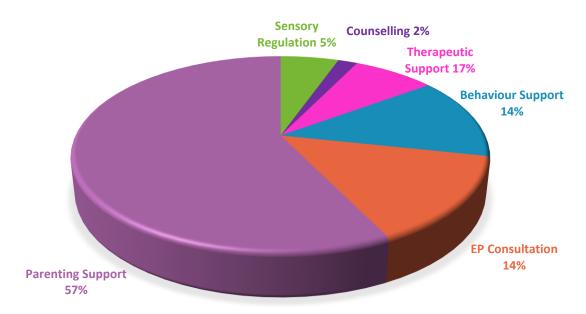




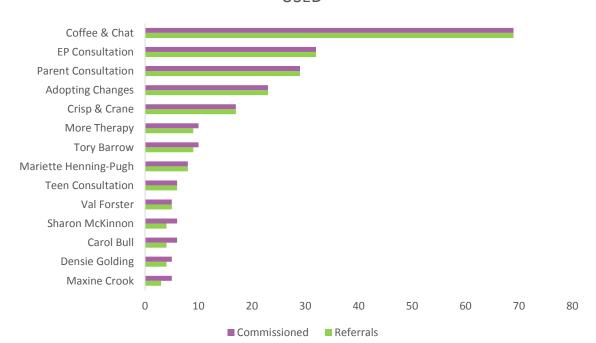




REFERRALS RECEIVED BY INTERVENTION



INTERVENTIONS AVAILABLE COMPARED TO INTERVENTIONS USED











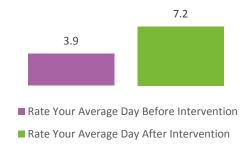


The interventions provided in-house, along with the Educational Psychologist Consultations, were fully allocated. Many parents who accessed these services had not had contact with Adopt South previously other than via the database. It has also been noted that there was a significant increase in both parents attending the intervention, as opposed to generally one parent prior to the pandemic.

Parental Feedback

At the referral stage, parents were asked a scaling question to rate their average day, with 10 being the best. The average score before intervention was 3.9. Following the intervention, parents were asked to repeat the scaling question, which revealed they rated their average day as a 7.2 which indicates the interventions enhanced family's average days by **85%**.

Parents rate your average day on a scale of 0-10 (with 10 being the best)



Conclusion

The aim of the COVID-19 scheme was to provide an immediate response to the outbreak of the Coronavirus by providing appropriate support to adoptive families within the Adopt South region.

The in-house support provided was extremely popular and a demonstration that the knowledge, experience and skills within the team can support parents in making positive change in difficult circumstances. The first lockdown started a week before Adopt South's first anniversary, and the success of the in -house support does evidence the success of Adopt South in bringing together the four partner local authorities without a dip in service, and in fact with offering a service in very difficult circumstances.

Adopt South proposed to allocate the funding to deliver direct support to up to 122 children and families using 15 providers. However, once the scheme was running, it was evident that interventions











which empowered parents with strategies to support their children were more effective during the pandemic than short virtual interventions specifically for children. With that in mind, the four providers commissioned to provide 8 blocks of therapy specifically for children were not used. This, therefore, reveals that the COVID-19 scheme provided interventions exceeding those commissioned.

Overall, the specific support identified met the presenting needs of families. There was positive feedback from parents relating to the providers commissioned and the Adopt South staff who delivered interventions over and above usual workloads. Parents felt their average day had improved by up to 33% following the six-session intervention, which is a significant increase in such a short period of time in extraordinary circumstances.

There was also a noticeable increase in both parents participating in the intervention. It would be beneficial to explore the reason behind this further; whether it was as a result of working from home due to the pandemic; the increased need for support; or that the interventions were delivered virtually.

The support packages were easily accessible and available to parents at a time when they were most needed. This was a key factor that was greatly appreciated by parents, case holding social workers and providers, all of whom reported they would support the idea of similar packages in the future.

Overall, the length of the support packages was fixed, and came with a clear scope which focused on the immediate needs of the family. The pre-determined expectations enabled the package to run smoothly, be SMART and cost effective.











Adopt South's Second Year

Strengths

 New Recruitment Initiatives and the High Number who have progressed to Assessment/Approvals

Adopt South's second year has continued to see extremely encouraging results, both in terms of the numbers of prospective adopters coming forward and new initiatives, despite the challenges of lockdown.

We have continued to see some significant advantages of recruiting as a Regional Adoption Agency with recruitment enquiries continuing to flow in at **719** during the year and **236** new adoptive families progressing to assessment, an average of **59** per quarter, compared to an average of **49.5** households per quarter during our first year and an average of **35.5** households the previous year when each local authority was recruiting separately.

The conversion rate from enquiry to assessment has continued to be above target, **33**% compared to a predicted **20**% and compared to an overall of **29**% above target last year. Similarly, the conversion rate from enquiry to approval has continued to be above target, **16**% compared to a predicted **15**%.

It is interesting to note that the ASGLB Data for 2019/20 which was published in October 2020 showed the national average was a reduction of 13% for approvals during 2019/20. However, Adopt South had a 32% increase, approving 121 in comparison to 92 adoptive households being approved the previous year by the 4 partner local authorities.

The approval rate has continued to be strong during Adopt South's second year, with 117 households being approved, a 27% increase from the 92 adopters approved the year before Adopt South launched.

New initiatives which have included our *Speak to An Adopter* sessions and the sticky chat button on our website, giving users three options to either call, *Arrange a Chat* or *Speak to An Adopter*, have been successful in driving recruitment when there has been no face-to-face route.

There is no doubt that our dedicated Recruitment Team, which includes two marketing officers, have continued to help bring in some significant results. They are a very passionate, innovative team, who offer excellent customer service, always ensuring they call potential applicants back and arrange a visit without delay, at a time of the applicant's choice. This always includes a choice of weekends and evenings, as well as weekdays.











Our second year has seen many positive comments and feedback on social media from adopters about the service they have received, helping build Adopt South's reputation and has encouraged other potential adopters to progress with Adopt South, rather than with neighbouring Agencies.

• Improvement in Timescales

Adopt South's second year has continued to see both Stage 1 and Stage 2 assessment timescales well within government expectations.

Stage 1 assessments were completed well within the government timescale of 2 months during Quarters 1, 2, 3 and 4 and averaged **1.5** months across the four quarters.

This compares to an overall average of **1.7** months during Adopt South's first year and **2.1** months the previous year which was outside of government expectations.

Stage 2 assessments averaged **3.8** months across the four quarters, compared to the same average of **3.8** months across all four quarters last year, well within government expectations, therefore.

Number of Families Identified/Numbers of Children Placed

A significant strength has continued to be the number of families identified for the 4 Local Authority's children and the number of children who have been placed.

With **150** children having a family identified during Adopt South's second year and **108** being formally linked with **96** adoptive families, the success with family finding continues to be clearly evidenced. Having started Adopt South's first year with **39** children with no potential links, this was reduced to **12** by the end of the first year. On the completion of our second year, this has reduced further to just **2**.

The strength of joining together as one Adoption Agency has continued to be clear, with a particular strength of finding families for **62** Hard to Place children.

Dedicated Stage 1 Team

Having a dedicated and innovative Stage 1 Team has continued to be a strength as we have completed our second year. We continue to be the only Regional Adoption Agency to have a dedicated team for Stage 1 and the benefits are clearly evidenced. The team have continued to support adopters to grow in Stage 1 and to further their understanding of the needs of adopted children and therapeutic parenting. Through the use of Virtual Reality and support to build childcare experience, potential adopters have been able to grow in knowledge and skills to meet the needs of our children, including sibling groups, older children and children with additional needs.

There is no doubt that this has continued to contribute to the high number of children placed in house and the need for very few interagency placements.











Training Pathway

The training offered to prospective adopters throughout their adoption journey has continued to be a strength as we have completed Adopt South's second year, with all courses quickly adapted to being delivered virtually due to COVID-19. In addition to Stage 1 and 2 training, (which is the requirement set out in the regulations), all prospective adopters have continued to attend a Paediatric First Aid and Care of Infants course prior to panel to enable them to have additional skills to care for a child when placed.

Following a child being placed, all adopters have continued to be strongly encouraged to attend a therapeutic parenting course (Adopting Changes/Adopting Little Changes) to provide them with a toolkit of skills they can draw upon to support them with caring for their adopted child.

A strength of the training pathway has included courses being co-facilitated by adopters and being offered during the daytime, evening and weekends to ensure that training has been accessible to all adopters.

Year 2 has also seen a pilot being rolled out, 'Stepping- Stones', a peer support group, which has quickly grown and a regular cohort of adopters now attend twice a week.

