

**Adoption
Partnership**
South East

Annual Report



2024/25

By
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Foreword from the Senior Local Authority Representatives for London Borough of Bexley, Kent and Medway Local Authorities

As the Senior Local Authority representatives for Bexley, Kent and Medway we are delighted to be able to provide a foreword for this Annual Report.

First, our most sincere thanks go to all the staff of Adoption Partnership South East. Your work and commitment to finding permanence and a loving home for our children is appreciated. We would also like to thank the Board who have worked tirelessly over 2024/25 to make sure the work of Adoption Partnership South East is at the cutting edge and achieves high standards of professionalism.

As the Annual Report will show there has been much activity over the course of 2024/25. As Directors we take pride in the work around Adoption Community Development Participation Events. To hear the voice of our children and families is important so we may deliver the best service possible. There is of course still much work to do, and we are confident that Adoption Partnership South East will continue to improve over the coming year.

Finally, a thanks to Cabinet and Lead Members for Children from Bexley, Kent and Medway Local Authorities, without your support the work of Adoption Partnership South East would not have been as successful as this report highlights.

Stephen Kitchman

Kevin Kasaven

Lee-Anne Farrach

Message from the Head of Adoption Partnership Southeast; Amy Coombs



I am delighted to introduce our 2024/2025 Annual Report. This report highlights the exceptional work that has been taking place across the Regional Adoption Agency. I am proud to lead a service which has children at the heart of all we do; connecting with families and supporting those with lived experience of adoption.

Adoption Partnership South East (APSE) is a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) comprising the London Borough of Bexley, Kent County Council, and Medway Council. It launched on 1st November 2020 and delivers adoption services on behalf of the three local authorities. Kent County Council remains the host Local Authority for Adoption Partnership South East. The regional adoption agency is operated under the terms of a Partnership Agreement, which confirms the legal and governance arrangements, the budget, staffing, and funding contributions for the three local authorities.

2024/25 has been a busy year for us, with a high level of initiative work taking places which has been funded by the Department for Education, these projects are outlined within this report.

This report evidences how well we know our Service and our motivation to work dynamically to continue to improve the service Adoption Partnership South East provides to our region.

Three Year Plan (2023-2026)

In 2023 we developed a Three-Year Plan; this outlines our vision, mission, outcomes, priorities across the next three years.

Our Vision is to be a supportive and active adoption community within our region, working with our partners to innovate and improve local and national adoption standards for children, adoptive families and those affected by adoption.

Our Mission is to put children at the heart of our decisions; our children come first, and we are dedicated to finding loving, secure, and permanent homes that are right for them, whilst also providing a range of tailored support to children and families who have come together via adoption, and adults affected by adoption.

The plan and how it will be achieved is available on the [APSE website](#).

Our service collaborates with Adoption England and is committed to implementing the Adoption England National Strategy to modernise adoption; ensuring children and families across the region continue to benefit from adoption and that adopted people, and their families,

are better supported moving forward. Our 2024/25 Service Plan outlines how APSE will do and is attached in the Appendix.

Key Highlights across 2024/25

This report highlights the significant amount of innovation which is taking place within Adoption Partnership South East in collaboration with Bexley, Kent, and Medway to strengthen the adoption work to ensure children are at the centre of all our work:

Innovative Projects Funded by the Department for Education to ensure service developments and positive outcomes for children and their families:

- Early Permanence Wraparound Support: Enhanced support for carers and birth parents, with positive feedback.
- Enhanced Matching for Siblings: Focused recruitment, training, and support for sibling adopters; 43 households approved for sibling groups.
- Multi-Disciplinary Adoption Support: Expanded internal therapy offer, improved multi-agency collaboration, and positive feedback.

Adoption Community Development

Participation Events taking place across the region with 288 attendees, including fundays, pantomimes, and biannual family events.

- Peer Support Scheme: 42 peer volunteers supporting nearly 200 families.
- Adopter-Led Community Groups: 10 active groups and a growing online community.
- Voice and Influence Groups: Youth, adoptive parent and birth parent reference groups influencing service delivery and policy.

Training and Practice Development

- Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP): Embedded across the service, with 15 Social Workers trained to Level 2.
- Professional Training Events: High attendance and positive feedback from regional webinars and workshops.

Adoption Support Services

- 850 support interventions delivered in 2024/25 (up from 512 the previous year). Interventions by internal and external providers.
- Wide range of therapeutic and parenting support programmes.
- Timely response to family's access to support.

Adopter Recruitment and achieving permanency for children

- Early Permanence: 28% of children placed via EP, exceeding the 20% target.
- Adopter Sufficiency: 63 households approved, with 61 of 62 children placed with in-house adopters.
- Timescale for children being matched with adopters is significantly lower than the national average.
- Stage 2 assessments completed faster than national average.

Feedback and Continuous Improvement

- High satisfaction in pre and post order surveys.
- 3 complaints received (down from 7), with clear learning actions taken.
- "Catch-up Calls" initiative launched to maintain long-term engagement with adoptive families



Delivering Adoption Services across Bexley Kent and Medway.

Adoption Partnership Southeast has been working collaboratively with Bexley, Kent and Medway children's teams to ensure children's plan for adoption are progressed and families receive adoption support when it is needed. Below is a summary of this activity, further details of this can be found from page 24- 37

Bexley

- 10 adoption orders were granted for Bexley children in 2024–25.
- 8 children placed for adoption, maintaining consistency over the past three years.
- Timeliness: Bexley outperformed national and regional averages in several key timescales, including:
 - 106 days from placement order to matching decision (vs. national average of 218).
 - 336 days from becoming in care to being placed for adoption (vs. national average of 491).
- 10 support and advice line call provided to families in 2024-25.
- 17 support assessments for families in 2024–25.

Kent

- 63 adoption orders were granted for Kent children in 2024–25
- 40 children placed for adoption in 2024-25
- Timeliness:
 - 144 days average from placement order to matching decision — better than the national average (218 days).
 - 365 days from becoming in care to being placed for adoption — below the national average (491 days)
- 105 support and advice line call provided to families in 2024-25.
- 160 support assessments for families in 2024–25.

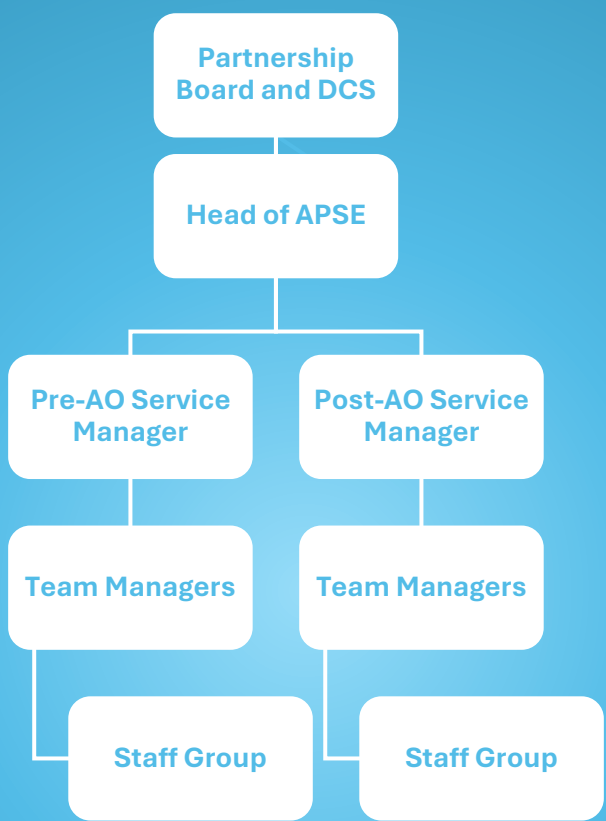
Medway

- 15 adoption orders were granted for Medway children in 2024–25
- 14 children placed for adoption in 2024/25
- Timeliness:
 - 147 days average from placement order to matching decision — better than the national average (218 days).
 - 424 days from becoming in care to being placed for adoption — below the national average (491 days)
- 18 support and advice line call provided to families in 2024-25.
- 19 support assessments for families in 2024–25.

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Our Service

Adoption Partnership South East is managed by the Head of Service and two Service Managers, one of whom is responsible for the pre-adoption order teams, and one is responsible for Adoption Support teams. Details of the nine teams within the service and the structure charts are included in the appendix.



