

# KCC/Coram Partnership Adoption Service

Corporate Parenting Panel – 9 April 2015

## Post Adoption Support Service

### Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the service including current and future developments in line with national priorities for post adoption support.

### Brief

The brief for the service is to provide an integrated service to adoptive families following the granting of an adoption order for Kent children and children placed in Kent by other local authorities.

### Vision

The broad vision is to develop a multi-disciplinary team around the child/adopters to provide a timely and responsive service to adopters and children. The aim is to support adopters in their parenting task to maximise the children's emotional, social and educational development. The vision is informed by recent Department of Education research (e.g. Professor Julie Selwyn, University of Bristol) and by the experience and expertise of the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust.

### Scope of the service

#### Information and advice line

The team provides a timely service through an information and advice line which can be accessed by professionals and adopters. The purpose of the information and advice line is:

- To provide immediate information and advice to adopters and professionals and signpost them to other services when appropriate.
- To provide immediate supportive phone consultation for adopters in crisis and/or in distress.
- To inform adopters with emotional, behavioural or mental health concerns about their children that their request for help will be allocated to a member of the team promptly.
- To liaise with other professionals who have concerns about an adoptive family/child/children.
- To refer adopters to the learning and development programme of training events
- To refer adopters to our weekly and monthly parent support groups and bi-annual intensive parenting programmes
- To refer adopters who are waiting for a child to our approved and waiting adopters support group.

Feedback from an adoptive mother:

*"This is just a quick thank you for talking to me earlier today. This is a very stressful period for us as a family and we and ... are struggling to cope with everything that is happening. Essentially we just want him to be happy or at least see that life is worth living. I am looking forward to speaking with your colleague and to seeing the list of seminars/talks that are available to us that you are going to send through. Thank you once again, it is nice to speak to someone who understands that this is a stressful time for parents as well as the child concerned."*

### Post Adoption Service Model

The Post Adoption Support Team provides a timely, responsive service to adoptive families through planned and immediate interventions.

The model is based on understanding and responding to the specific needs of children who have been adopted from the care system and have therefore almost certainly experienced abuse, neglect (or both), and/or multiple carers and attachments.

The therapeutic model is underpinned by a systemic understanding of family dynamics, developmental processes and attachment theory. The clinicians and social workers in the team understand that adopted children may also have specific needs around identity which parents may need expert help to support.

The team brings together its clinical and social work expertise to meet the needs of adoptive families struggling at any age or stage of their child's development.

The team's approach is underpinned by the ethos that adoptive parents need to be supported in understanding social and emotional development of their adopted child to maximise a child's potential. Parents may also need help to meet their children's need for a coherent, age appropriate narrative about their life story.

Feedback from an adoptive father:

*"We've recently had a lot of contact with ..... in your department, and wanted to say how impressed we are with the level of service and help that we've had. .... has been a very competent administrator, very polite, and providing information and replying very promptly. He gives the impression that he is very well organised!! We've met with ... on a one-to-one basis, and my wife attended the development/socialisation course in Ditton on Saturday just gone. We are both highly impressed with ... knowledge, her ability to communicate it and her concern for our children, and she has a very personable way about her. She is a very valuable asset to your team and we look forward to anymore courses that she is running which are applicable to us." Thank you also for making the Christmas party happen this year."*

### Referral Process

Where the initial information indicates there is a role for the team this is considered by the team manager and clinical lead and the case is allocated to the clinician/social worker who is best placed to support the family.

### Assessment/Consultation

In some cases a one off consultation with adopters is provided and is sufficient. However, in most cases there will be a plan for six sessions which provides both a brief assessment and intervention period. At that stage the work will be reviewed and either closed or further sessions will be provided which will again be planned and reviewed.