Very positive feedback has continued to be received with regard to how equipped adopters feel to care for their adopted child, which is borne out in the very low disruption rate since the commencement of Adopt South.

Mentoring Support

Adopt South's Mentoring Scheme remains a strength as we have completed Adopt South's second year. Although initially Cornerstones were commissioned to run the scheme, bringing the scheme in house and employing an adopter to lead the scheme, has seen it go from strength to strength with **186** families receiving support by **35** mentors at the end of March 2021.

Towards the end of Quarter 2, the mentoring scheme developed and offered bespoke and targeted one- off consultations with mentors who are experienced in specific areas of adoption. This included consultations on topics such as challenging behaviour, Foetal Alcohol Syndrome, unknown future needs, supporting heritage and culture, parental mental health and meeting birth parents.

Again, very positive feedback has continued to be received about the scheme and of how much it is valued by both adopters going through their adoption journey and by adopters needing additional support post adoption.











Speedier Matching/Scorecards

During Adopt South's second year, we have continued to see strong evidence of speedier matching and evidence of the benefits of having a dedicated family finding team, who have been supported by an increasing number of in-house adopters being available.

Average timescales for Scorecard 1 (average time between the child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family) were well below the government expectation of 426 days for all 4 Local Authorities across all four quarters. With the exception of Southampton who had an exceptionally low scorecard last year, all have seen a significant improvement on the last two years.

The comparison data which has recently been published by the ASGLB for the period October 2019 - September 2020, shows that out of the 31 Regional Adoption Agencies, Adopt South was one of just 8 RAA's who had Scorecard 1 under government thresholds.

Low numbers of Disruptions

Adopt South continues to have a low disruption rate with just 2 disruptions (out of 108 children placed) in Year 2 and just 3 disruptions (out of 118 children placed) in Year 1. This clearly is good news. Work now needs to take place to help understand if this is a result of adoptive families being better prepared and supported or that applicants are screened and assessed more effectively. It is interesting to note that there have been very few adopters withdrawn from panel or not approved over the course of the last year, even although who we recruit has been widened.

Work will take place to understand this some more.

Advantages of More Local Placements

With only four children being placed externally during Adopt South's second year, noticeable advantages have continued to be seen. These include the impact on staff time and significantly reduced travel, along with adoptive families being more able to access local adoption support.

• Regional Adoption Support

Amalgamating support, training courses and workshops across the region, along with the dedicated Advice and Support Line, has continued to see clear evidence of more effective adoption support for adopters. Although the COVID- 19 Crisis and ongoing restrictions meant that workshops delivered to groups weren't possible during Quarter 1, therapeutic parenting support, coffee and chat sessions, online consultations, along with commissioning the Adopter Hub from PACT, continued to support adopters across the region. The end of Quarter 2 saw face to face therapeutic parenting courses start again although, unfortunately, they had to move to virtual again in Quarters 3 and 4.











3268 enquiries were made to the Adoption Support Advice Line during our second year, compared to a total of 650 enquiries during our first year (a 402% increase), evidencing that this support is now being used widely by adopters.

Some very positive comments have continued to be received regarding the support available.

Centralising Applications to the Adoption Support Fund

The centralising of applications to the Adoption Support Fund led to a total of £493,424.16 being approved in Adopt South's second year.

The total including the COVID - 19 Scheme was £572,555.07.

Dedicated admin support to help process the applications and ensure no delays, has continued to ensure that a high number of adoptive families have had the support they have needed.

Low Interagency Spend and an Income Generated

With interagency placements being purchased for just 4 children (a total spend of £121,332) and an income being generated through selling 3 adopters (£97,000) and through selling training (£42,395.52), a total of £139,395.52 therefore), Adopt South's second year has ended strongly and has kept well within the budget set.

The budget for interagency purchases was £250,000. There has, therefore, been an underspend of £128,668 which will be returned to partners.

Recognition of Adopt South in the Evaluation of Regional Adoption Agencies
 Second Report October 2020 and RAA's Practice Note- Recruitment of Adopters

Adopt South's use of Virtual Reality was discussed as a positive intervention in the RAA Evaluation. Similarly, our Mentoring Scheme was discussed in detail in the Evaluation of Regional Adoption Agencies, Second Report (Oct 2020) and identified as a crucial aspect of both adopter preparation and adoption support.

Further to this, a case study outlining Adopt South's partnership with Hampshire Football Association was featured in the nationally published RAAs Practice Note- Recruitment of Adopters.











• Strength of Comparisons with other Regional Adoption Agencies

The comparison data which has recently been published by the ASGLB for the period October 2019 - September 2020, shows:

- Out of the 31 Regional Adoption Agencies, Adopt South is one of just 8 who had Scorecard 1 under Government thresholds.
- Adopt South had the lowest number of children waiting. (10)
- Adopt South approved more adopters than any other RAA. (135)
- Our adopters spent less time than any other RAA from enquiry to Stage 1.
- Adopt South is the only RAA who averaged Stage 1 in timescales.
- Adopt South is the only RAA who averaged Stage 2 in timescales.
- Adopt South is one of 4 RAA's who placed more than 100+ children with their adoptive families.
- Adopt South placed more children with in-house adopters than any other RAA, spending less on interagency adoptions (115 out of the 118 children were placed in-house).

Challenges

COVID -19

COVID-19 has continued to bring some significant challenges as we have ended our second year. However, the way our staff have continued to adjust to delivering our services in different ways and to ensure business as usual has remained impressive.

Incredibly, our second year has seen an increase in enquiries, pre-stage visits and those progressing to assessment with no pause in the service at any level. This remains a huge testament to the dedication and commitment of Adopt South's staff.

Conclusion

Adopt South's second year has ended strongly.

As we continue into Year 3, the data emerging indicates a continuing strong picture, despite the challenges of COVID- 19 that remain persistent.







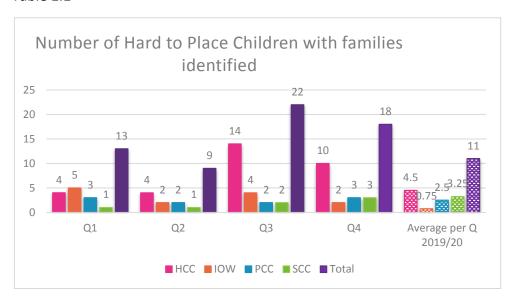




Q1 and Q2 Data – Target Comparison Charts

Family Finding

Table 1.1



62 hard to place children have had families identified during Adopt South's second year.

(HCC- 32; IOW- 13; PCC- 10; SCC- 7).

This compares to 44 during 2019/20.

Table 1.2

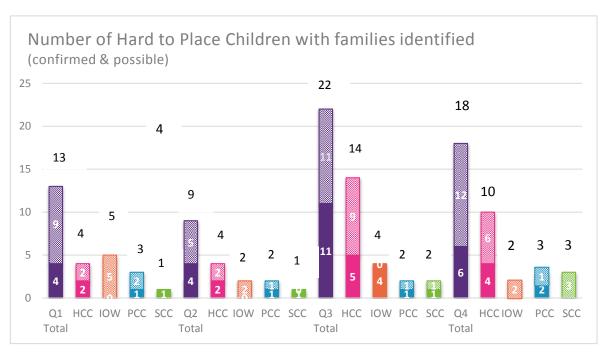




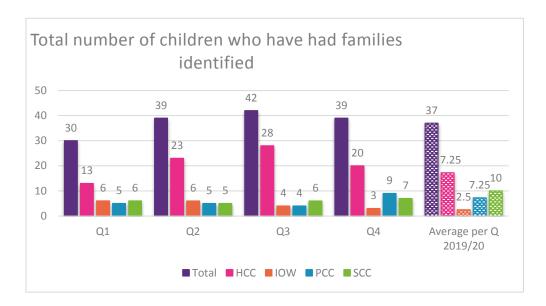








Table 1.3



150 children have had families identified during Adopt South's second year.

(HCC-84; IOW-19; PCC-23; SCC-24).

This compares to 148 during 2019/20.