The Head of Service reports quarterly to a Partnership Board. The Partnership Board comprises key representatives from each partner organisation. From Kent County Council (KCC), the appointed representative is the Director Children’s Countywide Services, with the Assistant Director of Corporate Parenting serving as the substitute. The London Borough of Bexley (LBB) is represented by the Director of Children’s Services, supported by the Deputy Director as substitute. Medway Council (MC) is represented by the Director of People, with the Assistant Director for Children’s Social Care designated as the substitute. Medway’s Head of Provider Services –Children’s Services also attends. The Head of APSE and APSE Service managers, adoptive parent, a voluntary adoption agency representative are also part of the Board, with Finance and data Leads for each partner, being invited to attend relevant parts of the meeting.

A separate Operational Managers group meets quarterly, which includes the Head of APSE, Service Managers (APSE), Children’s Service Managers and Independent Reviewing Officer leads for from Bexley, Kent and Medway.

Equality and Diversity

Adoption Partnership South East believes that everyone we work with should be treated with dignity, respect, and without discrimination. We continue to strengthen our service to represent the diverse community we work in. Equality and diversity are central to the work we do. Our recruitment of adopters across 2024/25 has ensured we have approved adopters from diverse backgrounds and communities to maximise the opportunities for children to be placed with families that reflect their history, heritage, needs and diverse communities.

The diversity of our Panel membership has been further enhanced during 2024/25 (see Panel Chairs' Reports in appendix) to reflect our adoption community. We have continued to work towards developing a more diverse staff group; valuing differences and what individuals bring to our service. Adoption Partnership South East promotes a culture and environment where our staff, families, and partner colleagues feel they belong, can participate, and are valued for their contribution. We have done this by ensuring we listen and work with our reference groups (as outlined in in our Adoption Community feedback section) and we provide regular service meetings for our staff to give them time to be heard and to take part in developments within the service and working collaboratively with partners across the region in joint meetings and training.

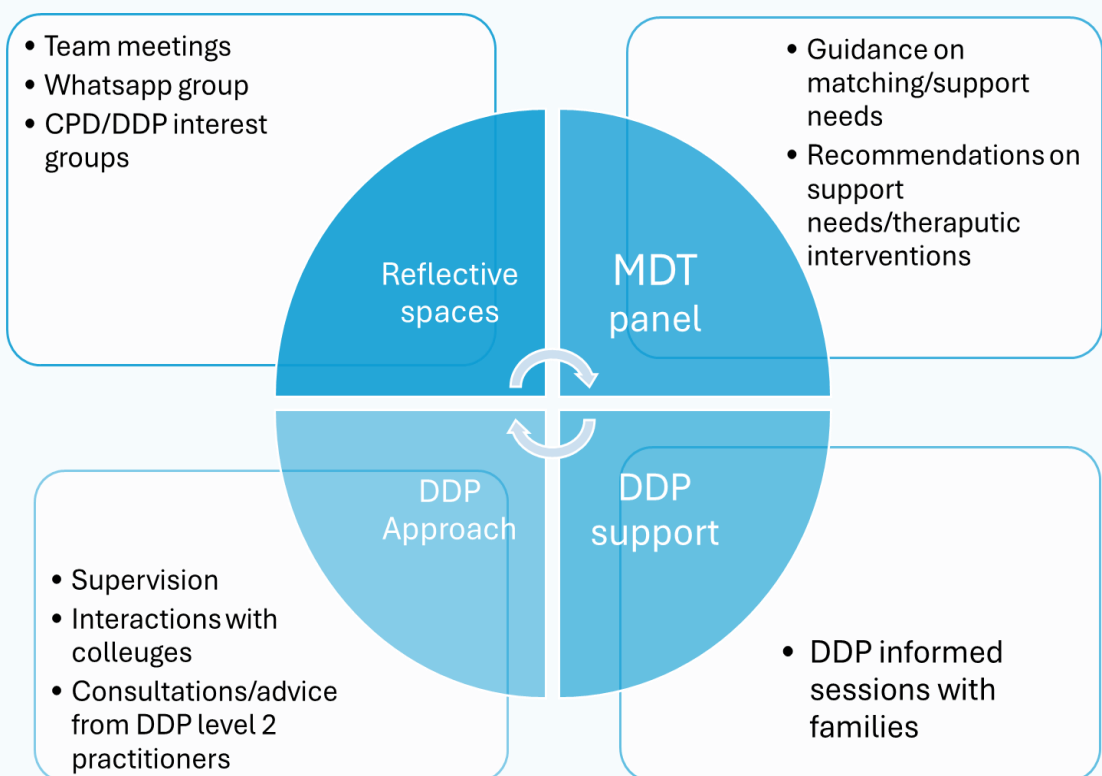


APSE staff at the annual service away day.

Dyadic Developmental Practice

Adoption Partnership South East has been committed to Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP) being a foundational approach to all we do within the service. Our professionals across the service have been using this practice model to support children and families and this approach is integral to how we work together within our service and throughout our wider professional collaborations. The DDP practice model brings together knowledge about developmental trauma, attachment, interpersonal neurobiology and child development. It helps us understand, work together with and be effective in support of children and their families.

The below diagram illustrates the Dyadic Developmental Practice model being used across the service.



Funding from the Department for Education has enabled adoption Social Workers and a Therapist to be trained in level one DDP training and 15 Social Workers across the service have completed Level 2 DDP training. They will be leading on this approach across the service.

Innovations

2024/25 was the final year of our three Department for Education funded projects. These projects have all been extremely successful and the funding has enabled the service to develop and improve our practice across three main areas:

- Early Permanence
- Enhanced Matching for Siblings
- Multidisciplinary Approach to Adoption Support

Early Permanence ‘wraparound support’

APSE had a well-established Early Permanence scheme, already placing over 20% of children with a plan for adoption in Early Permanence placements. An Early Permanence placement is a foster placement for children who have a likely plan of adoption. Approved adopters foster a child during the care proceedings, and then, should the court agree, the plan for adoption the carers go on to adopt the child. This scheme avoids additional placement moves for children and provides stable and loving environments for children whilst care planning decisions are being made.

The DfE funding has enabled APSE to further develop this scheme by introducing a ‘wraparound’ model, providing support for the parents, professionals, and carers with the child at the centre of this support. Social Workers and Managers have been trained in Level 1 Dyadic Developmental Practice to inform the support they provide to carers. In feedback an EP carer wrote; *“Our social worker was amazing, and we felt very supported by her throughout the whole process”*. Within the project the approach to supporting birth parents was to strengthen by providing specific support to parents when their children were placed in an EP placement. One parent messaged her worker stating: *“After my meeting today, ***** (EP carer) was so comforting she gave me a cuddle and a shoulder to cry on which I am so grateful for, and I appreciate how kind and supportive was towards me. I wasn’t expecting it, but it was so nice.”*

Early Permanence will continue to be a focus for the service, ensuring we recruit adopters who can be EP carers, provide them with a high level of support and continue support birth parents.

Enhanced Matching for Siblings

The Enhanced Matching for Sibling project took a three-pronged approach; focusing on adoption care planning for a sibling group, recruitment and assessment of adopters for siblings and training, and support for sibling adopters. For the first element of this project, APSE used the funding to provide sibling assessment training to Social Workers across the region to enable decisions on care plans for sibling groups to be well informed by high quality assessments. APSE also recruited a Senior Practitioner to complete sibling assessments when needed to avoid delay or co-work an assessment with a child's Social Worker and provide consultations to children's Social Workers. In 2024/25, 45 of the 61 children with an adoption plan decision made were considered within a sibling assessment.

The second and third elements of the project has been to have a clear recruitment drive to increase the number of prospective adopters for sibling groups and then to provide additional training and support to these adopters. Feedback from an applicant who attended this training stated, *"The training was an incredibly valuable day; it furthered our understanding of adopting siblings and will help to guide our considerations. Consultations that I think it started to fall into place a little bit more."* As part of the training and support for prospective adopters, APSE has created a sibling workbook and started to run six-week online support groups.

Having a clear focus on recruiting and supporting adopters for sibling groups has enabled there to be 43 adopter households approved for sibling groups during the project. One adoption Social Worker said: *"Finding adopters for siblings seems easier at the moment than finding them for younger children."*



Developing Multi-Disciplinary Approaches

This project has comprised three components; firstly, scaling up the internal therapy offer within APSE to allow for a consistent approach across the region from our Adoption Support teams and to learn from the experience of families whose children have received a multidisciplinary assessment.