### Intervention

Following assessment if further work is required a range of interventions can be offered including:

- Parent Support Work
- Parent-Child Psychotherapy
- Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy
- Family Therapy
- Group Therapy (through the group programme)
- Social Work Support

The brief is to provide specialist therapeutic post adoption interventions ensuring that the skills and expertise of the team are focused on those children and families with the most complex need and/or where there is a risk of disruption.

The team also has a social work staff member to provide practical support, organise events for families, and liaise with external agencies to provide outings for groups of adopted children and to develop an adopted children advisory board.

Where there are safeguarding and welfare concerns about a child a referral will be made to the Council's Central Duty in line with the LSCB Threshold Criteria for children in need and child protection.

### **Staffing**

The Post Adoption team historically consisted solely of social work staff and a social work team manager. The social work staffing has been reduced from 4.6 to 2 full time equivalents to assist in the development of a multi-disciplinary team.

The post adoption support team will comprise of a multi-disciplinary staff group including social workers, adult therapy, child and adolescent psychotherapy, systemic family therapy and music therapy. All clinicians are experienced in adoption support.

### Staffing of the Post Adoption Support Team

- Social Work Manager: Full time (currently interim manager 2 days/week)
- Development Officer/Senior Clinical Psychologist: 3½ days
- Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist: Full time
- Adult Psychotherapist: 3 days

- Senior Systemic Family Therapist: 3 days
- Systemic Family Therapist/Social Worker: Full time
- Social Worker: Full time
- Music Therapist: 3 days
- Administrator: Full time
- Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist: 3 days (beginning April 2015)

All clinical staff in the team receive supervision from the Senior Clinical Psychologist and social work staff receive clinical consultation on complex cases, as well as regular supervision from the Team Manager.

### **Budget**

Ongoing discussions are taking place with Kent County Council in relation to financial implications of the development of the service. The staffing budget for 2014-2015 is £271,900. Currently the social worker, administrator, and the family therapy posts are paid from this budget. The clinician's posts (Coram contract) are re-charged by Coram to Kent.

The system for the approval of adoption support allowances changed on December 1<sup>st</sup> 2014 from Adoption Support Board to District Resource Panels. Adoption support allowances are based on means test and the children's needs and are annually reviewed. The budget for adoption support allowances for the financial year 2014 to 2015 is £3.806m with a projected under spend of £499,700. This budget has now been transferred to Children's Social Care.

### **Service Activity**

The service is continuously updating its management information to ensure that accurate data is provided.

### Numbers of adoptive families in Kent County Council

There are 1150 families who have adopted living in Kent (from February 2000 to present), and 1652 adopted children.

Out of the 1150 families the breakdown is as follows:

- 719 families with 1 adopted child
- 365 families with 2 adopted children
- 61 families with 3 adopted children
- 5 families with 4 adopted children

Out of 1652 children, 126 were placed in Kent by other local authorities. This gives an indication of the volume of potential need.

### Enquiries to the Information and Advice Service

From August 2014 to February 2015, 252 new enquiries were made to the post adoption advice line. Below is a breakdown of those enquiries according to type of referral, contact method, work type and referrer.

Under work type Clinical refers to requests for help with emotional behavioural or mental health difficulties. Information refers to requests for information, advice and signposting

Month	Type		Referrer		Contact method				Work type	
	Adoption	SGO	Self/relative	Prof/Agency	Telephone	Email	Letter	Face to face	Clinical	Information
August	15	3	8	10	9	9	0	0	14	4
September	53	5	32	26	32	26	0	0	29	29
October	47	8	28	26	30	23	1	1	36	19
November	42	2	22	23	21	21	2	0	26	18
December	20	5	14	11	11	13	1	0	15	10
January	23	0	14	9	7	13	1	2	17	6
February	23	6	8	21	9	20	0	0	15	14
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>100</b>
	252		252		252				252	

The increase in numbers after August (apart from a dip during school holidays in December) may reflect the increasing confidence in the availability of a responsive service being communicated to adoptive parents and other professionals as staffing resources increased.

