

adoptionmatters.org

Achievement Report

1 April 2025 - 31 March 2026



2025-26



**adoption
matters**

Adoption charity where children matter

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A word from our Chair of Trustees



It is a privilege to introduce this year's Achievement Report and to reflect on the remarkable work of Adoption Matters. Every day, I am reminded of the **profound impact that adoption has** on the lives of children, families, and adult adoptees, like myself.

This year has brought both challenges and opportunities, and I am incredibly proud of how our charity has responded.

Our dedicated staff, volunteers, and supporters have shown extraordinary resilience, adaptability, and heart.

Their willingness to embrace change, uphold our values, and continue striving for excellence has ensured that we remain a strong, forward-looking charity focused on what matters most: helping children find stability, supporting families to thrive, and ensuring adult adoptees feel seen, heard, and supported throughout their lifelong journey.

The Board and I would like to extend gratitude to all our staff, volunteers and everyone who has contributed to our work - whether through fundraising, volunteering, professional expertise, or simply championing our cause within their communities.

Your belief in our mission strengthens us and enables us to reach even more children and families who need our support.

As we look ahead, the Board remains committed to guiding Adoption Matters with clarity, compassion, and ambition. Together, we will continue to build on our strong foundations and ensure that every child and every family we work with, receives the highest standard of care.



Jamie Bennett
Chair, Board of Trustees

A word from our Chief Executive

As we reflect on the past year, we do so with pride in what has been achieved across Adoption Matters and gratitude for the people who make our work possible. The need for adoption and fostering services continues to grow, with increasing numbers of children requiring safe, stable and loving families.

Against a backdrop of ongoing challenges across the children's sector, our commitment to placing children at the heart of everything we do has remained unwavering.

This year has been one of significant progress and opportunity. Alongside our continued support for prospective adopters, children and families across the UK, we strengthened and expanded our fostering provision.

At Foster Care Matters, we celebrated a very positive first Ofsted inspection in February, which you can read about on Page 11. Well done to all involved in achieving this outcome. We are also pleased to continue to welcome more foster parents into our community. The acquisition of 1st Affinity Fostering Service marked an important milestone in growing our not-for-profit fostering offer and extending our reach to support even more children and families.

While this report highlights many of our achievements, it represents only a small part of the dedication, compassion and expertise demonstrated every day by our staff, trustees, patrons, ambassadors and all our volunteers. Their efforts ensure that children and families receive the support they need at every stage of their journey.

We would also like to extend our sincere thanks to our supporters, partners and donors. Your generosity and belief in our mission enables us to continue developing innovative services, responding to emerging needs.

As we look ahead, we remain focused on delivering excellence, embracing new opportunities and ensuring that every child has the chance to **thrive in a safe, loving and supportive family environment.**



Susy White
Chief Executive Officer

Achievements

1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026

We are proud of the continued dedication and hard work of our staff. Thanks to their unwavering commitment, we remain one of the largest independent adoption agencies in the UK - **welcoming 56 new families** and **placing 72 children for adoption** over the past year.

In addition, we placed a further **11 children in early permanence placements**, a service we are equally passionate about.

72

children were placed
with our families

56

individuals, couples and
families were welcomed and
approved to adopt.

11

children were placed
with our families in Early
Permanence placements.



Our Centre for Fostering and Adoption Support and Therapy Service saw another busy year. With demand for their wide variety of services from families, our regional adoption agency and local authority colleagues and adopted adults, we are proud of the number of children and their families who were able to access support. This year also saw the team expand to offer support to our foster families.

Full statistics for the year are shown below.

The cuts to the Adoption and Special Guardianship Fund (ASGSF) continue to pose challenges as this is a vital funding resource for our families.

We are, however, committed to continue to support our families, as we have done for the last nearly 80 years. Our fundraising team continue to work hard at raising vital funds to support our charity.



243

Therapy Service contracts delivered to families

132

Packages of support were delivered to families

365

People viewed our online training videos

114

People attended our webinars

154

Families accessed a consultation session with a Therapeutic Social Worker

Ambassador Dez Derry appears live on BBC North West Tonight



On 23 October 2025 during National Adoption Week, our Ambassador, Dez Derry, appeared on BBC North West Tonight to discuss his own fostering and adoption journey and how Adoption Matters is involved with National Adoption Week.

