



Our ref MA-P HID/3648/18

Michelle Brown AM
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

15 November 2018

Dear Michelle,

I am writing to follow up on a number of points that arose during my Oral Statement on Adoption Week in Plenary on 16 October. In particular, I agreed to provide you with more details on the criteria for adoption, especially a perceived difference for families in the rented sector.

When adoption agencies consider prospective adopters, the objective is to place children in stable, loving families who are able to meet children's individual and emotional needs. Therefore, an adoption assessment will consider the person's ability to care for a child, their health and well-being, their parenting skills and their economic circumstances. The accommodation the prospective adopter is able to provide, whether as a home-owner or as a tenant, is therefore an important consideration as part of this overall assessment.

However, I want to emphasise that there is no disadvantage to living in rented accommodation when the suitability of a prospective adopters is being determined. Adoption agencies do need to ensure prospective adopters can provide a secure home environment for any child placed with them. This will involve being satisfied that there are no concerns that could undermine the suitability or stability of that home environment both in the short-term and into the future. One key component that will influence decisions about the suitability of any home be that owned, mortgaged or rented, will be the ability to provide children with their own room to offer them some personal, private space.

The cross-party support that was evident from our debate celebrating Adoption Week will help to raise awareness of adoption and encourage applications from potential adopters from the widest possible range of background, culture.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Gohebiaeth.Huw.Irranca-Davies@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Huw.Irranca-Davies@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

It is entirely unacceptable for anyone to be treated differently or less favourably, on the basis of their specific protected characteristic, including areas of race, gender, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation and age. These principles must underpin the assessment process for prospective adopters. The welfare and best interests of the child must always continue to be at the forefront of any placement decisions.

Following the debate, I was pleased to be able to join two prospective adopters in their home, to be able to discuss their personal journey and understand what is important to them. The reflections and experiences of individuals provide important evidence and understanding of how we can improve that journey and secure effective, stable outcomes for children at the earliest opportunity.

The couple I met were part of the Adopting Together project which you highlighted during the debate. The Project is run by St. David's Children's Society and I am pleased that the Welsh Government has been able to provide funding to support its success. Similarly, the National Adoption Service is one of the key delivery partners identified by St. David's in delivering the Project which seeks to find families for those children who wait the longest. These are children mostly aged over 4 years, brothers and sisters who need to stay together, children with additional needs and children with some uncertainty regarding their development and children from a BME background. I have enclosed a leaflet providing more information about the project which you may find helpful.

My officials are meeting St David's Children's Society later this month to explore in greater detail the learning from this Project, together with the potential to be the basis for a successful model for securing homes for children across Wales in partnership with the National Adoption Service.

Thank you again for your contribution in support of improving outcomes for children.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Huw', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Huw Irranca-Davies AC/AM

Y Gweinidog Plant, Pobl Hŷn a Gofal Cymdeithasol
Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care



**adopting
together**

Step by Step

**mabwysiadu
gyda'n gilydd**

Cam wrth Gam



Can you be the forever family for a child waiting for adoption?

Children wait longest for a family if they are:

- brothers and sisters who need to stay together
- over 4 years old
- have additional needs or uncertainty regarding their development
- from a BME background

Cymdeithas Plant Dewi Sant



St David's Children Society

Credwch
mewn plant
Believe in
children
 **Barnardo's**
Cymru

adoptionuk

ar gyfer pob teulu sy'n mabwysiadu
for every adoptive family

**CARDIFF
UNIVERSITY**

**PRIFYSGOL
CAERDYDD**



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu
Cenedlaethol | National
Adoption
Service

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

What is Adopting Together?

Adopting Together is a new and exciting child-focussed adoption project, supported by the National Adoption Service, that brings together the Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) in Wales to find families for children who may be waiting for a long time for their forever family.

Children who wait the longest are mostly aged over 4 years, brothers and sisters who need to stay together, children with additional needs and children with some uncertainty regarding their development, and children from a BME background. These children have had a tough start to their young lives and waiting for a family for a significant length of time can create additional problems.

Through this project we will provide specialist recruitment, including adopter-led events, and a programme of therapeutic customised support to find the right families for these children and we will walk alongside them in their adoption journey.

Adopting Together Support

From the day you make contact, to the day you become a family and for as long as you need it, we will provide you with specialist support. Adoptive parenting is a rewarding choice but can sometimes be as hard as it is wonderful. Needing help is absolutely normal as you navigate your way through the phases and stages of your child's life and we are here to support you.



All adoptive families are offered on-going support; however through Adopting Together you are offered a specific package of therapeutic support that acknowledges the impact of the child's journey and is tailored to yours and the child's needs. Our model focuses on strengthening your relationship with your child as they move in to your family and is offered as early as possible as your relationship grows and develops. We know that this early work will really help to set the foundation for positive life-long relations.

Support is centred around a therapeutic framework which seeks to understand the needs of your child, the strengths you bring to parenting, strategies to enable you to best parent your child and the ways in which this can be fully supported.

Package of Support

- An initial meeting led by a clinical psychologist to identify and consider the needs of your child and how we will best support you in parenting them.
- A series of on-going therapeutic sessions to identify and discuss any concerns you may have and develop continued strategies for support.
- Tailored package of support for your child to help them move from their foster family into your family to set the foundation for your life-long relationships.
- Professional support from a named social worker for as long as you need it.
- Access to a variety of specialist training programmes.
- Peer support from experienced adopters who will walk alongside you offering support and guidance.
- Support groups with crèche facilities where you will meet other adopters and your children have fun! Plus Christmas and Summer Family Days.

Children like these are waiting for a family



Charlotte is 4 years old. Her favourite past-time is singing along to 'Frozen'. She is a smiley, curious and playful little girl. Charlotte is currently behind in many areas of her development by around 18 months. Charlotte witnessed lots of domestic violence and substance abuse and there is some uncertainty concerning her development. Charlotte would like to be a teacher when she grows up!

Jacob and Thomas are 6 and 4 year old brothers who need to be placed together. Their ideal day is spent out on the beach and they love the outdoors! They experienced significant neglect and Jacob had to do much of the caring for his younger brother. The brothers' birth parents suffered from poor mental health. The boys are both currently meeting their milestones. Jacob and Thomas would love to live in a forever home where they can have a room each.



Mia is 7 years old and loves gymnastics! Mia has had 2 foster homes since being removed from her birth family when she was 5 years old. Mia's birth Mother lived a chaotic lifestyle and often associated with people known to the authorities. Mia currently attends play therapy and would respond well to the Adopting Together therapeutic model. Mia has three half-siblings who are also being placed for adoption. Mia would like to be with a forever family who can nurture her love of gymnastics.



Creating families

We are looking for people who want to create their families with these children in mind. You will need to be understanding, loving, playful and kind. You will need to have space in your lives, as well as people around you to share the joys and challenges. We will walk alongside you and help you understand what these children need and we will make sure you have the right support at the right time.

Adopting through Adopting Together will offer you a bespoke therapeutic model of assessment, training, transitions and ongoing support which enables and empowers you to meet the needs of children while creating your family.



If you would like to find out more

Visit the website: www.adoptionwales.org

Call: 02920 667 007

email: info@stdavidscs.org