

**Adoption
Partnership**
South East

Annual Report



2025/26

**By
your
side**

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By
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side



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

As senior representatives for Children's Services across the London Borough of Bexley, Kent County Council and Medway Council, we are pleased to introduce Adoption Partnership South East's 2025/26 Annual Report. At its heart, this report is about children and families, and the practical work taking place every day to support those affected by adoption.

A strong theme this year is the support APSE provides to families before and after an Adoption Order. The Adoption Support Pilot is an important part of this, helping the partnership try out new ways of offering earlier support, including therapeutic workshops, targeted advice and opportunities for families to connect with others who understand adoption.

These are exciting initiatives because they are shaped around what families say they need. Preparation for adopters, honest conversations about children's needs, peer support and timely advice from staff all make a real difference when families are building confidence and facing challenges.

We are also pleased to see the continued work to bring lived experience more directly into the way services are shaped. Hearing from children, adopted people, adopters, birth relatives and families gives a clearer picture of what support feels like in real life, and where we need to keep improving.

We would like to thank APSE staff, social work colleagues, foster carers, adopters, adopted people, birth family members and partner agencies for their commitment, support and care. We look forward to continuing this work together across Bexley, Kent and Medway.

Stephen Kitchman

Kevin Kasaven

Lee-Anne Farach



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Message from the Head of Adoption Partnership South East; Amy Coombs



I am proud to introduce this year's Annual Report for Adoption Partnership South East. As a regional adoption agency, we remain committed to putting children at the heart of everything we do, while continuing to strengthen how we listen to and work alongside our families. Over the past year, we have continued to develop our approach to adoption support in a way that genuinely reflects the voices of those we support. Listening carefully to our children, adoptive families and those with lived experience has helped us shape support that is responsive, meaningful and rooted in real need.

Being child-focused remains central to our work, but we know that by working closely with families and understanding their experiences, we are better able to support children to thrive.

Our adoption community continues to grow and evolve, and it is particularly inspiring to see the increasing role adoptive parents are playing in shaping and strengthening peer support. Many of our families are now working alongside us, sharing their experience, supporting one another and helping to build a strong, connected community across the region. This shared commitment is a real strength of our service and something we are incredibly proud of.

I would also like to recognise the dedication and passion of our staff across Adoption Partnership South East. Their commitment to making a difference in the lives of children and families is evident every day. They bring professionalism, compassion and creativity to their roles, ensuring that the support we provide is thoughtful, inclusive and focused on achieving the best possible outcomes.

Finally, our strong collaboration with colleagues across children's services in Bexley, Kent and Medway continues to be key. By working closely together, sharing expertise and maintaining a clear focus on children's needs, we are able to deliver a joined-up and effective service across the region.

This report reflects a year of continued progress, learning and partnership. I am proud of what we have achieved together and confident in our continued commitment to supporting children and families through adoption.



Key Highlights across 2025/26

A year of timely permanence, stronger support and a growing community across Bexley, Kent and Medway.

Children's journeys

Timely matching for Children

Matched faster than the national average: Kent 141 days, Medway 170 and Bexley 54. **See page 22.**

Adoption community

Adopter-led groups

Adopter-led groups offer peer support, shared understanding and practical advice. **See pages 15–16.**

Family feedback

Families feel listened to

Families report feeling heard, understood and clearer about next steps. **See pages 33–34.**

Adopter recruitment

Diverse adopter profile

Approvals included LGBTQ+, co-habiting and solo adopters, with focus on ethnic diversity. **See page 26.**

Supporting families

Adoption support strengthened

Pilot funding enabled needs-led therapeutic support and early help for families. **See pages 28–31.**

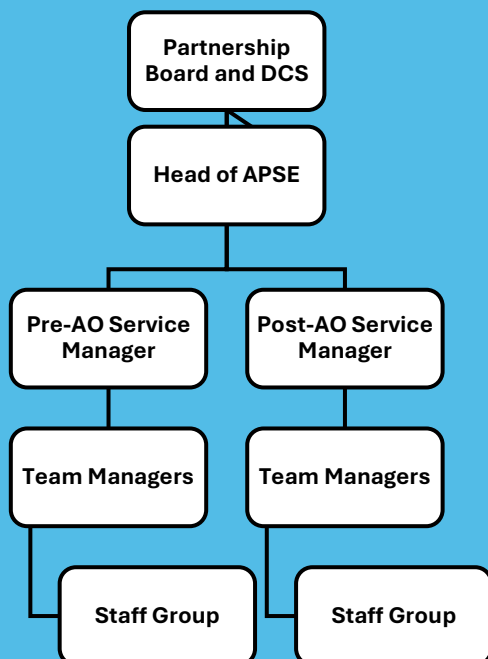
Birth Family Connections

100 in-person arrangements

In-person staying-in-touch arrangements helped sustain safe family connections. **See pages 38.**

Our Service

Adoption Partnership South East is managed by the Head of Service and two Service Managers: one responsible for the pre-Adoption Order teams and one responsible for the 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. The London Borough of Bexley (LBB) is represented by the Director of Children’s Services, supported by the Deputy Director as substitute. Kent County Council (KCC) is represented by the Director of Children’s Countywide Services, with the Assistant Director of Corporate Parenting serving as substitute. Medway Council (MC) is represented by the Director of People, with the Assistant Director for Children’s Social Care designated as substitute. Medway’s Head of Provider Services – Children’s Services also attends. The Head of APSE, APSE Service Managers, an adoptive parent and a voluntary adoption agency representative are also members of the Board, with Finance and Data Leads for each partner invited to attend relevant parts of the meeting.

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

The annual report is presented to Bexley, Kent and Medway’s Corporate Parenting Panels and to Medway’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Equality and Diversity

Adoption Partnership South East continues to place equality, diversity and inclusion at the heart of everything we do. We are committed to ensuring that everyone we work with is treated with dignity, respect and without discrimination, and we actively seek to reflect the diverse communities we serve. This is evident in our ongoing focus on recruiting adopters from a wide range of backgrounds to better meet the identity, heritage and needs of our children, as well as strengthening the diversity of our panel membership and workforce.

We are equally focused on creating a culture where staff, families and partners feel they belong and are valued, supported through regular opportunities to listen, learn and shape the service together. This includes our most recent service away day, which was dedicated to hearing the voices of those with lived experience, where young people, adopters and birth family members were invited to speak directly to staff and share their perspectives.

Through our engagement with reference groups, feedback forums and collaborative working across the region, we continue to ensure that lived experience informs both our practice and our future development.



Our Adoption Community

The VSK (Virtual Schools Kent) Participation Team supports Adoption Partnership South East (APSE) by ensuring that adopted children and young people in Bexley, Kent, and Medway have a voice and participate in meaningful activities. The team works under the principles of Corporate Parenting and the Lundy Model (participation framework) to create safe, inclusive environments, ensuring children's voices are genuinely heard in decisions. Children from the region are invited to join the Adoptables Council and participate in related events and activities. The VSK participation team comprises six apprentices with care and adoption experience, who are working towards their qualifications under the guidance of Participation Officers. One apprentice, who is an adopted young person, leads the APSE apprenticeship.

The Participation team, in partnership with APSE, organised biannual family events, including a summer picnic and a Christmas party.

In July, 71 young people and their families enjoyed a fairy-themed picnic featuring activities such as wand making, fairy gardens, and tie-dye t-shirts, providing a safe space for adoptive families to connect.

The popular Christmas party in December welcomed 84 children and young people with their families, offering Christmas crafts, games, and a visit to Santa's grotto, fostering community and shared experiences.





Over the past year, the Participation Team's apprentice Karmel has supported adoption preparation groups. These sessions provide opportunities to share lived experiences of adoption with prospective adopters, helping to deepen their understanding of the realities faced by adopted children and young people. Contributions to the programme have included reflections on personal experiences of adoption, insights into education, perspectives on relationships with birth families, and the impact adoption can have on identity and emotional wellbeing.

These discussions have supported prospective adopters to gain a greater understanding around adoptees' behaviour, possible trauma and emotional needs. The Participation Team has also shared practical guidance on the types of support that can make a meaningful difference, including the importance of young people feeling safe and listened to, having strong advocacy from parents, being able to openly discuss their past, and accessing appropriate support whether this is relating to their education or well-being.

