



# Adoption Annual Report

1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022

OFFICIAL

This presentation demonstrates The North Yorkshire Adoption Team performance and where it sits within the whole One Adoption Agency North & Humber - covering 2021-22 financial year (April 2021 – March 2022).

One Adoption North and Humber is a shared adoption service between the five local authorities: North East Lincolnshire Council, City of York Council, North Yorkshire County Council, Hull City Council and East Riding of Yorkshire Council. The Regional Adoption Agency is hosted by City of York Council.



OFFICIAL

# Adoption Activity

Across the 5 Local Authorities in the 'One Adoption North & Humber' Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) during 2021/22:

- **102** Children had a plan for adoption
  - **19** plans reversed
- **86** Placement Orders were granted
- **112** children were placed with adoptive families
- **84** Children were adopted from Care

Within **North Yorkshire (activity within period Apr21-March22):**

- **11** Children had a Plan for adoption
- **6** Children were granted a Placement Order
- **8** Children were matched with a prospective adopter
- **9** Children were placed with a prospective adopter

# Adoption Scorecard

- The Adoption Scorecard provides an overview of the timeliness of Local Authorities in placing children in need of adoption with a family
- North Yorkshire's performance is generally strong, although due to the low numbers, performance can be influenced by the impact of individual cases encountering delay during proceedings, usually within the court arena.

	North Yorks.	RAA Average (exc. NYCC)	National Average (rolling 3 years)
<b>A10: Average days between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family adjusted for foster carer adoptions*</b>	269	398	412
<b>A2: Average days between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child for adoption and deciding on a match</b>	162	146.5	220
<b>A3: Percentage of children who waited less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family.</b>	73%	42%	56%
<b>*adjusted for foster carers removes children adopted by their foster carer from the average, providing a more meaningful measure of adoption performance</b>			

# Adopters

## Across the One Adoption North & Humber RAA during 2021/22:

- **72** families were approved as suitable to adopt.
  - Down from 100 over the same period of 2020/21 and 89 over the same period of 2019/20
- **103** prospective adopters were matched with child(ren)
  - **104** children were placed within the RAA
  - **18** children were placed outside of the RAA
- **79** prospective adoptive families had a child(ren) placed;
  - **77** (93.9%) had a child from within the RAA placed with them
  - **2** (1.5%) had a child from outside the RAA placed with them.
- **84** adoptive families adopted a child/children, up from 62 over the same period of 2020/21, but down from 95 in 2019/20.

# Adopters

Within **North Yorkshire** during 2021/22:

- **18** families were approved as suitable to adopt
- **20** families were matched to children – all from within the RAA
- **20** prospective adoptive families had children placed with them
- **12** families adopted children

As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022:

- **21** prospective adoptive families approved as suitable to adopt, but still waiting for a match.
- **1** prospective adoptive families were matched with a child, but the child was not yet placed.
- **16** prospective adoptive families have a child placed with them, but have not yet received the Adoption Order.

# Adoption Support – what we offer

The team deliver a wide range of support from assessment of need, annual events & bespoke training courses that cover topics such as;

- Contact and Identity
- Parenting Adopted Teens
- Therapeutic Parenting Techniques
- Enhanced Adoptive Parenting
- Theraplay
- Non Violence Resistance training
- Training for schools in relation to supporting adopted children in education
- The team also offer 'drop in' sessions for adoptive parents, giving them an opportunity to come and talk to one of our Family Support workers / Adoption social workers and discuss any issues, in turn receiving support, guidance and advice.

# Adoption Support – in numbers

Across One Adoption North and Humber in 2021/22 there were:

- **160** new contacts for Adoption Support
- **100** New Assessments for Adoption Support

At the end of 2021/22, across the RAA there were:

- **286** open adoption support cases
- **183** children receiving support via the Adoption Support Fund

Within **North Yorkshire** during 2021/22, there were:

- **78** contacts for Adoption Support
- **56** resulted in a new assessment for Adoption Support started

At the end of March 2022, in **North Yorkshire** there were:

- **107** open Adoption Support Cases
- **58** open Adoption Support Fund cases



## Peer mentor service

The Peer Mentoring Scheme in OANH (contracted via Adoption UK) remains consistent and stable, with a learning offer of support and is well resourced.

Current figures;

23 peer mentors:

- 5 Same sex couple peer mentors
- 13 Sibling Adopter peer mentors:
  - 5 where the children were placed together
  - 8 with siblings either not biologically related or where a biological sibling has been born later and adopted into the family
- 3 EPP Peer mentors
- 45 families currently accessing the peer mentor service via 1 to 1 support
- 22 families accessing the what's app support service linked with a peer mentor

# Future Developments

- Adoption Support North Yorkshire:

- Implementation of an additional screening (Initial Visit) process for enquiries made re adoption support. This approach will raise the profile of adoption to align stronger with the strengths in relationships practice model and supports adoptive families to draw strength & support from their networks. It will also allow social workers to;
- dedicate more time to solution focussed assessments
- Use the assessment process as an opportunity for intervention, alongside assessment
- Focus on broader elements of support, not just external therapy provision via ASF
- It will ensure outcomes of assessments are timely, evidence based and goal orientated and provide clear, child focussed and measurable plans.

