

Partner LA Logo Here

## Together4Children Permanency Partnership

### Adoption Agency Annual Report 2020-2021

[Partner LA Name]

#### Together4Children Partnership Model

Together4Children is a partnership between Shropshire Council, Staffordshire County Council, Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Telford & Wrekin Council. We are working together to improve outcomes for those children who enter care and are not able to return to their birth parents.

**Our Vision** is to ensure that our children achieve emotional, physical, and legal permanence; growing up in loving homes with adults who provide them with a strong sense of security, continuity, commitment, and identity.

#### We aim to:

- Make best use of our collective resources to recruit, assess and support prospective adopters across the region.
- Improve the quality and speed of matching for children through better planning and by having a wider choice of adopters.
- Provide high quality support to children and their families delivered through a combination of direct provision and effective partnerships.
- Provide all children and their families the right support at the right time through a consistent permanency support offer across the region.

#### Preface

This is the first Annual Adoption Report produced by Together4Children since the partnership went live on 28 September 2020.

This report is produced in accordance with the adoption services regulatory requirements and Adoption National Minimum Standards (2014), which state that the executive side of the local authority shall:

- receive written reports on the management, outcomes and financial state of the agency every six months,

- monitor the management and outcomes of the services in order to satisfy themselves that the agency is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or service users,
- satisfy themselves that the agency is complying with the conditions of registration.

## Context and the Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic

Due to the Covid 19 pandemic the launch of Together4Children was delayed from 01 April 2020 to 28 September 2020. This delay, and the challenges brought about more generally by the pandemic have had some inevitable impacts on the partnership during 2020-2021, making this year unique in many ways. These impacts include:

- Launching midway through the financial year and performance reporting year - leading to practical challenges reporting performance pre and post go-live.
- Operational challenges to service delivery especially through the initial stages of the pandemic and national lockdown.
- The loss of organisational capacity (due to the pandemic) in relation to finance, performance, and other technical areas of support for the Partnership arrangement.

We know how important it is to secure children's permanency through adoption in a timely way. During 2020-2021 delays across the children's system, including significant delays with our regional Courts, have led to an increase in some of the timescales that we measure our performance for children against. We are awaiting publication of national data for 2020-2021 to compare and benchmark the impact that we have experienced with the adoption sector nationally.

Despite the significant challenges, the Together4Children Partnership has delivered significant achievements, including:

- A successful and well publicised launch at the end of September 2020.
- Delivery of a strong brand and very effective marketing and recruitment activity.
- Design and delivery of remote provision of service critical activity including adopter recruitment and preparation, assessment, adoption panels, adoption support assessment and the delivery of adoption support interventions.
- Delivery of Regional workforce development events.
- Building stronger relationships with our adopter community through our partnership with Adoption UK and our Adopter Advisory Board.
- Implementing the 'TESSA' pilot (an early intervention model of support delivered through our partnership with Adoption UK).
- Joint delivery of the Covid-19 Adoption Support Fund resources to 450+ adoptive and Special Guardianship families.
- Significant progress in moving to regionalised adoption panels.

And since we went live, we have seen more of our children moving into their new families with adopters from within the T4C region.

This is all credit to the commitment and dedication of practitioners across the T4C region who have demonstrated a huge amount of professional skill, creativity, dedication and determination to keep our services functioning and delivering good outcomes for children in the face of enormous challenge.

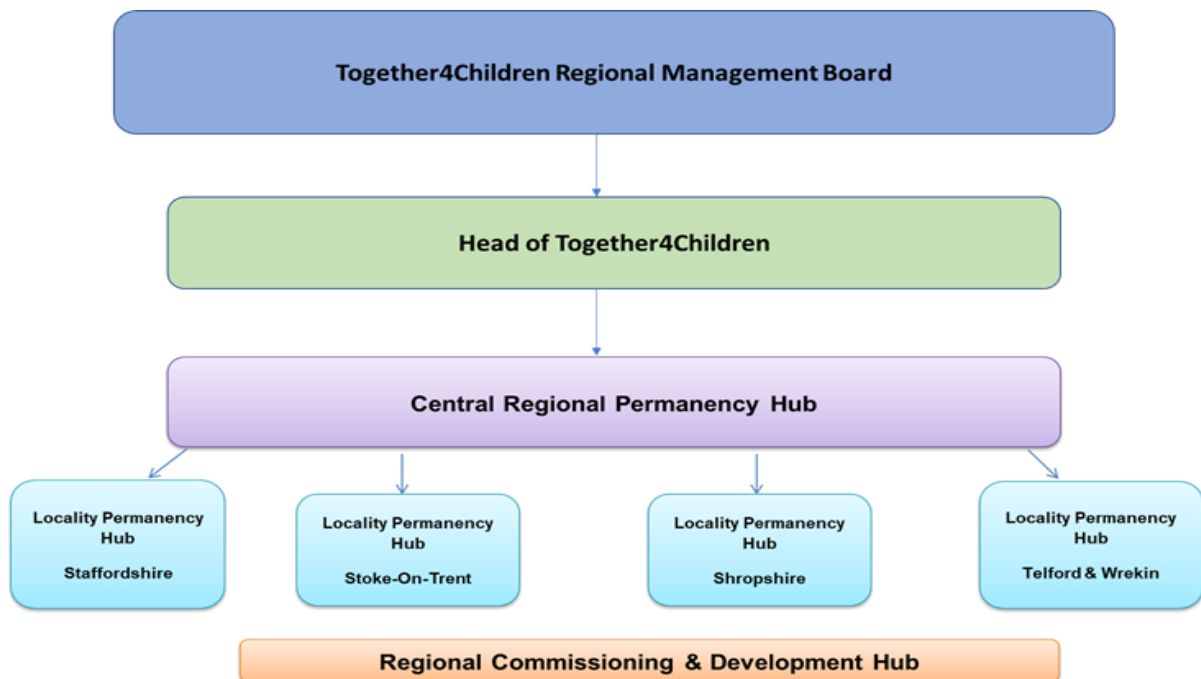
## Part 1 – Together4Children Partnership Adoption Agency Functions