Adoption UK Youth Forum

In addition, our apprentice Karmel has begun supporting the Adoption UK Youth Forum, a national platform for older adopted young people. The forum aims to empower participants by providing opportunities to share their voice and influence discussions at a wider level. Being involved in the forum has allowed Karmel and other young people to share personal experiences and perspectives, listen to and learn from the experiences of others, participate in discussions on key issues which may affect them, and help to represent their views on a broader level.

The forum ensures that the voices of young people are central to conversations about adoption, highlighting their needs and experiences directly rather than relying on adult perspectives only. Engagement in both the preparation groups and the youth forum has enabled lived experience to be used positively, contributing to improved understanding, stronger relationships, and better outcomes for adopted children and young people.



The logo for "THE ADOPTABLES", featuring a globe icon made of small colorful circles to the left of the text "THE ADOPTABLES" in large, multi-colored capital letters.

The Adoptables Council is a group exclusively for adopted children and young people living in Bexley, Kent, or Medway. The group meets every school holiday to discuss topics that may affect all adopted young people and to share feedback on services provided by APSE to young people and their families. It also serves as a safe space where young people can express their thoughts and feelings, socialise, and build and maintain relationships with peers who share similar lived experiences within the adoptive community.

Currently, 11 young people regularly attend the group, with some having been members for several years. Throughout the year, members have been collaboratively developing an inclusive Independence Programme, selecting and exploring topics they believe will assist themselves and others in transitioning into adulthood. Topics have included healthy eating and planning and preparing nutritious meals, alongside participation in accredited First Aid training. One young person remarked, "I think it's so important we learn these skills as you never know when you might need to use them."

Most recently, members took part in bespoke young people's recruitment and selection training, where they learned about the recruitment process, sitting on interview panels and identifying positive characteristics of candidates. The Head of APSE attended the meeting and gave an insight as to how important it is to ensure the voice of the young person is represented in the recruitment process.

Young people from the Adoptables Council group were invited for an evening at the pantomime at the Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury. The trip provided the opportunity for some of our young people to see a live theatre performance for the first time, something they might not otherwise have had the chance to experience.





OCYPC MAGIC is a group for young people aged 11–18 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in care, supported by social workers, or adopted in Bexley, Kent, or Medway. It offers a safe space to share views and improve local services. Recently, the group has focused on building independence through activities like cooking, First Aid training, and career discussions, helping members gain confidence. The group welcomes new members year-round to expand its support.



Enrichment Activity Days

116 children in 25/26 attended 12 activity days. Of these 115 were adopted (3 Bexley, 101 Kent, 11 Medway) and 1 was a child in care fostered by an adoptive family. The ages of the children and young people attending were 4 to 17 years old. These fun days have included activities such as horse-riding, outdoor pursuits, water sports, wildlife parks, arts and crafts. The days receive positive feedback and are a chance for young people to try new activities and learn new skills, as well as an opportunity to mix with young people with similar backgrounds to themselves and create a sense of belonging for them.



By
your
side

Feedback from families:

“It’s great to have a space where we can connect with those we have met during our adoption journey.”

Hi, I am *** and I am privileged to be a member of the Adoptables group.

Since being with the group, it has opened my eyes, and I realise that being adopted is not a weakness and I do not need to feel sorry for myself.

Being part of the Adoptables group, we meet people with similar stories and backgrounds, and you connect with people on a different level. I love being a member of the group as I now know that I am not alone.

I know that family does not have to share blood and home is where you feel comfortable. I feel comfortable in the Adoptables group.

I want to thank the team for everything they have done for us!”

“An absolutely fantastic event. So much on offer, my daughter tried so many different activities and we were both surprised by how well she did on some of them. All staff were super friendly and helpful, as well as being very experienced. My daughter has had a wonderful day - thank you!”

“For us and our children to experience time with other adopted parents and their children who have shared experiences. Love all of the activities- so well thought out!”

“Events are important for connection and a sense that our kids are not different in a difficult world. We attend to feel a sense of belonging!”

“Thank you so much for organising today’s experience. It was such a good thing for them to do. E** has been positively buzzing ever since and was so glad she felt the fear and did it anyway. My driving was subsequently under scrutiny on the way home with her newfound knowledge and skills. It’s definitely something we will return to do again. Now to see which Rangers badge it can fit with. As ever, thank you for all you do to organise and host these events. You are true superstars.”

Peer Connector Scheme

Our Peer Connection Scheme has now supported nearly 300 families through their adoption process. A Peer Connector is someone who has already walked through their own adoption journey and is willing to walk alongside and support someone else going through the process. Our scheme currently has 32 Peer Connectors who are volunteer adoptive parents.

A Peer Connector is automatically assigned to prospective adopters once they have completed Stage 2 of the Preparation Training and are approaching Approval Panel. The Peer will then be alongside the family throughout the rest of their adoption journey up until the Adoption Order is granted.

Leaning on their own lived experience, Peers provide much-needed support and wisdom, via telephone, FaceTime or Teams/online meet ups.

Our Peer Connectors can also provide one-off phone calls when social workers feel lived experience would be particularly helpful for those considering different aspects of the adoption process.

At APSE, Peer Connection continues to provide a growing, invaluable system of support which we are continually looking to enhance and refine. Our Peers recognise the importance of being part of an adoption community and greatly value being able to support others on their adoption journeys, as expressed through these testimonies from just a few of our Peer Connectors:

“I think coming from the era that peer support wasn’t available, adoption peer support is incredibly powerful because it offers something that’s often missing in such a complex and emotional journey: genuine understanding. It’s not just about having someone listen— it’s about being heard by someone who truly gets it. Someone who understands the process, the fears, the doubts, the excitement, and the moments that feel overwhelming or uncertain.”

“As an adoption peer, I’ve seen how valuable the support can be. Being able to talk to someone who’s been through it helps take away some of the unknowns and makes things feel more manageable. It gives people a space to ask questions, share experiences, and feel understood. For many, it builds confidence, settles nerves, and reminds them they’re not on their own in the journey.”

“One of my biggest insights into this programme is that people need to feel heard. Whether that’s them wanting to talk about the process, professionals or children, they just want someone to talk to who’s been there and know there’s light at the end of the tunnel. It’s one of many roles I have and honestly the one that fills me with the most pride.”

Community Connection Groups

Community support groups remain a central part of the APSE support offer, giving adoptive families accessible, peer-led spaces to connect with others who share similar lived experiences. Facilitated by experienced volunteer adopters or Adoption Social Workers, the groups provide a relaxed, inclusive environment where parents can speak openly without fear of judgement.

Group types include:

- Family groups
- Parents of teenagers
- Solo adopters
- Parents only
- Online meet ups
- Pre-school groups (social worker-led)