A Clinical Therapist joined the team in December 2023 and remains in post. The expansion of the internal therapy offer has had a positive impact for families living in the two local authority areas, not previously supported by the internal team, either through her direct intervention or through her appointment, allowing others in the team to offer support to these families. Feedback from a parent stated: *“It was such a great pleasure having you at the family therapy which was so helpful. Thanks very much once again for all your attentive listening, all the useful information and help offered. It was so comforting having someone who is not judgmental, can see things from our own point of view and acknowledge all the efforts that we have put in, in parenting C. Thanks once more again and wish you well in all your endeavours.”*

The second part of the project is bringing together a multi-agency group of professionals to help us have a better shared understanding of this group of children. The project has maintained a focus on engaging with the wider professional network to enhance their understanding of the needs of adopted children and their families, with the aim of them being better able and willing to offer support and/or develop their services accordingly. APSE has continued to increase the awareness and knowledge of other services and pathways to them of Adoption Support Social Workers. The aim being that they are better able to offer advice, guidance and support to adoptive parents to navigate the systems and secure the support they need for their family.

The third component involved undertaking case file audits and having conversations with parents to hear their views directly to help inform practice. Case file reviews and discussions with parents took place for 11 children. One mother described her daughter as being *“in a much better place than she has been for years.”* She said, *“the adoption support social workers was helpful in identifying the need for a MDA which led to her daughter having a holistic assessment, resulting in a clear diagnosis and recommendations as to how her needs could be met at school and home.”*

Most parents expressed concern for their child after leaving primary school and moving to secondary school. Several said their child is being supported in school, but for some this has been after a long and stressful journey. With respect to applying for EHCPs, parents described feeling as though they were in a 'battle' or 'in for the long game' and this included trying to find and secure suitable education setting for their child. Several children experienced periods of being out of school for months at a time, sometimes without tuition.

The learning from this project is now being taken forward into the development of the adoption support provided by APSE.

Pan Regional Commissioning Support Programme

APSE is working with Adopt South and Adoption South East to achieve the following goals:

- To provide additional commissioning capacity across the region.
- To improve the collective understanding of the need of adoptive families, now and in the future.
- To increase pan-regional commissioning arrangements on the ground.
- To share best practice and increase consistency.

Assessing needs and understanding the gap between those needs and existing services informs local priorities and service development. The overall aim is to improve the speed of service and provide a better quality and consistency of adoption support across the region and for our three RAAs to understand how joint working can practically happen.

The Pan Region have developed an innovation project of 'Catch-up Calls', which each Regional Adoption service will run for adoptive parents. Adoption Partnership South East launched a new service in April 2025 called 'Catchup Calls with APSE'. When an adoptive parent chooses to opt-in to the calls, a staff member from Adoption Support will call them to catchup every year, or every two or three years after their child's adoption order. Calls will be a space for parents to:

- Let us know how they've been.
- Ask questions and talk openly about their family.
- Stay up to date on developments, events and opportunities in the local area.
- Stay connected and build relationships with the local adoption support team.



Adoption Community

Adoption Partnership South East is committed to developing support, working with, and hearing the voice of all those with lived experience of adoption. Our Adoption Community has been a key development priority across 2024/25. APSE have continued to have:

- Participation Events for Families Across the Region
- Community groups and peer support scheme
- Voice and influence groups for those with lived experience of adoption
- Service user Feedback

Participation Events for Families Across the Region

APSE commissions the Participation & Engagement Team within Kent County Council's Virtual School Kent, to run participation events and activities for adopted children and young people across the region. The team continues to work to ensure that adopted children, young people and their families living in Bexley, Kent, and Medway. The team organises and facilitates a variety of events and activities for adopted children and young people, including:

'The Adoptables' - Children and young people from all three areas attend the 'Adoptables' Council. This is a group for 11 to 16+ and alongside agenda items and discussion topics, fun activities are regularly built into the meetings, such as seasonal arts and crafts, games and other fun activities. We have found this encourages young people to attend but also most importantly, helps the group members to get to know each other and build relationships with one another.

The Adoptables Council has held 5 face-to-face meetings throughout the last year and has a membership of 22 children and young people. During recent meetings, members have discussed a variety of topics including:

- Belonging in School
- Co-design of a Children's Guide to Adoption
- Contribution to Young Person's Participation Strategy
- Support for Young People's Wellbeing – Supported by Kooth

Participation Fun Days

The Participation Team organises participation activities for adopted children and young people living in Bexley, Kent, and Medway. In the period of April 2024 to March 2025, the team ran 15 activity days with 288 spaces being taken up. The team provided a variety of activities throughout the year to cater to different interests, these have included a big cat experience day, water sports, outdoor pursuits days, horse riding, as well as a range of arts and crafts activities.

These days provide a safe space for children and young people in similar situations to take part in activities they have never done before and to form friendships that we have seen grow as they attend multiple events. The activities have also provided parents a chance to meet and form connections with other adopted families. The team have received some positive feedback showing how the events benefit children and young people.

“Just to say a mega thumbs up from *** again for the science workshop, she loved it.”

“Just wanted to say a huge thank you for the amazing day *** had. She enjoyed all the activities but especially the terrarium! Thank you for all the effort you go to for our children. Look forward to seeing you again soon.”

“As a family who have only recently started talking to our children about their own adoption journey it was especially helpful for them to know that there are other children just like them and in a safe environment too. Thank you once again for all you do and we look forward to the next event.”

“The activities that were available were perfect and we were made to feel really welcome - it was also lovely to be able to catch up with the social workers who have been on our journey with us.”

Pantomime

In December 2024, some of our adopted young people joined us for an evening for a pantomime at the Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury. The young people had a fantastic evening, as a thank you from the Participation Team for all their hard work and contributions throughout the year.

Adoption Preparation Sessions

Our Apprentice within the team, who is adopted, has been supporting the Adoption workstream with Social Workers from APSE to provide advice from a young person's perspective to prospective adopters during stage one preparation session of the adoption process. Positive feedback was received showing how invaluable it was to have an Apprentice with adoption experience as part of the process. Having an experienced young person on the sessions helps to provide a comprehensive service to new adoptees, as well as adopted children and young people across the region.

Adoption England Conference

In October 2024, the Adoptables members created a short film that was shown at the Adoption England Conference, which was held in Leeds.

The film showcased The Adoptables group and what the group have worked on over the last year. The video gave a chance for adopted young people to showcase their group to other local authorities.

Bi-Annual APSE Family Events

The adoption summer picnic is an annual event, where adopted children and their families are invited to a relaxed, fun day where they can meet other families as well as staff from the APSE and the Participation Team. In the summer of 2024, a total of 50 family groups with 70 young people attended. Plans are underway for the next event in the summer of 2025.

A Christmas Party was held in December 2024, which 64 families with 93 children attended. This brought families together with staff for a great afternoon. There were lots of crafts to make and take home as a reminder of the day – reindeer food, lucky dips, tree decorations crafts, hand made



snow globes as well as many entertaining stall games for everyone to participate in. The children also had the opportunity to see Santa in his grotto.

"We wanted to send our thanks for the wonderful Summer Picnic last weekend."

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Community groups and peer support scheme

Our scheme currently has 42 Peer Connectors (volunteer adoptive parents). Since being relaunched almost three years ago we have supported almost 200 families. A Peer Connector is linked with a family once they have been approved as adopters. The Peer Connector can then be alongside the family throughout the matching process and once a child is placed. Now that the scheme is well established, we are further developing continued support for families across the region by Peer Connectors remaining involved when families are finding this helpful. Our Peer Connectors also help facilitate WhatsApp groups for applicants during the assessment process to help support networking between families.

Adopter Led Community Groups

These groups are run by volunteer adopters and are open to anyone who has been approved as an adopter. They are a great chance for parents and children to meet new people and make new friends. The groups have been developed and expanded during the past year, with ten groups now in place and growing. These range from family walking groups to coffee mornings for parents and groups for children and teenagers.

A private Facebook group called 'Adoption Partnership South East Community Group' has also been setup to share details of events and currently has 140 members.



Voice and influence groups

Young Person’s Reference Group

On 21st February 2025 APSE hosted its first Your Voice Youth Event for adopted young people in Bexley, Kent & Medway. Young people between the ages of 14 to 18 were invited to spend the day with a group of staff at the APSE office. The aim of this event was to bring together adopted young people and professionals. The group explored key issues of importance to them and these themes for the day will be shared to the Partnership Board to inform future practice and service delivery (see table below). A second group will be meeting in May 2025 for young people aged 11-13. Both these groups will meet on an annual basis.

