



Coventry Children's Services Annual Adoption Report 2024-2025



Children's and
Education Services

We believe children
and young people in
Coventry should always...



be and feel
valued



be and feel
safe



have
opportunities



be and feel
healthy



be and feel
loved



Coventry Children's Services Annual Adoption Report 2024-2025

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Local Authority Update, including review of Service Plan 2024-2025
3. Service Activity
4. Service Performance
5. Service Plan 2025-2026

1. Introduction

Each local authority is required by regulation to publish an annual adoption report. This provides an overview of adoption activity and performance for the year 2024-2025.

Coventry Children's Services delivers adoption services in partnership with the Regional Adoption Agency – Adoption Central England (ACE), which has been operational since 01st February 2018. This accords with national policy that all local authority adoption services were required to be part of a Regional Adoption Agency by 2020.

ACE provides the following services as a local authority shared services arrangement hosted by Warwickshire County Council:

- Recruitment, preparation, and assessment of adoptive parents
- Family finding and specific recruitment.
- Matching support and post order support to adoptive families for 12 months
- Non agency adoption - the provision of information assessments and court reports
- Assessment of need for adoption support including requests to the Adoption Support Fund
- Direct support to adoptive families including therapeutic interventions.
- Training for adopters and support groups
- Independent birth parent support services - Family Connexions
- Training for social workers
- Duty and advice service
- Co-ordination of Adoption Panels across the sub-region.
- Individual and couple counselling service

- Space2Talk – adoptive parents wellbeing.

This arrangement with ACE allows for a greater strategic approach to adopter recruitment, widening the potential pool of adopters for children. Adoption support services have been enhanced including the provision of therapeutic interventions, counselling and wellbeing services that are delivered and coordinated more consistently and effectively across the region.

Coventry's engagement with ACE is underpinned by a Hosting and Partnership Agreement and through the governance arrangements and partnership working there is an opportunity to ensure that the best possible outcomes are secured for children in a timely way and that adoptive families receive high quality support when they need it. In January 2021 ACE became the first adoption service to be DDP certified.

2. Local authority update

Over the last 12 months, staffing has continued to be stable, and overall good progress has been made towards permanence for children who had a care plan of adoption.

Review of Service Plan 2024 – 2025

In partnership with ACE the local authority plans to improve and develop its adoption practise in the following key areas:

Continue to develop collaborative working across Children's Services for effective pre-birth, pre-proceedings and care proceedings to ensure timely permanence is achieved for all children.

Following the 2023 relaunch of the Public Law Outline and implementation of the tracker supporting timely assessments within Care Proceedings there has been positive collaborative working in this area.

A pre-birth pathway is well established (from 23-24) and has continued to strengthen the effectiveness of care planning for unborn babies and with the Pre-Proceedings strengthened over the last 12 months has ensured that families are supported effectively and timely.

For the financial year 2024 / 2025, there has continued to be a marked improvement in the number of children entering pre-proceedings following a threshold discussion at the initial Legal Planning Meeting (LPM) stage, with 87% of families entering pre-proceedings and only 13% requiring immediate issue. For the families who proceeded straight into care proceedings rather than pre-proceedings, the rationale for this was entirely appropriate in that the risks for these families were either of a potential Non-Accidental Injury (NAI) nature or concerns around capacity of parents to consent to Section 20 accommodation or safety planning due to acute mental health illness at the presenting time.

This data indicates that at the point of the initial LPM, and where safe to do so, families are being given the opportunity to work through a pre-proceedings process, engage in support, intervention and assessment with the primary aim to divert from the court process, and where not able to, the Local Authority upon any care application being made are doing so with completed assessments and well informed permanency plans for children.

For this financial year there has been an increase in the number of families diverted from care proceedings at the conclusion of pre-proceedings rising to 44% compared to 34% in the previous year.

The number of families subject to pre-proceedings prior to the issuing of any care application to Court was 79% at year end, which has remained consistent with the figure for the previous year. This means that for a high proportion of families where care proceedings are issued, we are doing so with assessments undertaken and care plans for children well informed, including examples of filing final care plans at point of issue.

With regards to care proceedings, the improvements made in the previous year have been embedded into practice for the current year. For Coventry, the annual average case duration for the year decreased by 3 weeks to 31 weeks compared to 34 weeks for year 2023/2024, and 50 weeks for year 2022/2023. In the last 2 years we have reduced our average case duration by 19 weeks', and we currently sit 9th in the national league table (out of 43).