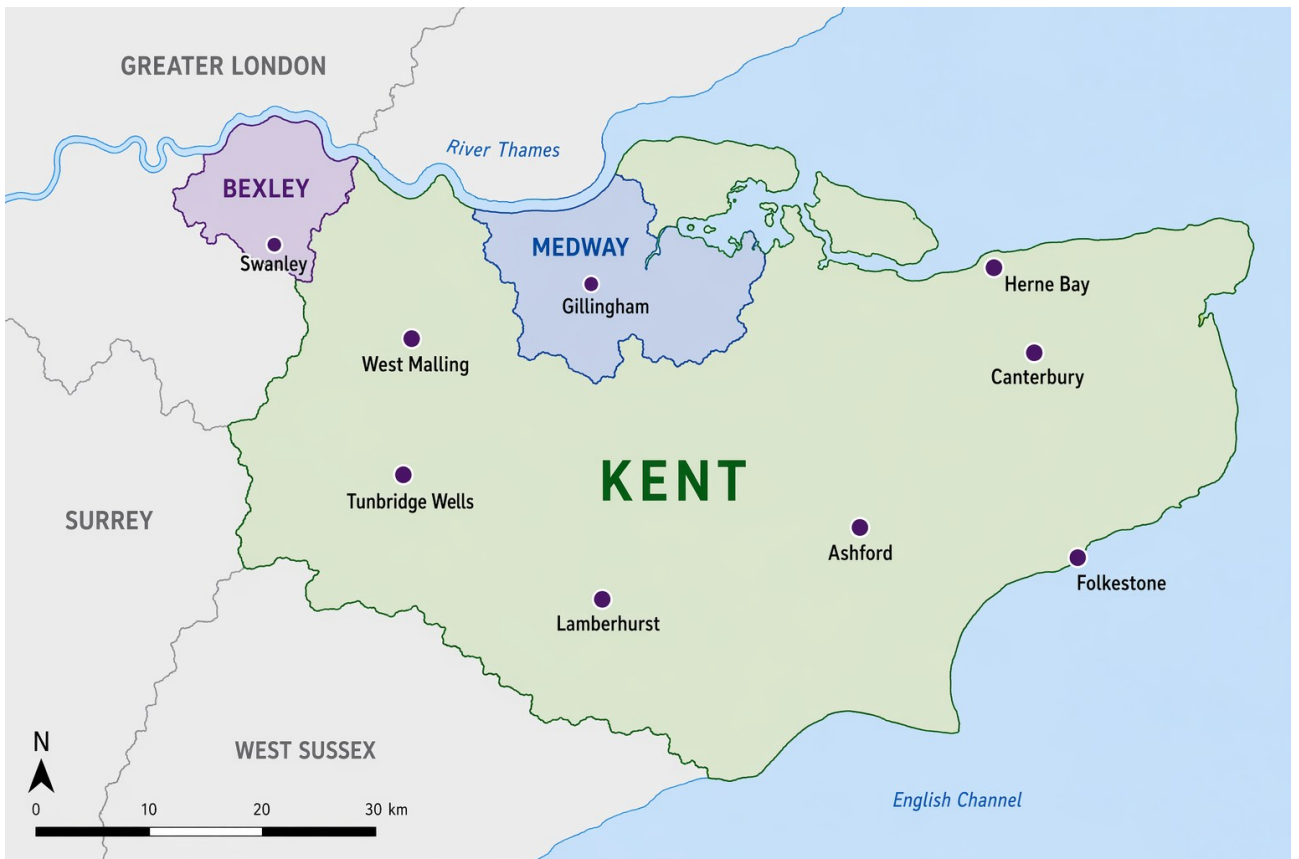
Families value the shared understanding, practical advice and emotional support the groups provide, particularly when navigating trauma, attachment needs and complex behaviours. The groups help parents build confidence and resilience, while giving children and young people opportunities to socialise where their needs are understood and accepted.

Regular activities and informal gatherings strengthen relationships over time, with many families developing trusted networks beyond the groups themselves.

Locations include parks, Amelia Scott Centre, online, coastal venues, Starbucks, pubs, church halls, cinemas, stately homes and zoos.



Locations of APSE community groups:



A huge thank you to the volunteers who run these groups. Their commitment and willingness to share their own experiences are what really make this work. The groups simply wouldn't be what they are without them, and the difference they make to families across our community is clear.



Feedback from parents attending groups:

“

We were recommended to the Sunday adoption walk once a month when our son was 2 years old by our Peer we met when we were going through Foster to Adopt. We wish we had found this group earlier as adoption can be quite a lonely journey and promised networks disappear simply because people just don't get it.

As soon as we met Neil and Tina, we immediately felt part of something special. Chatting with like-minded people with the children just playing and enjoying being together. Each time we go, we meet new adopters and hope that we can help or give advice if needed. The group has helped us so much and I class many as friends now. We hope that in the future our son will feel that he can get or give support with the other children.

The meet ups happen come rain and shine and we have had some real laughs... To name a few we have visited the goat sanctuary, beach walk with ice creams, walks in sleet and muddy puddles - getting prams stuck in mud and needing help to get them out and de-regulation of children in play parks with people staring! That's the thing with the groups - we understand our children. We have done a relaxed cinema setting where the children can truly be themselves and there is an arranged swimming pool meet up. More recently we have also been attending the Saturday monthly group with Sam which has been fantastic.

The guys who run these are just so welcoming, honest and non-judgemental as they help and share their experiences. They have helped me with post adoption support, navigating a potential sibling and private assessments, and I feel comfortable confiding in them.

Conversations are never repeated and we share our celebrations and our worries.

We would recommend these groups to anyone!
We are all there to support each other.

”



“

It's very valuable because only other adopters truly understand what it is like to bring up an adopted child and understand the difficulties often involved in bringing up an adopted child.

Other adopters are more likely to understand how the trauma that an adopted child has experienced can impact on them

It is a more relaxed atmosphere for the adopters in the group as they are often less judgemental of difficult behaviours and kids that are less able to cope in some situations.

I feel like I can talk very openly and honestly with other adopters even when I don't know them

Adoption can be very lonely. You don't get the benefit of things like NCT and you often have a child who doesn't easily fit so well socially. I have heard some pretty traumatic stories of how difficult it can be and the social groups are a way to meet people, talk and play with no judgement!”

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“

I feel adoption community groups are important because they provide a supportive and inclusive environment where adoptive families can connect with others who share similar experiences. Being part of a group helps me and other parents feel understood, knowing that other adoptive parents are familiar with the unique challenges, behaviours, and emotional needs that can sometimes arise through adoption.

These groups offer a safe space to talk openly about successes, concerns, and everyday experiences without fear of judgement. Parents can share advice, learn from one another, and gain reassurance from people who genuinely understand their situation. The sense of belonging and mutual understanding that adoption community groups provide can help families feel less isolated, more confident, and better supported throughout their adoption journey.”

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Children’s Journeys Through Adoption

Across the year, Adoption Partnership South East (APSE) has continued to prioritise timely and high-quality permanency planning for children with adoption plans. Social workers within APSE working collaboratively with children’s social workers remains a strength for progressing children’s adoption plans. Specialist permanency planning leads, agency advisors and family finding social workers ensure there is an approach of working alongside children’s social workers to support thoughtful, well-informed adoption care planning.

Early permanence remains a key part of Adoption Partnership South East’s approach to achieving timely permanence and minimising delay for children. This approach enables children to be placed with carers who are approved both as foster carers and prospective adopters, reducing moves and supporting early attachment.

During 2025/26, 20 children were placed with early permanence carers, including 16 Kent children and 4 Medway children. This reflects continued progress in embedding early permanence practice across the partnership and strengthening planning at an earlier stage in children’s journeys. The proportion of children matched with early permanence carers has increased to 35% in 2025/26, marking the highest level in the last four years.

Year	EP Placements	Total Matches	EP Matches	% EP Matches
2022/23	30	70	21	30%
2023/24	28	97	26	27%
2024/25	21	65	19	29%
2025/26	20	80	28	35%



To support children being matched with adoptive families APSE has held family finding events and been involved with national profiling through Link Maker. Children are supported through consistent tracking arrangements across APSE and Bexley, Kent and Medway, ensuring clear oversight from decision-making through to matching. The matching process is structured and carefully considered. Adoption panels play a crucial role in progressing children's adoption plans by providing independent scrutiny, testing the quality of evidence, and giving assurance that proposed matches are robust, child-centred and ready for Agency Decision Maker consideration.

Following matching, introductions and transition plans are developed collaboratively so transitions are well-paced and centred on the child. Family finders also work with adopters' social workers to ensure each child has a life story book in place.

Over the year, family finding activity has continued to evolve and strengthen, particularly for children with more complex needs and sibling groups. This has included targeted recruitment, enhanced preparation for adopters and ongoing support to practitioners to enable timely, confident care planning and minimise delay.

Family finding teams have continued to strengthen their practice by working closely with birth parents and sometimes wider family to support the development of each child's life story book. This collaborative approach helps ensure that children's histories are captured with sensitivity and accuracy, enabling them to understand their early experiences and maintain a meaningful connection to their birth identity.

APSE demonstrates a strong, collaborative and adaptive approach. With effective tracking, adoption panel oversight, local and national family finding strategies and robust governance, the partnership remains committed to securing timely, stable and well-matched adoptive families for children across the region.



Summary Adoption Child Level Data (2025-26) within each area:

Bexley

54 days to
match

173 days to
adoption order

5 ADM decisions, 8 placement orders, 1 match, 1 placement and 4 adoption orders.

Kent

141 days to
match

224 days to
adoption order

105 ADM decisions, 78 placement orders, 58 matches, 65 placements and 46 adoption orders.

Medway

170 days to
match

191 days to
adoption order

31 ADM decisions, 17 placement orders, 21 matches, 20 placements and 15 adoption orders.



The table below shows the number of children’s adoption care plans being progressed.