Adoption support social workers undertaking assessments will also have a 20 (working day) mid-way review with their line manager.

- Further embed the Strength in Relationship Practice model across Adoption Service

- Including peer group supervisions, Signs of Safety Mapping meetings and Restorative Practice Training

# Future Developments continued..

- The Adoption Service is now responsible for **Step-Parent Adoptions**, having received a total of 34 referrals since April 2022. We have developed a clear & robust referral and screening process, alongside providing practice and legal training to staff and managers.
- We aim to continue to build on the local offer around adopter recruitment campaigns
- To continue to contribute to the development of social work practice across the children's teams with the ongoing training around the combined CPR/Rule 14 – this is co delivered by the Adoption service manager & adoption lawyer
- Within the RAA, a research project is underway with regards to the modernisation of indirect contact in adoption. This is called the 'letter-swap' project.



**One**  
Adoption  
Agency  
NORTH & HUMBER



**NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (NYCC)  
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE (CYPS)  
ADOPTION SERVICE EXECUTIVE REPORT**

## **Adoption in North Yorkshire 2021/22**

**This report covers 2021-22 financial year (April 2021 – March 2022), and provides a detailed summary of North Yorkshire's performance and where it sits within the whole One Adoption Agency North & Humber.**

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## Executive Summary – Adoption Service

### 2021/22 Financial Year (1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022)

#### Context of the Regional Adoption Agency;

One Adoption North and Humber is a shared adoption service between the five local authorities: North East Lincolnshire Council, City of York Council, North Yorkshire County Council, Hull City Council and East Riding of Yorkshire Council. The Regional Adoption Agency is hosted by City of York Council.

The number of children going through the adoption process in North Yorkshire remains low, with 11 children placed for adoption over each of the past two years and 11 children adopted from care in 2021/22 (down from 13 in 2020/21). Whilst the Covid-19 pandemic will inevitably have impacted the numbers to some extent across the RAA, the low number of adoptions in North Yorkshire is to be generally expected, as the Strength in Relationship Practice Model seeks to support children within the family networks. As this model is fully embedded, many children that perhaps would have historically been considered for adoption are now supported and cared for within their family network.

Whilst the number of children adopted from care in North Yorkshire is low, we continue to see encouraging and consistent performance in relation to the timeliness that children progress through the adoption process and are placed within an adoptive family. North Yorkshire's performance is notably better than the national average across all three timeliness measures from the Adoption Scorecard.

	North Yorks.	RAA Average (exc. NYCC)	National Average (rolling 3 years)
A10: Average days between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family <b><i>adjusted for foster carer adoptions*</i></b>	269	398	412
A2: Average days between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child for adoption and deciding on a match	162	146.5	220
A3: Percentage of children who waited less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family.	73%	42%	56%
<i>*adjusted for foster carers - this removes children adopted by their foster carer from the average, providing a more meaningful measure of adoption performance</i>			

North Yorkshire continues to be a net contributor to the RAA's pool of prospective adopters, with 22 families starting an assessment last year and 12 families approved over the 12 months to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. As of the end of 2021/22, in North Yorkshire there were 21 prospective families approved as suitable to adopt and waiting for a child to be matched with them. A further 16 families had a child placed with them but were waiting to receive an Adoption Order.

Reflective of both the number of adoptive families in North Yorkshire, and North Yorkshire's commitment to providing effective adoption support, the volume of adoption support work undertaken remains high. Despite, 11 children being adopted from care in 2021/22, 78 requests for adoption support were received. At the end of 2021/22, 107 children were in receipt of Adoption Support, well over a third of the 239 cases across the whole of the RAA.

## **One Adoption North & Humber Adoption performance**

**Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 and 31st March 2022:**

- **84** children had an Adoption Order granted
- **86** Placement Orders were granted
- **103** children were matched with an adoptive family
- **112** children were placed with an adoptive family (this will include children that were matched in 2020/21)
  - o Compared to 94 in 20/21
- **104 of the 112** children placed with an adoptive family were from within the RAA

**For children who were adopted in the One Adoption North & Humber region it took an average of:**

- **373** days between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family, compared to 412 days nationally.
- **150** days between a Local Authority receiving court authority to place a child and deciding on a match to an adoptive family, higher than the national average of 116. days.
- For children who were adopted since April 2019, or have an approved adoption plan and are still going through the process, on average **48%** waited less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family. The average for England was 56%.