152 of the 252 new enquiries (60%) were requests for support for children with emotional, behavioural and mental health difficulties, where families reported they were informed they did not meet the CAMHS criteria for referral, or parents were specifically asking for help in developing parenting strategies, communicating life story/birth family information to their children. Many of these were families calling in crisis and were offered immediate support - either as a one off therapeutic consultation; time limited support, or ongoing therapeutic and practical support.

All of these referrals were allocated to a named person in the team to provide assessment and intervention.

The Information enquiries related to issues of contact, allowances and general information about entitlements for adopted children, for example regarding changes in pupil premium and other school related issues where both signposting to other local resources / services or supporting the parents in accessing these was needed.

#### Intensive Family Interventions

Please see Appendix 1 for examples of three case studies – (will be shared at the Corporate Parenting Panel)

As of February 2015 the team is providing intensive support to 76 children with complex emotional, behavioural and mental health difficulties. The remaining 76 children/families (out of the total of 152 clinical referrals) have received an intervention which was opened and closed within this six month period.

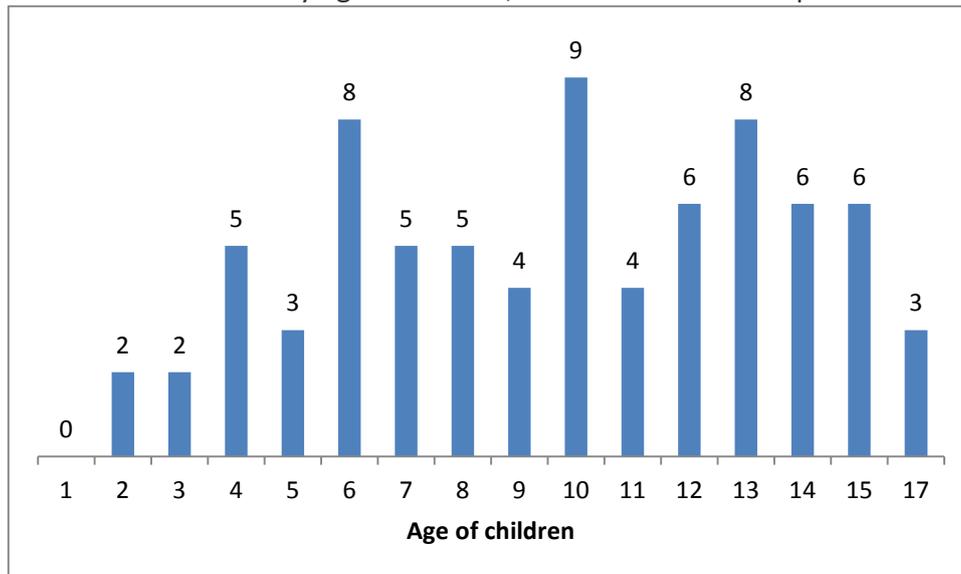
#### Age at Referral for Intensive Cases

The majority of the 76 open cases fall between ages 5-16 with a reasonable spread within this age range:

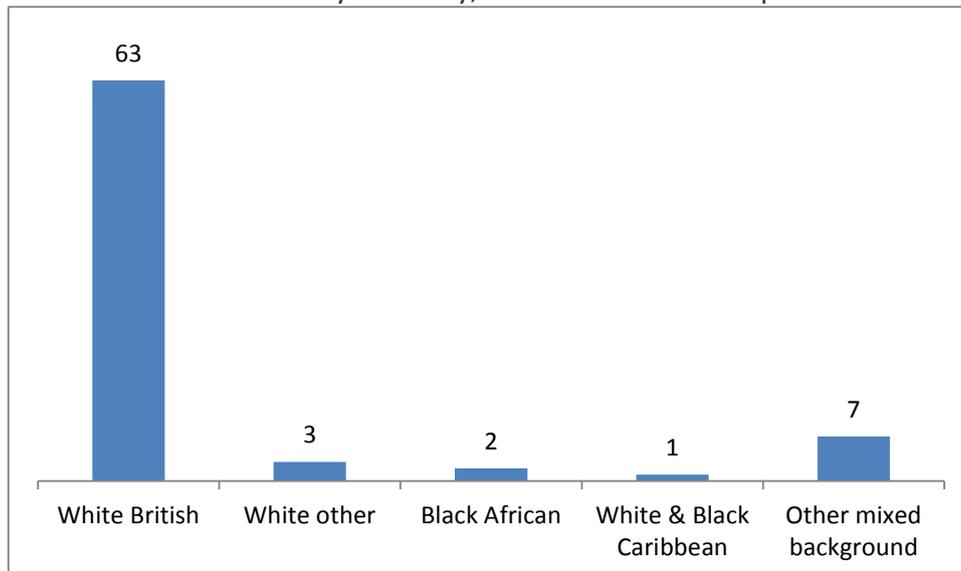
Age range	# children
0-4	9
5-8	21
9-12	23
13-17	23

### Detail of Age

Number of children by age at referral, within cohort of 76 open referrals



Number of children by ethnicity, within cohort of 76 open referrals

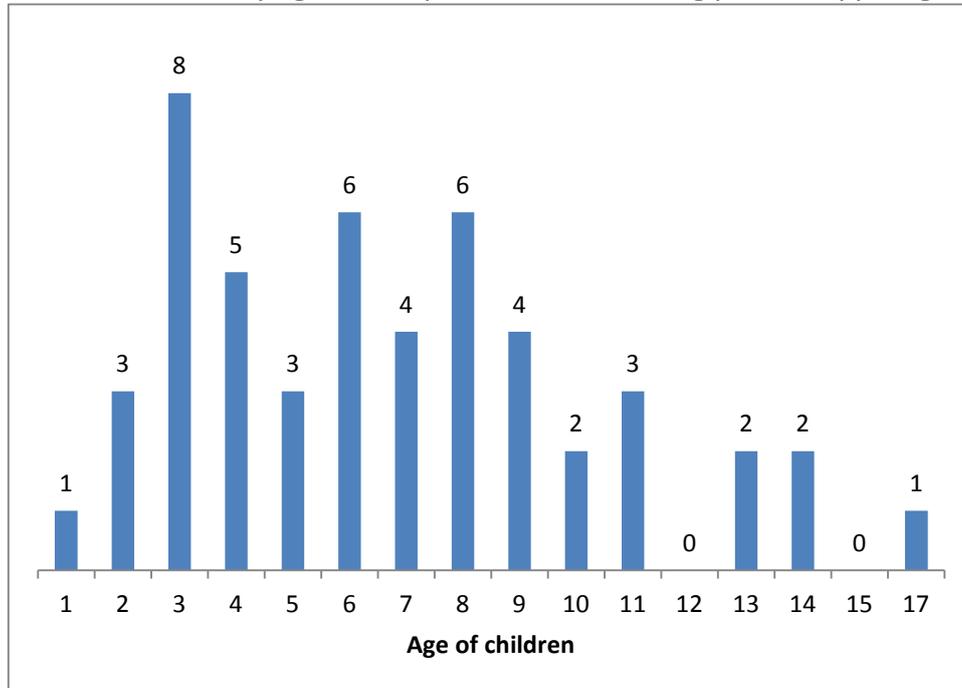


### Parent Support Groups

In addition to intensive interventions the team provides weekly and monthly parent support groups (see below for details). Currently attendance is 35 parents attending, who between them have 50 adopted children.

Age range	# children
0-4	17
5-8	19
9-12	9
13-17	5

Number of children by age whose parents are attending parent support groups



The majority of children whose parents are attending groups are under 11, which is positive in terms of providing a less intensive early intervention service for adoptive families.