Measure	Indicator	Authority	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
No. of children	ADM best interest decisions	Bexley	6	11	5
		Kent	65	85	105
		Medway	20	28	31
No. of children	Placement Orders	Bexley	6	6	8
		Kent	52	67	78
		Medway	12	25	17
No. of children	Matches approved	Bexley	8	7	1
		Kent	72	43	58
		Medway	16	14	21
No. of children	Children placed	Bexley	8	8	1
		Kent	72	40	65
		Medway	17	14	20
No. of children	Adoption Orders granted	Bexley	10	10	4
		Kent	68	63	46
		Medway	18	15	15

Across the three authorities, this data shows how the number of children moving through the adoption journey has overall increased. Kent continues to have a steady increase in children with ADM decisions and Placement Orders, and a rise again in children matched and placed following a dip in 2024/25.

Medway supports a smaller number of children, with activity remaining broadly steady, although there are some changes year to year.

In Bexley, the number of children is much smaller, which means the picture can look more changeable due to the impact sibling group numbers will have.

The table below shows the timescales for children’s adoption care plans progressing once a Placement Order has been granted by the court, alongside the national average.

Measure	Indicator	Authority	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	National average 2025/26
Average days	Placement order to matching decision (children matched in year)	Bexley	220	106	54	237
		Kent	144	144	141	237
		Medway	171	147	170	237
Average days	Adoption order granted	Bexley	478	386	173	244
		Kent	481	387	224	244
		Medway	432	436	191	244

This data shows how quickly children are moving through the adoption journey across the partnership and provides a positive picture when set against the national average. Across all three authorities, children are consistently being matched more quickly than the national average.

In 2025/26, the national average for children moving from Placement Order to matching is 237 days. Kent (141 days) and Medway (170 days) are both well below this, and Bexley shows a particularly fast timeframe at 54 days. This reflects the partnership’s continued focus on early family finding and timely matching for children. A similar positive picture is seen in the time taken for children to achieve an Adoption Order. The national average is 244 days, while all three authorities are below this in 2025/26. Kent has reduced to 224 days, Medway to 191 days, and Bexley shows a significant reduction to 173 days. This indicates that, once placed, children are generally able to move through to permanence without unnecessary delay. It is important to recognise that these strong timescales are being achieved in a national context where there are ongoing challenges in adopter sufficiency. Many areas continue to experience a shortage of adopters, particularly for children with more complex needs or those who are part of sibling groups. Despite this, Adoption Partnership South East continues to secure timely matches for children and supports them through to adoption at a pace that is right for the child and avoids unnecessary delays.

As with the earlier data, where the number of children is smaller, particularly in Bexley, timescales can be more influenced by individual children and sibling groups.

Adoption Disruptions

There were two disruptions during 2025/26, both involving Kent children aged five: one with APSE adopters and one with external adopters. Disruption meetings were held and learning shared across the service and wider professional network. Key learning focused on the reality and challenge of adopting a school-age child, how APSE helps adopters prepare, and the value of therapeutic workshops.

Non-agency adoption – step-parent/relative adoption

Adoption Partnership South East supports families where a relative or step-parent wishes to adopt a child within their family through the non-agency route. We receive Notifications of Intent (NOI) from applicants across the region and work alongside families to navigate the court process and complete assessments.

During 2025/26, 40 adoption orders were granted through this route. As of 31 March, 55 children were open to non-agency adoption assessments, supported by experienced social workers in our Recruitment and Assessment teams.

“

I just wanted to reach out and say thank you for everything you did to support us during the adoption process of our son last year.

Looking back, I know how much hard work, dedication, and care you put into helping our family. Your guidance, support, and belief in us made such a difference during what was a very important and emotional journey.

A year on, our family is thriving, and we are so grateful for the role you played in making that possible. The love, happiness, and stability we share as a family today are things we never take for granted.

Please know that your efforts have had a lasting impact on our lives, and we will always be thankful for the support you gave.

Thank you again from all of us

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Adopter Recruitment

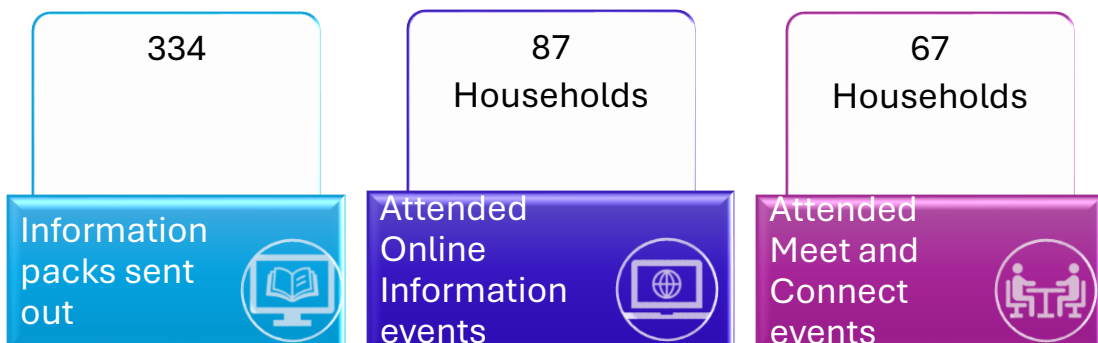
Adoption Partnership South East is committed to finding the right families for children who need them. We take a thoughtful and inclusive approach to recruitment, ensuring that prospective adopters feel informed, supported and confident as they begin their journey. Working within a national context where adopter sufficiency remains a challenge, Adoption Partnership South East is focused not just on increasing the number of adopters, but on ensuring we are recruiting families who can meet the more complex and diverse needs of children waiting for adoption. We prioritise the recruitment of families who can care for:

- Sibling groups
- Older children
- Children with complex needs or disabilities
- Children from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds
- Early Permanence placements

Recruitment activity is delivered through a multi-channel marketing approach, maximising reach while focusing on quality engagement and conversion. APSE utilises a dedicated website and enquiry route, social media and national campaigns (e.g. You Can Adopt, National Adoption Week), and targeted local promotion. Activity is designed to prompt those already considering adoption to take the next step and contact the service.

Prospective adopters can access information through our website and advice line, followed by attendance at our online information sessions (launched in October 2025) and then an in-person 'Meet and Connect' session where they can meet experienced adopters and social workers. These sessions play a key role in supporting informed decision-making and increasing confidence to progress. An open-access approach encourages early engagement without commitment.

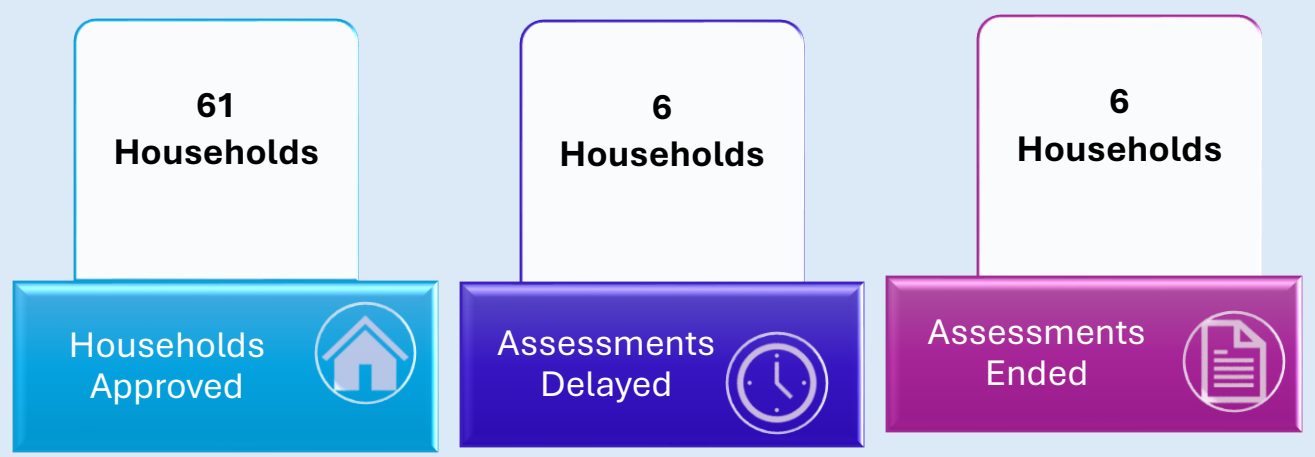
Across the year: 334 info packs issued → 87 households attended an online information event → 67 households attended Meet & Connect.