Together4Children deliver the adoption service for our partner Council's via a hub and spoke model – a combination of core central functions and networked regional delivery (via a Central Permanency Hub).

Partner Council's retain direct service delivery functions within Locality Permanence Hubs, working within the Together4Children practice framework whilst maintaining clear links to local Children & Families Services.

### 1.1 Partnership Governance and Operational Structure

The Partnership is governed via Regional Management Board Chaired by the Director of Children's Services for Shropshire Council. Each partner council is represented on the Board by the Assistant Director (or equivalent) with responsibility for Children in Care.



Senior Operational leadership is provided through the Together4Children Senior Leadership Team, which is comprised of the Head of T4C, the Principle Manager for the Central Permanency Hub and the Head of Service (or equivalent) with responsibility for Adoption in each partner council.

Further operational leadership and management is provided through the Wider Leadership Team which comprises of managers across the central and locality hub functions.

### Central Permanency Hub Functions

The Central Permanency Hub has a small team of staff who provide functions and undertake activity for the whole region. The core central functions are:

- Central co-ordination of functions across the Partnership
- Adopter Recruitment
- Regional Family Finding
- Adopter Training
- Children's (Permanency) Tracking
- Adoption Panel Advice and Management
- Adoption Panel Coordination
- Agency advice and support to Agency Decision Makers

### Locality Permanency Hub Functions

There are 3 Locality Hubs across the region. These are based in Stoke (City of Stoke-on-Trent), Uttoxeter (Staffordshire) and Shrewsbury (Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin).

Each Locality Hub has:

1 x Assessment & Support Team - undertaking adopter assessments and supporting prospective adopters through to the granting of an Adoption Order.

1 x Permanency Support Team – supporting adopted children and their families through a variety of activities.

Staff within these Hubs support children's social work teams in relation to permanence planning and adoption providing in-reach advice and support.

## 1.2 Regional Performance Overview 2020-2021

### Marketing & Recruitment

Understanding that potential adopters engage with us in different ways, we have created a rich mixture information sources ranging from video, to digital and written materials. The routes to our 'front door' are similarly multifaceted, such as our traditional telephone enquiry line - **0300 111 80444**, through to new media engagement like Messenger.



The recruitment of potential adopters for our children has been supported by strong and effective marketing activity. This has included:



- A successful launch campaign in September and October 2020.
- Successful launch of social media channels.
- The launch of the [Together4Children](https://www.together4children.org.uk) website.
- Development of downloadable digital Information Event and Microsoft Teams based Information Events.
- Delivery of a marketing campaign focusing on finding adopters for children in sibling groups and other priority children.