As well as sharing his inspiring story of growing up with parents of a different heritage to his own, Dez touched on the important message of National Adoption Week 2025, which is that children who need to be adopted don't need perfection – they just need a 'welcome home', love and stability.

Our family, Emma and Mike, were also involved in the National Adoption Week campaign film (below right), with their two children whom they first saw through one of our bespoke child focused family finding campaigns. They were also interviewed on several radio shows and appeared on BBC News TV and press.





From Adoption to Film Set: Zac Helps Bring National Adoption Week to Life



As part of this year's National Adoption Week campaign, a unique kitchen installation was created and showcased at King's Cross Station in London and Leeds Train Station.

Inspired by real-life stories from adoptive families across the UK, including our very own Emma and Mike (pictured), the installation beautifully illustrated how everyday moments help transform a house into a home. Every item in the kitchen carried a story, reflecting the warmth, love and lived experiences that are at the heart of adoption.

Ahead of the campaign, Adoption Matters invited families to get involved and share their experiences. Among the responses was a lovely email from Zac, one of our adopted adults.

Zac, who was adopted through Adoption Matters 22 years ago, had recently graduated in Film Production and Cinematography. Keen to gain hands-on experience and support the campaign, he asked whether he could get involved behind the scenes.

Thanks to the incredible teams at Adoption England and Freuds, Zac was welcomed onto the London set, where he spent the day working alongside the film crew. It was a fantastic opportunity for him to gain valuable industry experience while contributing to a campaign that shines a light on the lifelong impact of adoption.

Reflecting on the experience, Zac shared:



“

The day was incredible and it was amazing to be involved, I am so grateful to Adoption Matters and the team at Adoption England for letting me join the set.

”

Zac, Adopted Adult



Campaigns & PR Highlights

We were delighted with a high number of press coverage pieces including national coverage, local and national radio, outlets such as BBC News, The Metro, Sunderland Echo, Northern Echo, Liverpool Echo, Yorkshire Post and many other local media outlets. We are so grateful to the many families and our ambassadors who helped achieve this coverage.



Foster Care Matters



Another busy year for our fostering service, Foster Care Matters. We were delighted to welcome more foster parents to the Foster Care Matters family this year and we continue to grow our foster parent base across the North West and Stoke on Trent areas.

We hosted a number of our own Prepare to Foster training courses (right) and are looking forward to welcoming more applicants over the coming months!



Pictured: Deb Reid (top right) and Karen Palfreyman, Foster Care Matters.



Proud to Foster - LGBTQ+ Adoption & Fostering Week



We were proud to support this year's LGBTQ+ Adoption & Fostering Week during March 2026. The theme was **'Now's the time'** – focusing on the fact that there's no such thing as the perfect time to adopt or foster.

But with an urgent need for more people to consider adoption or fostering, now's the time to take the first steps.



Foster Care Matters foster parents, Luke and Zach, commented:

“Deb, our Family Matching Co-Ordinator at Foster Care Matters, consistently made us feel that she was in our corner and genuinely wants the best outcome for both us and the children when looking for a match. Throughout our enquiry and assessment, we couldn't fault Foster Care Matters.”

Visit: www.fostercarematters.org.uk/proud for more information.

We are GOOD!

Foster Care Matters celebrated a 'Good' Ofsted rating in February 2025, with the effectiveness of leaders and managers judged '**Outstanding**' – the inspection highlights the agency's commitment to providing safe, supportive, and high quality foster care.

The report also highlighted the strong relationships built with foster parents, the positive experiences of children in placement, and the organisation's commitment to ensuring every child feels valued, heard, and supported.

This achievement reflects the hard work of staff, foster parents, and partners who share a vision of creating stable, nurturing homes for children who need them most.

Comments from the report included:

“

The agency is highly child and family focused. Staff support foster carers to provide high quality nurturing and individualised care to children.

Staff support foster carers to use therapeutic parenting techniques for the benefit of children in their care. Foster parents also have access to specialist therapeutic support from the agency's in house therapy service



Supervising social workers have an in-depth knowledge of the children and their foster carers. They are in regular contact with foster carers and provide a high level of professional and child centred support.