Once applicants decide to move forward, they enter a two-stage assessment process supported by dedicated social work input and preparation training. Recent improvements to the pathway have included reducing delays in Stage 2 assessments and enabling more flexible progression through the process, improving both efficiency and the applicant experience.

During the year **73** assessments in total were completed. Of these 73, 61 adopter households were approved, 6 assessments will be presented for approval in April 2026 and 6 assessments did not proceed to approval.



APSE’s recruitment approach is strengthened by embedding adoption support from the outset, giving prospective adopters clarity and confidence about the support available, including therapeutic parenting, training and peer networks.

Across 2025/26, the average time taken to complete Stage One of the adopter assessment process was 110 days. While this exceeds the expected two-month timescale for Stage One, it is notably below the national average of 133 days.

Across 2025/26, the average time taken to complete Stage Two of the adopter assessment process was 121 days. This sits within the expected four-month timescale for Stage Two assessments, and is also below the national average of 149 days.



Across 2025/26, APSE approved 61 households to help meet children’s varied needs. Most approvals were among White British households (52, 85%); 9 households came from other ethnic backgrounds, showing an opportunity to broaden reach.

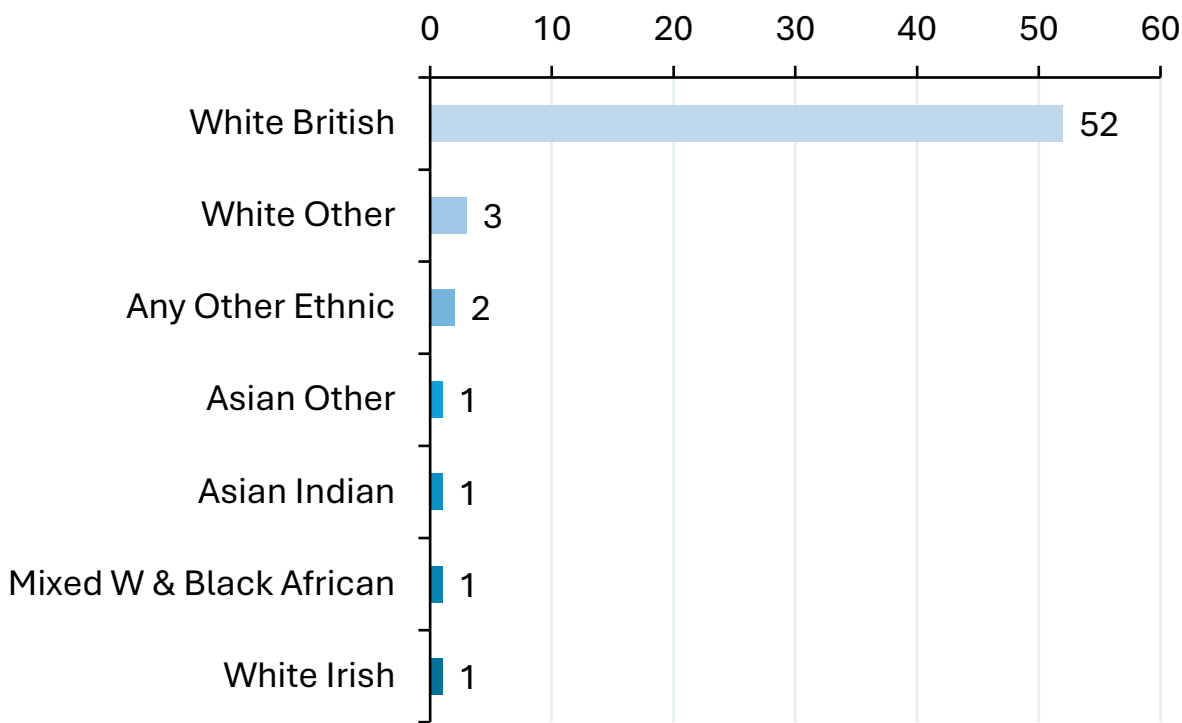
The age profile was balanced: 28 households in their 20s–30s, 31 in their 40s–50s and 2 aged 60+. Sexual orientation data adds to this wider diversity profile.

Sexual orientation

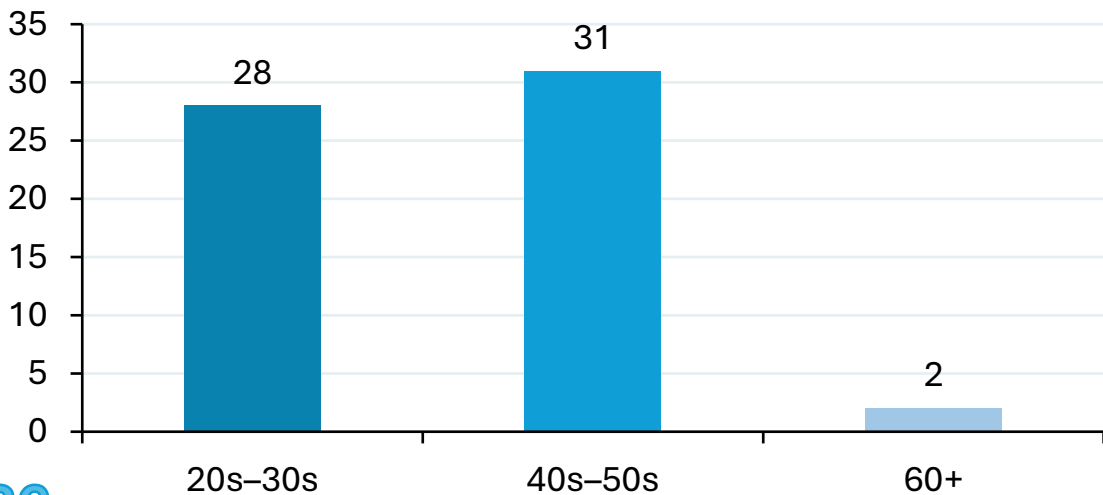
Approved households (n=61)

Category	No.	%
Gay	8	13%
Heterosexual	50	82%
Lesbian	2	3%
Not provided	1	2%
Grand total	61	

Ethnicity distribution



Age profile (grouped)



Feedback from adopters who have recently completed the process in 25/26 shows a largely positive experience from approval onwards, with strong satisfaction in assessment, matching and introductions, and most respondents also feeling well prepared through training. However, the application to approval stage remains a clear pressure point. It is important to note that these feedback forms are completed after adopters have reached Adoption Order, meaning reflections on assessment are typically based on experiences from the previous year; since then, APSE has introduced changes to improve timeliness, particularly reducing waits between stage 1 and stage 2 in response to this feedback.

Adoption Pre-Order Survey (n=11): Agreement by question



“Always felt supported... felt well informed and advocated for throughout the process.”

“The training and experiences helped us feel prepared and confident.”

“We always felt comfortable and able to speak about anything with our social workers. Felt well informed and advocated for throughout the process.”

“Our social worker was fantastic... we really trusted her and felt she understood us. The assessment process was run with empathy.”

Supporting Families

Adoption support is a central part of Adoption Partnership South East (APSE)'s work, recognising that adoption is not a single event but a lifelong journey for children and families. Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP) underpins how we work with families, with oversight from two DDP consultants, ensuring support is grounded in empathy, connection and relational safety. Over the past year, APSE has continued to strengthen its support offer, with a particular focus on early intervention, relational practice, and ensuring families receive timely, tailored support that meets their individual needs.

APSE's approach to adoption support is rooted in the principle that families benefit most when support is available early and remains responsive as needs evolve. The Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF) Pilot has supported the development of a model that prioritises early identification of need, reduces reliance on crisis intervention, and enables a more proactive relationship with families. Through this model, families are encouraged to access support at the earliest stage of their journey, particularly during the transition into becoming a family. This approach aims to strengthen family foundations, build trust with the service, and reduce the likelihood of difficulties escalating over time.