### Enquiries & Referrals

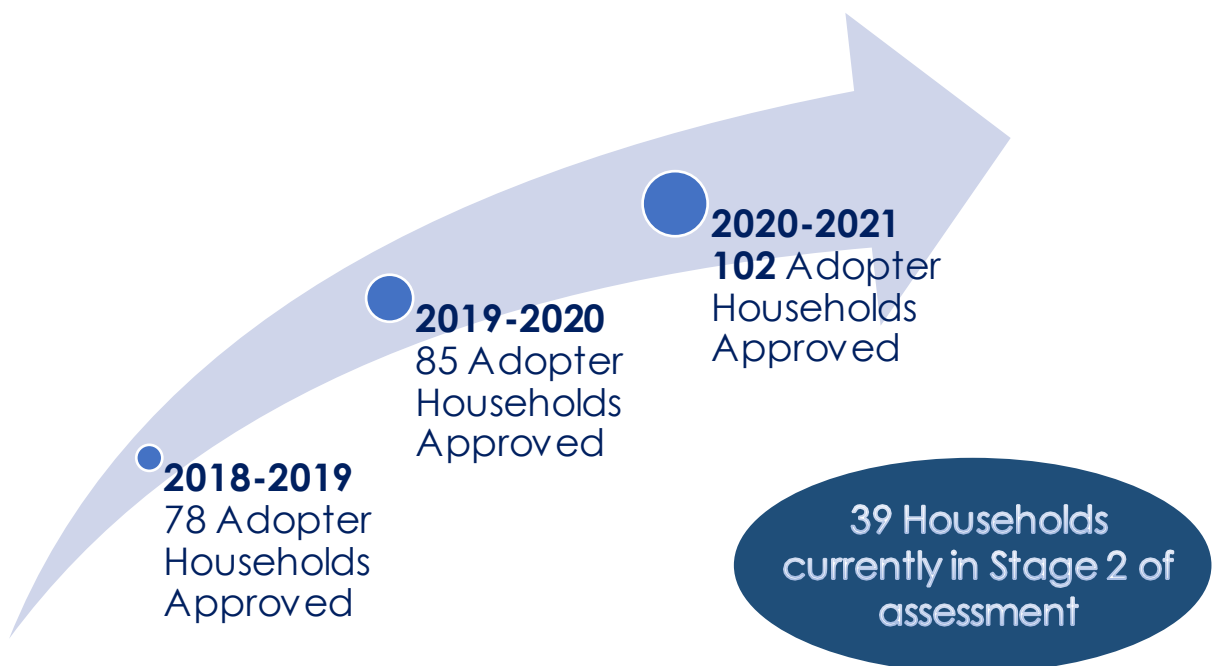
From the end of September when we launched, to the end of March 2021 we received a total of 304 enquiries from potential adopters.

This led to 77 referrals to our Locality Hub assessment teams.



### Assessment and Approval of Adopters

Together4Children partners have been working collaboratively since 2018 to increase the number of adopter households able to provide permanent homes for children in our region. This has resulted in a year on year rise in the number of families we have assessed and approved as prospective adopters.



This represents a positive outcome, meaning that we can find more homes for children within our own regional 'pool' of adopters. In turn, this supports positive transitions for children and means that we can better support children and their families as they move through their adoption journeys. It also means that we avoid the costs involved in using adopters approved by other agencies.

A challenge for us this year has been completing our assessments of prospective adopters within our target of 6 months. We have only been able to achieve this for 40% of the households who we assessed. This has been particularly impacted this year by external factors such as the time it has taken for people applying to become adopters to have a medical (usually provided by their own GP), and getting safeguarding checks back from other local Authorities outside of the T4C region.

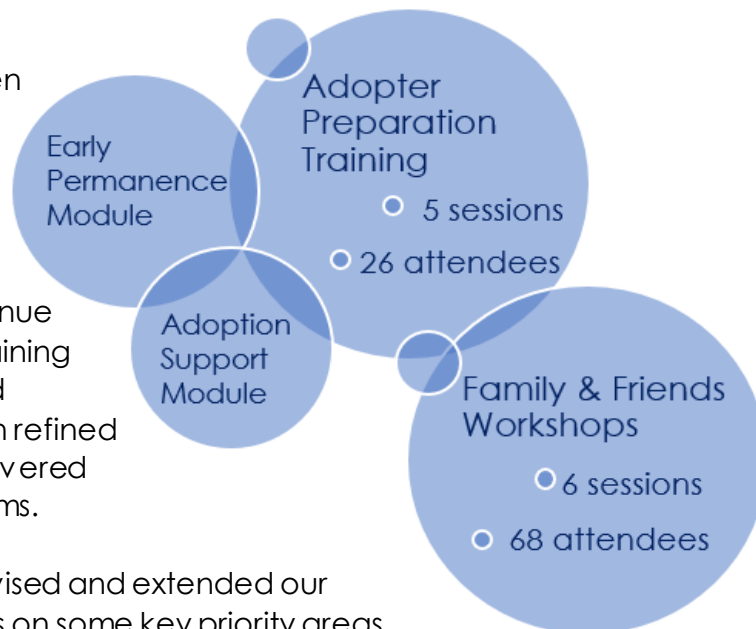
### Adopter Training Activity

From April-December 2020 Adopter Preparation and other adopter training activity was delivered by each partner. During this time work was undertaken to design a consistent package of preparation training that was able to be delivered remotely across the region.

From January 2021 adopter Preparation training has been Delivered centrally via our Regional Training Officers, with the support of locality practitioners.

At the current time we continue to successfully deliver this training remotely using materials and approaches that have been refined over the past year to be delivered effectively via Microsoft Teams.

During the year we have revised and extended our preparation training to focus on some key priority areas. We have introduced a module as part of our core training to help prospective adopters consider offering a child early permanence. We are currently developing a module to support those considering adopting children in sibling groups.



### Activity & Outcomes for Children in 2020-2021

We know that activity and outcomes for children with a plan of adoption has been significantly impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic during this reporting period. To help understand how this has impacted our region, we have compared our activity during 2020-2021 with activity in 2019-2020. This provides a very broad comparison helping us understand the regional impact of Covid 19. However, it must be noted

that there are always year on year fluctuations in activity across the region and there were significantly higher levels of adoption activity in 2019-2020 than there had been in previous years.

The table below shows key adoption activity across the partner councils over the past 2-year reporting periods.