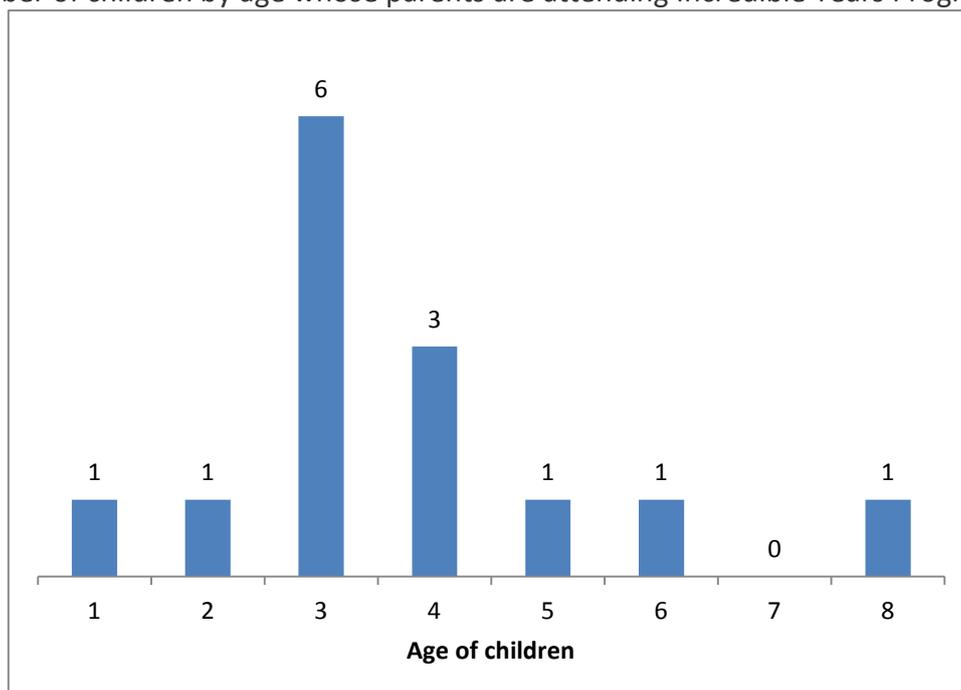
#### Incredible Years Intensive Parenting Programme

We are also providing a twelve-week intensive parenting programme adapted specifically for adoptive parents with children under 8 years of age (see below for details) in conjunction with Coram.

Parents attending: 17 (10 families)

Number of children adopted by these parents: 14

## Number of children by age whose parents are attending Incredible Years Programme



## Adoption Breakdown Data

<i>Name of child</i>	<i>Age at adoption</i>	<i>Age at breakdown</i>
Girl A	Baby	13
Girl B	Baby	11
Boy C	2	12
Girl D	2	14
Boy E	5	17
Girl F	4	15

We are aware of 6 adoption breakdowns in the past 12 months since the last report on breakdowns. All breakdowns occurred in the 11-17 age range which is in line with Julie Selwyn's study and the number of breakdowns is also in line with national figures. Work is being done to identify causes and a further update on this can be brought to subsequent panel meetings.

## Adoption Advisory Board

The purpose of the Board is to ensure adopter involvement (through being a critical friend) in relation to service development and continuous improvement. The board has advised the service on, for example, web-site design/information, and the Council's recruitment campaign for adopters, the learning and development programme and the Christmas event for adopters.

The Board meets three to four times per year and attendance varies from 6-15 adopters. Membership includes new and experienced adopters, plus members of KCC (e.g. from

Performance, Marketing and others). The Board is chaired by the Post Adoption Team Manager and the Clinical Psychologist who is also the Service Development Officer.

The board is increasing through participation at learning and development events, adoption feedback, and through word of mouth via the recruitment and assessment and family finding teams. Leaflets to widen Advisory Board membership are being developed now for dissemination at the next Advisory Board in June. Adopters are also now involved in the development of web-site content.