The **ASGSF Pilot** has enabled APSE to deliver a more flexible and responsive support offer. By moving away from individual funding applications for each intervention, the pilot allows support to be commissioned more quickly and adapted to families' changing needs. This has reduced delays and administrative burden while improving access to therapeutic and specialist support. Around fifty percent of interventions delivered across 2025/26 were pilot funded.

Multi-disciplinary working and trauma-informed practice continue to be key strengths of APSE's adoption support offer. The service has embedded a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) approach, bringing together social workers, therapists and other professionals to support complex cases and develop holistic, formulation-led plans for families.

The integration of MDT working, DDP-informed practice and access to specialist assessments ensures that families receive coordinated, high-quality support that addresses both emotional and practical challenges relating to adoption.

APSE has continued to strengthen support for families during the first 12–18 months of a child being placed with their adoptive family, recognising this as a critical period for building relationships and secure attachments. Pre-adoption order, families are supported through a consistent and relationship-based model, with adopters retaining their Adoption Social Worker alongside the child's Social Worker until the Adoption Order is granted. This ensures continuity, stability and coordinated support as families adjust and begin to build confidence in meeting their child's needs.

Support during this period is tailored to individual needs and delivered through APSE's core offer. This includes structured preparation such as the Settling into Therapeutic Parenting workshop, ongoing opportunities to embed learning through early years stay and play groups, and facilitated access to adopter-led community networks that provide valuable peer support. Families also benefit from practical resources, including a structured preparation folder and access to a core therapeutic parenting course, helping them to develop trauma-informed, attachment-focused approaches from the outset.

In 2024/25, the introduction of the Becoming a Family approach has further strengthened this early, preventative support. The model promotes timely access to advice and intervention, supporting adopters to build resilience, develop therapeutic parenting skills, and access coordinated support from across services. It also brings greater consistency for families, particularly where children are placed across regional boundaries.

Where additional or more complex needs are identified, Social Workers can draw on Multi-Disciplinary Team discussions to access specialist advice, alongside support from an APSE Senior Therapist. This ensures that families can access the right level of support at the right time, without unnecessary delay. The availability of early advice through more accessible routes, alongside targeted therapeutic support, enables a more responsive and flexible approach. Our ambition is that by the time the Adoption Order is granted, all our families are better able to feel settled, connected and confident in their parenting, with a clear understanding of the support available to them as their child grows.



Support for Families – Post Adoption Order

Following the granting of an adoption order, Adoption Partnership South East (APSE) provides a clear, adoption support core offer to ensure that adoptive families receive the right support at the right time.

A new element to the support is the **Catch-up calls**; these provide a regular and accessible point of contact for families, offering space to review progress, respond to emerging needs and maintain continuity of support. Delivered as shorter, focused conversations that parents sign up to, enabling an adoption social worker to check how strategies are working in day-to-day family life, offer reassurance and make timely adjustments where needed. Developed as a pan-regional innovation alongside Adopt South and Adoption South East, and supported by Department for Education funding, this approach reflects a shared commitment to early, responsive support. It helps strengthen relationships with families and ensures support remains accessible. Catch-up calls took place relating to 31 children across 2025/26.

Support is designed to be accessible from the outset, with families able to seek timely advice through a dedicated **Support and Advice Line**, offering consultation with therapeutically trained social workers. Where further support is required, this may progress to a short period of targeted intervention or a more comprehensive Assessment of Need is completed by a social worker, ensuring that responses are proportionate and tailored to each family.

Across the year, parents of 271 children accessed the Support and Advice Line. Of these:

- 103 children (38%) were supported through a Short Intervention.
- 53 children (20%) required no further action following advice and guidance.
- 115 children (42%) progressed to a full assessment.

These figures demonstrate that almost 60% of contacts were effectively supported without requiring a full assessment, indicating that early intervention and advice pathways are successfully meeting the needs of many families at an earlier stage.

The service completed 151 initial assessments and 431 children had review assessments during the year. The volume of review assessments highlights the ongoing commitment required to support families already receiving services and reflects the importance of sustained intervention and monitoring to achieve positive outcomes.

Kent accounted for the highest proportion of service activity across all measures, reflecting the larger population served. However, activity across Bexley and Medway demonstrates a consistent level of demand and reinforces the importance of maintaining equitable access to specialist adoption support services across all three local authority areas.

Number of Support & Advice Total = 271	Bexley 14	Kent 229	Medway 29
Of which resulted in Short Intervention Total = 103 children	Bexley 4	Kent 89	Medway 10
Of which resulted in No further action Total = 53 children	Bexley 2	Kent 46	Medway 5
Of which resulted in Full Assessment Total = 115 children	Bexley 8	Kent 94	Medway 13
Number of Initial assessments completed Total = 151 children	Bexley 9	Kent 120	Medway 22
Number of Review Assessments Total = 431 children	Bexley 30	Kent 360	Medway 41

The Assessment of Need provides a holistic understanding of the family’s circumstances and leads to planned interventions of support, which may include therapeutic support delivered by specialist practitioners alongside ongoing social work involvement, ensuring that families receive coordinated, needs-led support that can adapt over time. These therapeutic interventions include family therapy, therapeutic parenting, sensory integration and individual child therapy.



Children Accessing Interventions:

Service	2023/24		2024/25		2025/26	
	External	Internal	External	Internal	External	Internal/ Pilot funded
Family Therapy	64	34	153	37	138	56
Individual Therapy	47	8	81	19	93	13
Sensory Integration	18	27	52	13	31	31
Therapeutic/Specialist Assessments	36	0	25	0	0	32
Therapeutic Group	3	70	35	31	11	89
Therapeutic Parent Work	112	64	127	23	93	81

The data highlights continued progress in strengthening the Therapeutic Service, with more support now being delivered by APSE staff. Internal family therapy has grown steadily over the past three years, with a particularly noticeable increase in therapeutic parenting work during 2025/26, reflecting the positive impact of pilot funding and the increased ability to make best use of the internal team. Group-based support remains a key part of the offer, with good engagement across both internally and externally delivered groups.

Alongside formal support pathways, the core offer places strong emphasis on connection and community. Families are supported to build networks through regular catch-up calls, peer support opportunities, and adoptive parent-led community groups. A range of therapeutic workshops further strengthens parenting confidence, covering key areas such as therapeutic parenting, life story work and managing behaviour.

Children and young people are supported through participation groups and events, providing opportunities to build relationships, develop confidence and share their experiences of adoption in a safe and supportive environment.

The core offer is further enhanced through access to specialist services provided by CAFIS Barnardo’s, including support with staying in touch arrangements, and guidance for adopted adults and young people in understanding their records. Families are also supported to access wider health, education and mental health services, ensuring a whole-system approach to wellbeing.

Overall, APSE’s Adoption Support Core Offer provides a responsive and inclusive pathway of support, underpinned by therapeutic practice, strong partnerships and a commitment to walking alongside families throughout their adoption journey.

Across 2025/26, Support and Advice Line calls took place relating to 271 children. Feedback from families highlights the positive impact of APSE’s adoption support offer. Families consistently report feeling listened to, supported and understood, particularly valuing the accessibility of the Support and Advice Service and the relational approach of practitioners. Support and Advice calls received an average rating of 4.96. Families reported high confidence in understanding next steps. When asked:

How would you rate your Support & Advice call with the Adoption Support Worker?

4.96

Average Rating



“ We felt really at ease and are so grateful for the support. Sinead really listened and was very understanding about my needs as well. ”

“ Really caring and warm call - very helpful with additional information and next steps. ”

“ It was so lovely to speak to someone as supportive and understanding as Sinead. She was a great listener too, Thank you ”

“ It was very helpful and I was able to share our experiences and chat openly and with ease about the things we are facing and be listened to without judgment. ”

“ I have spoken with Abi several times and I have found her calm and professional at a time when I have been emotionally drained whilst trying to do everything I can for my son. Abi has provided clear advice and guidance and followed up with notes of our conversations which I have found helpful. She is a great asset to your team and to for those of us who need support with our children during challenging times. ”

“ Structure of the call was good, helpful questions and ideas, good (timely/accurate) followup. ”

“ Felt listened to and understood. A super speedy response post call and a plan was put in place to link with school. All conveniently done within an hour after the meeting and follow up today. Notes match what was discussed - transcription helps! Thank you. ”



Feedback from families highlights the positive impact of APSE’s adoption support offer. Families consistently report feeling listened to, supported and understood. The quality of support received an average rating of 4.69. Qualitative feedback highlighted practitioner empathy, responsiveness and expertise. Families also value the consistency of support and the ability to access help without delay, particularly during challenging periods.