**73% of the children we placed for adoption during the year were placed with adoptive families from our region.**

	2019-2020			2020-2021		
	ADM Plan of Adoption	Placement Orders	Children Placed	ADM Plan of Adoption	Placement Orders	Children Placed
Shropshire	23	14	17	26	15	13
Staffordshire	58	51	56	41	33	31
Stoke-on-Trent	37	36	33	34	26	29
Telford & Wrekin	39	24	29	32	34	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>101</b>

This shows that levels of activity have dropped over the last year with overall fewer plans of adoption agreed, a drop in the number of Placement Orders granted by Courts, and a subsequent drop in the number of children placed for adoption compared to 2019-2020.

We know that activity increased during the last 2 quarters of 2020-2021, and that this has continued into the current year. This is what we would expect to see given the relaxation of lockdown measures, a return to more normal practice, and a freeing up of other key parts of the children's system and Family Courts.

	T4C Region	% Difference 2019-20
ADM Plan of Adoption	132	-16%
Placement Orders	108	-24%
Children Placed	102	-25%
Adoption Orders	103	+13%

### Where we Found Homes for our Children in 2020-2021

One of the key aims of Together4Children is to ensure that, where we can, we find homes for our children within our region. This supports good transitions which we know are a critical part of the adoption journey for children and adoptive parents; and helps us to support children and their families into the future.

However, where no families are identified who can meet the particular needs of a child or children within our region, we look to other agencies across the Midlands and nationwide to ensure that we explore every possibility of finding the right families for our children.

The table below shows where the adoptive families came from for those children who moved into their new homes in 2020-2021.

	Shrops	Staffs	Stoke	T&W	Total
Own LA/T4C Adopters*	10	26	13	25	74
Other RAA/LA Adopters**	1	1	7	3	12
VAA***	2	4	9		15
					101
Early Permanence	1	0	5	6	12

\* Adopters approved by one of the Local Authorities within the T4C Partnership.

\*\* Adopters approved by another Local Authority or Regional Adoption Agency.

\*\*\* Adopters approved by a Voluntary Adoption Agency

## Early Permanence

The table also shows the number of children who were placed in 'Early Permanence' arrangements. This is where children are placed with approved adopters, where the Local Authority is confident that the likely outcome for the child is adoption, but before a Court has decided. Where the Court does decide that adoption is the right plan, the child can remain with the adopters.

Early permanence means that children are placed earlier within their prospective families and means that they experience fewer moves and changes of primary caregiver. We know that these factors are beneficial for good outcomes.

This practice does carry some risks for the prospective adopters, however. Occasionally children will return to their birth family, and early permanence carers need resilience and right support to help them to work with professionals to achieve the best outcome for the child.

Currently the number of children placed in these arrangements across the region is slightly below the England national average (13%). We can also see that there are disparities in practice between our partners. Together4Children are committed to supporting the development of early permanence practice across the region, with the aim of placing more children with early permanence carers where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

## Timescales for Achieving Permanency for Our Children

The average timescale for local authorities in England is 409 days (based on 3-year average timescale: ASGLB Dashboard Data – Q3).

It is reported as both an aggregated figure averaged over the preceding 3 years (to take into account the fact that a child's journey to adoption will normally take longer than 1 year to achieve), and against the reporting year (for all those children whose Adoption Order was granted during the reporting period 2020-2021)



Comparing in year timescales against the average 3-year timescales gives a general indication of the overall trend in relation to this performance indicator.

We can see from the table below that all partner councils have experienced a drop in performance during 2020-2021. This means it has taken longer in the past year for children entering care to be placed with their adoptive family. For the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire this increase has been relatively marginal. For Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin the increased amount of time it is taking to secure permanency is more significant. However, both Shropshire and Staffordshire remain below the England national average for this indicator (2018-2021).

A10 Indicator	2018-2021	In Year	Trend	< 3 Year national average
Shropshire	319	423	↓	✓
Staffordshire	352	372	↓	✓
Stoke-on-Trent	492	510	↓	✗
Telford & Wrekin	506	630	↓	✗

Given the impact of Covid 19 over the course of this reporting period it is unsurprising that we are seeing this increase in children's timescales. There are several factors that we are aware of which have impacted across the children's system which have created delay in achieving the outcomes we want for our children:

- Significant delay in Care Proceedings for children caused by capacity issues in the Family Courts.
- Delays in Care Planning for children created by, for example, extended timescale for specialist assessments due to lockdown restrictions.
- Delays in being able to place children in their new families due to restrictions and practice issues – especially during the initial national lockdown period.

**A2:** This is the second key national indicator and measures the average time between an LA receiving court authority to place a child (Placement Order) and the LA deciding on a match to an adoptive family. The national average across England for this indicator is 186 days (ASGLB Dashboard Data – Q3).