One Adoption North and Humber are proud that they are one of the only agencies in the country that is numerically sufficient, approving more, adoptive families compared to sets of children needing an adoptive family. The number of adopters approved continues to be steady and is able to meet the needs of the cohort of children requiring adoptive placements. The number of children needing families is falling meaning that there is more choice for children in the region.

However, they have to be the right adopters for the children waiting, and at times, it is not possible to find the right match for a child within the region, albeit it is rare that we encounter a situation like this. If this is the case a decision is made early by the child's Local Authority that a search should be made on a national basis. Some children will wait longer due to a national shortage of adopters for sibling groups, older children, and children with disabilities.

## **North Yorkshire specific adoption performance during 2021/22**

As we emerge from the past two years and the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic, Children in North Yorkshire, and the wider Regional Adoption Agency LAs, continue to achieve permanence with an adoptive family in a timely way and we are proud of this.

In the context of the data reflected in this report and the associated timeframe, it is relevant to note the courts continue to work through a number of backlogs in cases, which do have the potential to cause delays.

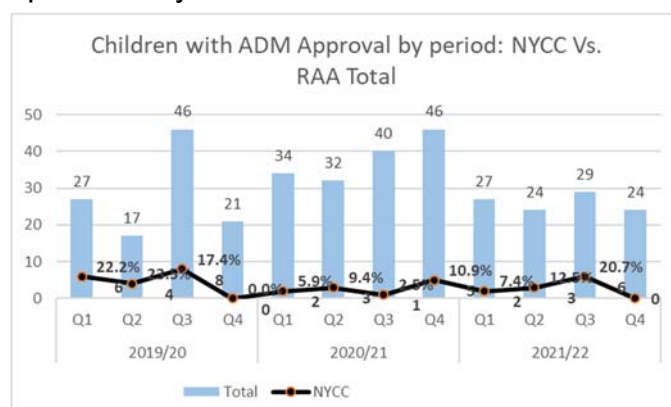
### **Plans for Adoption**

Once a child enters the care system, comprehensive assessments of birth families are completed to determine whether it is safe for that child to return to parent’s care or wider family. If these assessments do not have a positive outcome, then a recommendation of adoption may be made at the child’s Looked After Children Review. Once this recommendation is made then a plan for adoption will be considered, and could be approved, by the ‘Agency Decision Maker’ (ADM) in the child’s LA.

In 2019/20 a relatively high number of ADM approvals were recorded (n=18), as a comparison in 2020/21 (n=11) During 2021/22 the number of approvals remained stable at 11.

Over period 2020/21, we have seen 11 children from North Yorkshire receive ADM approval to be placed for adoption. This has remained stable in 2021/22 with 11 over the same period, with 1 sibling group of 3 and 1 sibling group of two, the rest being single children. Whilst the number of ADM approvals in North Yorkshire remained stable, the overall number across the RAA reduced, from 152 ADM approvals in 2020/21 to 102 in 2021/22. As a result, the proportion attributable to NYCC has increased, nearly doubling from 5.7% to 10.8%.

Continuing the recent trend, it is worth noting that in period 2021/22, North Yorkshire saw the lowest number of children (9 in total) placed for adoption of any of the authorities in the RAA. This is likely to be reflective of the increased focus in North Yorkshire on the importance of the role of the wider family network in supporting and caring for children. This is laid out in North Yorkshire’s Strengths in Relationship Practice Model, which focuses on harnessing family networks to support children to remain at home or within the family network, using the Family-Seeing model, Family Group Conferencing and Relationship Based Practices to build support long term networks centred on the child. The inevitable



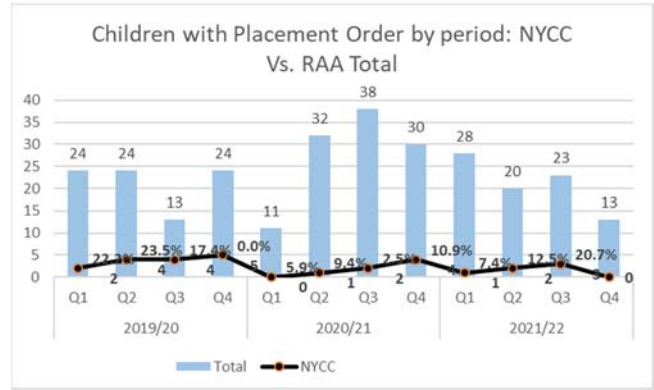
impact of this is that we see a reduction in the number of children leaving care through adoption.

Reflective of the high quality decision-making in North Yorkshire, there has been just 1 reversed decision in relation to plans of adoption for children, since Quarter 2 2020/21.

**Placement Orders**

Once the decision has been made to place a child for adoption and a plan for adoption approved by the ADM, a Placement Order may be granted by the court.