Table 1.4

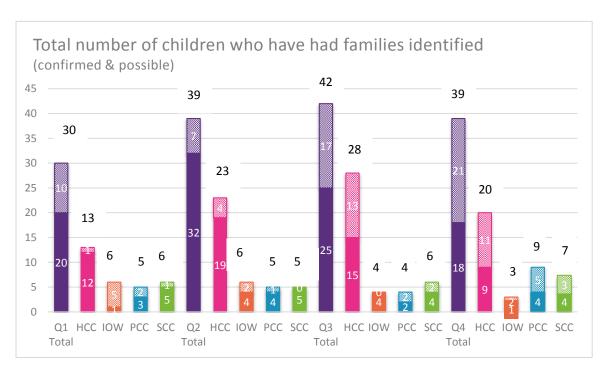




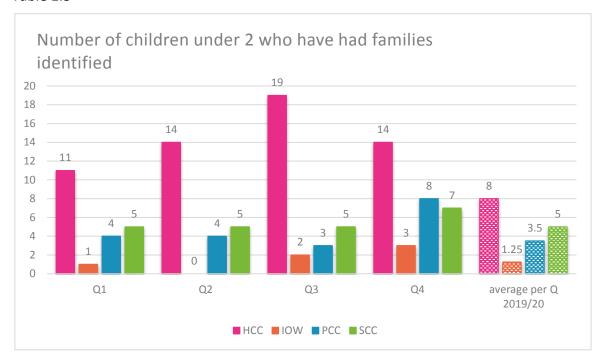








Table 1.5



105 children under the age of 2 have had families identified during Adopt South's second year.

Table 1.6

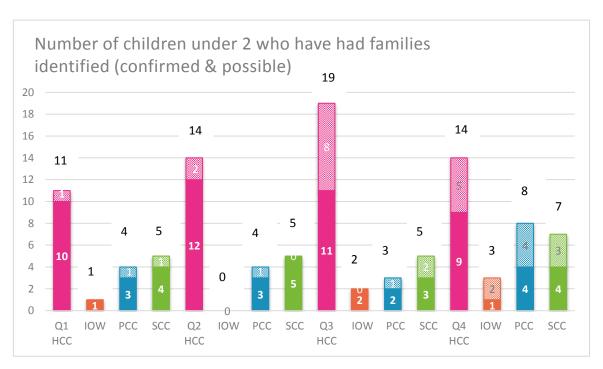




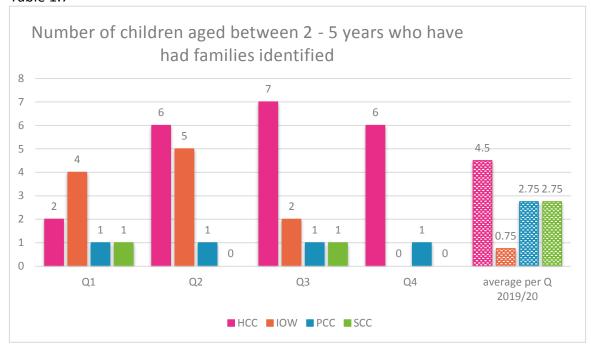








Table 1.7



38 children between the ages of 2-5 have had families identified during Adopt South's second year. Table 1.8

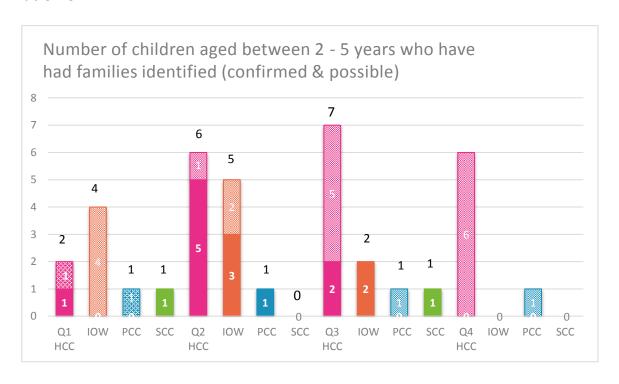




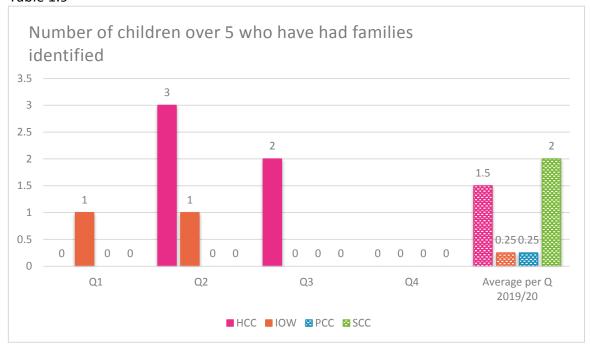








Table 1.9



7 children over the age of 5 have had families identified during Adopt South's second year.

Table 1.10

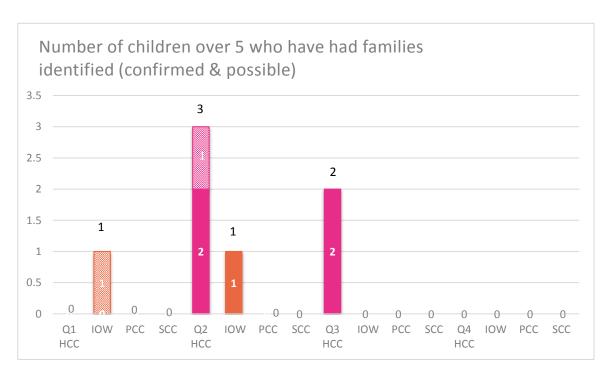




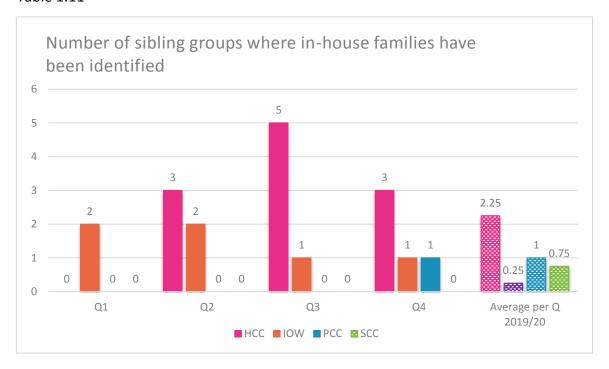








Table 1.11



18 sibling groups have had families identified during Adopt South's second year.

Table 1.12













Graphs below show how many families have been identified (confirmed/possible) for children who have been waiting for under 6 months, 6 months to a year, 1-2 years and 2-3 years.

