

# ADOPTION WEEK SCOTLAND

ADOPTION WEEK SCOTLAND  
15 - 19 NOVEMBER 2021  
EVALUATION REPORT



**adoptionuk**  
for every adoptive family  
in Scotland



## INTRODUCTION

AFA Scotland and Adoption UK Scotland were responsible for organising Adoption Week in their final year of the multi-year contract. The week ran from 15 – 19 November and benefitted from the ability to offer a hybrid of in-person family events, and online webinars and workshops.

Due to the high levels of participation and positive feedback achieved in the wholly online programme, the decision was made to retain the online delivery aspect which particularly benefitted our more popular webinar events, allowing a larger number of attendees, along with the ability to record events for future use and legacy. The ability to facilitate in-person family and young people events allowed us to engage better with existing adoptive families, and we received excellent feedback from those who attended.

As in the previous year the exceptional pressures on local authorities and other agencies meant that not all were able to organise events in their local area, however the week once again succeeded in raising the profile of adoption while highlighting the complex issues involved in today's adoption sector. This year we were unable to achieve significant media coverage beyond messages from the week shared in some newspapers and online media, but attendance at events was high, and feedback positive.

We were delighted to have strong support from the Scottish Government and an introductory video message from our new Minister for Children and Young People, Claire Haughey, MSP which was shared at our first event of the week and offered a strong message of support for adoptive families recognising the changed face of modern adoption and the associated challenges and benefits.

## THEME FOR THE WEEK

The Scottish Government fully fund Adoption Week Scotland, define the overall purpose and set several specific objectives. Within the overall objective of promoting and raising the profile of adoption, the theme of the week was 'The Current Face of Adoption' and focused on recent developments that had a positive impact on the adoption community, including:

1. [Voices of lived experience](#) – along with webinars on international adoption and those led by adult adoptees, we also ensured our other workshops on trauma informed education, FASD and maintenance of contact featured individuals with lived experience.
2. [Importance of maintaining contact](#) – in partnership with Scotland's Adoption Register and Stand Up For Siblings we led an event specifically around the importance of contact, speaking with an adopted adult and two different adoptive parents about their experiences.
3. [Impact of trauma](#) – this theme was highlighted in various ways throughout the week including through two guest led webinars with expert clinicians and psychologists.

## MEETING THE OBJECTIVES

The activity relating to the specific objectives set by the Scottish Government for AWS 20 was as follows:

[Develop a programme of events, to ensure that the week of activities targets a wide range of stakeholder groups \(e.g., children and young people, professionals, pre and post adoption families\)](#)

Fourteen events were held over the week as part of the main programme, with 894 attendees - an increase of 32% on last year. The most popular event was the Karen Treisman seminar on therapeutic parenting with 245 attendees. All bookings were managed through Eventbrite and held online through zoom, with the exception of three family and young people events. Events included:

- Three family events run by Adoption UK to mark the start and end of the week – soft play, creative play centre and skating for older children.

- One online disco facilitated by Adoption UK for families unable to attend in person family events.
- Welcome and Information event.
- A conversation with international adoptees.
- Dr Karen Treisman seminar on Therapeutic Parenting.
- Maintaining Relationships – the importance of contact event.
- Understanding FASD webinar.
- What is TESSA? Separate information events for parents and for professionals around the Therapeutic and Education Support Services in Adoption service run by Adoption UK Scotland.
- Trauma informed educators.
- Risk and Resilience Following Trauma in Childhood with Professor Eamon McCrory from the UK Trauma Council.
- Legal Q and A event with AFA Legal Consultant.

Raise the profile of adoption in Scotland and the support available to prospective adopters, including the role of Scotland's Adoption Register

The new graphics created in 2020 enabled us to advertise and brand events in a colourful and easily recognisable way.



AWS again made use of [www.adoption.scot](http://www.adoption.scot) website, with a specially created section acting as the hub for the week's activity - [Adoption Week 2021 - Adoption\\_Scotland\\_New](#). The website was used widely to share information including:

- Making all key events bookable online
- Providing information about partner's events – which could also be booked from this page if requested
- Providing downloadable resources to promote the week including: "I support Adoption Week" images; tea party kit with recipes; bunting to make and colour in
- Providing downloadable factsheets linked to the three themes along with sub-pages providing more detailed information for those wanting to explore any of the themes in more depth
- Giving the link to the new Scotland's Adoption Register video

The staff from Scotland's' Adoption Register were closely involved in the planning and delivery of the week. Information on the work of the Register was provided at the opening event, the Register's Manager, Kate Richardson, spoke at the Maintaining Relationships event, and the Register's social media was used extensively to promote the week.