For the year 2024/2025, 40% of proceedings concluded within 26 weeks which is the same as the previous year's figure and we have seen a continued improvement in the number of proceedings concluding at IRH rising to 76% compared to 73% for previous year.

The consistency in the performance of effective Issues Resolution Hearing's (IRH) has been pivotal in reducing the average case duration for care proceedings. Concluding at IRH prevents the need for listing a contested final hearing, which in turn extends the proceedings further. Where a final hearing is needed to be listed, having an effective IRH means that remaining issues are narrowed, and witness templates are scrutinised so that the time estimates for proposed final hearings are kept to a minimum. Shorter final hearings can be listed much quicker than multiple day hearings. The culture embedded into the need for effective IRH for care proceedings in Coventry Court is key to ensuring we secure timely outcomes for children and families.

More recently, this good practice has been showcased at a National level, with the President of the Family Division taking a keen interest in how Coventry has been able to make such progress in this area, and with support of the DFJ for Coventry and Warwickshire (who has utilised the data set monitored by Case progression officer), has shared such practice with DFJ areas around the Country.

Continue to ensure fostering for adopt / early permanence is considered for every child where appropriate and a rationale for decision is recorded.

Coventry implemented an early permanence tracking system (2023-2024) to ensure early discussion of children who are subject of pre proceedings who may require permanence to be sought outside of the family. ACE colleagues attend this meeting to consider any foster for adopt carers at the earliest opportunity.

During the 2024 – 2025, 3 children were placed on a foster for adopt basis. Coventry made referrals for 6 children during the 2024 – 2025 period.

Foster for Adoption was not progressed for 2 of the children for two reasons: one child had identified adopters, however they later withdrew due to the recommendation for post adoption direct contact with birth parents and one child the care plan changed to one of connected carers. The third child was placed foster for adoption with the sibling' adopters in the next

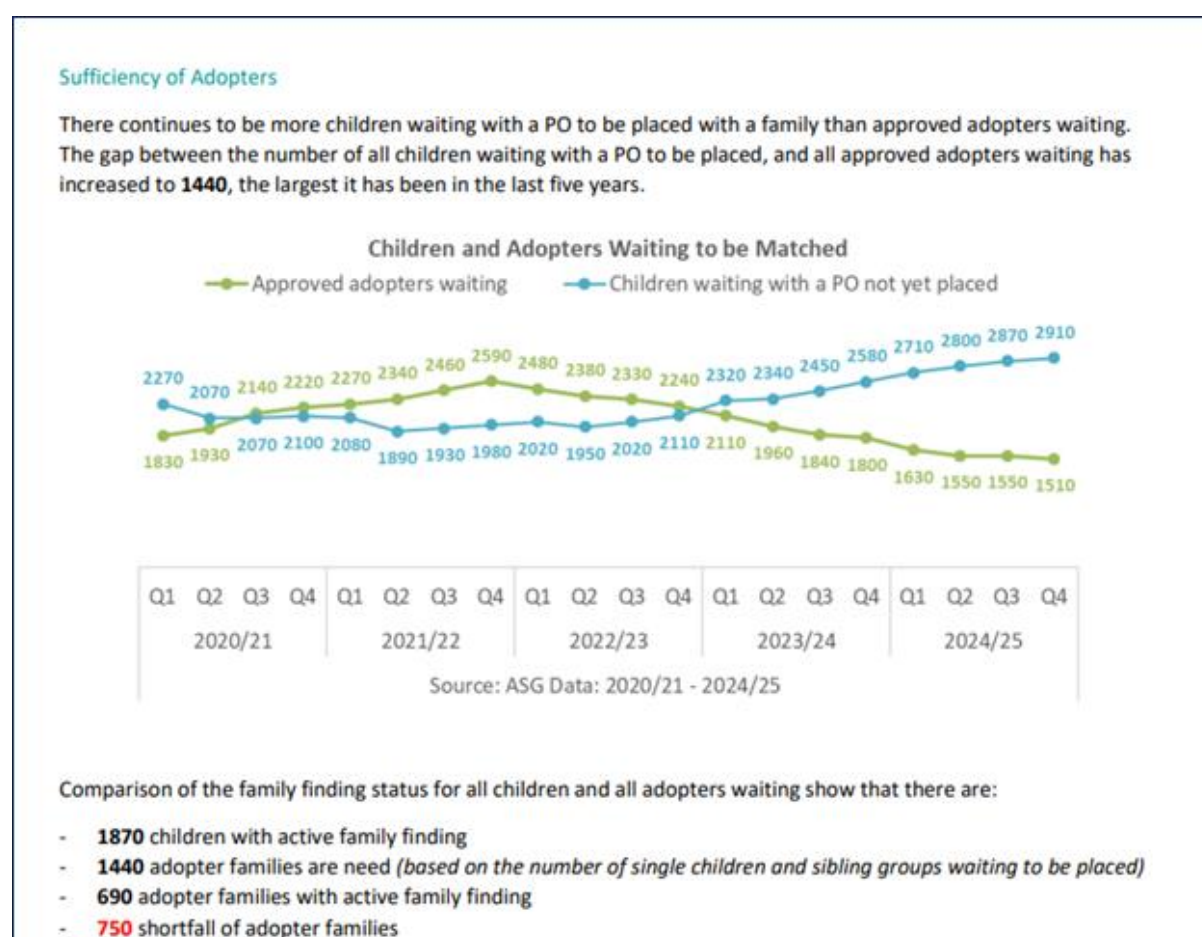
quarter falling into the 2025-2026 year and is therefore not represented within the 'placed' data for this reporting year.