The Advisory Board was integral to the development of the Learning and Development programme. Members helped shape the content and structure of the programme and gave feedback at every stage as we developed the programme.

Members of the advisory board were also actively involved in planning and preparing for the Christmas Party, using their experience from previous events to ensure this one was a great success.

### **Integrated Learning and Development Programme and Parent Support Groups**

#### Preparation Groups

The post adoption service has joined in a review of the adoptive applicants' preparation groups resulting in a change to a 3 day format, allowing time between the first 2 days and the third to allow participants to reflect and process the content of the two day programme. This was to make the programme more dynamic, interactive and alive, which follows the design of the post adoption Learning and Development groups. The intention was to enable the adopters learning and development journey pre and post adoption to be more integrated. Foster cares and subsequent adopters are also invited to participate in the preparation groups.

A member of the post adoption team now delivers a session at all preparation groups, looking at how children communicate emotional experience and the impact on prospective adopters. A session on how the Post Adoption Support service can support adopters is also provided.

### **Post adoption Learning and Development Programme**

The learning and development programme was launched in September with six half day events from September – December 2014. The events focussed on the emotional and social development of adopted children and adolescents. Members from the post adoption team and external speakers from the Tavistock & Portman NHS Foundation Trust have facilitated the events.

There were requests for further Saturday and evening events, which have been integrated into the 2015 programme.

The 2015 programme (January-July 2015) comprises 26 events with several of those covering necessary safeguarding seminars for adopters provided by Kent Safeguarding Board. The majority of the events continue to cover the social and emotional development

of adopted children, how to explain adoption to children, adolescence and how to survive it and managing internet access and contact. All these events have developed in consultation with the advisory board members.

Feedback has been consistently excellent:

*"Nothing could have been improved."* – Social and Emotional Development workshop, 28/10/14

### **Parent Support Groups**

In addition weekly and monthly Parent Support Groups delivered by the post adoption team psychotherapist and family therapist assisted by social workers are now taking place.

The purpose of the groups is to address the issues that are common to many adoptive families. In particular to support parents to understand and respond to their children's emotional communications; to provide a containing space for parents to share the impact of parenting a troubled child and through meeting other adoptive parents in their local area.

The groups started in mid-January 2015 and the first weekly groups will be evaluated at the end of March 2015.

A group for approved adopters waiting to adopt also began this term. This is facilitated jointly by the new child and adolescent psychotherapist and a member of the family finding team. The objective of this group is to provide support for waiting adopters but also to think about specific children's needs in relation to the capacity of waiting adopters.

### **Webster Stratton Incredible Years Intensive Parenting Programme**

A second Webster Stratton Incredible Years programme is being provided for parents of 14 adopted children beginning in January 2015. The take up for the programme was extremely positive with the programme filling up within two weeks of being advertised via our mailing list. The programme will run until May 2015 and is being facilitated by two Coram staff members.

Two members of the post adoption team and one from Family Finding are currently being trained to provide future programmes with the next programme to be delivered in September 2015.

### **Music Therapy**

Music Therapy is also provided by a qualified Music Therapist through a DfE funded project, which finishes in March 2015 and this service will continue to be provided as the music therapist has been employed on a permanent basis. . The feedback from adopters has been positive as some children, who are not able to engage in child psychotherapy, have found music therapy to be more helpful.

*“My son went to music therapy with .... I went thinking we would give it a go but not expecting too much but within 4 weeks he was saying 'I feel angry' and 'I don't like it when you do ...’  
It was unbelievable and the start of an emotional understanding that at 11 years old he had no idea of.  
He now says sorry, asks for cuddles and support when feeling wobbly rather than acting out. I can't thank her enough.” - March 16<sup>th</sup> 2015*

## Working Directly with Young People

In partnership with Young Lives Foundation the Post Adoption Team is running activity days for adopted children aged 10+ and have also sent out a questionnaire to assess interest in further activities. Below is a table with details of young people’s involvement from 2014-15.