Table 1.13

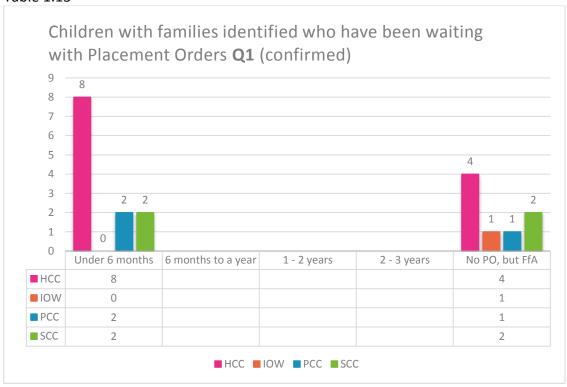


Table 1.14













Table 1.15

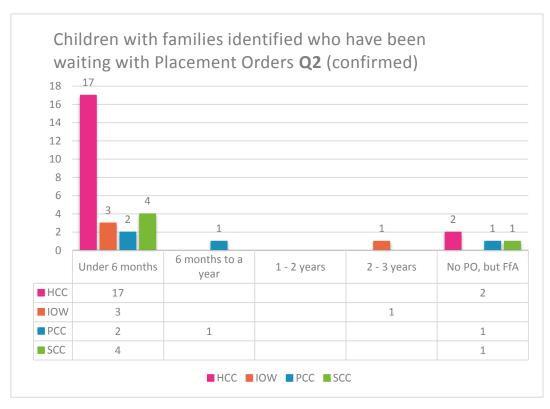












Table 1.16

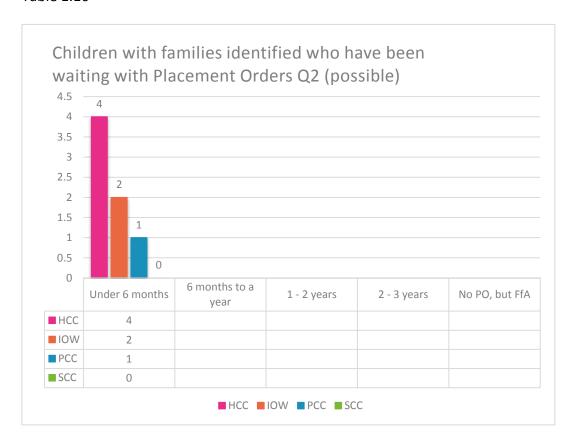


Table 1.17

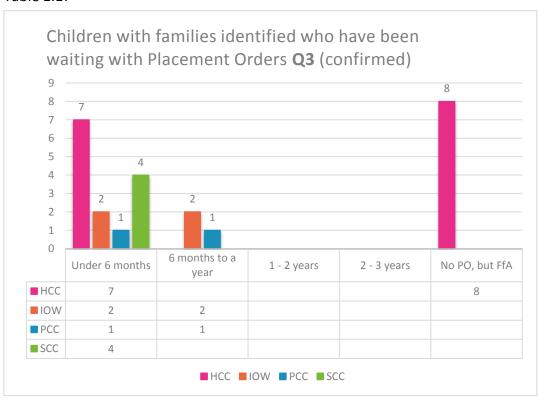












Table 1.18

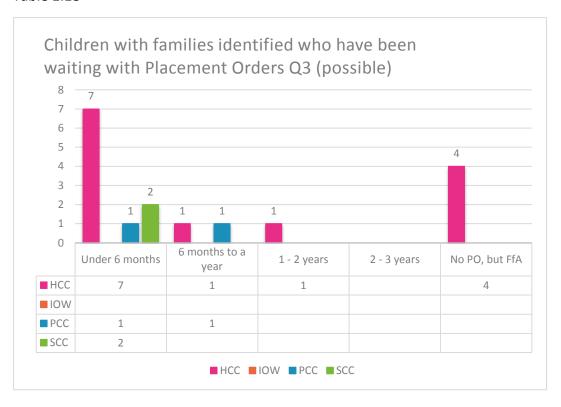


Table 1.19

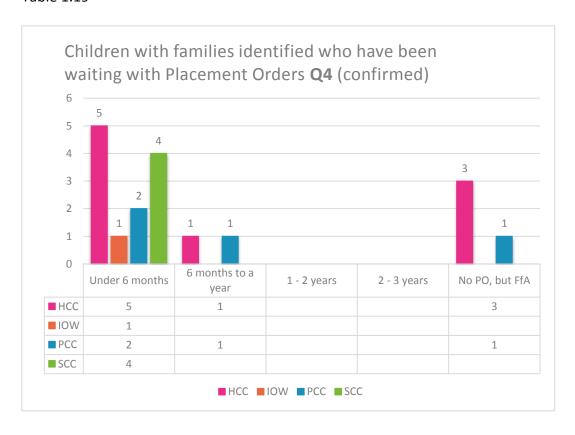




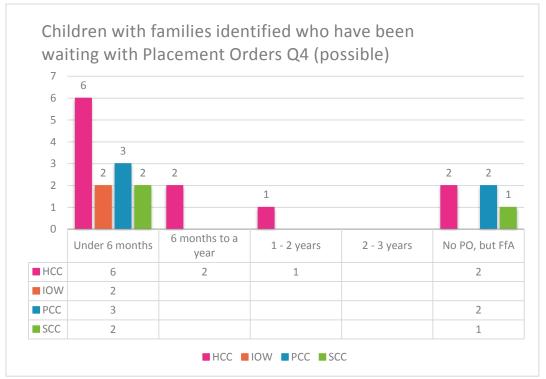






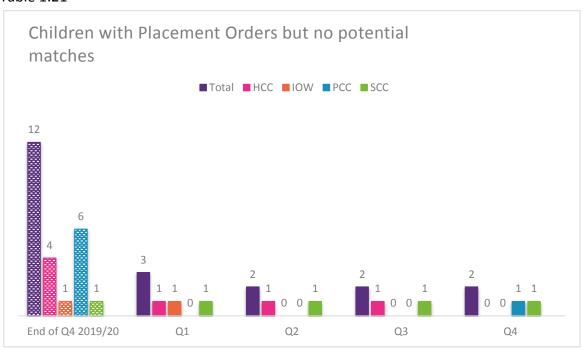


Table 1.20



During Adopt South's second year, **10** children had been waiting for a family between 6 months and a year; **1** child had been waiting between 1- 2 years, and **1** child had been waiting between 2- 3 years. The remaining children had been waiting for less than 6 months.

Table 1.21



At the end of Adopt South's second year, just 2 children had no potential matches.





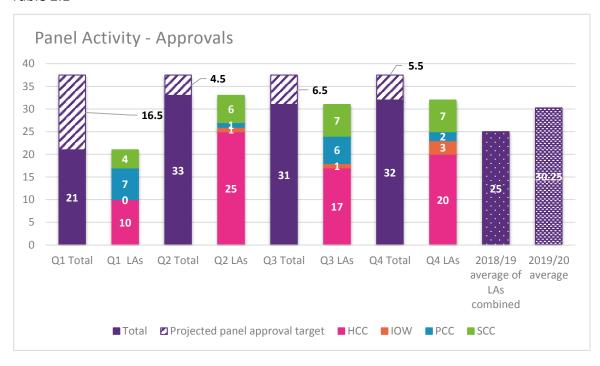






Panel

Table 2.1



Overall, yearly projected target is 150 approvals per year.

117 households have been approved during Adopt South's second year.

(This compares to 121 approvals during 2019/20)

Since the launch of Adopt South, 238 adopters have, therefore, been approved.



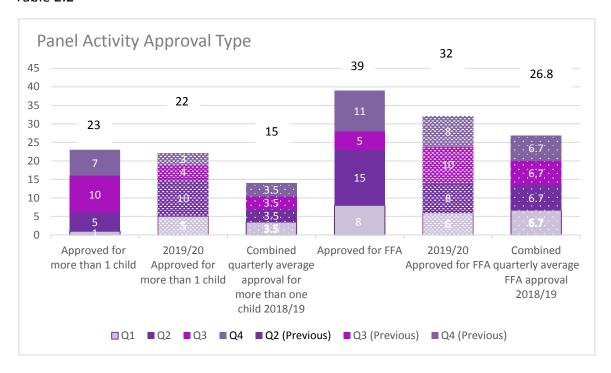






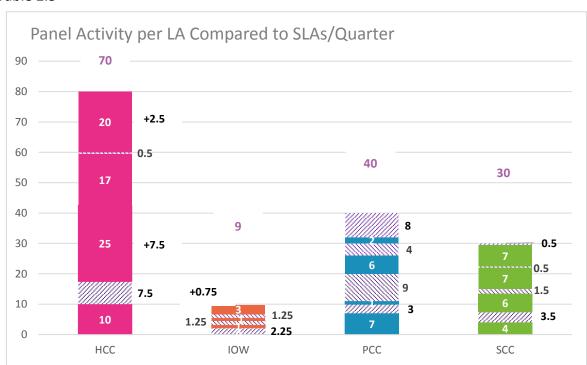


Table 2.2



Out of the **117** households approved during Adopt South's second year, **23** were approved for sibling groups and **39** approved for Fostering for Adoption.

Table 2.3



HCC- 72 (yearly target 70); IOW- 5 (target 9); PCC- 16 (target 40); SCC- 24 (target 30)



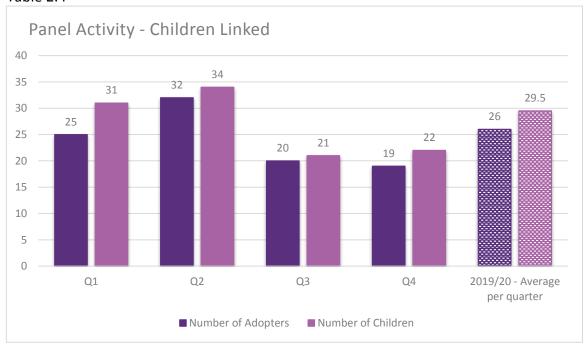








Table 2.4



Total for Q4 – 22 children linked with 19 adopters.

This compares to Q3 - 21 children linked with 20 adopters; Q2 - 34 children linked with 32 adopters and Q1- 31 children linked with 25 adopters.

108 children have, therefore, been linked with 96 adopters during Adopt South's second year.

(This compares to 118 children linked with 104 adopters during 2019/20).

Since the launch of Adopt South, 226 children have, therefore, been linked.



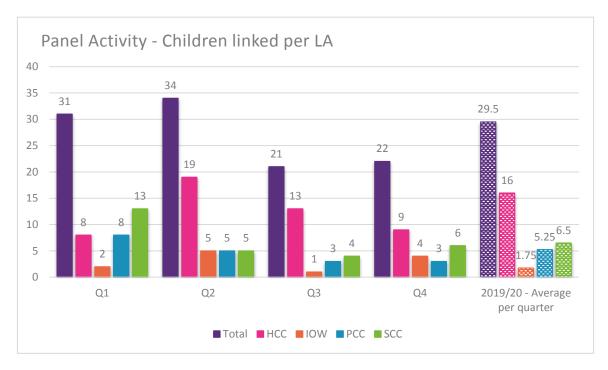








Table 2.5



During Adopt South's second year, **108** children have been linked; HCC- **49**; IOW- **12**; PCC- **19**; SCC- **28**.

