

ADOPTION WEEK SCOTLAND

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14 - 20 NOVEMBER 2022
EVALUATION REPORT

*'ADOPTION; THE CONNECTION WITH PAST,
PRESENT AND FUTURE FAMILY'*

INTRODUCTION

AFKA Scotland and Adoption UK Scotland were responsible for organising Adoption Week Scotland 2022. The week ran from 14 – 20 November and included several online workshops accessed by adoptive parents, people with experience of adoption and multi-agency professionals and in person activity events for adoptive families.

We welcomed the support of Scottish Government and an introductory video message from the 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 importance of connection and relationships for children, young people and adults throughout their life journey. We were delighted to welcome the Minister to an activity on 20 November where she heard from the experience of adoptive families.

Learning from previous years of delivering Adoption Week Scotland and the positive feedback received, the use of online webinars was continued to maximise attendance at key events from all over Scotland. The ability to facilitate in-person family and young people events allowed us to improve engagement with existing adoptive families, and we received excellent feedback from those who attended.

The Adoption.scot website offered the opportunity for other adoption organisations to profile events in their areas and this was taken up by some, and 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 achieved media coverage on the radio, newspapers and on social media.

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 *Adoption: the connection with past, present, and future family* which focused on the importance of maintaining connections for children, young people and their families including.

Key Themes:

- the importance of connection for healthy identity development and emotional wellbeing
- Relationships and maintaining connections with important people throughout life
- Recognising sibling and sibling like relationships
- Attending to the voice of adult adoptees and their narratives and experiences.
- Supporting professionals in adoption to develop knowledge in supporting roots, transitions, connections and preventing family disruption
- Promoting understanding of the needs of children who are adopted in Scotland in 2022- including the importance of therapeutic parenting, support within education, and with additional needs including foetal alcohol spectrum disorder

MEETING THE OBJECTIVES

The activity relating to the specific objectives set by the Scottish Government for AWS 22 was as follows:

1. Develop a programme of events

Thirteen events and one social media takeover were held over the week as part of the main programme, with 744 attendees. At the face-to-face family events there were 102 children and young people, 109 adults which included 82 adoptive families. All bookings were managed through Eventbrite and held online through zoom; 10 online events attracted 533 attendees with a 61% conversion from signing up to attending on the day.

Events included:

- Three family events run by Adoption UK to mark the start and end of the week – including soft play, creative play centre and skatepark for older children. These were in Glasgow and Edinburgh with an Aberdeen event being supported via AUK.

- Welcome and Information event, AFKA, AUK and Scotland's Adoption Register.
- Practitioners Research Conference, hosted by AFKA, webinar.
- Navigating the School Environment with ACES and Trauma, presented by Gerry Diamond, webinar: (56% of attendees were education professionals.)
- Therapeutic Life Story work, presented by Richard Rose, webinar.
- Sensory Ladders, for self-regulation, webinar.
- 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.
- Film Night 'transitions; a journey not a beginning' with Dr Polly Cowan, AFKA, Scottish Adoption, Edinburgh City Council and St Andrews Children's Society.
- Legal Q and A event with AFKA Legal Consultant.

Children and young people from the [E Project](#) took over social media on the Thursday of the week sharing several animated videos highlighting their achievements and how support can help to overcome challenges.

2. Raise the profile of adoption in Scotland

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



AWS again made use of www.adoption.scot website, with a specially created section acting as the hub for the week's activity - [Adoption Week 2022 - Adoption_Scotland_New](#). The website was used widely to share information including:

- Making all key events bookable online via Eventbrite.
- Providing information about partner's events – which could also be booked from this page if requested.
- Providing downloadable resources to promote the week including social media logos, email signatures and zoom background.

Data collected demonstrated that there were attendees from all 32 Scottish Local Authority areas as well as from England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This year we also had international attendees from USA and Kenya.

We found that 32% of attendees found out about AWS via information from their Local Authority. 44% from social media and 19% through newsletters received from AFKA and AUK.

The staff from Scotland's' Adoption Register were actively involved in the planning and delivery of the week. Information on the work of the Register was profiled at the opening event, and the Register's social media was used extensively to promote the week.

3. Engage with ministers, local authorities and the third sector

The welcome video recorded by the Minister for Children and Young People, Ms Haughey led off on the opening event of the week and was shared throughout the week on social media. 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 on the key themes and plans for AWS 2022. An online information session was run for agencies in September, providing information and to support agencies in their planning for the week. Three agencies used the AWS page on www.adoption.scot to promote events they were running in their local area.

Agencies did share information on AWS through their own mailing lists and contacts and there was attendance at events from 32 Local Authority areas across Scotland. A small number of Local Authorities held information events publicised locally but for others with adopters waiting to have children matched with them and limited resources to assess adopters they held off on public facing events this year. Practitioners and families continued to attend events to improve knowledge, skills, and practice.