Activity 1: Young people’s thoughts about identity	Activity 2: Young people’s feelings and thoughts about education
Key themes • They wanted to know about grandparents and have more of an opportunity to stay in touch with grandparents and siblings. • They wanted to know if they have common interests and hobbies with birth family members. • They had questions about their life story, wanting to know more details. • They wanted to see copies of their birth certificate. • They wanted to know the full names and ages of their birth family members. • They wanted to know about their name, why it was chosen, if their surname at birth was from the maternal or paternal family. • They wanted to know if anyone in their birth family had wanted to care for them.	Key themes • They all had good friends in primary school, but this was hard in secondary school. • All experienced bullying in secondary school. • All had teachers they felt understood them, but they also had teachers they avoided. • Two young people said they found it hard to ask for help at school. • They all said they needed more support at school and one young person said that they didn’t feel like their teachers cared.





Adoptive Parent Reference Group

In 2024/25, an Adopter Parent Reference Group was established. This group is run and chaired by parents. There are currently 5 parent members (3 women, 2 men), all with different experiences, ranging from 1 to 4 children in a family, from different stages in the adoption lifecycle, different backgrounds and children with unique needs. The group meet quarterly, aligned to the timing of the APSE Partnership Board meeting. The group aims to provide the adoptive parents perspective to APSE (to be the voice of the parents), with this they:

- Suggest improvement ideas
- Raise key issues and concerns
- Provide perspective on questions raised by the board
- They also represent at the Developing Multi Disciplinary Approach Steering group

Key discussion points have included:

- Improved information for parents about education, including virtual schools and SEN support provision.
- Communication and feedback loop between parents, APSE and the Partnership Board.
- Development of adoption community.

Sophie (current Chair) reports: *“The group feel they have significant influence and feedback due to the close alignment with the board meeting, for example; anonymous surveys were implemented following a suggestion from the group due to struggling response rates, several parents attended a recent board meeting so they could meet the team in person and one of the key topics identified to spend more time in, is the changing research around contact with birth parents.”*

Birth Relatives Reference group

CAFIS Barnardo's facilitates birth relative support groups. Amy Coombs (Head of APSE) plus Rachel Dobson and Maria Olsson (Service Managers) attended one of these group to listen to the relative and gain insight into their experiences. The birth relatives were positive about the meeting and fed back that they found the staff to be receptive and genuine. This then led to two birth parents attending the Partnership Board meeting to voice their issues. The key points made were around the importance of birth parent/relative support, importance of staying in touch arrangements evolving and working with birth relatives to support a child's identity. In response to this, one to the birth parents is working with the Family Finding team to support development of collaborating with birth relatives to write the child's life story book. Senior management from APSE will also attend the support group once a year as well as birth relatives being invited to attend the Board meeting on an annual basis.





Service User Feedback

As well as the voice and influence groups which take place across the APSE community, the service collates feedback both from our formal surveys and individual feedback sent in either directly to the service or via the Kent Complaints team.

The Pre-Order Survey

This survey is sent out to adoptive parents once the adoption order is granted for their child. This identified strengths in the support that our applicants received during the assessment process and when a child was matched and placed with them, and that most of our applicants would recommend APSE. The results and feedback highlighted the need to ensure the assessment process is completed in a timely way, which at times is a challenge when waiting for checks and references to be received during the assessment process. To help families feels supported during this time of waiting the pre-order service now sends out regular communication emails to support families to remain connected and updated. (See results table and feedback below).

	Previous Total Surveys	Latest Total Surveys	Change
Measure/Question	n=54	n=67	NA
The process from application to approval took the right amount of time	48%	48%	0ppt
The process from approval to placement took the right amount of time	64%	61%	-3ppt
The information and training I received prepared me well for being an adoptive parent	79%	77%	-2ppt
I felt well supported throughout the assessment process by the adoption service	83%	83%	0ppt
I felt well informed during the child(ren) matching process by the adoption service	76%	83%	7ppt
I felt well supported by the adoption service during the matching and introduction process	78%	79%	1ppt
I felt well supported by the adoption service after the child(ren) were placed for adoption	74%	71%	3ppt
I know what to do should my family need support in the future	72%	69%	-3ppt
How likely are you to recommend this service to another adoptive parent, based on the support you have received? Answered 6-10 on a 0-10 scale	87%	87%	0ppt



Feedback comments from pre-order survey

“Our whole process in early permanence before adoption took nearly 2 years and in the training it was mentioned that it could take even up to one year in some cases. It did not feel like the information we got before hand reflected the experiences of most people in the support group.”

“Our experience with our first SW was traumatic but a huge improvement once we were provided a new SW our experience was great.”

“The team we worked with were all so friendly, open, honest and supportive. They helped and guided us through every stage.”

“SW and manager have been amazing throughout the process- nothing is too much trouble- they have gone over and above for our family.”

“The knowledge, experience, hard work and compassion of all the Social Workers we worked with.”

“The amount of time between approval and placement for us was incredibly quick so can't say it was or wasn't the right amount of time. We also can't really say about support during introductions as it was all so quick it happened in about 30 minutes.”

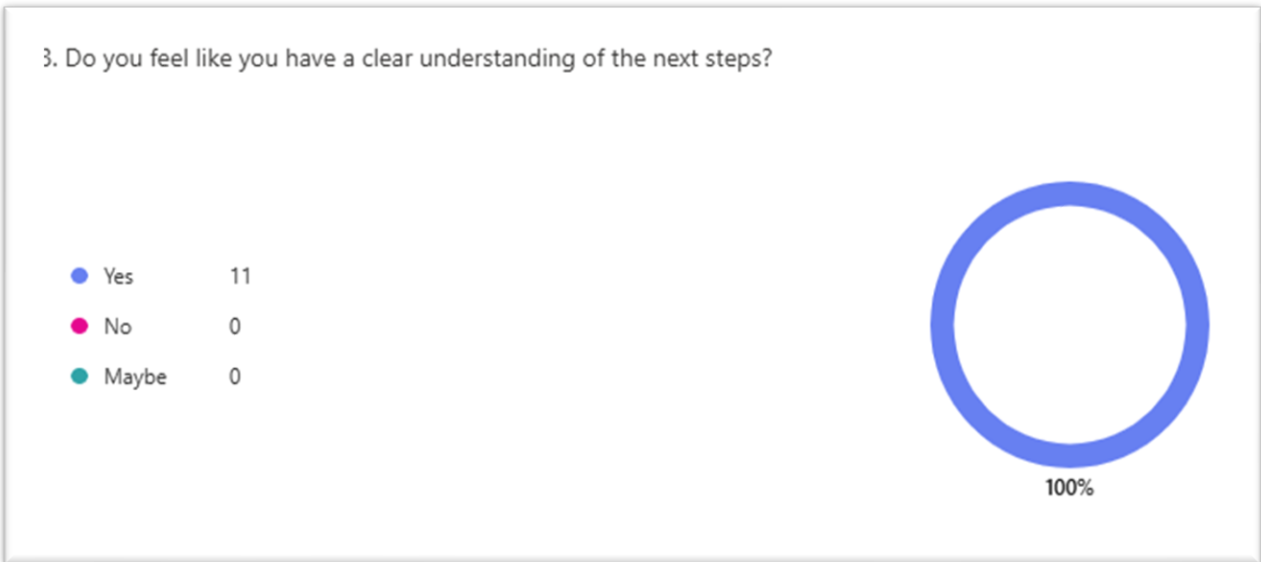
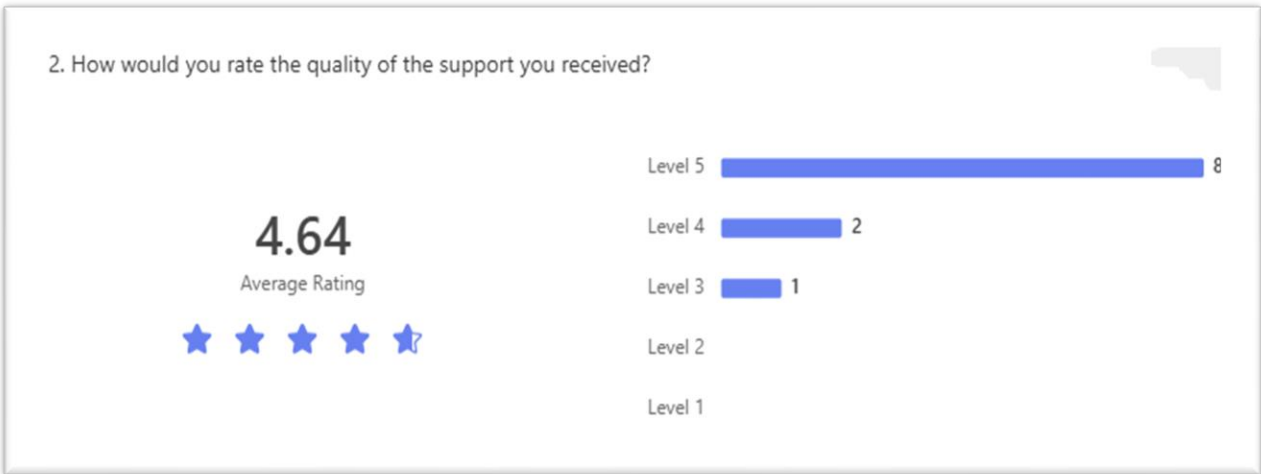
“The process did feel long and there was an unnecessary delay with finishing stage 2. However, if that had not happened I would not have had the match I have, which has been amazing and everything I wanted parenthood to be, so I am so grateful for all the support received.”