(This compares to HCC-64; IOW-7; PCC-21; SCC-26 during 2019/20)

Since the launch of Adopt South, therefore, 113 HCC children have been linked; 19 IOW children; 40 PCC children; 54 SCC children.



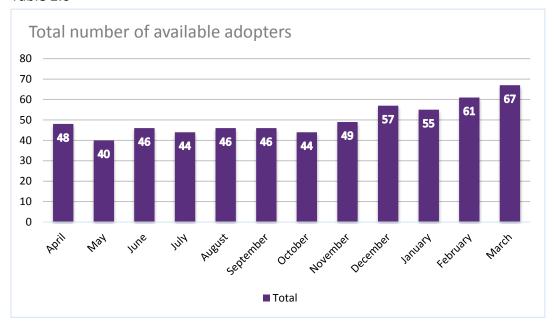






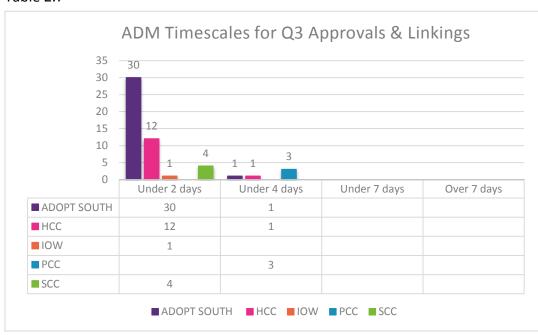


Table 2.6



During Quarter 4, there was an average of **61** adopters available, compared to **50** in Quarter 3 and **45** in both Quarters 1 and 2. This is significantly more than all quarters last year, when the average was **46** (Q4), **36** (Q3), **35** (Q2) and **24** (Q1).

Table 2.7



During Quarter 3, all approvals and linkings were considered by the Agency Decision Makers in under 4 days with the majority being considered in under 2 days, well within the 7-day regulatory timescale.



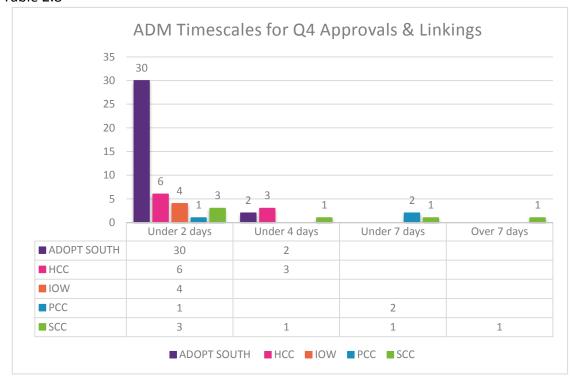








Table 2.8



During Quarter 4, all approvals and linkings were considered by the Agency Decision Makers in under 7 days, with the exception of one linking which was over 7 days. The majority of decisions were considered in under 2 days, well within the 7-day regulatory timescale.











Recruitment

Table 3.1 Pipeline/ Conversation Rate

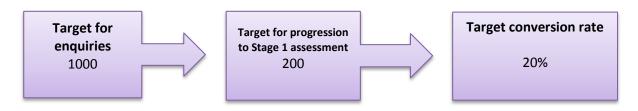
Target enquiry to approval - per year



Actual enquiry to approval – per the year - 2020/21



Target enquiry to assessment – per year



Actual enquiry to assessment - per the year - 2020/21



Target assessment to approval - per year











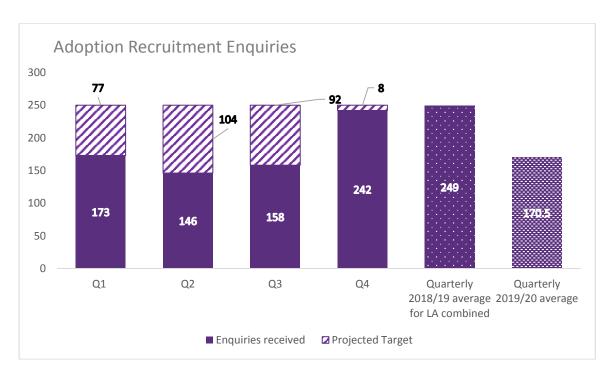


(These figures allow for closure rate of 17.5% in Stage 1 and 9% in Stage 2, leaving target of 150 to be approved per year)

Actual assessment to approval – per the year - 2020/21



Table 3.2



Overall yearly projected target is 1000 enquiries per year. The quarterly target is 250 enquiries.







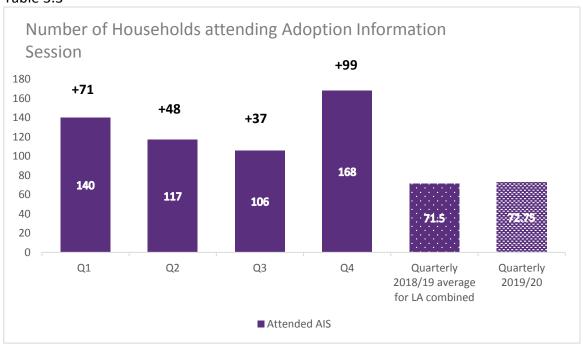




719 enquiries were received during Adopt South's second year.

(This compares to 682 during 2019/20)

Table 3.3



Overall, yearly projected target is 275 households. Quarterly target is 69 households.

531 households attended an Adoption Information Session during Adopt South's second year.

(This compares to 291 households during 2019/20)



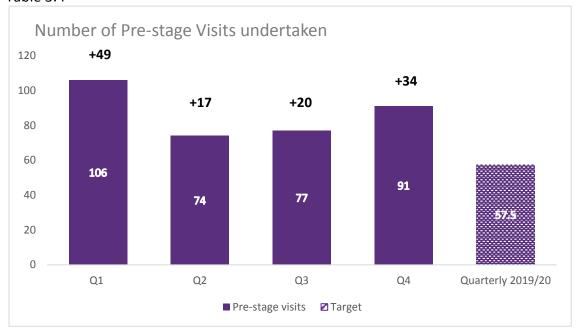








Table 3.4



Overall yearly projected target is 230 visits per year. Quarterly target is 57 visits.

348 pre-stage visits were undertaken during Adopt South's second year.

(This compares to 230 during 2019/20)

Table 3.5



Overall yearly projected target is 200 assessments progressing to assessment (Stage 1) per year.











Quarterly target is 50. **244 Registration of Interest Forms were received during Adopt South's second year.**

(This compares to **196** during 2019/20)



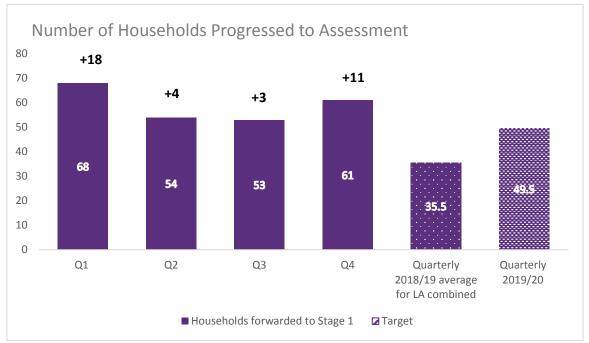








Table 3.6



Overall yearly projected target is 200 households forwarded to Stage 1. Quarterly target is 50 households forwarded to Stage 1.

236 households were forwarded to assessment during Adopt South's second year.

(This compares to 198 during 2019/20)





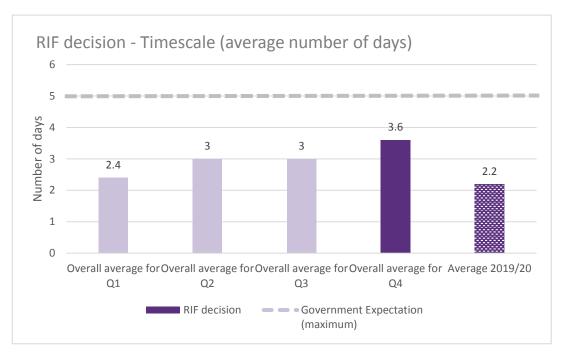






Timescales

Table 4.1



RIF decisions averaged **3.6 days** in Quarter 4, remaining well within the government expectation of 5 days.

RIF timescales for Adopt South's second year averaged 3 days, well within, therefore, government expectations.