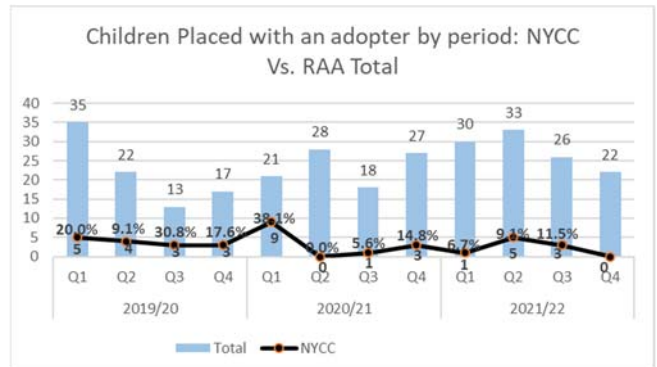
With a reduction in the number of children being placed for adoption this is leading to a reduction in the number of Placement Order’s being granted. In 2020/21, 7 children received a Placement Order, reducing to 6 in 2021/22. Over the same period, it is worth noting that the RAA LA average has also reduced to 17 from 22.8 in 2020/21.



This is indicative that at least some of this reduction is potentially linked to the impact of the pandemic, as the reduction has been observed across the RAA, rather than just in NYCC.

Once a plan for adoption has been agreed the Regional Adoption Agency can then work with the child’s social worker, along with other agencies, to find the best possible match for that child. The RAA uses dedicated family finders, family finding forums, and Linkmaker (an electronic local and national searching tool) as well as holding monthly family finding meetings to consider the cohort of children and adopters in the region, ensuring the best matches and choice for our children.

Reflective of the recent stability in the number of children receiving a Placement Order, the number of children being matched with a prospective adopter at the end of Q4 2021/22, is 8. This shows very little move away from the long-term average of 3 per Quarter. The number of children matched across the RAA has slightly increased to an average of 25.8 at the end of Q4 2021/22 compared to a long-term average of 25 at the same point in 2020/21.



Given both the overall lower number of Placement Orders granted and the overall reduction in children placed for adoption, this is likely to lead to reductions in the number of children being matched, placed and formally adopted.

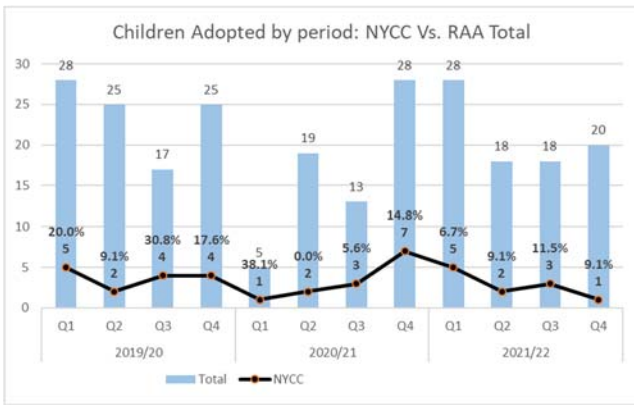
Once a Placement Order has been granted and a match has been recommended at panel and approved by the ADM, then the child can be placed with the prospective adopter.

The number of children placed with an adopter reduced fractionally down to 9 at the end of 2021/22 compared to 13 at the end of 2020/21. Whilst the North Yorkshire number remains low, the RAA total has increased up to 112, compared to 89 in 2020/21. As a result, the proportion attributed to North Yorkshire children has dropped from 9% in 2019/20 to 7% in 2020/21.

**Adoption Orders**

Once a child has been placed with a prospective adopter, an Adoption Order may be granted by the courts to legally make the child a part of the adoptive family.





The number of adoptions increased in the latter part of 2020/21 in North Yorkshire, which was aligned to the increase noted across RAA (n=28). However, at the end of 2021/22 the numbers in North Yorkshire and the RAA have come back in line within normal expectancy (n=11).

Across the RAA, a total of 84 Children left Care through adoption in the 2021/22, a notable increase compared to 65 in 2020/21. It is worth noting that the high number of adoptions in 2021/22 have been driven by a continuation of the spike seen in Q4 2020/21 into Q1 2021/22 – this will in part be linked to children being adopted following delays linked to the pandemic. As these children will now mostly have been adopted from care, it is likely that we will see the number of children adopted from care reduce into the coming financial year.

Adoptions by Period	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
York	10	3	11
North Yorks.	15	13	11
N. E. Lincs.	18	10	6
Hull	33	27	46
East Riding	19	12	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>84</b>

The table above shows the breakdown of RAA adoptions by period, regarding each Local Authority. A number of Local Authorities are now beginning to see stability in the number of adoptions in each period, with the exception of Hull who have experienced an increase on pre-pandemic numbers in 2021/22. However for the other authorities this gives a good indicative impression of what demand may be like in the future.