“The support we received at the beginning of the adoption process in stage one and waiting for stage two was really bad. Emails were not responded too, we had to repeatedly email to get any information and to be placed on training courses. The wait between stage one and stage two was really hard we felt like we had been left in a sort of limbo. We actually considered giving up on adoption. A lot of work is needed to support adopters in this stage. However when we were given our stage two social worker that completely turned around, she was brilliant the whole way through.”

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The Post Order Survey

Families receiving support from one of the APSE Adoption Support teams have provided positive feedback of their experience. The completion of the survey has been low and APSE are working to increase the numbers completing this survey.



Feedback from families who received support from the ASPE Adoption Support Teams was overwhelmingly positive. The Support & Advice calls received an impressive average rating of 4.91, with all 23 respondents affirming a clear understanding of the next steps. Comments highlighted the professionalism, empathy, and helpfulness of staff members. Similarly, the provision of support services, including those from social workers and therapists, was rated at 4.67 on average. Respondents praised the compassion and effectiveness of the support, particularly noting the positive impact during challenging family times. No respondents expressed a desire to escalate concerns to a Team Manager, indicating high satisfaction with the services provided.

Feedback comments from post order survey

“Our social worker seemed to understand our child from our first telephone call which made such a difference, she has been wonderful and so supportive.”

“Our social worker has been a great support to us and our children. She took the time to explain how things worked, what we could do and how to access more information if we needed it. If I had a question or was unsure about something she was quick to respond and help us as much as she was able, from coming with us to our first EPPLAC meetings to helping us find the right support for our children.”

“Good to be able to have someone to discuss what support we may be able to have. Having a clear support plan to follow makes it clear being able to discuss options with people who understand.”

“Our social worker has worked incredibly hard and with great compassion to help us access the support needed.”

“Very helpful with all the various steps we had to take getting our son help with his ASD/ADHD.”

“I found our social worker to be very supportive through some challenging times in our family. She was a wonderful listening ear and was great at boosting my confidence and helping me to feel confident in my parenting decisions.”

“Our social worker has been absolutely brilliant. After months of asking for help/therapy from her predecessor and not getting anywhere, our Social Worker managed to find a local therapist and get us an introductory meeting within a week of starting in her role. This has had a huge impact on our son and actually the whole family, and we are incredibly grateful for our social workers support in making it happen.”

“SW was an attentive listener and a supportive voice during our conversation. She sensitively clarified what was best in terms of next steps and left us feeling empowered and encouraged. We know we could call on her again for support.”

By
your
side

Complaints

The Partnership agreed Kent County Council will be the lead partner on all complaints which relate either wholly or in part to Adoption Partnership South East. Most of the concerns or issues raised in relation to the service provided by the Regional Adoption Agency are resolved through a problem-solving approach as the service aims to respond quickly and with sensitivity. Between 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025, three Stage 1 complaints were received. This shows a higher than 50% decrease from last year when seven complaints were received. One of these related to a non-agency adoption case and issues raised around a delay in the process. The second related to Adoption Support and the third related to a couple's experience during the adopter assessment process.

Learning from Feedback and Complaints

Adoption Partnership South East has reviewed the feedback and complaints and taken the following action as a direct result from the learning:

- Improved communication during assessment through regular email updates to families being assessed.
- Social Worker support for all families open to APSE pre and post adoption order.
- Catch-up call provided for families to support connectivity and communication





Journey Through Adoption

The Adoption and Special Guardianship Quarterly Data Collection (ASG Data) return is completed by every local authority (LA), regional adoption agency (RAA) and voluntary adoption agency (VAA) in England on a quarterly basis.

The [latest publicly available data](#) covers the period from 1 April 2024 to 31 December 2024.

The table below shows the number of children within the Adoption Partnership South East’s region with an adoption plan during the last five years and outlines their adoption journey.

Indicator	Authority	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Agency decision makers best interest decisions	Bexley	10	10	13	6	11
	Kent	80	58	80	65	85
	Medway	39	18	28	20	28
Placement Orders	Bexley	10	6	8	6	6
	Kent	54	49	68	52	67
	Medway	27	16	14	12	25
Matches approved	Bexley	6	7	7	8	7
	Kent	63	51	49	72	43
	Medway	23	26	14	16	14
Children placed	Bexley	6	5	8	8	8
	Kent	64	49	47	72	40
	Medway	21	27	13	17	14
Adoption Order granted	Bexley	7	7	<5*	10	10
	Kent	42	47	56	68	63
	Medway	14	22	21	18	15

* <Data suppressed due to low number



Agency Decision Maker Best Interest Decisions

The Agency Decision Maker (ADM) is usually a Director of Children's Services or an Assistant Director who agrees adoption would be in a child's best interest and should be presented to a court as the local authority's care plan.

In 2020/21 and 2021/22 the number of adoption plans agreed by the ADM for Bexley children remained the same. This increased to 13 in 2022/2023 but decreased to 2023/2024. For 2024/2025 this figure was 11. For 2024/2025 this figure reduced to 6. Kent agreed the plan for adoption for 80 children in 2020/2021. In 2021/22 this decreased to 58 but in 2022/23 this rose again to 80. In 2023/24 the figure decreased to 65 but rose again in 2024/25 to 85. Medway saw a decrease from 39 children to 18 between 2020/21 and 2021/22 followed by an increase to 28 in 2022/23. In 2023/24, 20 children had an adoption plan agreed and in 2024/25 rose again to 28.

Placement Orders

A Placement Order is the legal order granted when a court agrees adoption should be the care plan for a child. There were 10 Placement Orders granted for Bexley children in 2020/21 compared 6 in 2021/22. Since then, the figures have been steady at 8, 6 and 6 in the years 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 respectively. 49 Placement Orders were granted for Kent children in 2021/22 which was 5 fewer than in 2020/21. This increased to 68 for 2022/23. Numbers decreased in 2023/24 to 52 then rose again to 67 in 2024/25. Medway saw a decrease in Placement Orders granted, from 27 to 16 in 2021/22. Numbers remained steady at 14 then 12 and in 2024/25 increased to 25.

Matches Approved

Bexley's figures have remains constant at 6, 7, 7, 8 and 7 between the years 2020/21 and 2024/25. For Kent in 2021/22 there was a decrease to 51 in the number of matches with an adoptive family in comparison to 2020/21 when there were 63 matches. 49 Kent children were matched with an adoptive family during 2022/23. In 2023/24, there were 72 matches and in 2024/25 this fell to 43. Medway had 23 matches approved in 2020/21 and 26 in 2021/22. In 2022/23 this fell to 14 and remained lower at 16 in 2023/24 and 14 in 2024/25.

Interagency Placements

In total, 64 children were matched with adopters during 2024/25 and 63 of these children were with Adoption Partnership adopters. 1 child was matched with external adopters.