A2 Indicator	2018-2021	In Year	Trend	< 3 Year national average
Shropshire	116	175	↓	✓
Staffordshire	137	203	↓	✓
Stoke-on-Trent	189	186	↑	✗
Telford & Wrekin	312	407	↓	✗

Again, it is reported as both an aggregated figure averaged over the preceding 3 years and against the current reporting period. This indicator is a measure of how quickly we can find the right families for children once the Court has given us authority to place for adoption. It reflects the capacity of services to 'family find' for children, and the sufficiency of adopters locally, regionally, and nationally.

We know that some children wait longer than others because finding families who want to adopt older children, children in sibling groups, and children with additional needs is more difficult. It also takes longer to find families for children where there are considerations around ethnicity and faith. Across the Together4Children partnership, it is important to note that we are ambitious when it comes to finding permanent homes for our children, even when we know that it will be a challenge. This ambition for our children can also lead to drops in overall performance measures (where it has taken us longer to find a family that can meet a child's complex needs, for example).

Across the region we can see an overall decline against this indicator with relatively steep increases in the time it has taken to find families for our children for three of our partner councils. In any given reporting period, the unique journeys of individual children will impact on this indicator and those factors are discussed in more detail in the localised information in part 2 of this report.

As this indicator only reports against children for whom an Adoption Order was granted in the current reporting period, it mainly represents activity prior to the launch of the new Together4Children arrangements which brought family finding activity for the whole region together within the Central Permanency Hub.

**Our success in recruiting and assessing more adopters than in previous years will play a significant part in helping us to reduce the time it takes for us to find the right family for a child.**

The drop in performance against this indicator will also reflect some impacts from the early stages of the Covid 19 pandemic, such as disruption to Adoption Panels in the earlier part of 2020 and the general difficulties for social work practitioners created by lockdown restrictions. It also reflects the fact that some key activities which support family finding such as national activity days and exchange events all but stopped during the reporting year.

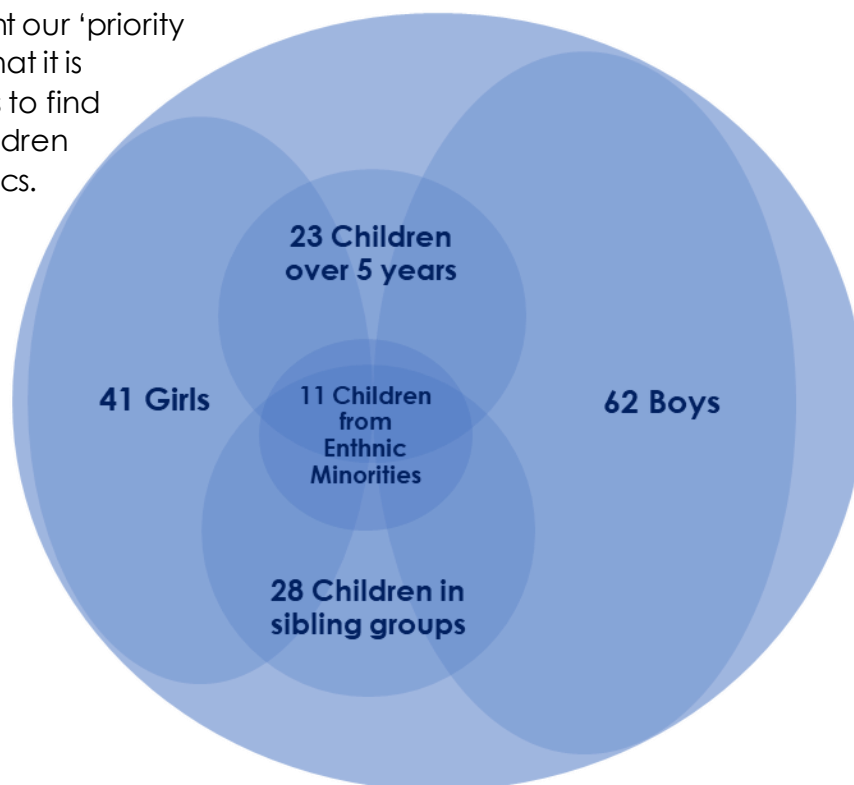
However, we recognise that reducing the time it takes to find the right families for our children is a key priority for the Together4Children partnership. Other measures we are taking to reduce this timescale are outlined below.

### 1.3 Children Adopted During 2020-2021

Despite the challenges of the past year **103** Adoption Orders were granted for children across our region, securing their legal permanence within their new families. Of the children who were adopted, 23 children were aged over 5 years, 28 children achieved permanency alongside one or more of their siblings, and 11 children came from ethnic backgrounds other than 'white British'.

These children represent our 'priority children' as we know that it is more challenging for us to find the right families for children with these characteristics.

It is very positive that overall, 48 children (47% of all children adopted) were priority children. This shows good outcomes for children who may not have found adoptive homes without the dedication and ambition of practitioners across the Together4Children partnership.



#### 1.4 Regional Overview of Children Waiting and Family Finding Activity

- To ensure that any adopter assessed within our region can be considered for any child within the region.
- To create a wider choice of potential families for our children, increasing the likelihood of finding a family that can meet a child's individual needs.
- To identify those children who have been waiting or are likely to wait the longest and focus our resource and capacity on finding permanent homes for them.
- To identify children where we may not have a potential family within region who are able to meet their needs and take swift action to consider adopters across our wider (Midlands) region and nationally.