Families say:

How would you rate the quality of the support you received?



“ Esther was brilliant she really understood M and how best to help him, it was just difficult to engage the school in the therapy ”

“ I found Amy 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.” ”

“ The sessions with Louise were hugely beneficial at a time when we as a family were really struggling. ”

“ Post adoption support from Jo. A thorough assessment provided reflecting that she had listened to us and other professionals such as VSK and the school. She will continue to support for the foreseeable.” ”

“ Really helpful, listened well, engaged well, kind, supportive. Lots of experience and really encouraging which was what we needed. ”

Partnership working with Virtual Schools in the Region

Each local authority within the partnership continues to maintain its own Virtual School, with Virtual School Heads working in close collaboration with the Regional Adoption Agency. Virtual School Heads meet quarterly with the Head of Service and senior managers, providing ongoing support to service development through training, advice, resources and contributions to communications, including newsletters.

Adoptive parents are routinely informed about the role of Virtual Schools and are signposted to relevant services and online resources where appropriate. While Virtual Schools are not able to offer individualised support to every adopted child, they continue to provide advice directly to adoptive parents and work closely with adoption social workers to support educational outcomes.

All three Virtual Schools continue to support adopter engagement through regular coffee sessions, including evening opportunities to improve accessibility for working families. These sessions remain well attended and positively received, offering a valuable space for information sharing and peer connection.

The wider South East regional Virtual School subgroup remains well established and continues to meet regularly. This forum enables professionals across the region to share practice, strengthen collaboration, and respond collectively to emerging priorities.



Learning from 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.

APSE received four formal complaints during 2025–26. Three of these related to prospective adopters during the assessment process, and one related to a foster carer's experience during matching. Two of the complaints progressed to Stage 2.

Learning from these complaints has led to a renewed focus on strengthening communication and practice throughout the adoption journey. This has included ensuring that in-person meetings happen where difficult decisions need to be discussed, maintaining regular and transparent communication with applicants during assessment, and reviewing preparation training to ensure greater clarity about the process.

There has also been a continued emphasis on supporting staff to demonstrate empathy and clarity in their work, recognising the emotional impact of these processes on those involved.



Supporting Families – Birth Families/Adopters/ Adoptees



Adoption Partnership South East commissions independent services from Barnardo's to support those with lived experience of adoption. CAFIS provides a range of support to birth families, adopted adults and adoptive families, including counselling, access to records, intermediary work and support with staying-in-touch arrangements. During the year, the service delivered timely support, with appointments offered within target timescales, and continued to play a key role in helping individuals understand their history and maintain safe, meaningful staying-in-touch arrangements. Demand remained strong, particularly within access to records and staying-in-touch services, with high levels of ongoing activity across both indirect and direct arrangements. The service operates within a complex environment, with challenges such as delays in referrals, court responses and variable engagement from families, but continues to adapt its approach, strengthen processes and work closely with partners to improve access, reduce delays and provide consistent, supportive services.

Feedback received:

“Gemma was brilliant, very welcoming and patient as well as being highly professional and informative. She explained the process of revealing the contents of my file and helped to interpret the records showing excellent sensitivity, empathy and understanding. I felt listened to and very well supported by Gemma. The service was very good. Impressed that Gemma was able to arrange online sessions at convenient times.”

“Excellent all round service.
All brilliant, thank you.”

“I felt that throughout the process I was well supported and was kept updated progress wise. Could not fault the service offered. We would not of known about this service if it wasn't for Medway District Council. Thank you so much to everyone involved for the support and advice we have received.”

By
your
side

CAFIS Activity across 25/26

156

Adoptees Supported

41

Birth Parents Supported

8

First Meetings
Facilitated

Staying in Touch (SIT)

1,742

Indirect Arrangements

Birth Mothers: 1,689 | Fathers: 1,253

Siblings: 819 | Grandparents: 460

100

Direct Arrangements

Mothers: 34 | Fathers: 11

Siblings: 69 | Grandparents: 16

11

Support Groups Delivered

48

Total Attendees

During 2025/26, CAFIS supported 156 adoptees and 41 birth parents, alongside facilitating 8 first meetings between birth parents and adopters. The service continued to prioritise relationship-based support, delivering 11 birth family support groups attended by 48 individuals. Staying in Touch activity remained a core area of work, with 1,742 indirect arrangements supported, primarily maintaining connections with birth mothers, and 100 direct arrangements, most commonly between siblings. This reflects a strong focus on sustaining meaningful family connections in ways that are appropriate and safe for children.

The experiences of birth family members have continued to play an important role in shaping the development of Adoption Partnership South East. Through our partnership with CAFIS and the birth relatives support group, we have created opportunities to listen directly to birth parents and relatives about their experiences of adoption, loss, identity and ongoing family relationships. These conversations have provided valuable insight into the lifelong impact adoption can have on birth families and the importance of ensuring their voices are heard alongside those of adopters and adopted people.

A consistent theme raised by birth family members has been the significance of maintaining meaningful connections for children, where safe and appropriate to do so. Birth relatives spoke about the importance of staying in touch arrangements, the role these play in helping children understand their identity and heritage, and the emotional impact when family connections are lost or difficult to maintain. They also highlighted the value of dedicated support services for birth relatives, particularly at a time of profound grief and change.

The birth relatives support group continues to provide an invaluable source of support, connection and advocacy for birth family members. It offers a safe space where individuals can share experiences with others who have faced similar journeys, whilst also providing APSE with an important mechanism for listening, learning and improving. The relationship between APSE and the group has strengthened over the past year, ensuring that birth family voices are not only heard but are helping to shape services and improve outcomes for children and families across the region.

Listening to these experiences has directly influenced our service. Following engagement with the birth relatives support group, two birth parents and a birth grandparent attended an APSE Partnership Board meeting to share their perspectives with senior leaders from Kent, Medway and Bexley. Their reflections helped strengthen understanding of the challenges experienced by birth families and informed discussions about how APSE can continue to improve support, develop more meaningful staying in touch arrangements and ensure children's identity needs remain central to practice. In response, APSE committed to maintaining ongoing engagement with the support group and ensuring birth family voices continue to contribute to strategic discussions.





APSE Staff Experience And Collaboration with Children's Services

In March 2026, 53 APSE staff members completed a Staff Experience and Feedback Survey, which provided a clear picture of how they experience working within the service.

Overall, the survey reflected a highly motivated and values-driven workforce, with many staff describing their roles as rewarding and closely aligned with APSE's purpose. Staff consistently expressed pride in working for the organisation and a strong sense of connection to its relational and therapeutic approach.

A key strength is the supportive and collaborative culture. Staff reported feeling valued, trusted and well supported by their managers, with positive relationships across teams and confidence in the wider leadership of the service. Many colleagues also highlighted a strong sense of belonging and teamwork within APSE.

The survey also points to positive experiences of learning and development, with staff recognising the opportunities available to build their skills and practice. At the same time, it identified career progression as an area for further development, particularly within a relatively small service.

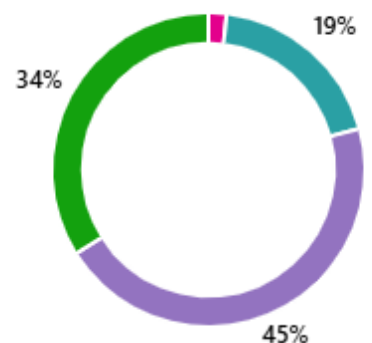
While confidence in leadership is strong, there is more to do to strengthen communication, particularly in creating consistent opportunities for open, two-way dialogue across the organisation.

Staff also valued the flexibility and work-life balance available within their roles, which contributes to wellbeing and sustainability in the workforce.