Children Placed for Adoption

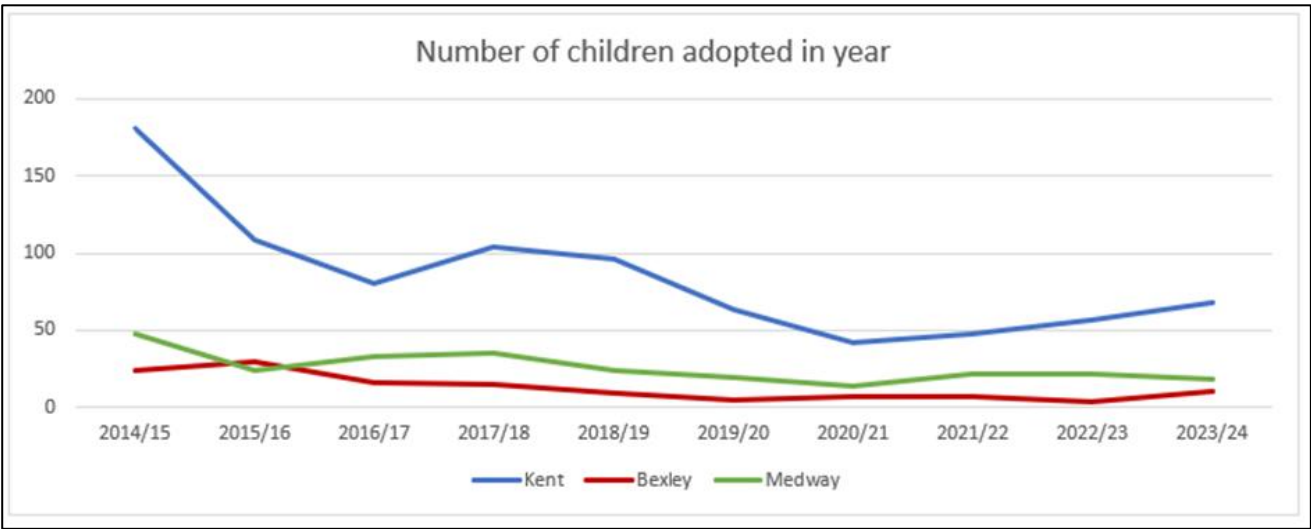
During 2020/21, 6 Bexley children were placed for adoption compared to 5 in 2021/22. In each financial year since 2022/23 this has remained at 8. For Kent, in 2020/21 there were 64 placements that began with adoptive families. In 2021/22 there were 49 children placed. This decreased slightly to 47 in 2022/23. In 2023/24, this increased to 72. For 2024/25 this fell to 40. Medway had 21 children placed for adoption in 2020/21 and this increased to 27 in 2021/22. In 2022/23, 13 children were placed. In 2023/24 this increased to 17 but for 2024/25 this decreased to 14.



Sibling placements

Within the group of 62 children placed in 2024/25, 12 were part of a sibling group placed together for adoption: Bexley: 0 siblings, Kent 6 siblings (3 pairs), Medway 6 siblings (1 pair and 1 group of 4 – 3 of whom were placed together).

Adoption Orders Granted



- Bexley’s number of Adoption Orders granted in 2024/25 remained the same as 2023/24 at 10.
- Medway’s number of Adoption Orders granted fell slightly from 18 in 2023/24 to 15 in 2024/25.
- 63 Adoption Orders were granted for Kent children during 2024/25 which was a slight decrease compared to the 68 during 2023/24.

Timeliness of Children’s Plans

Timescale indicator	National Comparison (Mar 2025)	Authority	2020/ 2021	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023	2023/ 2024	2024/ 2025	From target 2025/25 (days)
Placement order to matching decision, children matched in year	England: 218	Bexley	61	138	146	220	106	-15
	London: 273	Kent	144	117	110	144	144	+23
	South East: 187	Medway	252	160	94	171	147	+26
Placement order to matching decision, children adopted in year	-	Bexley	49	67	135	140	195	+74
		Kent	80	132	129	103	134	+13
		Medway	237	209	152	160	126	+5
Became in care to placed for adoption, children placed in year	England: 491	Bexley	410	333	481	430	336	-90
	London: 586	Kent	385	309	476	447	484	+58
	South East: 465	Medway	388	469	340	579	539	+113
Became in care to placed for adoption, children adopted in year	-	Bexley	394	354	427	397	285	-141
		Kent	274	392	352	346	365	-61
		Medway	394	375	427	473	424	-2



Placement Order to Matching Decision

The target time from the local authority receiving court authority (Placement Order) to place a child for adoption to the approval of a match with an adoptive family is 121 days, 4 months. Latest ASG return data shows that nationally the average timescale was 218 days for 2024/25.

For children who were adopted, Bexley saw an increase in the average number of days it took to match children from 49 days in 2020/21 to 67 days in 2021/22 to 135 days in 2022/23. For 2023/24 this increased again to 140 days. In 2024/25 the average was 195 days. Kent saw an increase in the average number of days from 80 in 2020/21 to 132 in 2021/22. This fell slightly to 129 days in 2022/23. In 2023/24 the average was 103 days, and this has increased to 134 days for 2024/25. Medway saw a decrease from an average of 237 days in 2020/21 to 209 days in 2021/22 and a reduction again to 152 for children adopted in 2022/23. In 2023/24 this increased slightly to 160 but fell again in 2024/25 to 126 days.

When seeking to review more recent or current performance, the table on the previous page shows a slight increase in the timeliness between a Placement Order being granted and a match agreed with adopters in 2024/25 in respect of Bexley children. It took on average 106 days for children to be matched in 2024/25. In 2020/21 the average was 61 days. This increased to an average of 138 days for those whose Placement Order was granted in 2021/22 and increased again to 146 days for Placement Orders granted in 2022/23. For 2023/24 this figure rose to 220 days. Kent children saw a decrease from an average of 144 days for those matched in year in 2020/21 to an average of 117 days for those whose Placement Order was granted during 2021/22. The average improved again in 2022/23 and dropped to 110 days. In 2023/24 the average was 144 days and remained the same for 2024/25. Medway saw the biggest improvement with children whose Placement Order was granted in 2021/22, being matched on average in 160 days, as opposed to an average of 252 days in 2020/21. For children matched in 2022/23, the average was 94 days. In 2023/24 this increased to 171 days and was 147 days for 2024/25.

APSE is now experiencing the impact of the national shortage of adopters available for children. In previous years APSE has always been able to seek adopters from voluntary adoption agencies for the children which needs meant no suitable 'in house' available adopters were available. These external adopters have not been available and therefore this has had an impact on the placement order to match timescale.

Became in Care to Placement Order

Timescale indicator	National Comparison (Mar 2025)	Authority	2020/ 2021	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023	2023/ 2024	2024/ 2025	From target 2024/2025 (days)
Became in care to Placement Order, children with order granted in year	England: 320	Bexley	403	430	300	478	386	+136
	London: 393	Kent	355	336	446	481	387	+137
	South East: 347	Medway	295	375	470	432	436	+186
Became in care to Placement Order, children adopted in year	-	Bexley	354	364	300	359	447	+197
		Kent	233	326	327	416	418	+168
		Medway	284	202	326	429	415	+165

The current DfE threshold for children entering care to placement order is 250 days for children adopted in year. Regarding this measure, the average days for Bexley’s children decreased from 364 days in 2021/22 to 300 days in 2022/23. For 2023/24, it increased to 359 days. For 2024/25 this increased again to 447 days. Kent’s average days for 2024/25 was 418 days For 2023/24 it was 416 days. This was an increase from 2022/23 which was 327 and in 2021/22 it was 326 days. For 2021/22 Medway’s duration decreased from 284 to 202. This rose to 326 days in 2022/23. This increased again in 2023/24 to 429 days. For 2024/25 the average has fallen to 415 days.

The data shows that, during 2024/25, the length of time between entering care and the court authority to place for adoption who have not yet been adopted increased considerably compared to pre-pandemic timescales, particularly for children in Kent and Medway, and all three local authorities exceeded the target of 250 days. Across the region, the pandemic had an impact on the timeliness of court proceedings concluding. However, there are other factors such as court decisions regarding further birth relative assessments and practical issues such as court availability.



Became in Care to Placed for Adoption

The current DfE threshold for children becoming in care to placement is 426 days, 14 months, for children adopted in 2024/25. Regarding this measure, the average days for Bexley’s children increased in 2022/23 to 427 days, compared to 354 the previous year. In 2023/24 this decreased to 397 days. For 2024/25 this fell again to 285 days. Kent’s average days was 392 in 2021/22 and fell to 352 days in 2022/23. The figure decreased again slightly to 346 in 2023/24. For 2024/25 it has risen to 365 days. Medway’s duration increased from 375 in 2021/22 to 427 in 2022/23. In 2023/24 this increased again to 473 days. For 2024/25 the average fell to 424 days.

Early Permanence

APSE set a target for 20% of children placed for adoption to be through Early Permanence (EP). This target has been exceeded over the past three years.