## **NYCC performance in relation to The Adoption Scorecard 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22**

Whilst the numbers shown above are undoubtedly important in understanding the volume of work North Yorkshire’s adoption service and the Regional Adoption Agency are undertaking, it does not necessarily show how well we are performing in relation to the children that are adopted from care. In line with North Yorkshire’s commitment to find permanence for children as quickly as is reasonably and safely possible, one of the most informative ways that we can measure our success is by looking at the time taken to reach various stages of the adoption process.

The following provides an overview against the measures included in the Adoption Scorecard. The Adoption Scorecard provides an overview of the timeliness of Local Authorities being able to place children in need of adoption with a family;

- **A10: average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted – adjusted for Foster Carers\***
- **A2: average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family.**
- **A3: measures the number and percentage of children who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family**

	North Yorks.	RAA Average (exc. NYCC)	National Average (rolling 3 years)
A10: Average days between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family <i>adjusted for foster carer adoptions*</i>	269	398	412
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<i>*adjusted for foster carers removes children adopted by their foster carer from the average, providing a more meaningful measure of adoption performance</i>			

North Yorkshire performance is generally strong in regards to timeliness throughout the adoption process. Our timeliness in relation to the average number of days between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family is strong, outperforming both the national average and the RAA average across scorecard measure A10 and A3. Whilst we have seen a slight deterioration across measure A10 (from 230 days to 269 days) and A3 (from 76% to 73%), it is worth noting that the low number of children placed for adoption in North Yorkshire does mean that delay in the court proceedings for a single child can have a considerable impact on the overall outcome.

North Yorkshire performance remains stronger than the national average against measure A2 at 162 compared to 220 days nationally. The RAA performance is stronger still, with an average of 146.5 days. This is likely to be a direct result of the high number of Early Permanence Placements used by other authorities in the RAA. These, by their very nature, inevitably result in a shorter duration between court authority and a match.

## **North Yorkshire – Overview of Adoption activity 2014/15 – 2021/22**

The table below shows the North Yorkshire trends in relation to the work undertaken by the Adoption service.

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Overall LAC population (excluding UASCs)	446	418	407	419	412	428	417	404
Plans for Adoption agreed	47	32	32	29	16	18	11	11
Placement Orders Approved	30	45	21	28	13	15	7	6
Adopted	52	35	31	33	13	15	13	11
% of LAC adopted (based on end of year LAC)	11.7%	8.4%	7.6%	7.9%	3.2%	3.5%	3%	2.7%
Open Adoption Support cases (children)				81	107	88	87	107

## **Prospective Adopters**

Please note: responsibility for finding, approving and matching adopters has now moved to the Regional Adoption Agency, information on North Yorkshire's adopters is no longer being produced by the Regional Adoption Agency, and is therefore not included within this report. The below has been included to provide an overview of this activity over this reporting period.

### **One Adoption North & Humber during 2021/22 in numbers:**

#### **Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022:**

- **72** families were approved as suitable to adopt.
  - o Down from 100 over the same period of 2020/21 and 89 over the same period of 2019/20
- **103** prospective adopters were matched with child(ren)
- **112** children placed with prospective adopters
  - o **104** children were placed within the RAA
  - o **18** children were placed outside of the RAA
- **79** prospective adoptive families had a child(ren) placed;
  - o **77** (93.9%) had a child from within the RAA placed with them
  - o **2** (1.5%) had a child from outside the RAA placed with them.
- **84** adoptive families adopted a child/children, up from 62 over the same period of 2020/21, but down from 95 in 2019/20.

### **North Yorkshire Focus:**

#### **From April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022**

- **22** families started Stage 1
- **19** families started Stage 2
- **18** families were approved as suitable to adopt
  - o Up slightly from 14 over 2020/21

- **20** families were matched to children
  - o All of which were within the RAA
- **20** prospective adoptive families had a child(ren) placed;
  - o Up from 12 over 2020/21
- **12** Adoptive families in North Yorkshire adopted a child/children
  - o Down slightly from 10 over the same period of 2020/21

### **As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022**

- **21** prospective adoptive families approved as suitable to adopt, but still waiting for a match.
- **1** prospective adoptive family were matched with a child, but the child was not yet placed.
- **16** prospective adoptive families have a child placed with them, but have not yet received the Adoption Order.

## **Adoption Support:**

### **One Adoption North & Humber 2020/21 in numbers**

#### **Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022:**

- **160** new contacts for adoption support
  - o Up from 106 over the same period of 2020/21 and 158 over the same period of 2019/20.
- **100** new assessments for adoption support
  - o Down from 111 for the whole of the 2020/21 financial year

#### **At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022:**

- **239** open adoption support cases
  - o Up slightly from 238 at the end of last financial year
- **183** Children receiving support via the Adoption Support Fund.
  - o Down slightly from 195 at the end of 2020/21.