The week was also used as a platform to share the recruitment video produced by the Adoption Register focusing on the need to identify adoptive families able to care for groups of brothers and sisters, older children and those with particularly complex additional needs. (The video can be viewed on the Register's website at [Could you adopt?.](#))

### Engage with ministers, local authorities and the third sector

The welcome video recorded by the Minister for Children and Young People, Ms Haughey was used for the opening event of the week and shared throughout the week. Political support at this level undoubtedly increases coverage of the week's events as well as providing a valuable message about the government's recognition of the continuing importance of adoption for some of the children who are unable to live with their own family.

All 32 local authorities and the four voluntary adoption agencies received detailed information in the months leading up to AWS21. An online information session was run for agencies in August, providing information and supporting agencies in their planning for the week. Seven agencies used the AWS page on [www.adoption.scot](http://www.adoption.scot) to promote events they were running in their local area

As per 2020, many local authorities indicated that as a result of pandemic associated difficulties, they were not organising separate local events this year but were nevertheless able to share information about the week with adopters and practitioners in their areas.

Key collaborations relied on during the week were with the Stand Up For Siblings partnership, UK Trauma Council, FASD Hub Scotland and Whatever Next? The international adoptee led project. Thanks are due to all groups for the events they led or participated in, and the information they shared.

### Improve access to advice for adoptive parents, adopted children and parents who have had their children adopted

Lessons learned during AWS 2020 when more restrictions were in place allowed us to again achieve the following accessible activities:

- digital marketing activities focusing on promoting and developing [www.adoption.scot](http://www.adoption.scot) as a digital hub sharing information and marketing events.
- extending our social media reach via our different accounts across partnership organisations.
- running the key events online, increasing accessibility across the whole of Scotland.
- providing local authorities and third sector organisations with access to digital resources to support their participation in the week.

Digital platforms and social media allow for a more targeted approach, tailoring the information provided to suit different audiences. For our four key audiences the messages were:

#### General public

- Raise profile of adoption
- Understand the developments leading to the changed face of adoption today

#### Prospective adopters

- Support on the journey to find out more information
- Importance of maintaining relationships through contact
- Encouragement the use of Scotland's Adoption Register

#### Adoptive families

- Celebrate their adoptive families
- Raise awareness of the need for therapeutic parenting throughout the adoption journey
- Raise awareness of impact of trauma

#### Practitioners in adoption

- Encourage good practice sharing in adoption
- Promote and encourage the importance of maintaining relationships and contact
- Raise awareness of the impact of trauma

There were 1600 visitors to the [www.adoption.scot](http://www.adoption.scot) website from 25<sup>th</sup> October to 29<sup>th</sup> November, an increase of 74% from the previous month).

Produce an Adoption Week DVD and information pack, which contains fact sheets and other written information, allowing agencies to share this information through their own information events

The plan to create a DVD was made prior to the changes resulting from Covid. For the second year in a row, we instead prioritised developing online materials and maximising the use of the website. The increase in website usage in 2020 and the feedback received suggested this was the correct decision and therefore continued this year.

A range of fact sheets was produced along with information that agencies could adapt for their local use, which remain available for agencies to use whenever required.

#### Longer term support for parents and children – peer network

The family events were positively received, with families delighted to return to in person events in order to meet with other adoptive families.

The continued use of [www.adoption.scot](http://www.adoption.scot) website as the hub for AWS 2021 has increased awareness of this site as a resource that people can turn to when they need information or support and ensures that we have a legacy from the events and information created for the week.

#### MEDIA COVERAGE

##### TV, Radio and Press

We had less media attention than previous years but still saw messaging appear in The National, Northern Times, North Edinburgh News and the Caithness Courier.

##### Social Media

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram were actively used to support and promote the week. Our Facebook posts were viewed by more than 9,000 users during the week and our #AdoptionWeekScotland hashtag was used on more than 110 tweets by 55 individual twitter users during the week with a combined reach of 76,000 followers – mainly thanks to it being used not only by us but also local authorities (with Aberdeenshire, Angus and East Ayrshire Councils leading the way) and other third-sector organisations. In total, the hashtag was seen by more than 111,000 twitter users during the week.

We also worked with the BBC's Tiny Happy People team for an Instagram post featuring our case study, which went out to their 102,000 followers and received 287 likes.

#### FEEDBACK

Participants at all the events were given the opportunity to provide feedback via Survey Monkey There was also a follow up survey of all the local authorities and voluntary adoption agencies.

The response to the question asking people to rate their experience was:

Excellent	73%
Good	23%
OK	3%
Could have been better	1%

Some of the comments in the participants own words are as follows:

"It was absolutely fantastic. It's the first event that I have been too. It was amazing to see that children who had perhaps never met before (mine) just played along as if they saw each other every day."

"Nice for my daughter to be around other adopted kids and for us with other adopters."

"The quality of speakers and the wealth of knowledge they had and were willing to share with others."