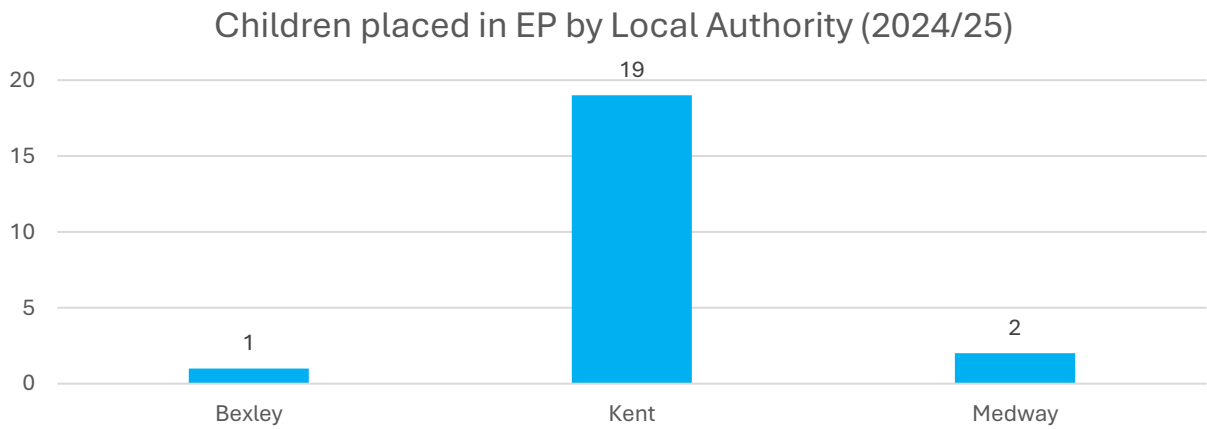
Total children matched (3 years): 232

Children matched with EP carers: 66

Overall EP match rate: 28%

Breakdown by Year:

Year	Children Placed in EP	All Children Matched	Children Matched with EP Carers	% Matched with EP Carers
April 2022 – March 2023	30	70	21	30%
April 2023 – March 2024	28	97	26	27%
April 2024 – March 2025	21	65	19	29%



Adoption Disruptions

There have been three disruptions during 2024/25, all three were Kent children. This was a sibling group of two, and a solo child. Disruptions meetings have been held for these and learning and reflections shared within the service and wider professional network. APSE also facilitate a training workshop for professionals on learning from disruptions.

Non- Agency Adoption –stepparent/relative adoption

Adoption Partnership South East completes assessments for the court when a relative or step-parent applies to adopt a child within their family. These applications are completed through the non-agency route of adoption. We receive Notification of Intent (NOI) from the applicants who live within the region and support families to apply to the court and complete the court assessment. **In 2024/25; 54 adoption orders were granted** to families through this route. Our experienced Social Workers based within our Recruitment and Assessment teams work with these families and on the **31st March 52 children** were open to for non-agency adoption assessments.



The Adopter’s Journey

Adopter activity (as households)	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Information Packs Sent	585	427	453
Consultation Events Attended	147	108	66
Enquiries in year	116	97	64
Stage 1 starts in year	113	104	65
Stage 2 starts in year	72	92	60
Stage 2 ends in year	69	80	63
Adoptive families matched in year	58	80	64
Adoptive families with placements in year	56	79	63

Adoption Partnership South East developed their process for those wanting to find out more information about adoption. A digital information pack was produced which can now be sent out to enquirers, this pack includes video clips, a presentation with a voice over and details written information for enquirers to read, watch and listen to in their own time. The packs were designed to be accessible to all; giving a range of methods to receive the information.

Timescale	Target	2023/24	2024/25	National Comparison (March 2025)
Enquiry to Stage 1 Start (days)	N/A	83	106	-
Stage 1 Start to Stage 1 End (days)	60	114	113	England: 128 London: 125 South East: 106
Stage 2 Starts to Stage 2 End (days)	121	110	117	England: 147 London: 184 South East: 133

During both 2023/24 and 2024/25, Adoption Partnership South East was outside of the Stage 1 target of 60 days but in both years, performance was below the national average at 128 days.

Stage 1 is adopter led, during this stage the agency undertakes statutory checks and references. The prospective adopters also complete their own home learning and attend a 3-day preparation course.

On reviewing the applications which exceeded 61 days there were specific themes identified which caused these delays, which included applicants having difficulties getting appointments with their general practitioner for the adult health assessment to be completed and DBS checks.

Priority continues to be given to assessing prospective adopters who can provide early permanence placements and homes for children who have more complex needs i.e., have a known disability, hereditary/genetic illness in the birth family and slightly older children, plus some siblings. This is part of our sufficiency strategy to reduce the time children are waiting for adoptive families and to ensure we are approving families that match the needs of Bexley, Kent, and Medway children with adoption plans.

The target duration for Stage Two assessment is 4 months, 121 days. Adoption Partnership South East took on average 110 days to complete stage 2 assessments in 2023/24, 11 days under the target timescale. In 2023/24 performance was within target again at 117 days. Both years were below the national average of 147 days.

During this period, 63 households were approved as adopters which ensured sufficiency of adopters for Bexley, Kent, and Medway children. In total, 62 children were placed with adopters during 2024/25 and 61 of these children were placed with the Regional Adoption Agency assessed and approved adopters. Between April 2024 and March 2025, 1 child was placed in an interagency placement (a Kent child). Between April 2024 and March 2025, 7 adopter households had children from outside of the RAA placed for adoption with them.

Of the 63 households approved during April 2024-March 2025, 54 were part of a couple and 9 were single applicants. 54 applicant households identified themselves as heterosexual, 9 identified as being from the LGBT community. 107 adopters identified as white British, white Irish and white any other background and 10 identified as being from a mixed, black, Asian or other ethnic group.

Adopter Gap – sufficiency

It is important to have a range of adoptive placements available to allow children to be matched with adopters who are most able to meet them. The adopter gap i.e., the number of adopters 'available approved and waiting' was between 10-20 at any point in time during 2024/25.

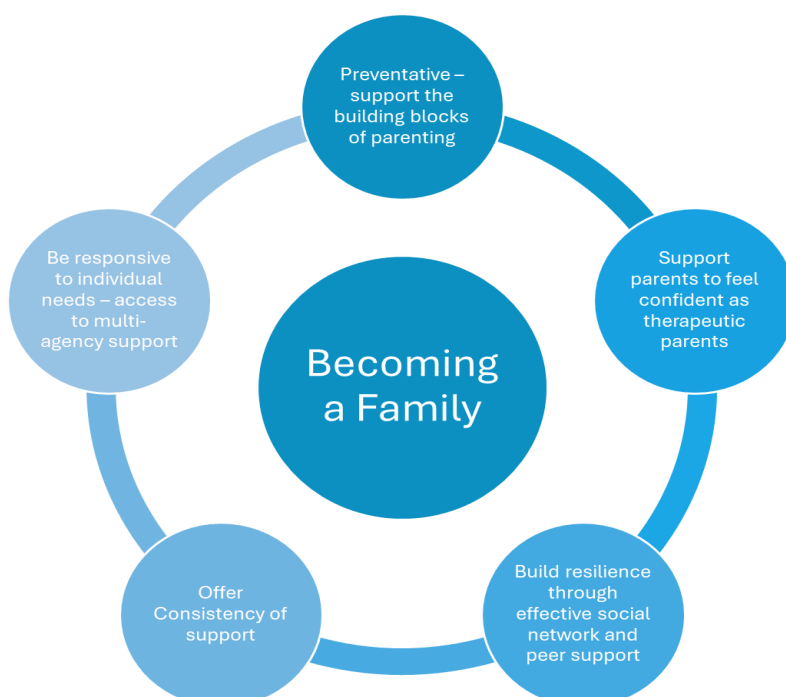
Early Support for Families

APSE has been developing the support provided to families in first 12-18 months; to help lay foundations and build bonds of attachment. The support provided to the family in this time is crucial to their relationships and parenting helping them to become established for the future. A significant element of this support is the role of the adoption Social Worker in enabling adopters to become confident parents that understand and have access to the support and services they will need from the point of the adoption order. In 2024/25 Adoption England launched the approach to early placement support called ‘Becoming a Family’.

The approach to early placement support aims to:

- Be preventative and support the building blocks of parenting in adoption,
- Support adopters to feel confident as therapeutic parents,
- Build resilience through effective social network and peer support.
- Be responsive to individual needs with access to a wide range of multi-agency support.
- Offer consistency of support across England for families adopting a child from another region.