Number of young people expressing an interest in Positive activities from: 18 months to 18 years	22
Number of families expressing an interest in positive activities	19
Number of activities provided for young people aged 10-18 years	4
Number of young people who attended: <b>Climbing activity day</b>	7
Number of young people who attended: <b>Thorpe Park</b>	5
Number of young people who attended: <b>Laser Rush</b>	4
Number of young people who attended: <b>Bowling</b>	9
Overall number of young people engaging with the Positive Activities Programme	13

Our new Social Worker/Family Therapist will be leading on young people involvement in the service, co-ordinating activities and developing a young people’s advisory board. This will start in April 2015.

## Adoption Christmas Party

A very successful Christmas party was held on 6th December 2014 attended by 90 people – 28 families including 41 children. The purpose was to bring adopted children and families together to network and engage with each other, to support and bring together adopted children, provide enjoyment with party games/activities, food and an entertainer and demonstrate that the post adoption service is responsive to adoptive families requests for such events. Feedback was extremely positive and included the following comments – “lovely party”, “children enjoyed it”, “Entertainer was great – engaged all the children”. A young person said “I liked designing a t shirt” and “the party was good”.

It is hoped that another fun activity day will be held in the summer.

## **Adoption Web-Site**

As part of a recent review we are refreshing the web-site in conjunction with adopters so that it provides information on current support available to adopters.

Further work on the web-site has progressed so that it is more user-friendly and provides practical information to adopters, for example, on adoption leave, pupil premiums etc. It is hoped that the refreshed website will be operational from 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2015.

## **Performance Management**

A database for adopters and their adopted children living in Kent has been developed, to give accurate and up to date contact and statistical information. The database is also being adapted to include accurate historical and current management information to track the performance of the service and to structure performance surgeries from January 2015. The service is being supported in this work by a Coram analyst.

It is intended that information from the post adoption service in relation to the experiences of new adopters and children will be fed back on a quarterly basis from 2015 to the rest of the adoption service at the Service meetings so that lessons learnt can be applied across the whole adoption service. A workshop on developing a deeper and more analytic understanding of attachment in the assessment process was held by the post adoption service in February 2015

The Post Adoption Support Team is using SDQ's (Parent), an adoption specific questionnaire devised by the Clinical Psychologist and will be developing a Satisfaction Service questionnaire for use from April 2015.

## **Improving Service Experience**

We are having continued discussions with our child care colleagues in relation to provision of a seamless service so that adopters don't have the experience of having to repeat their narrative several times.

## **Future Developments**

We will continue to develop the service to improve our communication with adopted children by summer 2015, through a young people's board and young people's support groups. We are preparing for the adoption support fund expected to be in place from May 2015 onwards, to be used for Kent adopted children.

## **Conclusion**

We have made significant progress in achieving our vision this year. We have now recruited a multi-disciplinary team that can work with children with complex emotional and mental health needs and their families. We have put in place an exciting and innovative continuous learning and development programme and have a lively and active Adoption Support Board that has helped influence all aspects of service development.

## Data Appendix

Table 1:

WORKSHOP 1a: Social and emotional development in adopted children	19
WORKSHOP 1b: Social and emotional development in adopted children	6
WORKSHOP 1c: Social and emotional development in adopted children	21
WORKSHOP 2: When two worlds meet: Relating to difference in adoptive families	13
WORKSHOP 3: What kind of person am I going to be? Adolescence and identity in adopted children	18
WORKSHOP 4: Tuning in to children's non-verbal communication	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>

Table 2

21/1/15: Explaining Adoption and using life story books	16
31/1/15: Managing Transitions: Helping children manage separations, beginnings & endings	16
6/2/15: Adolescence and identity in adopted children	11
11/2/15: Social and Emotional development in adopted children	9
28/2/15: Trauma and secondary trauma (including self-harm)	17