The application for the Early Permanence Quality Mark has been submitted within the 2024-2025 period through collective evidence gathered by Adoption Central England and the consortium of Local Authorities.

Continue to collaborate with ACE on an operational and strategic level (via the ACE Executive board) regarding sufficiency challenges in ACE to minimise delay for children being matched with adoptive families.

Sufficiency remains a national problem with fewer adopters approved to adopt. Ultimately this means that our children are often waiting longer to be matched. There continues to be quarterly managers meetings between the ACE consortium, made up of the respective local authorities and ACE partners. Discussions take place around the ways in which ACE are addressing this and what strategies are happening to promote adoption.

For context, the recent publication by the ASGLB (2024/2025) highlights the sufficiency matters nationally.



All social workers who are working with children who have a plan / potential plan of adoption will undertake permanency planning training offered by ACE to continue to promote good practice in this area.

All practitioners in Coventry continue to be encouraged and supported to attend relevant training via ACE. ACE have a comprehensive training offer which covers all elements of adoption planning. ACE colleagues also attend meetings to share learning and disseminate practice development matters. Coventry registered 26 places on training with ACE during 2024/2025. Further work is being completed to ensure take up is good across children's services.

All social workers will undertake training on life story work, life story books offered by ACE to continue to promote good practice in this area.

As part of both coventry City council and ACE's training offer, practitioners are encouraged to attend training that will support the completion of life story work and life story books.

Practice exemplar's using the Joy Rees model are available to staff to further support this area of work.

Coventry continues to embed the Richard Rose model of life story work, this is enhanced through regular workshops / training internally delivered.

Coventry and ACE to consider collectively the full Best Practice Report upon its publication and work together to plan for promoting a more open approach to post adoption contact.

Coventry is working closely with CAFCASS, who will be part of recommending and endorsing post adoption contact within the court arena. We held a joint training event with CAFCASS on 11th November 2024 with the contribution of ACE. Coventry remains committed to working with change and wherever safe to do so, consideration will be given to an open adoption approach where we can achieve the best for our children and families, post adoption.

Coventry is working on its practice approach to more open adoption arrangements; the guidance and practice pack is currently in development. Coventry has been careful to ensure that the recommendations and practice falls in line with Coventry Family Valued. In order to do this, we have considered the views and recommended tools by both ACE and Coram BAAF and completed consultation with social work practitioners who undertake Adoption work within Coventry.

It is anticipated that the final proposal will be before the extended leadership team in September 2025 for their sign off.

3. Service activity

Adoption recruitment activity is reported by ACE.

Overall Children's Services performance:

	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
ADM decisions that a child should be placed for adoption	50	48	36

Placement orders granted by the court	50	42	29
Matched with prospective adopters	40	35	20
Number of children placed with adopters	34	36	23
Adoption applications submitted	38	45	24
Number of children adopted	32	56	18
Children placed with adopters at period end	25	9	17
Number of children with placement order awaiting match	33	37	36
Number of children subject to an adoption plan change	6	10	10
Number of adoptive placement disruptions	0	0	0

In summary, the number of children with an ADM endorsed care plan for adoption has reduced by twelve in 2024-2025 when compared with 2023-2024. There has been a decrease from 42 to 29 Placement Orders granted from the period 2023 - 2024 and 2024 - 2025. This is likely to be attributed to the increased work Coventry is doing within its family valued framework and connected persons placements.

