

Adoption Tees Valley Annual Report 2022-2023



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Introduction

1. Executive Summary

This annual report of the Regional Adoption Agency business covers the period 1.4.22-31.3.23.

This year has been one of building on partnerships, and existing practice to strengthen and improve adoption in Tees Valley. There has been more work with regional partner RAA's, and the regional VAA's, on collaborative projects which are detailed later in this report. Work has continued with the 5 partner Local Authorities to continue to strengthen early twin track care planning for adoption.

The adoption team have been working on trauma informed practice within this year, inspired by one of the presentations at the national RAA Adoption Support Conference in September 22. ATV has now implemented a model of the Trauma Timeline, and use of the trauma tree in assessments of adopters, and in preparation for matching children. Staff, adopters, partner Local Authorities and Panel are reporting very positively on this practice, which is helping to focus on the long term needs of the child, arising from early trauma.

ATV continues to work within the overall framework of the National Adoption Strategy. This year has seen significant focus on early permanence, including the launch of the National Early Permanence Practice Standards. <https://earlypermanence.org.uk/resources/>. While there have been the same number of EP placements as in the previous year, more prospective adopters have been approved for early permanence, however, we continue to aim for greater numbers. The focus has also continued on adoption support, including on the long term identity needs of adopted children and adults. With more early permanence for children, and continuous development of the framework for these placements, more adoptive parents are meeting with the parents of the child from the outset, and we see a national move towards long term maintenance of significant relationships, enacted through direct and indirect ways of keeping in touch, including "letterbox" contact. Research, including the latest Adoption Barometer Report (PAC UK) continues to tell us that many adopted people want to have some form of contact with their birth relatives, and as a whole system we need to continue to review how we move in this direction.

This year followed the "tail" of the Somerset judgement, and its repercussions for children in the adoption system across England. A small number of children in Teesside had delayed adoption orders, and there were some delayed placements due to the legal implications of Somerset in the previous year: for this reason, we see a small number of children who have gone on to

be adopted, or even placed for adoption within this period, who might otherwise have had that part of their adoption journey in the previous year.

Adoption Orders are higher than the last year, while children placed for adoption remains the same as in the previous year. This level of placement activity is at a lower level than has been the case, which follows the national trend, where adoptions from care have reduced over the last 2 years. Of Significance in this region is the increase in numbers of Placement Orders granted within this year – 87 which is the highest level in the previous 4 years. Similarly, ADM best interests' decisions have risen significantly - 100 in this year, a 28% increase on the previous year, also the highest for the previous 4 years.

This shows Local Authorities are planning for adoption for more children, and these care plans are being authorised through Court, indicating that adoption is the right plan for the child.

ATV continues to perform well in timeliness of adoption for children. Many children are being placed within government set timescales for placement once the Placement Order is granted. Timescales (PO to match) have improved this year, from 174 to 146 days and ATV continues to perform better than the England average by some 50 days, although remains over the government target. The time from a child starting their first care placement to moving in with adoptive parents has increased, with average days being 411 across the Tees Valley, which is lower than the national target (421 days) and 70 days lower than the England average.

The number of families approved over the past year has risen from the previous year, with 55 families having been assessed and approved to adopt. While this increase is welcomed, ATV continues to need more families for siblings, for older children up to the age of 5, and for children who may have some uncertainty in relation to developmental delay.

As part of this annual report, I would like to acknowledge the significant contribution of "Lesley" (name changed) a Mum who has had 5 children leave her care, and one adopted, and who makes an important contribution to prospective adopter preparation training within this region. She talks at every preparation training group, about the perspective of birth parents and why keeping in touch matters. "Lesley" is truly exceptional. She has had the courage to talk to hundreds of prospective adopters over the years, and she makes a real and tangible difference to their views and feelings about birth parents, which then goes on to translate into a more informed understanding around keeping in touch.

2. Governance

ATV is governed by the Board of Directors which comprise the DCS's for the 5 partner Local Authorities. There are additionally 2 non-executive directors who are adoptive parents.

In this year, the ATV Board was chaired by the Middlesbrough DCS, Sue Butcher, who has now left post. In February 2023 Sally Robinson, DCS in Hartlepool took over as chair.

Sally has significant operational experience in adoption. she is the ADM for Hartlepool and chairs the regional ASGLB until its decommissioning in 2022. Sally remains as chair of the NE regional adoption network meeting, involving LA's, VAA's and CAFCASS.

The ATV Board meets 4 times each year, and considers performance information, finance, and adoption operational and strategic issues within the region.

3. National Adoption – National Strategy

Adoption Tees Valley works within the wider sector forum of the national Regional Adoption Agencies group, which is linked to ADCS, CVAA, DfE and a wide range of stakeholder committees and groups. The RAA leaders group works with a strategic plan, closely aligned to the National Adoption Strategy, Achieving Excellence Everywhere (2021). Through the RAA leader's forum, the DfE has made available national funding to support strategic delivery against the national priorities. The Service Manager at ATV chairs the national Early Permanence Working Group. Managers and practitioners in ATV have access to forums and training opportunities that are delivered through the RAA Leaders network.