We are thankful for the support of our Key Speakers at events this year including Gerry Diamond and Richard Rose, both of whom offered thoroughly engaging and stimulating events for adopters and professionals across Scotland using the online seminar format.

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

Use of online platforms and social media allowed us to again achieve high levels of engagement:

- digital marketing activities focusing on promoting and developing 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:

1. General public
 - Raise profile of adoption
 - Understand the role of adoption today
2. Prospective adopters
 - Support on their journey to find out more information
 - Encourage to consider the adoption of sibling groups, older children and children with additional needs.
 - Encourage the use of Scotland's Adoption Register
3. Adoptive families
 - Celebrate their adoptive families
 - Raise awareness of the need for trauma informed parenting throughout the adoption journey.
 - Promote and encourage the importance of relationships defined by the child as important.
4. Practitioners in adoption
 - Encourage the development of evidence informed practice in adoption
 - Promote and encourage the importance of sibling relationships and the adoption of sibling groups

- o Increase recognition of the importance for birth families in planning for their children and support to maintain relationships and with managing loss

5. Provide support to children, young people, birth and adoptive parents to promote loving relationships.

Promoting loving relationships is at the heart of adoption week Scotland, keeping the child at the centre and considering their needs is pivotal to the key messages from events. The theme of maintaining connections past, present and future allowed discussion of the importance of relationships with birth family, brothers and sisters, and adoptive family throughout life and was delivered through key events. For example, recognising that any transition is a journey and not just a beginning but brings the past and present with it and in Richard Rose seminar he highlighted the importance of life story work in promoting relationships from birth to older ages which engaged adult adoptees in the discussion alongside parents and practitioners.

REPORTING ON ADOPTION WEEK SCOTLAND 2022

Use of Adoption.Scot

There were 1709 visitors to the www.adoption.scot website from 31 October to 20 November, increasing by 100 on 2021. 79% were new users with a peak of 141 users on 14 November.

The continued use of www.adoption.scot website as the hub for AWS 2022 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

Media

- Interview on BBC Radio Scotland morning show with Kaye Adams
- Interview with Carol Hunter of E Project for BBC Scotland News website
- Coverage in Scottish Legal News, The National, The Scotsman and Midlothian View

Social Media

We created 88 posts across Twitter, FB and Instagram. There were 15k profile impressions with 34k views. 11k people were reached through FB and Instagram with the average engagement rate being 5.45%. On Twitter there were 113 shares of our posts with 53 following the link and on Facebook, 69 shares with 99 people clicking on the link to obtain further information. We received good reactions on Twitter, 235' Facebook 128 and Instagram 111.

EVALUATION

Participants at all the events were given the opportunity to provide feedback via Survey Monkey.

97% of feedback received said **good to excellent**.

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

'Trauma informed' is of little impact unless translated into 'trauma responsive' I'm going to continue to build relationships and to fight the corner of those young people who would benefit from a more sympathetic and empathetic approach to their learning.

Richard Rose was amazing at explaining TLSW and helped me feel more confident as a practitioner in doing this work instead of feeling fearful and doing or saying the wrong thing.

I liked the mix of adopters and foster mums on the panel and the stand out thing was the lovely lady with FASD and how successful she had been in her life

We only attended the Family event at Funstreet. We would love to go to more family events to connect us to other families and for our wee one to know that she has a shared experience with others.

LEARNING AND LESSONS FOR FUTURE EVENTS

Having hosted AWS over a number of years it is beneficial to be able to plan strategically over a 2–3-year period rather than responding year on year once the contract is awarded. However, we have demonstrated that we can create a full programme of events raising awareness and engaging a wide range of adoptive families, people with experience of adoption and multi-agency practitioners. The ability to run events via online platforms, widens the scope of AWS and allows us to reach those in more rural areas and those unable to travel to in person events. The family events are hugely appreciated and helpful in bringing together families with experience of adoption for great activities and the opportunity to build on peer support.

Recommendations for future campaigns would be:

- Continue to use online events for delivery of workshops and seminars with family events taking place face to face across Scotland.
- continue to focus on building awareness of the [adoption.scot](https://www.adoption.scot) website optimising search engines and ensuring content is fully accessible.
- Continue build on 'reach' across the country using online engagement
- We thoroughly valued the 'take over' of social media this year and increased engagement from people with experience of adoption, we hope to continue to build on this in future years with more direct engagement.
- 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

CONCLUSION

Adoption Week Scotland has again been successfully created and supported by AFKA and AUK reaching people from all over Scotland and beyond with experience of adoption whether that be personal or professional. The theme of connection with past, present, and future family was a golden thread throughout all of the events and highlights the commitment of the agencies involved to keeping the promise and recognising the current landscape of adoption practice in Scotland.

Evaluations and feedback continue to be good to excellent for all events and positive comments reflect the importance of these for those who attended. There are many tangible 'takeaways' which will make a difference to how adoption is considered, experienced, and practiced in Scotland. Adoption Week Scotland, 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.

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