## LEARNING AND LESSONS FOR FUTURE EVENTS

The ability to plan and facilitate the week over a multi-year contract was hugely beneficial, allowing for shared resources and better timing of planning and events. It also enabled us to dynamically assess events and resources in respect of what to carry forward or repeat in the future, which ensured we built on success from previous years.

We again benefitted from the ability to run events via online platforms, in addition to some in person events. Recommendations for future campaigns would be:

- aim for broadly similar mix of events but avoid overcrowding the programme
- continue to focus on using and building awareness of the [adoption.scot](https://www.adoption.scot.nhs.uk/) website
- build on 'reach' across the country using online engagement
- allow more direct input from young people and adults with lived experience of adoption
- use of online core programme and resources to support more local event opportunities delivered via agencies
- work closely with agencies to share themes and event information from the earliest point
- review the system for obtaining feedback, making this specific to individual events and requesting this at the end of, or immediately following, the event.
- consider the possibility of using radio advertising as one of the methods for promoting the messages of the week.

## CONCLUSION

Evaluations and feedback from those involved, along with numbers of attendees, evidence a successfully facilitated Adoption Week Scotland in 2021. We appreciate that the contract is once again going to be offered up for tender, and we hope that experience from the previous weeks are used to continue to build on success and learning in the future. AWS is an important opportunity for the complexities and realities of adoption to be raised, discussed, and for parents and practitioners to come together via learning opportunities to improve their understanding of current issues, while celebrating families.

January 2021



# The Current Face of Adoption 15 - 20 November 2021 Programme

(Bookings for all events can be made here - [Adoption Week 2021 - Adoption\\_Scotland\\_New](#))

## Monday 15th November 13.00pm - 14.00pm

**Whatever Next? - a conversation with international adoptees**  
This event will explore the narrative about adoption with Chinese adoptees and co-founders of Whatever Next?, an organisation aimed at broadening and facilitating open dialogue around adoption.

## 19.00pm - 20.30pm

**Welcome and Information Session**  
A virtual event suitable for anyone considering adoption, as well as those in the early stages and beyond, who would like to find out more about the adoption process and the services available in Scotland. Join Scotland's Adoption Register, Adoption & Fostering Alliance (AFA) Scotland and Adoption UK Scotland to find out about all aspects of adoption, from the legal process to family-finding, and the kinds of support you may require after the adoption order has been granted. There will be a short presentation from each agency, with the opportunity to ask questions that can then be answered in an informal discussion session afterwards.

## 19.00pm - 20.00pm

**What is TESSA? - information for parents**  
An event for adoptive parents to find out about Adoption UK post adoption support service. There will be a short presentation around what TESSA is and how to access the support service.

## Tuesday 16th November 10.00am - 12.00noon

**Maintaining Relationships - The Importance of Contact**  
Hosted by Adoption UK Scotland, this session will look at how we maintain relationships through indirect and direct contact. Hearing from professionals, adopters, adult adoptees about their experiences and best practice.

## 13.30pm - 14.30pm

**What is TESSA? - information for professionals and practitioners**  
An event for professionals working with adoptive families to find out about Adoption UK post adoption support service. There will be a short presentation around what TESSA is and how to access the support service.

## 19.00pm - 20.30pm

**Understanding FASD**  
A short presentation around key FASD facts and the FASD Hub Scotland service, together with discussions from individuals who have experienced FASD including professionals working in the field. There will also be a panel discussion from pre-submitted questions with a live Q & A session.

## Wednesday 17th November 19.30pm - 21.30pm

**Therapeutic Parenting**  
Creative and expressive ideas and ways of talking to children about their feelings. An insightful and invaluable 2 hour session on therapeutic parenting.  
Dr Karen Treisman

## Thursday 18th November 11.30am - 13.00pm

**Risk and Resilience Following Trauma in Children**  
Discussion on how research into the psychological impact of early adversity helps us intervene to promote more resilient outcomes for children  
Professor Eamon McCrory, UK Trauma Council

## 19.30pm - 21.30pm

**Trauma Informed Educators**  
To best serve our adopted children who need TRAUMA INFORMED EDUCATORS. This session will look at the good practice in schools and what may still need to be done.

## Friday 19th November 10.00am - 11.30am

**Legal Surgery**  
Chaired by Rhona Pollock, Legal Consultant, AFA Scotland

## Saturday 13th November 09.00am - 11.00am

**Tumbles Soft Play, Edinburgh**  
Exclusive use of Tumbles soft play centre for 2 hours

## Saturday 20th November 11.00am - 12.00noon

**Family Online Disco with DJ Kev**  
Join our adoptive families across Scotland and take the chance to get your glam on in your own house to dance away the afternoon together

## 17.00pm - 19.00pm

**Fun Street, Glasgow**  
Exclusive access to Fun Street with climbing walls, soft play, play street and so much more