This year has seen stronger pan regional working together across the 3 RAA's of Adoption Tees Valley, Adopt North East, and Adopt Coast to Coast. The 3 RAA's cover the 12 Local Authority areas of the North East, and through collaborative working we have together set an agenda for greater consistency of delivery in this "pan region".

We have secured funding for 2 significant projects pan regionally to offer improved services, and greater consistency of delivery in adoption across the NE region.

NE and Cumbria Early Permanence Project

This is a 2 ½ year funded project to increase the number of children who have access to early permanence, and to develop a range of placements including more concurrent planning placements. The funding is £330,000, funded until April 2025, and has been secured and managed through the support of Stockton BC Procurement Team.

The project has recruited a lead consultant who is Kate Knowles, a manager from the North West Concurrency Project –which has strong experience and expertise in concurrent planning placements. Each RAA has seconded at least one social worker into the project, and one regional VAA, Arc Adoption, is also involved as a partner. The aim is to achieve regional sufficiency of EP carers, and more children having the opportunity for a single placement, without moves around the system, until a Court decision is made on the final care plan.

Adoption Tees Valley has been an active contributor to the Project, with 2 social workers, Angela Simmons, and Kirsty Taylor, being seconded for 1 day per week, to strengthen practice and delivery of EP placements.

North East Multi-Disciplinary Adoption Support Service

This is a 2 year funded project to set up and establish a multi-agency adoption support service for the NE region. It is a pilot project testing out a model of adoption support for any child within the age range of 7-11, who it is considered would benefit from a multi-disciplinary assessment and intervention. The project has a clear ethos that to support children, parents must also be supported, and is seeking to test and refine a model which will be available for ASF funding in the long term.

A strength of the project is the partnership that has been achieved with the 3 RAA's and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) for the NE region, bringing social care and health together in this developing service.

The project has secured £950,000 funding over 2 years and will run until April 2025.

4. Partnership Working

Following the Review of ATV in 2021, the service has strengthened its focus on partnership working, a theme which is also evident in national strategy.

Working in partnership is one of the key elements of the service plan 2023-25, and new ways of working together are continually being tested in the maturation of the RAA. The 2 projects highlighted above reflect a stronger regional partnership, where we are achieving more together than would have been achieved by any single agency.

ATV works together with Local Authorities, through strategic and practice working arrangements. This year has seen a strengthened approach to

working with LA Fostering Services, for early permanence. Also, a shared adoption support process, and a new approach whereby ATV will attend Legal Gateway meetings in the LA.

Work with VAA's has been strengthened through the early permanence project above. This builds on ATV regular working together with regional VAA's to secure regional placements for children where no in house option is available. Working relationships are positive although challenges exist in the increasing costs of VAA placements, while funding to LA's and the RAA is not increased.

ATV works with health predominantly around provision of the Medical Advisor role. This has been an area of significant challenge within the year, especially within the South Tees Trust, affecting Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland. There have been pressures in achieving timely adoption medicals, and adult adopter health appointments. To address this, there has been a lot of collaborative working between Local Authorities, ATV, South Tees Trust and the ICB. Significant management and practitioner time in all agencies is dedicated to addressing how children can progress without delay. ATV remains appreciative of the Medical Advisors, who's expertise and commitment are valued, in helping to ensure that children's health needs are fully understood, and that adoptive parents are given high quality information about the child's health, prior to matching.

Pan regional partnership working has been positive in the year, reflected in the 2 projects highlighted above.

ATV has valued the continued support of the Virtual schools, in helping to understand and promote the needs of adopted children who can be "hidden" if schools are unaware that the child or young person is adopted. Working together is supported by tri-annual meetings and the partners virtual schools' collaborative funding of the ATV Education support worker. See section 13 for details of education support in this year.

ATV works with commissioned providers of services including multiple therapy providers via a commissioned framework, and a VAA providing independent support services to birth parents, and access to adoption records.

5. Benchmarking – Key Performance Data

The key performance data is presented in summary in this section. More detailed performance information, presented by local authority is detailed in section 8.

Data is presented for ATV for the year 2022-23, at the end of quarter 4, and for the previous year 2021-22 for comparison.