”



Pictured: Deb Reid & Karen Palfreyman, Foster Care Matters.



Pictured: Jenny MacQuire Adoption Matters, Deb Reid, Karen Palfreyman, Foster Care Matters, Susy White & Karen Rodriguez Adoption Matters



In February 2026, Adoption Matters acquired 1st Affinity Fostering Service, a well-established fostering agency based in Gresford, Wrexham.

The strategic acquisition ensures a sustainable, not-for-profit future for the agency in Wales, as the Welsh Government progresses its commitment to end profit-making in foster care by 2030.



Pictured above L-R: Claire Grain, Fostering Service Manager, 1st Affinity Fostering Service, Karen Rodriguez, Finance & Business Service Manager, Susy White, CEO and Jacqui Shore, Director of Adoption & Fostering, Adoption Matters.

By becoming part of Adoption Matters, 1st Affinity Fostering Service will continue to deliver high-quality fostering services whilst they transition to a not-for-profit model, complementing our not-for-profit fostering agency, Foster Care Matters.

The agency will continue to operate under the 1st Affinity Fostering Service name, and all services will continue as normal, ensuring continuity for foster families, children, and staff.

Founded in 2013, 1st Affinity Fostering Service began as a locally owned, family-run independent fostering agency dedicated to supporting children and families in the local community. Quickly growing to become a reputable agency, they now support over 100 foster families and over 170 children and young people.

Claire Grain, Fostering Service Manager of 1st Affinity Fostering Service, commented:

“Adoption Matters share our ethos of prioritising the needs of vulnerable children and young people and delivering services with a therapeutic approach. By joining the Adoption Matters family, we can fully embrace this ethos and transition to a not-for-profit status.”

Pictured right L-R: Karen Rodriguez, Susy White, Emma Spiers, former Director of 1st Affinity Fostering Service, Jacqui Shore and former Director of 1st Affinity Fostering Service, Colin Tucker.



Thank you!



To all our supporters!

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



Supporter stories



Brian's London to Edinburgh Tractor run raises over £6,500

Supporter Brian Kettell completed a remarkable journey from London to Edinburgh on his 1964 Nuffield Tractor, raising over £6,500 to be split between five charities, including Adoption Matters and Foster Care Matters.

Brian began his journey in London on Saturday 13 June and arrived at the Murrayfield Stadium in Edinburgh on Wednesday 18 June.

Along the way, Brian stopped off in Preston where he met the Adoption Matters Board of Trustees Chair, Jamie Bennett (pictured), and their outgoing Chair, Carolyn Johnson, at Carolyn's home.

Jamie commented:

“Brian’s efforts in both raising funds for our charity and awareness comes at such a vital time, with the numbers of children in care rising by 7% over the last 5 years and also given the ever-growing shortage of both foster parents and adopters.

“We are truly grateful to him and his team.”



Celebrating Sarah

Our supporter, Sarah went through a difficult period of huge adversity and went on to become one of our adopters.

Sarah wanted to channel that adversity into something positive and decided to do some community fundraising on behalf of Adoption Matters.

During Christmas 2025, she organised a Christmas Wreath making event combining it with a cake bake sale – along with other small events, **she raised over £2,100** for our charity.

Chloe Gillings – A Remarkable Adoption Matters Fundraiser

Despite facing challenges with epilepsy, cerebral palsy, and learning difficulties, Chloe Gillings refuses to let anything hold her back – especially when it comes to fundraising and it has remarkably **raised £2,500 for Adoption Matters**.

Thirty years ago, Chloe Gillings was fostered by a compassionate couple from Stockport. Her foster father, Richard, was a dedicated member of the Adoption Matters Board of Trustees, based in Chester, and deeply committed to providing children from the care system with the best opportunities in life.

Alongside his wife, Richard fostered numerous children over an incredible span of 43 years until their well-earned retirement three years ago. The couple later adopted Chloe, and today, they all live together in Scotland.



Using her internet skills, Chloe has successfully raised funds for Adoption Matters through birthday fundraisers on Facebook over the past few years and, thanks to her dedication, Chloe has raised over £2,500 – a fantastic achievement that continues the legacy of generosity and support set by her parents. She is truly making a difference in the lives of children from care backgrounds.