## **Peer Mentor Service:**

The Peer Mentoring Scheme in OANH (contracted via Adoption UK) remains consistent and stable, with a learning offer of support and is well resourced.

Newcastle University conducted research into the project, which is the biggest peer-mentoring scheme in the country; the headlines from the paper completed in 2022;

- A strength in the Yorkshire and Humber model has been the ability to add the lived experience, expert knowledge, of experienced adopters into the lives of prospective or adopters facing challenges. There was recognition that this everyday experience of adoptive life is enduring and that families may experience critical moments of challenge at any point in the adoption lifecycle, but that these can be held and supported by a strong accessible adoption community and appropriately available specialist services.

- Peer Mentoring has been an extremely successful intervention in adoptive family lives and mutually beneficial for mentees and mentors. It has generated new resources, strategic and operational feedback on critical points and potential solutions. Mentees have reported feeling more confident about how to navigate the services and which they could approach for help and support.
- The Peer Mentoring Scheme is an incredible success, extremely well organized and supported, understood by participants and valued by all stakeholders.

### **Current figures:**

23 peer mentors:

- 5 Same sex couple peer mentors
- 13 Sibling Adopter peer mentors:
  - 5 where the children were placed together
  - 8 with siblings either not biologically related or where a biological sibling has been born later and adopted into the family
- 3 EPP Peer mentors
- 45 families currently accessing the peer mentor service via 1 to 1 support
- 22 families accessing the what's app support service linked with a peer mentor

## **North Yorkshire Adoption Support**

Adoption Support is a significant provision within our service delivery and can be relevant at various stages throughout the life of the child and their adoptive parents. All adopters are invited to take part in support groups, attend training courses and annual social events.

The team deliver bespoke training courses that cover topics such as;

- Contact and Identity
- Parenting Adopted Teens
- Therapeutic Parenting Techniques
- Enhanced Adoptive Parenting
- Theraplay
- Non Violence Resistance training
- Training for schools in relation to supporting adopted children in education
- The team also offer 'drop in' sessions for adoptive parents, giving them an opportunity to come and talk to one of our Family Support workers / Adoption social workers and discuss any issues, in turn receiving support, guidance and advice.

The team also deliver events for the children and their families including various annual events to enhance the sense of belonging around being part of the local adoption community. An example of this being the summer picnic where 159 people attended in total 82 adults and 77 children. Feedback captured from the event;

### **Adopters;**

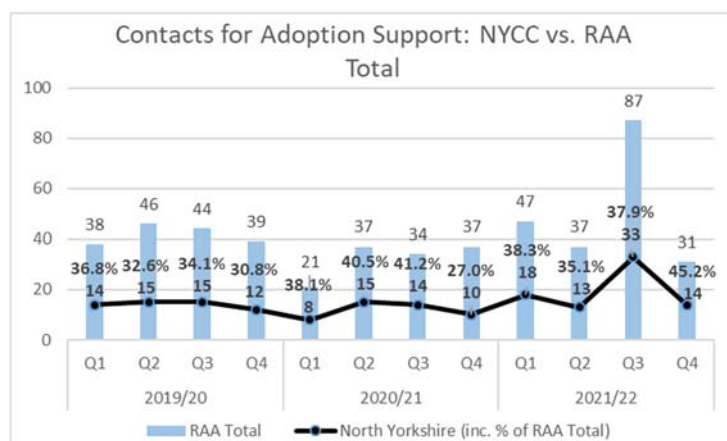
- *"Lovely to be able to spend time with other adoptive families and connect with social workers who have helped us on our journey"*
- *"It was a brilliant day out, gave us chance to speak to other adopters and for our boy to interact with other children from a similar background"*

- “it’s a non-judgemental place to go with a really good range of things for the children to do, see and feel in a large, open space”

**Child;**

- “It was a fun day out and it was nice to be with my family and meet new people, I enjoyed the bubble man and the animals”.

Since the establishment of the RAA, North Yorkshire has consistently seen high levels of adoption support when compared to the wider RAA. The number of contacts for Adoption Support has increased year on year, from 47 at the end of 2020/21 to 78 at the end of 2021/22. North Yorkshire has often approved and matched the highest amount of adopters within the RAA which brings with it, the level of support needs adoptive families have. The North Yorkshire offer for adoption support is clear, consistent and well received by families which in turn means that referral intake and requests for support remains high, as we pride ourselves on being a service that is visible, available and trustworthy.



As we emerged from the pandemic and restrictions eased, the service experienced a notable increase in the number of contacts for adoption support, increasing to an average of 20 per quarter during 2021/22 compared to 11.8 at the end of 2020/21. This aligns with the trend across the RAA, which has increased from 26.5 per Quarter in 2020/21 to 40 per Quarter in 2021/22.

