



23-24

ACHIEVEMENT REPORT

01 April 2023 - 31 March 2024

www.adoptionmatters.org

Registered Charity No. 512892



A proud history of children's futures

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Foreward and introduction from CEO and Trustees Chair

Thank you for another exciting and productive year for Adoption Matters. Despite many challenges that many of us are feeling in the children's sector right now, through the dedication of our staff, trustees, volunteers, supporters and donors, we have continued to make a profound impact in the lives of many families.

This year saw the expansion of the Adoption Matters family with the launch of our independent, not-for-profit fostering service, **Foster Care Matters**. We are excited to grow our new service and welcome new foster parents.

Our vision is to offer robust and outstanding adoption and fostering services running in parallel which impact positively on outcomes for children.

This report highlights some of our achievements over the last year, but is unable to capture the real dedication of our staff, who on a day-to-day basis put children at the heart of **everything** they do.

Susy White
Chief Executive Officer



Once again, Adoption Matters remains to be a leader in the adoption sector and strives to offer more. I again feel privileged to be chair of a charity that exudes such confidence in its board, staff and supporters.

The launch of Foster Care Matters, our new charity fostering service, was a tremendous achievement and I look forward to meeting our new foster parents and hearing of the impact of this fantastic service.

The service was one of the ways that our charity reacts to the changing climate in the children's sector, offering a not-for-profit and therapeutic fostering service to our Local Authority colleagues.

On behalf of the board, I would like to recognise and thank the dedication, and adaptability of our staff, volunteers and supporters who have embraced the changes to enable us to remain a strong organisation that is firmly focused on helping children, families and supporting adult adoptees.

Carolyn Johnson
Chair of Board of Trustees





A proud history of children's futures

Our Impact

Adoption Service

We are proud of the continued hard work and dedication of our staff. We remain one of the largest independent adoption agencies in the UK and we continued to welcome many families and placed more children for adoption.

With **over 2,400 children still waiting for an adoptive family** at the time this report goes to print, there is still huge demand for individuals, couples and families to think about adoption.

38%

of children placed were part of a sibling group

3 years

was the average age of the children we placed

IMPACT SNAPSHOT

46

adopters were approved and welcomed

72

children were placed with our adopter families

15

children were placed in Early Permanence placements

www.adoptionmatters.org

The Centre for Fostering & Adoption Support

A unique support and therapy service supporting adoption, permanency and fostering

#CFAS

Adoption and Fostering Support and Therapy Service

Earlier this year the Centre became the Centre for **Fostering** and Adoption Support. The Centre, which is often called CFAS for short, expanded to meet the needs of permanency through kinship, foster care and special guardianship in 2019. We rebranded to include fostering in the title to ensure a warm welcome to our new Foster Care Matters foster parents.

Both the Centre and our Therapy Service have seen another busy year, supporting families, children and young people and adopted adults.

To find out more, visit: www.adoptionmatters.org/cfas

IMPACT SNAPSHOT

381

people attended one of our webinars

101

sensory packages were commissioned for families

100

schools our teams worked with

230

therapy service contracts were delivered to families

443

people viewed our online training videos

www.adoptionmatters.org

163

packages of support were delivered to families



Adopt with PRIDE

Our teams were proud to support several Pride events during 2023 flying the Adoption Matters flag and raising awareness in Chester (above), Durham (below left) and Leeds (below right).

We also supported LGBTQ+ Adoption and Fostering Week in March 2024. This year's theme was 'Different Together' which called on more people from the LGBTQ+ community to consider adoption and fostering, while also highlighting that children from diverse backgrounds are sometimes harder to place.

In this financial year, **nearly 30% of our newly approved adopters identified as LGBTQ+**. We welcome enquiries from all communities and work hard at raising awareness within the LGBTQ+ community.

Find out more, visit: www.adoptionmatters.org/proud



New Charity Patron

In March, we were delighted to welcome a new charity Patron, Amanda Parker, Lord-Lieutenant of Lancashire. Born, bred and educated in Lancashire Amanda is a devoted Lancastrian.

Amanda has a long record of public service in Lancashire, extending over thirty-five years. In 2015, she was appointed High Sheriff of Lancashire and in 2017 Amanda was elected to the High Sheriffs' Association Council.

Amanda commented: "I am delighted to join Adoption Matters, who do such wonderful work with so many families across the region. I look forward to working with them to help raise awareness of this work and the support they offer, as well as highlighting the need for more people to consider adoption for the thousands of children in care waiting for their forever family right now".

Adoption Matters Board of Trustees Chair, Carolyn Johnson, commented: "We are truly honoured that Amanda has chosen to support our charity as a Patron, bringing her wealth of experience in public service, we are excited about our plans to work together".



The Goodwin Room

In January 2024, we named a newly refurbished meeting room in our Chester Head Office the 'Goodwin Room', in honour of our former CEO and now one of our Patrons, Norman Goodwin, CBE.