Annie O'Neill, Adoption Matters Fundraising and Relationship Manager commented:

“Everyone at Adoption Matters is so incredibly grateful for Chloe’s efforts, she is our top Facebook fundraiser by far! We were delighted to present her with a special thank-you certificate in recognition of her contributions.”

To find out more about how to raise funds for our charity through Facebook Fundraisers, visit our website: **www.adoptionmatters.org/fundraising**

Corporate Supporters

On Saturday 15 November, 64 of our lucky families embarked on a magical Polar Express journey, all made possible through the generosity of **John Pass Jewellers and Newcastle-under-Lyme School**.

Families enjoyed a festive polar extravaganza true to The Polar Express book and film. Making the event extra special, Adoption Matters families were allocated their very own carriage.

Annie O'Neill, Fundraising and Relationship Manager, commented: **"A huge thank you to John Pass Jewellers and Newcastle-under-Lyme School for providing this wonderful memory to our families and their children"**.



Pictured: Sue Spruce & Elaine Trohear from Adoption Matters with Andrew Pass from John Pass Jewellers.



Chester Racecourse and MBNA Community Investment Programme provided Adoption Matters and Foster Care Matters families with a joyful day out at the Chester Races Family Fun Day on Sunday 3rd August 2025.

A selection of tickets were kindly donated which we offered to all families in a raffle. Winning families had access to the exclusive charity area, together with a complimentary packed lunch.

Chester Racecourse and MBNA Community Investment Programme again gifted 50 tickets for us to raffle out to our families for the spectacular Lord Mayor's Fireworks display on Saturday 8 November at Chester Racecourse. It was a truly magical night for our families, complete with a free £10 meal voucher per person.

A huge thank you to them for providing two wonderful events for our families.



Pictured: Karen Rodriguez & Annie O'Neill from Adoption Matters with event performers

Kate & Martin's Annual Garden Party



Adoption Matters supporters, Kate and Martin Slack, hosted a garden party in aid of the children's charity, which **raised over £1,000**.

On Saturday 28th June 2025, Kate and Martin opened up the beautiful grounds of their home in Ashton Hayes, near Chester, and welcomed over 80 people for an afternoon of family fun in support of Adoption Matters.

Adopter families and members of the public enjoyed the beautiful woodlands of Ashton Grange, a forest school hosted by Cheshire Forest School (below).



The children attending were thoroughly entertained by from children's entertainer Andy Green (pictured left with Karen Rodriguez from Adoption Matters).

There were also opportunities for visitors to indulge in some tasty treats, as local villagers, along with Kate, baked up some goods.

"We are so thankful to Kate and Martin as they are always so generous in their support of our children's charity. This is now the fifth time that they have opened up their beautiful home and gardens to host this event and we are so grateful - our attendees always love it and so do we."

Annie O'Neill, Fundraising and Relationship Manager.

All funds raised will go towards more support for adoptive families and adopted adults.





What **your** support can do!

£5

could fund refreshments for a child attending one of our Centre for Fostering and Adoption children's activities

£35

could fund activity materials for use within a Theraplay Support Package

£130

could fund a virtual therapeutic consultation session for an Adoption Matters family member with one of our adoption professionals

£400

could fund two or three urgent sessions for families in crisis

£1,000

could fund materials for our invaluable Life Story Work for children, plus a session for adopters to share the work

£3,000

could provide a package of support for families

Why we do it

Children are at the heart of all we do. There is currently an urgent need for more adopters and foster parents across the UK.

Our aim is for children to grow up in a secure and loving family that will help them reach their full potential through adoption, early permanence or foster care.

There are many ways you can support our work

You can support us through a variety of ways. Through direct donations, fundraising events or sponsorships; we will offer you dedicated help and support. Or through your company, church or school. Together, we can tailor a partnership or package to suit your needs. Visit: www.adoptionmatters.org/fundraising

How you can help

Every year there are vulnerable children who enter care who need stable homes. Some wait longer than others for adoption and some children are placed in foster care far away from their homes and everything familiar to them.

We want to help change that.

Can you help us raise vital funds to support many more families and children?





www.adoptionmatters.org

Registered Charity No. 512892

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

Covering the North West, Stoke, Shropshire, Staffordshire,
Yorkshire and the Humber and parts of the North East.