Our Regional Family Finding team utilises a variety of resources to support them to find the right families for our children:

- Regional Matching Meetings.
- Linkmaker (a web-based tool used to support family finding regionally and nationally).
- Exchange days & Activity days (Regional/Pan-regional/national events where adopters can find out more about, and potentially meet children who we are family finding for).
- Use of professional relationships and networking opportunities.
- Pan-regional Family Finding arrangements (e.g. the 'Midlands Together Collaboration').

Since the launch of Together4Children we have been working hard to embed regional family finding arrangements, implement new working practices, integrate IT systems, and develop our pan-regional networks.

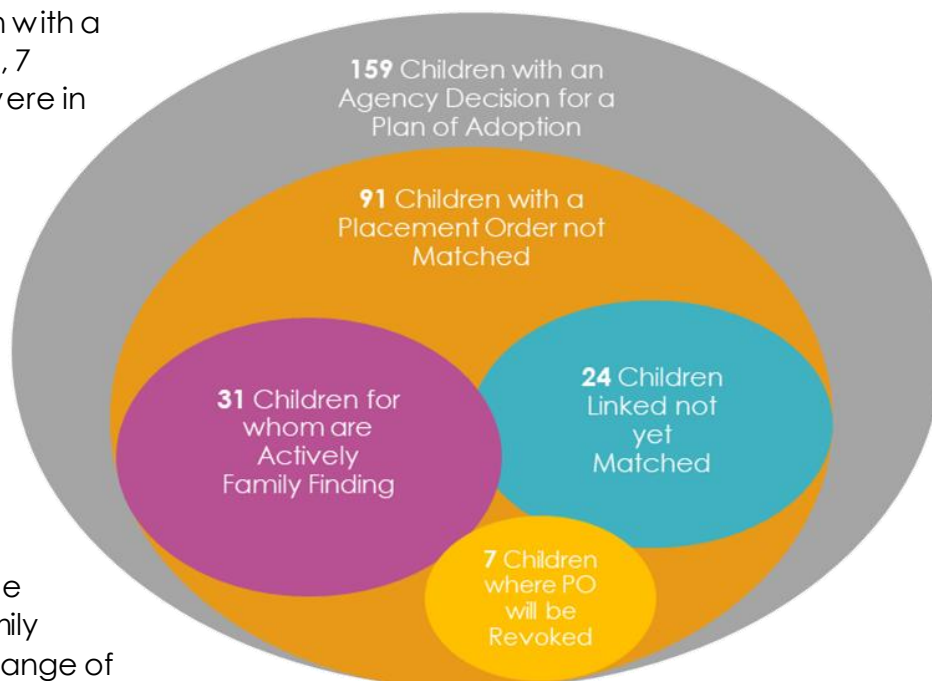
### Children with a Plan of Adoption on 31 March 2021

At the end of the current reporting there were 159 children across our region where Agency Decision Maker's across our partner local authorities had decided on a plan of adoption.

Of these, 91 children had a Placement Order granted by the Court, giving their agencies the authority to place them for adoption. These children had not yet been formally matched with their adoptive family (which involves an Adoption Panel making a recommendation approving the match, and an Agency Decision Maker agreeing).

Of the 91 children with a Placement Order, 7 children's plans were in the process of changing away from adoption. A further 24 children had been linked with their prospective family and were progressing to a match.

For 31 children, we were actively family finding using the range of activities outlined above.



Of the remaining 29 children, the majority were currently in foster homes where their carers were being assessed to provide their permanent care via adoption of special guardianship.

### 1.5 Regional Overview of Placement Disruptions

A placement disruption is defined as an adoptive placement that comes to an end before the granting of an Adoption Order. These usually occur within the first weeks or initial months following the placement of the child with their prospective adopter. Whenever an adoption disruption occurs, a meeting is conducted with all relevant parties and a disruption report is compiled by an experienced adoption manager who was either external to, or independent of, the children's services practitioners and teams involved in the Care Planning, matching and placement decisions. The

learning from placement disruption is fed-back within the agency, with the adoption panel, and with the social work teams and practitioners involved.

Across the region, during 2020-2021 2 placements disrupted affecting 1 single child and 2 siblings placed together. Whilst we would never want children to experience a further change in their care, this represents a relatively low rate of disruption which is broadly in line with national averages.