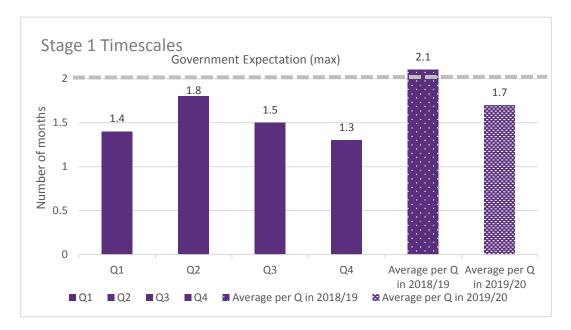








Table 4.2



Stage 1 timescales averaged **1.3 months** in Quarter 4, remaining well within the government expectation of 2 months.

Stage 1 timescales for Adopt South's second year averaged 1.5 months, therefore, well within government expectations.



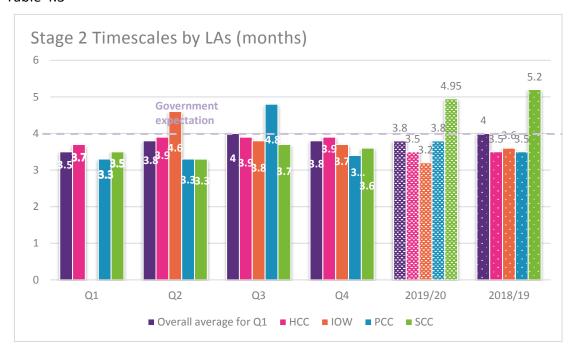








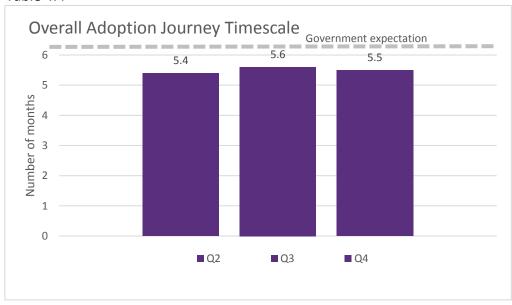
Table 4.3



Stage 2 timescales averaged **3.8 months** in Quarter 4, continuing to be within the government expectation of 4 months.

Stage 2 timescales for Adopt South's second year averaged 3.8 months, therefore, well within government expectations.

Table 4.4



The overall adoption journey (excluding fast tracked assessments) averaged **5.5 months** in Quarter 4, remaining well within the government expectation of 6 months.











Stage 1 and Stage 2

Table 5.1

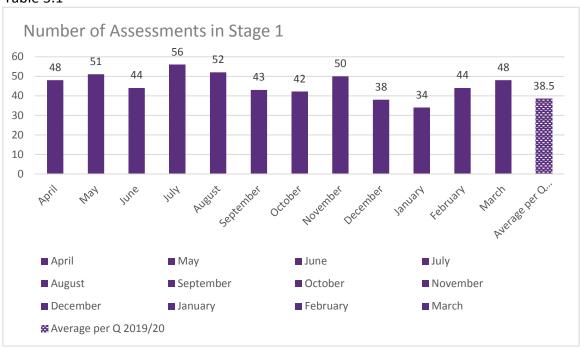
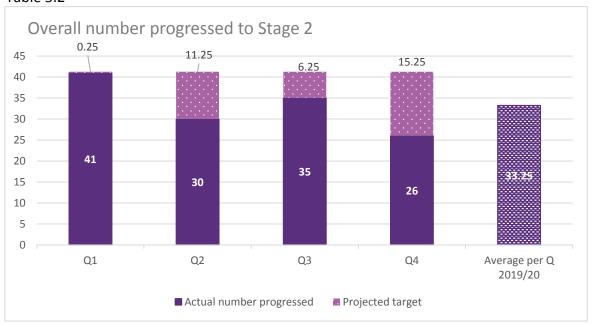


Table 5.2



The

projected number to progress to Stage 2 per quarter is 41.25 to allow 9% counselling out/ withdrawals (165 to progress to Stage 2) to reach 150 approvals.

132 households progressed to Stage 2 during Adopt South's second year. (This compares to 133 during 2019/20)











Table 5.3

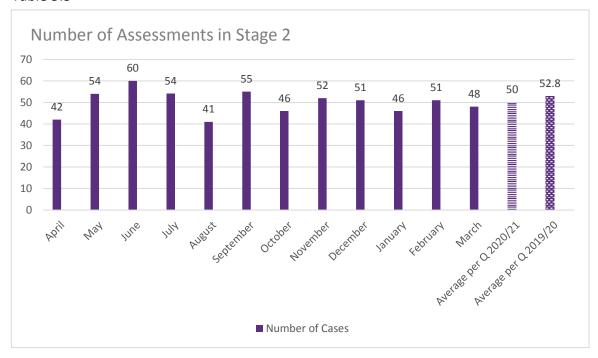


Table 5.4

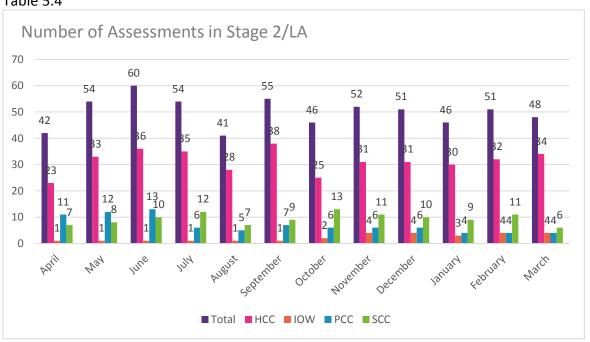




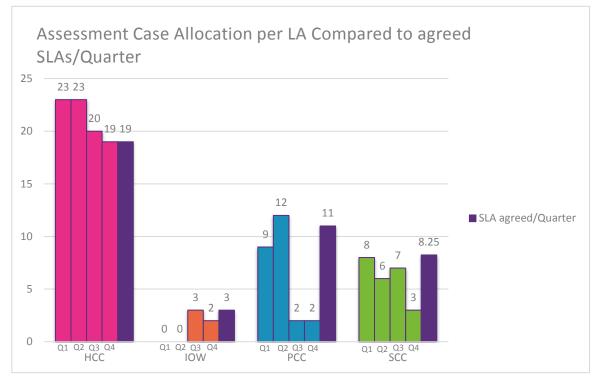








Table 5.5



Service Level Agreements (SLAs) per quarter allowing for 9% closure rate:

- HCC 19 (47% of overall target)
- IOW 3 (7% of overall target)
- PCC 11 (27% of overall target)
- SCC 8.25 (20% of overall target)

The table below shows the allocation targets for each hub and as a combined figure for each time period throughout the year:

Hub	Allocations per	Allocations per	Allocations per ½	Allocations per
	month	quarter	year	year
HCC	6.5	19	38	76
loW	1	3	6	12
PCC	3.5	11	22	44
SCC	2.75	8.25	16.5	33
Combined total	13.75	41.25	82.5	165





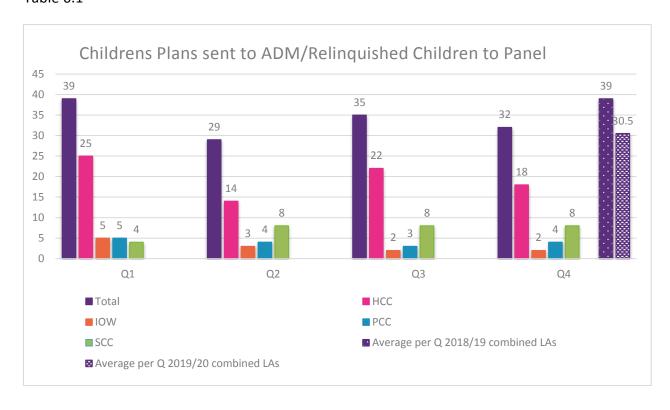






Children's Information

Table 6.1



There were 135 Children's Plans, an average of 33.8 per quarter, sent to ADM/Relinquished Children to Panel during Adopt South's second year.

(This compares to **122** during Adopt South's first year, an average of **30.5** per quarter and compares to an average of **39** per quarter during 2018/19).



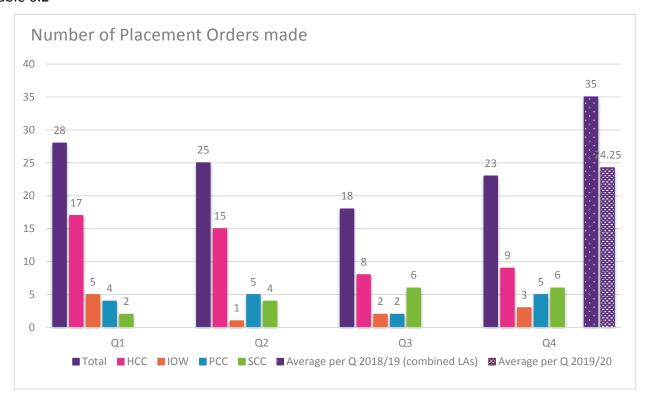








Table 6.2



There were 94 Placement Orders made, an average of 24 per quarter, during Adopt South's second year.