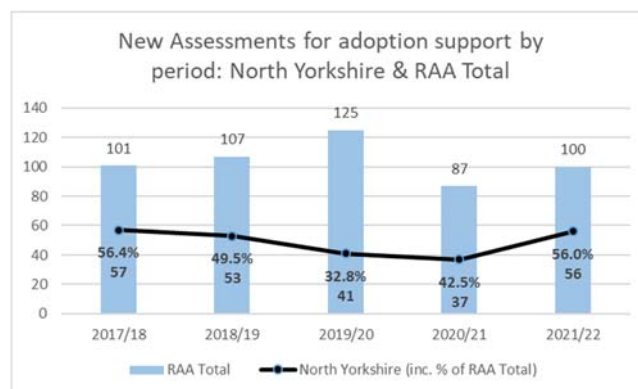
Nearly every Quarter of the past 4 Quarters, North Yorkshire has accounted for just under half of all contacts for Adoption Support in the RAA. This is reflective of the good offer of support available to adoptive parents in North Yorkshire.

During 2021/22, of the contacts to North Yorkshire for Adoption Support:

- 12 resulted in either signposting or advice and support
- 9 resulted in another LA undertaking the assessment (due to the family living outside of North Yorkshire or them living in another LA and the timeframe being 3 years post granting of the Adoption Order for their child, which means NYCC do not hold the responsibility to provide adoption support as it falls to the LA in which the family reside)

- 56 resulted in a new assessment

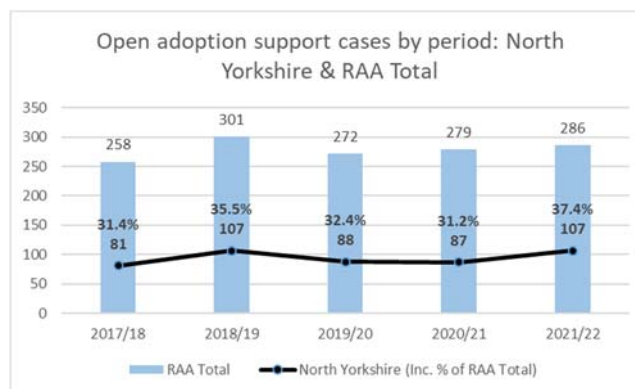
Having seen the number of new assessments for adoption support gradually reduce over the past 4 years, from 57 in 2017/18 to 37 in 2020/21. 2021/22 has seen an increase to 56 new assessments. Reflective of North Yorkshire’s position as a net contributor to the RAA in terms of Adoptive families, North Yorkshire continues to receive a high number of contacts for adoption support. This inevitably results in the number of assessments for adoption support completed each year in North Yorkshire, particularly when compared to the number of child adopted from North Yorkshire’s care.



Over the past 3 years, North Yorkshire has accounted for 16% of adoptions whilst accounting for 56% of assessments for adoption support. This ties in to North Yorkshire’s commitment to support permanency for the children well beyond the initial placement to ensure the best possible outcomes for the child and family and in upholding our commitment to the Adoption community.

A new assessment framework for adoption support developed by the Centre of Excellence in Leeds has been introduced throughout One Adoption North and Humber, this has been adapted and training and guidance provided for regional variation. This has unified the approach to adoption support through the region and raised the standards of assessment, planning and reviewing for our adoptive families. Emphasis is being made on outcome led plans and support being wider than therapeutic interventions.

Aligning with the increase in the number of assessments over the course of this financial year, the number of adoption support cases open to North Yorkshire has also increased, up from 87 at the end of 2020/21 to 107 at the end of 2021/22. The number open to the RAA have increased from 279 to 286. North Yorkshire continues to have a disproportionately high number of open adoption support cases, accounting for 37.4% of open cases across the RAA. As of the end of 2021/22, of the 107 open adoption support cases, 54 (50.5%) had been open for 12 months or more.



With Adoption support cases remaining high in North Yorkshire, and the number of new assessments continuing to increase, it is also worth noting that North Yorkshire has seen a decrease in the number of open cases accessing the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) at the end of 2021/22 (from 64 to 58). Over the same period, the RAA total has reduced by 12 (195 to 183). It may be that the needs of families are already being met by the Adoption Support offered by North Yorkshire’s adoption services, meaning that ASF cases are starting to reduce. It is worth noting that the ASF was previously planned to come to a close at the end of 2022. This has now been extended to March 2025.

## **Finance**

### **Adoption Budget**

The table below shows the outturn from last financial year:

In 2021/22, the Adoption Team budget that consists mainly of staffing costs was underspent by £277k - £235k of this was one-off income from the RAA. Without this income from the RAA, the budget would have still underspent by £42k due to vacancies within the staffing establishment and reduced expenditure on mileage (mainly as a result of virtual working during the pandemic). Adoption Delivery and Adoption Allowances came in almost on budget.