T4C Region Placement Disruptions 2020-21	T4C Adopters	Inter-Agency
No. of Placement Disruptions	0	3

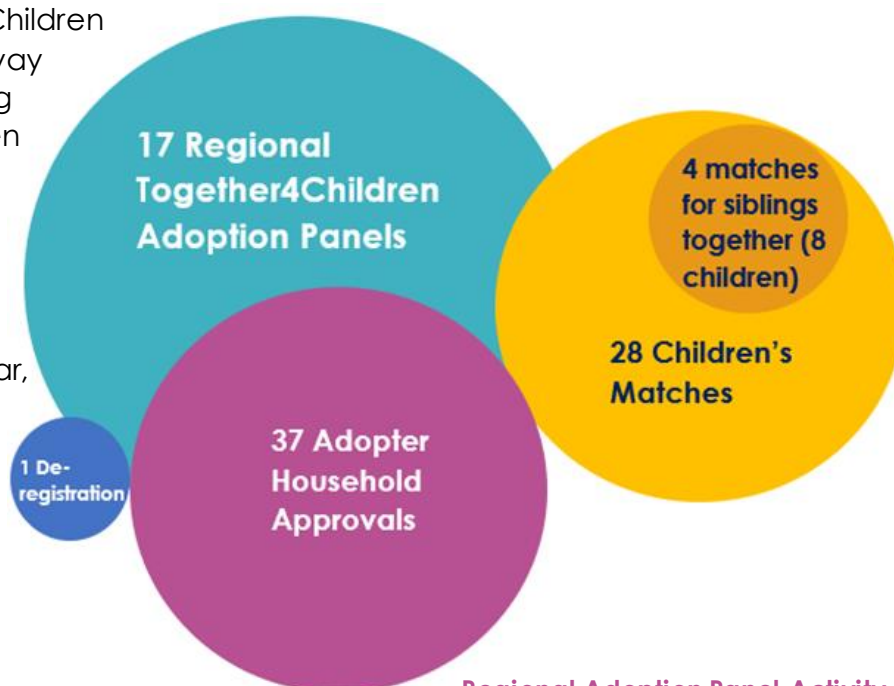
## 1.6 Together4Children Regional Adoption Panel Activity

Alongside making recommendations about the approval of prospective adopters, and matches for children with their adopters, adoption panels provide vital quality assurance feedback to the regional adoption agency. This includes whether the requirements of the Restrictions on the Preparation of Adoption Reports Regulations 2005 have been met, and whether there is a thorough, rigorous, consistent and fair approach across the service in the assessment of whether a child should be placed for adoption, the suitability of prospective adopters and the proposed placement.

Over the reporting period a total of 46 adoption panels were convened across the partnership. We have 3 adoption panels which operate from Shrewsbury, Stafford and Stoke. Since October 2020, we have begun the complex work of bringing the 3 panels together to operate as a fully regional resource. Our Adoption Panels began to hear regional items from December 2020, and we are continuing to develop and integrate the activity of our panels to fully support our regional arrangements.

Because Together4Children was launched half-way through the reporting period it has not been possible to report on the whole year's activity in detail.

As we enter the current reporting year, we will be better able to report on the quality assurance functions of our Panels.



Regional Adoption Panel Activity  
December 2020 – March 2021

## 1.7 Together4Children Regional Adoption Support Delivery

### Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund – Covid 19 Provisions

In May 2020 the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund made exceptional provisions for Regional Adoption Agencies to apply for funding to provide therapeutic and other support to families impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic and lockdown measures.

From May-December 2020 Together4Children jointly identified, commissioned, and delivered approximately £225,000 of support provisions for adoptive families and Special Guardians on behalf of our 4 partner councils.

Support provided to over 450 families across the region

230+ memberships for support organisations

30+ peer support packages

80 specialist therapeutic interventions

24 therapeutic parenting training packages

4 therapeutic support groups

### Adoption UK 'TESSA' and Together4Children

Together4Children are proud to be partners in delivering Adoption UK's innovative 'TESSA' support program for adoptive families. We are one of only two Regional Adoption Agencies in England to be offered the opportunity to pilot this program which is currently funded through the Big Lottery Community Fund. The program aims to create the conditions for healthy development and family wellbeing in adoptive families at risk of the effects of early childhood trauma. It offers parents:

- Clinical Psychologist-led assessment and support plans, family support, and core training.
- Innovative group therapy, counselling, coaching and mentoring, enhanced training, school consultation.
- Support in accessing statutory and voluntary provision, specialist and medical support and community groups.



Since TESSA went live in October 2020 **40 families** across the Together4Children region have received support through this provision.

### Locality Permanency Support Activity

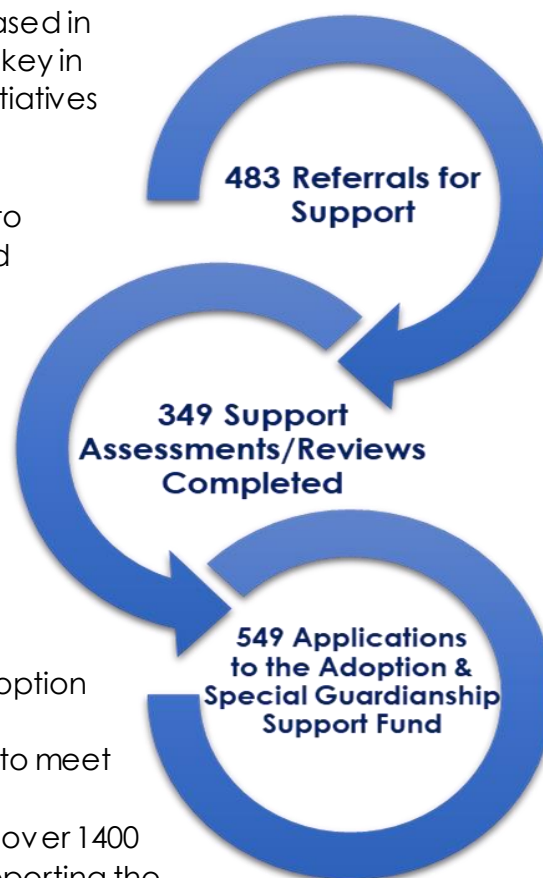
Our 3 locality Permanency Support Teams based in Shrewsbury, Stoke and Uttoxeter have been key in implementing and delivering the regional initiatives above.