(This compares to **97** Placement Orders made during Adopt South's first year, an average of **24.25** per quarter and compares to an average of **35** per quarter during 2018/19).



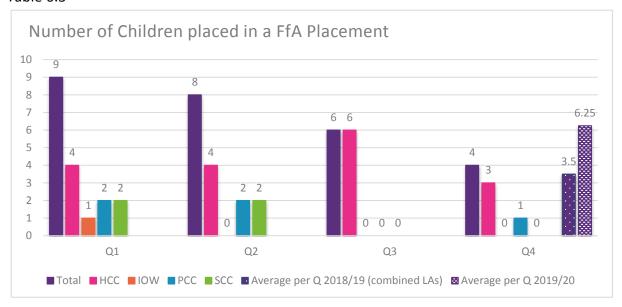








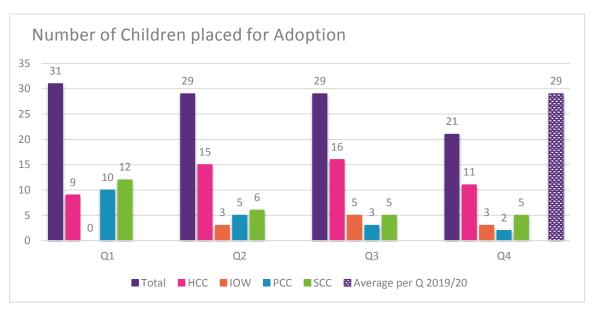
Table 6.3



There were 27 children placed in a FfA placement, an average of 6.8 per quarter, during Adopt South's second year.

(This compares to **25** children being placed in a FfA placement during Adopt South's first year, an average of **6.25** per quarter and compares to an average of **3.5** per quarter during 2018/19).

Table 6.4



There were 110 children placed for adoption, an average of 27.5 per quarter, during Adopt South's second year.

(This compares to **116** children being placed for adoption during Adopt South's first year, an average of **29** per quarter).



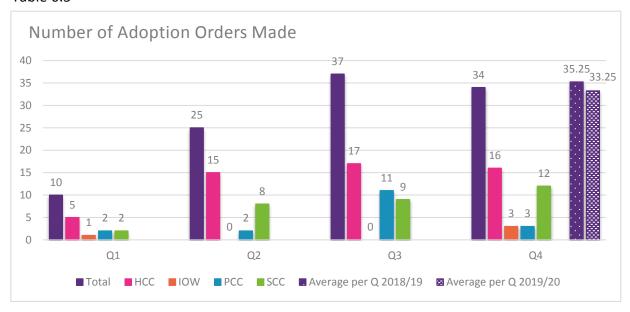








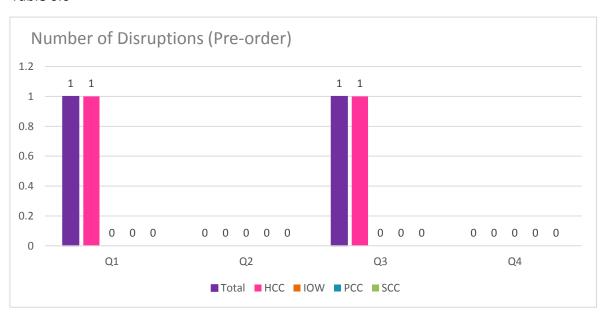
Table 6.5



There were 106 Adoption Orders made, an average of 27 per quarter, during Adopt South's second year.

(This compares to **133** Adoption Orders being made during Adopt South's first year, an average of **33.25** per quarter and compares to an average of **35.25** per quarter during 2018/19).

Table 6.6



There have been 2 disruptions during Adopt South's second year.

(This compares to 3 disruptions during Adopt South's first year).



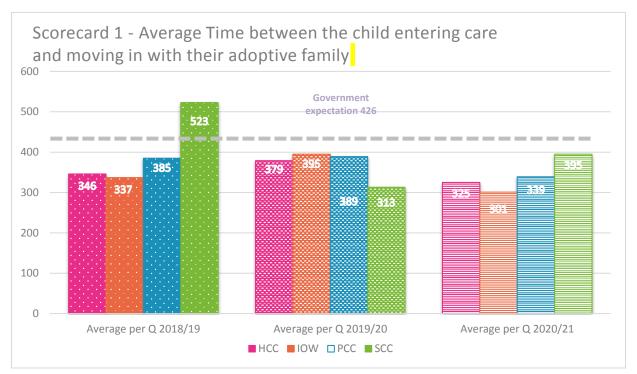






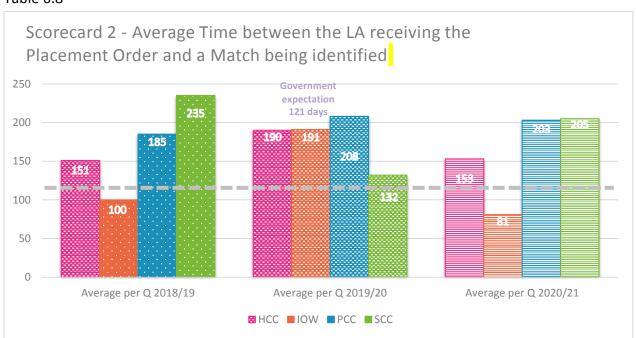


Table 6.7



All 4 Local Authorities have averaged Scorecard 1 below the government's threshold during Adopt South's second year.

Table 6.8



Although Portsmouth and Southampton have averaged slightly outside of the government's threshold of 121 days, this reflects their hard to place children who although it took longer, families were found.





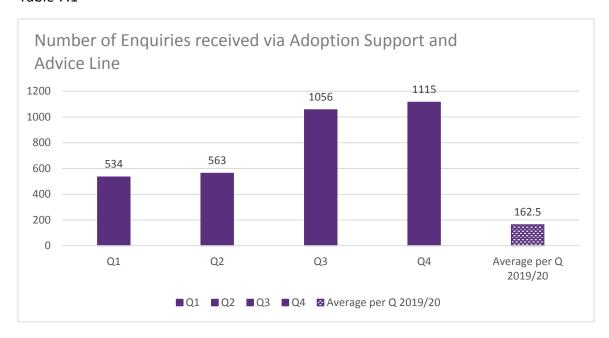






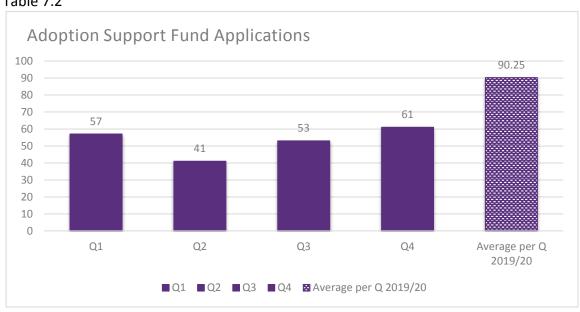
Adoption Support

Table 7.1



There were 3268 enquiries received via the Adoption Support and Advice Line during Adopt South's second year. (This compares to 650 enquiries received during 2019/20).

Table 7.2



A total of 212 applications, an average of 53 per quarter, were made to the Adoption Support Fund during Adopt South's second year.

(This compares to **361** applications being made during 2019/20, an average of **90.25** per quarter).



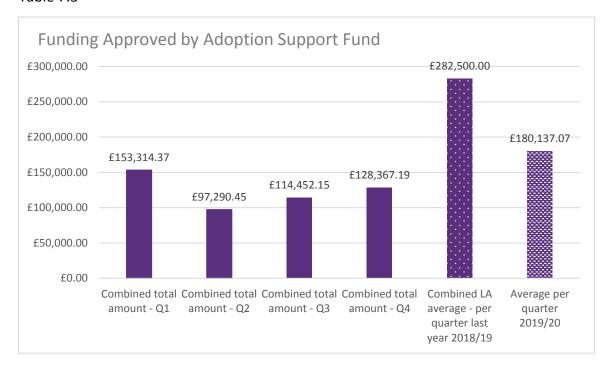








Table 7.3



The total amount approved by the Adoption Support Fund in Quarter 4 was £128, 367.19.

In Adopt South's second year, £493,424.16 has, therefore, been approved in relation to regular applications for therapeutic interventions.

The total including the COVID - 19 Scheme is £572,555.07.

(This compares to a total of £720, 548 being approved during 2019/20, an average of £180,137.07 per quarter).