<b>2021/22 Outturn</b>	<b>Budget (£)</b>	<b>Outturn (£)</b>	<b>Variance (£)</b>
Adoption Team*	691,300	414,800	-276,500
Adoption Delivery	134,600	135,900	1,300
Adoption Allowances	1,251,500	1,250,000	-1,500

\*The service received £235,000 from the RAA in 21/22 which is included in the Adoption Team budget.

The table below shows the forecast for this current financial year:

The latest forecast for this financial year for Adoption Team is on budget. The Adoption Delivery forecast is slightly under budget mainly due to rationalising subscription fees and Adoption Allowances are under budget due to fewer than budgeted allowances being paid.

<b>2022/23 Q2 Forecast</b>	<b>Budget (£)</b>	<b>Forecast (£)</b>	<b>Variance (£)</b>
Adoption Team	718,600	717,800	-800
Adoption Delivery	139,400	126,200	-13,200
Adoption Allowances	1,315,300	1,246,700	-68,600

## **Ongoing service Development**

The Regional Adoption Agency is continuing to grow and develop and make positive strides forward. Joint adoption panels for North Yorkshire and York and East Riding, Hull and North East Lincolnshire are now running well. They follow the same procedures and contribute to establishing and aligning best practice across the region. Panels have worked quickly to adapt to working virtually and all panels are now working at full quoracy on virtual platforms. Chairs



and Vice Chairs have worked with dedication and commitment to ensure that business of panels continues to enable children to be placed and adopters to be approved.

One Adoption North and Humber works closely with One Adoption West Yorkshire, hosted by Leeds City Council, sharing the 'One Adoption' brand and website, and running a joint marketing strategy.

### **Adoption Support North Yorkshire**

In response to the continuing growth in the number of adoption support referrals and assessments into the team, we are about to implement an additional screening process to dealing with enquiries made for adoption support. The introduction of an Initial Visit process means that families who refer in to our service requesting an assessment of need, will have an allocated social worker / family support worker, in their home within 10 working days, working alongside them to screen the issues of concern and provide timely advice and guidance around opportunities for next steps / support. Key elements of North Yorkshire's family seeing model have been adapted to fit in line with this approach, with a particular emphasis on utilising the family networks for support.

If cases progress to an assessment of need, the frontloading as a result of the Initial Visit process, allows the assessing social worker to dedicate more time to solution focussed assessments and seeing the process as an opportunity for intervention, alongside assessment. The result being, outcomes of assessment are timely, evidence based and goal orientated and provide clear, child focussed plans. The aim is for this process to go live in November 2022.

### **Step Parent Adoptions**

In April 2022, step parent adoption cases were implemented into the adoption service for the first time. We are proud to report that we have worked hard to embed a very clear referral and screening process for these and provide practice and legal training to the staff team and managers. Since April the team has dealt with 34 referrals and we are pleased to report that the first step parent adoption order was granted in October 2022 in respect of a case in the team. It is worthy to note that from a service perspective we are confident that the implementation of this work into the adoption team has resulted in more robust screening approaches and a more streamlined, evidence based and thorough approach to assessment, resulting in best outcomes for children and families.

### **Other developments**

The Adoption service has raised its profile within North Yorkshire in the context of joining up with the strengths in relationships practice model. We now have a social worker who is championing the family seeing model within practice and she contributes to 'coaching' her peers across the service in the relevant models of practice,. This extends to the introduction of peer group supervision and signs of safety case mapping meetings taking place regularly within the team, to help unpack complex casework and develop a learning culture. In February 2023 the team will access the Restorative Practice training delivered in-house by North Yorkshire, which will enhance service delivery and outcomes within adoption support.

The team have implemented local recruitment campaigns that we deliver across the county in order to drive up adopter recruitment across the region based on trend of a reduction in prospective adopter enquiries. These are happening monthly, as of October 2022, and will be reviewed early in the New Year. We are active across all relevant social media platforms and work alongside One Adoption West Yorkshire in deliver regular Facebook Live sessions for anyone wishing to know more about adoption. This is in addition to the One Adoption North and Humber Information Events, which occur monthly.

The Service Manager and Adoption Lawyer have delivered a number of training sessions about the combined Child Permanence and Rule 14 report, to the cohort of social workers and practice supervisors across all of the Child Permanence and Reunification children's teams in North Yorkshire. As a result, we are already seeing an improvement in the quality of Child Permanence Reports being provided to ADM. In particular the improvement in providing robust, up to date genograms and a stronger emphasis of evidence pertaining to current and future risk factors and the impact of harm for children.

Within the RAA, a research project is underway with regards to the developments around letterbox contact in adoption. The 'letter swap' project is focussing on the development of a digital platform to be used for adoptive and birth families as a way of modernising contact, whilst ensuring safety and confidentiality for all concerned. It is hoped that this project will conclude and proposals identified around Easter of 2023.

***Tom Maxwell***

Service Manager

Adoption