In addition to this work, we have continued to deliver the vital support that our children and families need by effectively managing and adapting service delivery throughout the pandemic.

During the year our teams completed 349 support assessments and reviews, working directly with children and their families to identify and review their support needs and plan the right interventions.

Our teams made 549 applications to the Adoption & Special Guardianship Support Fund for the specialist therapeutic interventions required to meet needs identified through our assessments. Over the same period, our teams supported over 1400 'Post Box' arrangements, facilitating and supporting the exchange of information between birth families and adoptive parents.

Throughout the year our teams have continued to deliver other important activities to support adopted children and their families including support groups and therapeutic parenting courses.



*"The course has helped massively, with all your tips and knowledge and putting it into everyday context that makes it more understandable. I know as a family we've had a lot less issues.... and I'm sure it's because I'm now more equipped with my little tool kit to understand what [my child] needs."*

Feedback from a parent who attended our 'Two Hands' Therapeutic Parenting Course  
March 2021

## 1.8 Together4Children Financial Information 2020-2021

Overall expenditure on central partnership functions was £771,621 for the period 2020-2021. This delivered a £78,092 underspend due to some staffing vacancies across the partnership from the point of go-live and some savings against panel costs and other operational expenses.

	2020-21 Budget	2020-21 Outturn	Variance
Central Permanency Hub	771,621	693,529	- 78,092

During the second half of the year, we have successfully recruited to vacant positions within the central hub. Additional underspend will be utilised to build capacity across our regional adoption panels and support our functions in relation to the 'adoption agency adviser' role.

Locality Permanency Hubs			
Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin	863,540	957,095	93,555
Staffordshire	1,248,470	1,209,186	-39,284
Stoke-on-Trent	676,910	654,181	-22,729
Total	2,788,920	2,820,462	31,541

Costs for the Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin locality hub (based in Shrewsbury) are shared across the two Councils under arrangements that preceded the Together4Children Partnership. The overspend totalling £93,555 reported for 2020-2021 relates to staffing costs and was identified as a cost pressure from the outset of the financial year. A proportion of this overspend will be offset against payment for therapeutic interventions (via the Adoption Support Fund) delivered by practitioners in the locality hub.

The small underspends reported across the Staffordshire and Stoke locality hubs are due to a combination of staffing vacancies, and small savings against operational cost and staff expenses.

## 1.9 Annual Plan and Actions to Address Performance and Capacity Issues

Over the course of 2020-2021 several performance and capacity issues have arisen across the partnership. We have taken short-term action have been to address issues as necessary.

Following this report, and the analysis and review of the first operational period of Together4Children, we will set out our detailed plans to improve performance and address capacity issues over the coming year in our annual plan. The Together4Children Annual Plan will be published in July 2021 and will set out actions in relation to the following areas:

- Target recruitment activity to ensure enough enquiries from potential adopters who can meet the needs of our children.



- Support prospective adopters to consider providing homes for our priority children (e.g. those children likely to wait longer) through effective, high quality assessment, training, and support.
- Support prospective adopters considering offering early permanence to a child, through effective, high-quality assessment, training, and support.
- Support practice development across the region to increase the number of children placed with early permanence carers where that is the right plan for the child.
- Address capacity issues across our regional adoptions panels to ensure that there is no delay in accessing panel for children's matches and adopter approvals.
- Address capacity issues in relation to the adoption agency advice we provide to key decision-makers in each of our partner councils.
- Move to fully regionalised panels to improve consistency, diversity and expertise and support quoracy across the region's 3 adoption panels.
- Reduce the time it takes to match children with their permanent families by making best use of all Together4Children resources and supporting timely decision-making for children.
- Improve the range and consistency of support offered to our adoptive families across the region, focusing on delivering the support that our families have told us they want.
- Improve the way we communicate and keep in touch with our adopter community to ensure that we promote the support available and facilitate strong peer to peer networks.

### **Changes in policy and legislation applicable to the Together4Children Agreement**

During the Covid 19 pandemic partner councils have jointly agreed how, and to what extent, we would implement the flexibilities introduced through the government's emergency legislation in relation to adoption [Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020].

Elements of the amended regulations have been used sparingly, and only when necessary, to ensure the continuation of service delivery.



**Scott Crawford**  
Head of Together4Children

**June 2021**