Alongside these strengths, colleagues shared constructive feedback on areas such as career pathways, communication, and specific organisational policies. This insight is helping to shape APSE's ongoing workforce priorities and ensure the service continues to develop in response to staff experience.

How much do you feel your work at APSE is rewarding and motivating?

Not at all rewarding or motivating	0
Slightly rewarding and motivating	1
Moderately rewarding and motivating	10
Very rewarding and motivating	24
Extremely rewarding and motivating	18



Staff Feedback:

“ Since I started I feel like I am part of the team, everyone is so friendly and approachable, I love working within APSE. ”

“ I wish I could have selected all of the options for Q.10! APSE is a superb service on every level. That doesn't mean that everything is perfect or flawless - but where there are areas for growth and change that is embraced with humility which comes from a willingness and desire to constantly strive to improve the service, making it the best it can possibly be. The management are outstandingly professional and caring towards employees and service users. ”

“ Since I started my role I have been well supported with training and learning opportunities. I feel well supported by my team manager and there is good working relationships between the team members. I think within APSE we work well together across the different teams and service. ”

“ I feel incredibly lucky to work for ASPE. Over the past year in my personal life, the support from my manager and team manager has meant so much. Feeling understood and genuinely cared for has made a huge difference, and I'm very grateful to be part of such a supportive team/work place. ”

Ofsted Findings

Kent County Council’s 2025 Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services (ILACS) provided positive feedback about Kent’s adoption arrangements and the role of Adoption Partnership South East (APSE). Inspectors recognised the strong partnership working between Kent and the regional adoption agency, noting that: *“The local authority works closely with the regional adoption agency, Adoption Partnership South East, and ensures that there is good-quality recruitment, assessment and support to adopters. Adopters are well informed and supported throughout their adoption journey. Post-adoption support is timely and responsive to individual need.”* The inspection also recognised the strength of permanence planning for children, reflecting the shared commitment of APSE and its partner local authorities to achieving stable, loving and lasting family relationships for children.

Professional Training

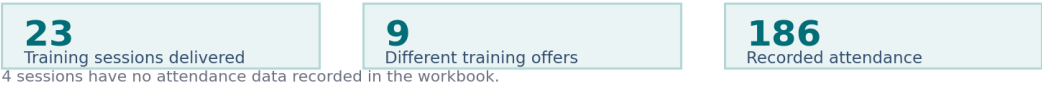
APSE has continued to deliver a broad and responsive programme of training for colleagues across children’s services, aimed at strengthening confidence and understanding in adoption practice.

Over the year, we offered a mix of core sessions, including Introduction to APSE, Introduction to Adoption Support and Children’s Adoption Plans (CPR), alongside more specialist training such as Early Permanence, sibling relationships and learning from adoption disruptions. These sessions were delivered multiple times across the year to make them accessible to teams and reflect ongoing demand.

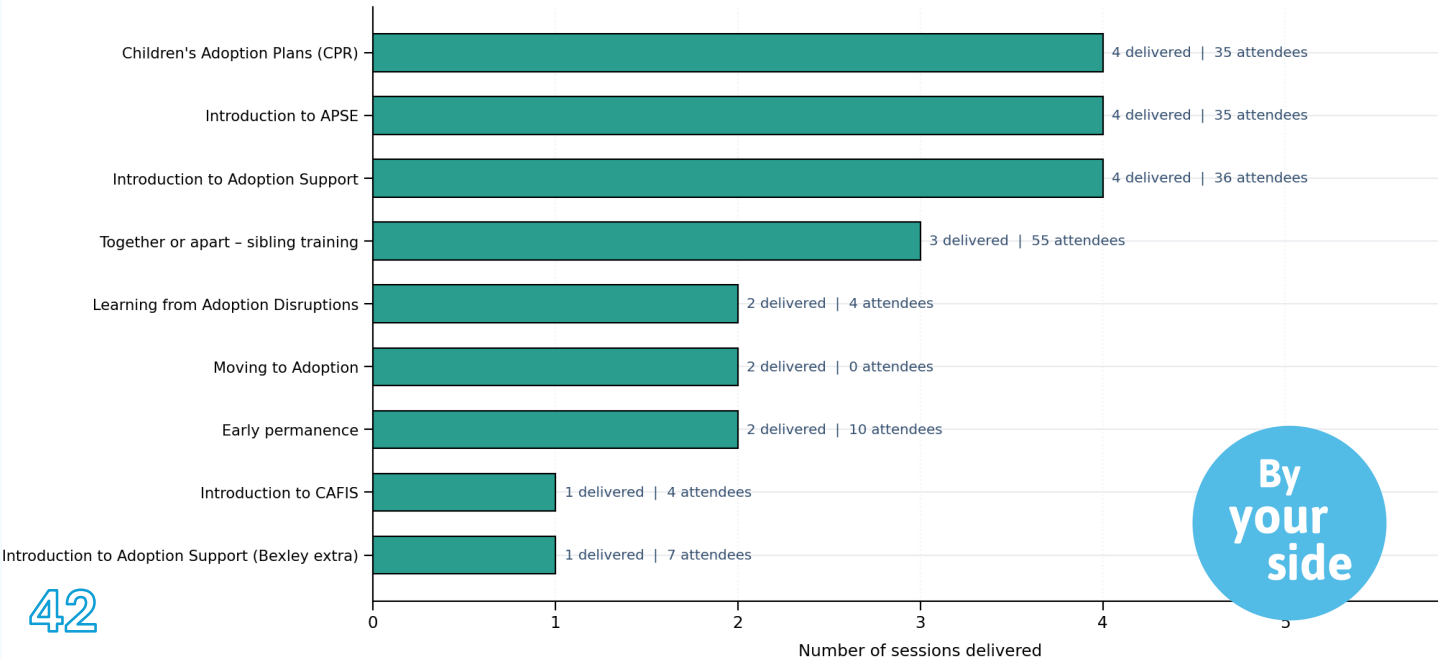
The range and frequency of training demonstrates APSE’s commitment to supporting colleagues in their adoption work, while ensuring children and families benefit from informed, confident and consistent practice across Bexley, Kent and Medway.

APSE training delivered and attendance

Professional training sessions from the annual report workbook



How many of each training was delivered



Looking Ahead: Our Priorities for the Year to Come

Supporting Families

The first year of the ASGSF Pilot has given the service a strong platform to build from. It has shown that when we respond earlier, work flexibly and stay closely connected to families, we can reach more children and provide support that feels timely and right for them.

As APSE moves into Year Two, the focus is on building on what is working, while continuing to grow the offer so it reaches more families across the region. We expect to support a larger number of children through the pilot, reflecting both the demand for adoption support and the confidence in this approach. Alongside this growth, there will be continued strengthening of the key elements that have underpinned Year One; early help, strong relationships, and shared decision-making through our multidisciplinary approach.

Placing Children for Adoption

A continued priority for the year ahead is increasing the number of adopters. We know there are still too many children waiting, particularly those with more complex needs, sibling groups and older children. While we have strengthened our recruitment activity and engagement with prospective adopters, there is more to do to ensure we have a diverse and resilient pool of families able to meet the needs of our children. This will remain a central focus for the service.



By
your
side

Growing our Adoption Community

APSE remains passionate about growing and strengthening our adoption community. Over the coming year, we will increase opportunities for adopter-led groups, recognising the value of shared experience, peer support and informal networks in helping families feel understood and less alone.

We will also begin to explore the development of more structured one-to-one peer support that can be accessed following the making of an Adoption Order, ensuring that families continue to have access to connection and support beyond the early stages of becoming a family.

We will also continue to develop our approach through partnership working. Building on the progress made this year, APSE will continue to work with Adopt South and Adoption South East to explore shared, pan-regional ways of supporting families. This includes developing the use of catch-up calls as a simple and accessible way for people to stay connected and seek advice when they need it. We want to begin testing how this approach could support adopted young adults. This is an area where we know support can fall away, despite ongoing need. Exploring catch-up calls as a flexible way of staying in touch offers a new opportunity to provide connection, reassurance and guidance beyond childhood and into early adulthood.

Details of how these developments will be taken forward are set out within the APSE Service Plan, included in the appendices to this report.

Appendices

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