The support provided aims to ensure that by the adoption order is granted, families will feel established with support in place from family, community and key agencies, feel equipped to support their child’s identity and know how to seek any support they may need after the adoption order.





Adoption Support Activity

The table below shows the number of families who contacted the Advisory Team for support and were offered a Support & Advice line appointment between April 2024 – March 2025. Families received a Support & Advice line call within an average of 5.9 days.

LA	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	TOTAL
Bexley	0	1	2	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	3	0	10
Kent	10	8	11	10	5	13	16	7	5	12	7	1	105
Medway	1	0	1	2	0	0	2	1	0	1	4	6	18
TOTAL	11	9	14	12	6	14	19	8	5	14	14	7	133

Adoption support assessments (households) carried out between April 2023 – March 2025

LA	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
Bexley	0	17	17
Kent	68	129	160
Medway	1	16	19
TOTAL	69	162	196

Review Assessments carried out between April 2024 – March 2025

LA	2024/2025
Bexley	14
Kent	175
Medway	22
TOTAL	211

Learning, Development and Support

A range of opportunities for parents to access training are provided by the Adoption Support teams, which include:

- Incredible Years training, (12-week course)
- Non-violent resistance course (10-week course)
- Sensory integration (6-week course)
- Therapeutic parenting - understanding developmental trauma (12-week course)
- Life story workshops (2-day course)
- Monthly social work lead support group meetings

Adoption Support Fund Applications

Between April 2024 – March 2025 (includes pre-order applications):

Type of application	Number of applications
Internal provision	83
External provision	414
TOTAL	497



Adoption Support Services

A range of opportunities for parents to access training are provided:

- Non-violent resistance course (10-week course)
- Sensory integration (6-week course)
- Therapeutic parenting - understanding developmental trauma (12-week course)
- Life story workshops (2-day course)
- Non-Violent Resistance

Families have also accessed family therapy, individual therapy and therapeutic social work intervention (numbers relate to children within the families with some children accessing more than one service).

Service	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
Family Therapy	47	95	137
Individual Therapy	61	47	95
Life Story Work	7	17	13
Other	33	6	6
Sensory Integration	57	55	80
Social Work Support	110	117	329
Therapeutic Assessments	93	21	34
Therapeutic Group	3	36	50
Therapeutic Parent Work	87	96	104
Training Workshop	22	22	2
TOTAL	520	512	850

Partnership working with Virtual Schools in the Region

Each local authority within the partnership has its own virtual school. The Virtual Heads meet with the Head of Service and other managers from the RAA on a quarterly basis. They continue to support the service development with training, advice and resources alongside contributions to newsletters.

Adoptive parents are advised about the virtual schools and signposted to their website by the adoption service when appropriate. Although their services cannot provide a one-to-one service for every adopted child, they do speak with adoptive parents and work with adoption Social Workers. Coffee sessions for adopters are supported by all three virtual schools, and this includes sessions in the evening to enable more parents to attend. These were well received by parents.

The wider regional working subgroup for the south east is well established and continues to meet. This means professionals can share practice and ideas quickly.





Supporting those affected by adoption and Staying In Touch

Barnardo’s CAFIS

Adoption Partnership South East commissions independent services from Barnardo’s to support those with lived experience of adoption. This is a bespoke service to families eligible to receive support from APSE. The Service is called Connecting Adoptive Families Independent Service (CAFIS). Services are provided to four groups of people affected by adoption:

- 1. Service for birth parents
- 2. Support for birth relatives
- 3. Access to information and intermediary services
- 4. ‘Keeping in Touch’ contact service

Barnardo’s CAFIS Activity 2024/25						
Service	No of Kent cases	No of Bexley cases	No of Medway cases	No of Out of Area Agency request	Total	Total in 24/25
Independent birth parent support	49	7	4	N/A	60	74
Adopted Adults access to records / intermediary	162	10	18	56	246	240
Birth relatives access to records / intermediary	66	6	7	10	89	97
Indirect Staying in Touch letter exchange	1354	183	350	1	1888	1865
Direct Staying in Touch meetings	82	13	27	N/A	122	83

APSE and Barnardo’s CAFIS have continued to work working closely with Adoption England on the National Campaign for a Culture of Change around staying in touch arrangements for children with their birth families post adoption order. All our work and support with families right from the preparation of prospective adopters through the support adoptive families with teenager works toward creating an open culture for adoptive and birth families to interact in ways which best meet the needs of the children involved. This is evidenced in an increase in direct staying in touch arrangements taking place.





Training and Development workshops run across the Region for the Professional Network

ASPE Adoption Support & Virtual School Webinar for SENCOs and Designated Teachers (DTs)

Overview

Three webinars were delivered during the 2024/25 academic year, aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of support available for families who adopt. A total of 164 people registered for the events and 69 attended. The sessions were well-received, with consistently high feedback ratings despite a decline in attendance over time.

Webinar Attendance and Feedback Summary

Date	Registered	Attended	Feedback Forms	Average Helpfulness Rating
15/10/2024	70	27	21	4.29
30/01/2025	68	31	16	4.56
08/05/2025	26	11	7	4.57

Has the training given you an understanding of support availability for adopted children?	Yes	No	Maybe	Key Themes from Participant Comments
Training on 15/10/2024	18	0	3	- Clear and well explained - Useful for signposting support - Variety of support appreciated - Interest in future webinars
Training on 30/1/2025	14	0	2	- Great visuals - Helpful details - Refresher on contacts - Reminder of available support
Training on 8/5/2025	5	1	1	- Useful information - Insight into limitations - Good pace and Q&A opportunity





APSE Conference 2024

APSE held an online conference for adoptive parents and professionals on 22nd October 2024. The theme of the conference was “Working Together to Develop Multi-Disciplinary Approaches to Adoption Support”. Sarah Naish, CEO and Founder of the Centre for Excellence in Child Trauma spoke on ‘My Journey Through Therapeutic Parenting’ and the APSE short film ‘[Adoption Community](#)’ was premiered.

The conference was a huge success with over 200 attendees and over 300 further views of the recording.



Learning from the conference



Highlights from the conference



Training provided by APSE for professionals across the region

APSE has provided online training for children’s Social Workers and other practitioners across children’s services within the region. These have taken place with the aim of strengthening the wider workforce’s knowledge and understanding of key elements of adoption. In addition to these training session APSE practitioners have been invited to speak at children’s services staff meetings and provide consultations to staff around adoption issues. ASPE now produces a monthly newsletter for our professional community, highlighting the offer of free training as well as relevant practice development and tools for working with adoption cohort.

Training session title	Dates	Attendees
Introduction to Adoption Partnership South East	22/05/2024	8
	11/09/2024	5
	11/11/2024	7
	12/02/2025	2
Children's Adoption Plans (CPR)	21/06/2024	38
	10/07/2024	7
	01/08/2024	13
	27/09/2024	31
	11/12/2024	21
Moving to Adoption	25/04/2024	3
	27/06/2024	20
	12/09/2024	6
	14/11/2024	3
Sibling Assessment Training	19/03/2024	19
Early Permanence Training	31/07/2024	11
	13/11/2024	4
Learning from Disruptions	18/04/2024	16
	14/10/2024	8
Introduction to Barnardo's CAFIS	18/04/2024	5
	18/07/2024	4
	17/10/2024	9

Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund Pilot

The DfE and Adoption England agreed for APSE to be part of the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF) Pilot in 2025/26. This pilot offers APSE a valuable opportunity to receive direct funding via the ASGSF. This enables flexible commissioning of support across the year without the need for individual applications through the ASGSF portal for each intervention.

Aims and Focus of the APSE Pilot

The pilot aims to design and deliver a support service that is:

- Proactive and accessible – encouraging early engagement with social work support and therapeutic group interventions.
- Responsive and needs-led – enabling timely access to family or individual therapeutic support where appropriate.

The pilot will prioritise families in the early stages of their adoptive journey, with a particular focus on those with children under 12 years old. The goals are to:

- Strengthen the foundations of adoptive family life.
- Promote early, trust-building access to support.
- Reduce escalation of needs through timely, relationship-based intervention.
- Build stronger, more sustained relationships between families and the service.

In addition, the pilot enhances ability to:

- Commission specialist assessments to gain a deeper understanding of children's needs.
- Navigate multi-agency networks effectively to identify the most appropriate responses.

Appendices

- [Recruitment Strategy](#)
- [Service Plan](#)
- [Panel Chair Report October 2024](#)
- [Panel Chair Report April 2025](#)
- [Statement of Purpose](#)
- [Governance and Service Structure](#)



**By
your
side**