The room will now be one of the venues for monthly adoption and fostering panels, where new adoptive and foster parent/s are approved.

Adoption Matters Chief Executive, Susy White, commented: "We are so delighted that Norman's name will now be proudly displayed for all our new adopters to see as they attend their panel. It is a small gesture to mark Norman's amazing contribution to our charity and the 36 years he worked here, with 29 of those years as CEO. I worked closely with Norman for nearly 18 years so I am personally delighted, as were all our staff, when we decided to rename our newly refurbished room in Chester".

Norman Goodwin, CBE, commented: "Having spent many years of my career chatting to staff in this very room, I was honoured to think my name will now adorn the door for years to come. As an Adoption Matters Patron, I am still very much involved in the charity and the amazing work they continue to do for children and families".





**foster care
matters**

Fostering charity where children matter



**We launched our
fostering service!**

www.fostercarematters.org.uk



After over eighteen months of hard work and preparation, we were delighted to launch our new not-for-profit fostering service, **Foster Care Matters** in May 2024. Offering a therapeutic approach and dedicated support to our foster parents across the North West, Stoke on Trent and surrounding areas.

We held a launch event in Chester ahead of Foster Care Fortnight, with support from Chester's Town Crier, who announced our launch in the town centre, followed by a number of information events across the North West area.

Karen Palfreyman, Foster Care Matters Registered Manager commented:

“We were delighted to launch our new agency just ahead of Foster Care Fortnight 2024, which is such an important event for raising awareness of the many aspects of fostering. Nearly 70,000 children live with almost 55,000 foster families across the UK each day. This is nearly three-quarters of the over 98,000 children in care away from home on any one day in the UK. Every year thousands of new foster families are needed and there is a huge need for foster parents who can care for children of all ages, cultures and backgrounds.

Foster Care Matters therapeutic approach runs through everything we do and we cannot wait to start building our fostering family by recruiting foster parents across the North West, Stoke on Trent and surrounding areas”.



www.fostercarematters.org.uk

The Concurrent Planning Service - end of an era

In April 2024, the Concurrent Planning Service, a partnership service delivered by Adoption Matters and Caritas Care, was ended and all staff deployed back to their respective agencies, bringing their expertise in early permanence into our adoption teams.

Over the last 3 years, the adoption landscape has changed significantly with a huge shift towards modernising adoption and the development of Early Permanence within all Regional Adoption Agencies and Local Authority children's teams. We are so proud that Early Permanence is now high on the agenda for all children's services professionals and that its importance in reducing moves or disruptions in children's early relationships is recognised as good practice; as we know this is crucial for future attachment.

We are proud of all that the service achieved since its launch in 2014, which included:

- The Concurrent Planning Service grew to be the largest service of its kind in the UK, placing 187 children with our carers and welcoming 146 new carers to the service.
- Carers supported 18 reunifications to birth families, supported by our service, many of those carers went on to concurrently care again and/or adopt.
- The service was pivotal in driving research and change in the Early Permanence arena.
- Staff and carers from the service were invited to speak to the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Adoption and Permanence (APPGAP) on early permanence in 2021.
- Carers shared many of their stories regionally and nationally helping so many other prospective carers through their videos and press interviews, including one of the first podcasts on Early Permanence used in #YouCanAdopt campaigns.
- We launched our 'Guide to Managing Family Time' – showcasing best practices in contact with birth families and trained many RAA colleagues in the North West.

Our team continues to work closely with RAA colleagues in the North East to help share our best practice and learning to help develop early permanence in the region.

To find out more about Early Permanence, visit: www.adoptionmatters.org/ep

The service was innovative, pioneering and adaptable, constantly changing to meet the needs of children waiting. A service which led the way in the Early Permanence arena, our work has helped pave the way for many of the services now embedded across the country helping hundreds more children and families. We are so very proud of that.



“Knowing the relationship I have had with my daughter's adoptive parents for me has been better because...I have built a relationship with them, I have got to know who they are as people and I quite like them.”

Birth mother whose daughter was adopted via CCP

**We couldn't
have done it
without your
generous
support.**



Thank you
to all our supporters.

www.adoptionmatters.org

Thank you

meet some of our fundraising heroes



Nicki & Gary

Abseilers reach fundraising heights for Adoption Matters

Adoption Matters and Foster Care Matters staff have been attending NatWest Group's Homelife Employee Led Network to support colleagues awareness of adoption and fostering for the last 18 months. This led to two brave members of the team, Nicki and Gary (pictured), volunteering to assist our fundraising efforts with an amazing abseil with the use of 100 foot crane at one of their Scotland offices to raise **over £700** for Adoption Matters in January 2024.

Adoption Matters Fundraising and Relationship Manager, **Annie O'Neill, commented:** "All of us at Adoption Matters are so, so grateful to Nicki and Gary for this amazing fundraising feat. The look of pure terror on Nicki's face (above!) at the start of the challenge just shows how much it took to complete! We are so grateful to them both and for NatWest Group's Homelife Employee Led Network for nominating our charity as one of their beneficiaries."