There remain more children needing adoptive families than adopters approved to be matched with children. Fewer potential adopters are expressing an interest in being assessed to adopt. This continues to be a national problem and not bespoke to ACE. This is likely to be the contributing factor to the decrease in number of children matched in this period comparable to the year previous.

The number of children where permanency was achieved via adoption has decreased from 56 in the period of 2023 - 2024 to 18 in the period of 2024 – 2025. This falls in line with a decrease in the number of children with plans of adoption and the sufficiency matters related to adoptive families.

Coventry is the second highest for the number of children matched with families within the ACE region. Attendance of social workers and the family finder at bi-monthly adoption clinics and bimonthly adoption “catch ups” ensures that all children where there is a plan of adoption are kept under review to avoid any drift and delay.

Securing early permanence via foster for adopt, has remained a priority, ensuring where possible that children secure permanency at the earliest opportunity – 3 children were successfully placed on this basis.

There have been no adoption disruptions.

4. Service Performance

National Performance Indicators	Government Target	Coventry performance 2022-23	Coventry performance 2023-24	Coventry performance 2024-25
A2 - Average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family (days)	122 days	172 days	222 days	216 days
A3 - Children who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (number and %)	14 months	35% (39 of 112)	34% (38 of 112)	38% (31 of 82)
A10 - Average time in days between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family adjusted for foster carer applications		508 days	574 days	460 days
A20 - Average time in days between entering care and placement order		333 days	376 days	234 days

The average wait of 216 days against the A2 indicator is above the government target (122) however indicates a small improvement from the previous year (222 days).

Coventry remains committed and aspirational in achieving permanence via adoption for our children with complex needs and those considered harder to place. 7 children (38%) of granted adoption orders were for children considered harder to place.

The average time children waited between entering care (A10) and moving in with their adoptive families has decreased by 114 days indicating the impact of timely care proceedings and matching when adoptive families are identified. The A20 indicator has also decreased by 142 days over the last year, this again providing evidence of the impact of timely care proceedings.

It is important to note that positive collaborative working relationships with ACE continue. Where possible there remains early identification of potential adopters, meaning that adopters can be identified for some children prior to the placement order. Notwithstanding the national sufficiency picture in respect of adopter availability, where we have been able to identify matches these have progressed.

The following are some good examples of permanence being achieved for children during the last year.

This year has seen two instances of adoption for children of an older age;

An 11-year-old girl whose Placement Order was granted back in 2018 but revoked in 2021 achieved permanence with her foster carers via adoption in September 2024.

A 14-year-old girl was adopted by her foster carers with the adoption order being granted on 12th December 2024.

Whilst this is the private avenue of adoption, this demonstrates the commitment that Coventry has to achieving permanence via adoption where appropriate to do so throughout a child's looked after journey.

A 5-year-old little boy whose Care and Placement Order's were granted on 18th November 2022, found his right family and moved in with them on 12th March 2024 with successful transitions, despite a lengthy time in foster care.

5. Coventry City Council Service Plan 2025-2026

In partnership with ACE the local authority plans to improve and develop its adoption practise in the following key areas:

- Continue to develop collaborative working across Children's Services to for effective pre-birth, pre-proceedings and care proceedings to ensure timely permanence is achieved for all children.
- Continue to ensure fostering for adopt / early permanence is considered for every child where appropriate and a rationale for decision is recorded.
- Continue to collaborate with ACE on an operational and strategic level (via the ACE Executive board) regarding sufficiency challenges in ACE to minimise delay for children being matched with adoptive families.
- All social workers who are working with children who have a plan / potential plan of adoption will undertake permanency planning training offered by ACE to continue to promote good practice in this area.

- All social workers will undertake training on life story work, life story books offered by ACE to continue to promote good practice in this area.
- Coventry to have an established framework for assessing and supporting post adoption relationship maintenance between Adoptive families and Birth families.

Chantelle Davies

Adoption Lead

Children in Care Team

08th August 2025