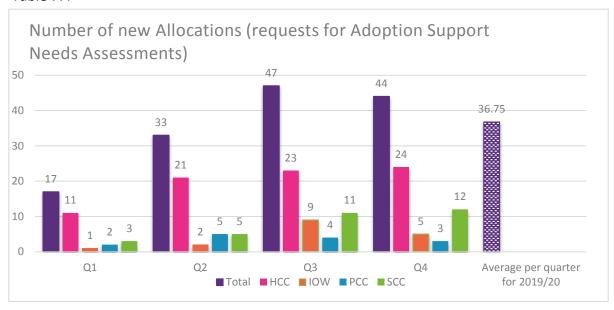






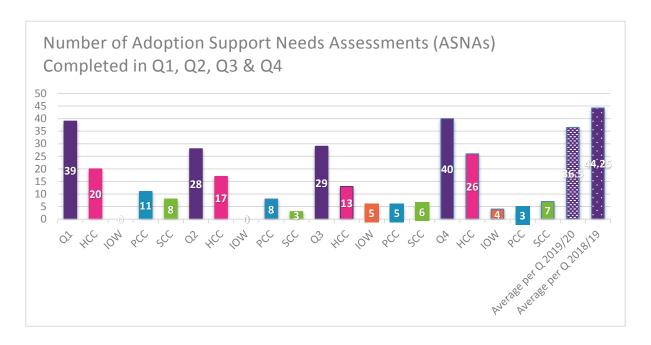


Table 7.4



141 new Adoption Support Needs Assessments, an average of 35.3 per quarter, were allocated during Adopt South's second year.

(This compares to **147** (an average of **36.75** per quarter) during 2019/20 and compares to **464** (an average of **116** per quarter) during 2018/19). Table 7.5



136 Adoption Support Needs Assessments were completed during Adopt South's second year.

153 ASNA reviews were also completed, a total, therefore of 289.











Table 7.6

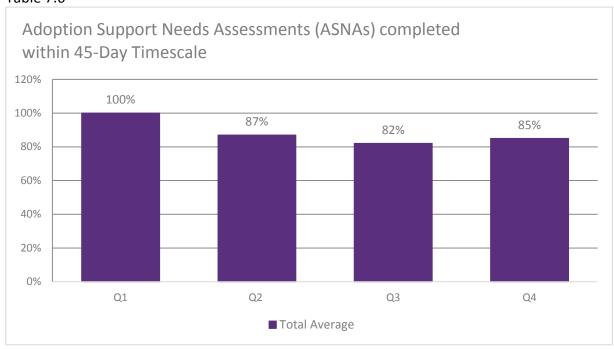
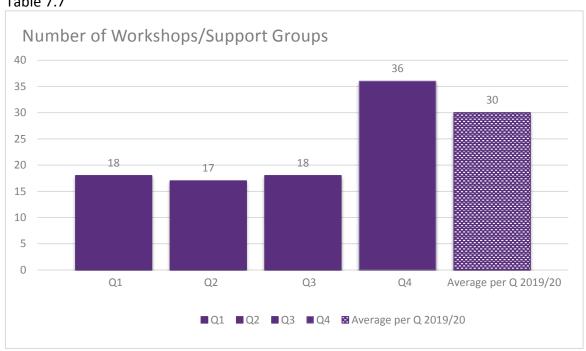


Table 7.7



A total of 89 workshops/therapeutic parenting courses/support groups were held during Adopt South's second year.

(This compares to a total of 120 during 2019/20, an average of 30 per quarter).



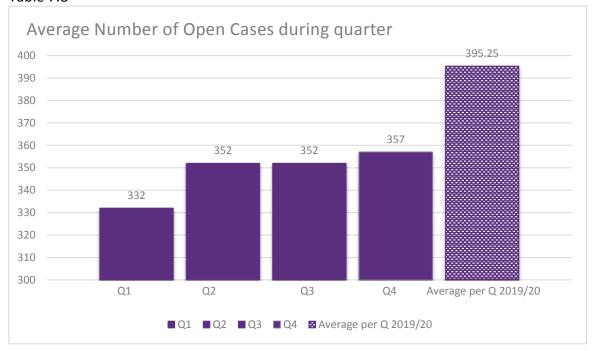






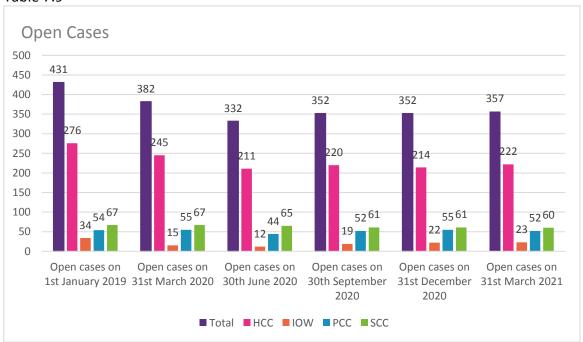


Table 7.8



In Year 2, 554 children and young people were open to a social worker in the Adoption Support Team and accessed an adoption support plan.

Table 7.9







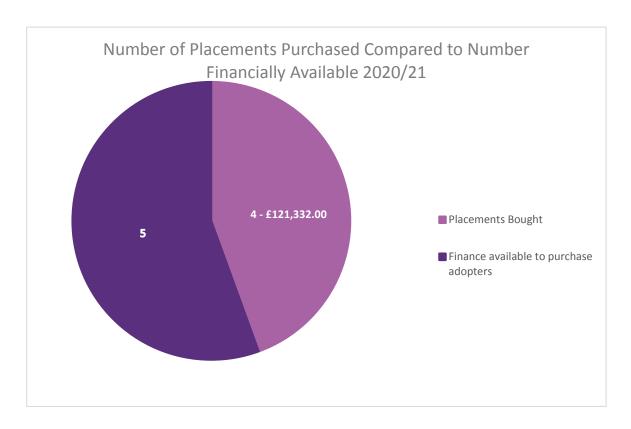






Interagency

Table 8.1



Funding has been adjusted to allow for 8 placements to be purchased during our second year.

The saving has been re-directed to support the pressure with staffing.

During Quarter 4, 1 interagency placement was purchased. This was for 1 child (IoW) who was placed with the London Borough of Bexley.

The total cost of interagency placements for Adopt South's second year, therefore, is £121,332 and is made up of the following: -

- 1 child placed with Diagrama (VAA)
- 1 child placed with One Adopt North and Humber (RAA)
- 1 child placed with St Francis Child Society (VAA)
- 1 child placed with London borough of Bexley

The budget for interagency purchases was £250,000. The underspend of £128,668 will be returned to partners.





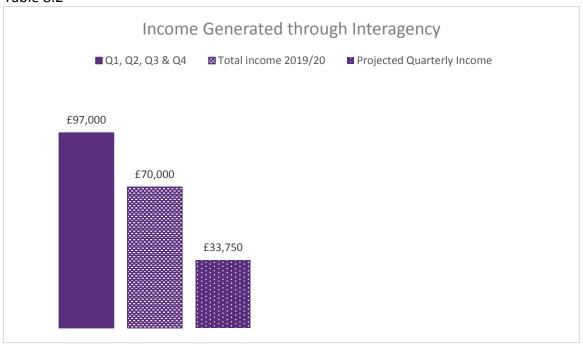






(This compares to interagency placements being purchased for 3 children during 2019/20, a total spend of £96,620).

Table 8.2



Projected quarterly income - based on financial model (5 adopters to be sold - £135,000 per year).

The total income from adopters sold during Adopt South's second year is £97,000 and is made up of the following: -

1 adopter for 1 child with Aspire (RAA)

1 adopter for 1 child with Adoption Now (RAA)

1 adopter for 2 children with Adopt North East (RAA)

The income budget for adopters sold was, therefore, under achieved by £38,000.

(This compares to 2 adopters being sold during 2019/20, one was linked with two children, generating an income of £70,000).



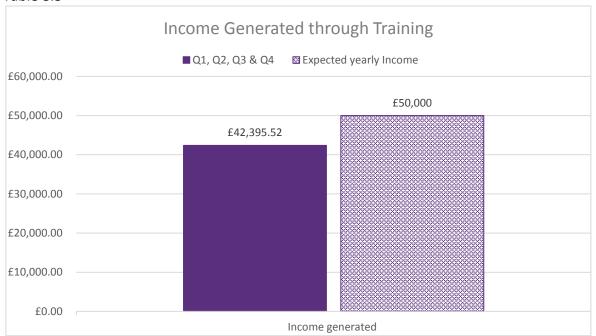








Table 8.3



£50,000 income to be generated through selling of training places – based on financial model.

£42,395.52 has been generated through selling therapeutic parenting courses during Adopt South's second year.