Gary believes that Adoption Matters were the perfect charity to support with the work that they do.

Gary commented: "It was great to be able to raise some funds for Adoption Matters, who give so much support not just to my colleagues, but to the wider community too in all the great work that they do."

Nicki commented: "To be asked to take part in an abseil from a crane 100 feet in the air was a little daunting to say the least, however the opportunity to make a difference within the adoption community meant that it was a challenge that I could not say no to."



Manleys solicitors host Charity Pub Quiz for Adoption Matters

Chester-based Manleys Solicitors chose Adoption Matters to support in their Annual Charity Pub Quiz held on 15 May 2023.

Hosted at Alexanders Live in Chester, the event offered lots of great rounds of questions with an amazing array of raffle prizes donated by local businesses. The evening **raised an incredible £1,105**.

Adoption Matters Chief Executive Susy White commented:

“We are so grateful to Mark (Manley), Rebekah, Jessica and the whole team at Manleys for choosing to support our charity at their annual quiz and to everyone who attended the event. These vital funds enables our charity to continue to offer added support to adopted children and their families through our Centre for Fostering and Adoption Support ,which is vital to them now and as they grow up to become an adult, as we are here for them for as long as they need it.”

Adoption Matters had their very own team at the event (pictured below right), the ‘AM Aces’ were delighted to come joint third and were humbled when the winning team donated their £100 cash prize back to the charity raffle.



Pictured below left: Left to Right Jessica Turner, Associate Solicitor, and Rebekah Booth, Chief Operations Officer both Manleys Solicitors with Susy White, Chief Executive Adoption Matters



Footy mad Jack Arrowsmith, aged 7, wanted to put his skills to the test and chose Adoption Matters to support in the process. Jack set himself a challenge of scoring 150 goals and, with a couple of Haribo breaks to get him through it, he achieved this within just an hour and a half. Full of determination, **Jack raised £335 for Adoption Matters!**

Lindsey, Jack's Mum, who works for Adoption Matters Centre for Fostering & Adoption Support said: "Jack said he wanted to help adopted children feel better and the money he raised will hopefully do that. He has done fundraising before but decided to choose Adoption Matters this time as he wanted to help other kids - I was a bit taken aback when I realised he wanted to fundraise for us. He is a really kind and empathetic kid and he is very thoughtful of others."

Adoption Matters Chief Executive, Susy White, commented:

"We are so grateful to Jack for taking on this challenge for Adoption Matters. He absolutely smashed it - well done Jack!! The funds that he has raised will make a big difference in helping us to continue to support more children and families. **Thank you.**"



Jack scores goals!

Ashton Grange Charity Garden Party 2023

Our annual Garden Party was held on Sunday 16th July 2023. Families enjoyed their picnics in the grounds and woodland of the beautiful Ashton Grange and the afternoon of fun included an animal workshop, where the children got up close and personal with a skunk, a royal python and a kookaburra to name a few.

Children and young people then took part in Forest School sessions and were invited to explore the meadows, woods, and gardens of the venue so kindly offered by owners **Kate and Martin Slack**, who are big supporters of our charity.

A thank you to **Brownlow Furniture**, who very generously sponsored the event which raised over £600.

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The difference your support can make

£25

could fund activity materials for use within a Theraplay support package

£100

could provide a virtual therapeutic consultation session for an Adoption Matters or Foster Care Matters family

£200

could enable us to deliver a valuable peer support group session

£400

could fund materials for our invaluable Life Story work for children along with a session with adoptive parents to share the work

£1000

would provide a package of intense support for families during times of crisis

Why we do it

Children are at the heart of our work and we believe that their welfare and needs are paramount. Our aim is for them to grow up in a secure and loving family which will best meet their long-term needs and can help them reach their full potential.

Every year, there are vulnerable children needing a stable, caring home through adoption. Some wait longer than others. We want to help change that. Can you help?

How you can help

Your donations allow us to provide vital life-long support from the outset of the adoption process, helping new families to understand their child(ren)'s needs and to cope in potentially difficult circumstances. Donations also provide all the 'fun stuff' such as our social activity events.

Facebook Fundraisers are a great way to raise funds and awareness for Adoption Matters and we are so grateful to all our supporters who kindly asked for donations for their birthdays this year.

To find out more about Facebook Fundraisers, visit: bit.ly/AMfacebookfundraisers



For more information about our Fundraising plans and how you could help, please get in touch, we would love to chat with you about any ideas you may have.

Email: fundraising@adoptionmatters.org

www.adoptionmatters.org/fundraising

www.adoptionmatters.org
Achievement Report 2023/24



Registered Charity No. 512892

Head Office: 14 Liverpool Road, Chester, CH2 1AE.

Also offices in: Warrington, Hale, Manchester, Stoke, Blackburn, Leeds & Durham.



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Foster Care Matters is part of the Adoption Matters family.