Key Indicator	ATV 2021-22	ATV 2022-23	Current c/w previous	National Govt Target where applicable
Adopter Approvals	46	55	Inc 19%	N/A
Children referred to ATV	179	223	Inc 25%	N/A
Children with ADM -BID (Best interests' decision)	78	100	Inc 28%	N/A
PO	74	87	Inc 18%	N/A
Matches	79	81	Inc 1%	
Placed	77	77	No Change	N/A
Early Permanence	11	11	No Change	
Adoption Orders	78	84	Inc 8%	N/A
Disruptions – pre order	0	1		N/A
Timescale – A2 (PO to match)	174	146 days	Dec 16%	121 days
Timescale A10 – BLA - Moved in with Adopters	383	411	Inc 7%	421 days

6. Marketing and Recruitment

ATV marketing aims to promote awareness of the need for more people to consider adopting. ATV also seeks to increase awareness of the role of ATV in providing support to adoptive families including children and adoptive parents. ATV has a multi-channel approach to marketing, using social media including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and also commissioning support to digital marketing campaigns during key campaign periods. It can be difficult to evaluate the impact of any particular campaign, other than numbers of enquiries received. However, it is recognised that the consideration of adoption is a major life decision and there is a pre-contemplative period for adults in deciding to go on an enquiry about adoption. As a result, we use social media reach, and engagement, enquiry numbers and approval numbers to indicate whether marketing is being effective. However, it is not an exact science, due to the time period that people may require, either before enquiring, or following enquiry, before commencing the “adopter journey”.

ATV is seeking to reach out to prospective adopters who can offer the family homes to children in the region where their needs are more complex arising from the child's needs or being part of a sibling group. Marketing has therefore been targeted to people who are interested in older children (age 4+) children with additional needs, and siblings.

Activity	ATV 2021-22	ATV 2022-23
Number of ATV recruitment campaigns year to date	3	5
Number of all Adopter enquiries year to date (all methods)	287	309
Number of ATV enquiries converted to ROI	61	73
% of ATV enquiries converted to ROI	22%	24%
Number of adoptive families attending information events	123	131
Social media followers	11,724	11,751
Website visits	16,819	17,422

What has gone well?

- Greater numbers of enquiries, and adopter approvals
- Attendance at Pride at Newcastle- the major LFJB event in the North
- Introduction of blogs on the ATV website written by adoptive parents
- Press and media presence with coverage on ITV Tyne Tees twice in the last 12 months, interviews on BBC radio Tees and press releases local news outlets including the Gazette and Northern Echo.
- Conversion rate of enquiries to ROI increasing, and numbers increasing.

Challenges?

- The service continues to need more enquirers and adoptive parents for siblings and for older children, and those with more complex needs.

7. Preparation, Assessment and Approval of Adoptive Parents

	Total 2021-22	Total 2022-23	Current c/w previous
Initial Visits to prospective Adopters	71	106	Inc 35%
Stage 1 Starts	46	58	Inc 26%
Stage 2 Starts	52	51	Dec 2%
Adopter Approvals	46	55	Inc 20%
Numbers in assessment at the end of the period	39	38	Dec 2%
Numbers waiting to be matched at end of period	29	29	No change

Timescale S1 (Govt target 60 days)	106	239	
Timescale S2 (Govt target 121 days)	146	156	

ATV has increased numbers of initial visits to prospective adopters and has focussed in this year on the Enquiry to Registration of Interest (ROI) timeline and experience. ATV has created a new role for enquiries management, and through this role, we have seen conversion from enquiry to ROI increase by 2%, however rising well beyond this in the current year, and we expect to see significant improvement in 2023-24.

ATV has partnered in with Redcar and Cleveland, and Darlington Virtual Schools, to share the new Virtual Reality Video headsets adopted by both agencies. These headsets are now being used in all preparation groups, to enable adoptive parents to experience the world of the child in a range of scenarios that a child may have experienced, for example- where domestic violence has taken place around the child. The headsets are aimed at helping prospective adopters have a better understanding of the trauma a child has experienced, and feedback so far is that they are powerful, impactful, and helpful.

ATV has incorporated learning from a national Child Safeguarding Review of a child placed for adoption (LJC case) and has progressed to a trauma informed approach across the service. The team now use the Trauma Timeline approach in assessment work with families, and then through the matching work for a child, helping prospective adopters and all professionals understand the lived trauma of the child. The Trauma Tree is a tool used within the direct work with families, and in preparing to care for a particular child.

ATV is now requiring all family and friends' networks to be involved during the assessment process. The aim is to raise the profile of the role of support networks in any potential safeguarding matters, and to help them be better prepared to support the child and family, with more awareness of the impact of trauma and attachment disruption for children.

All adoptive parents undertaking their first approval are required to complete the 4 day preparation training course, which is underpinned by the Secure Base Model (Schofield and Beek), the Trauma Timeline, and PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy) parenting.

Families are all asked to register with CATCH (commissioned from PACT) which is an on line learning and support forum, and which is integrated into the ATV adopter journey, from assessment onwards.

Timescales for assessments have been challenging in this year (239 days on average with a target of 182 days), and the explanation is largely due to delays in medicals being completed in full during stage 1. This may be with either the GP practice, or with the Medical Advisor providing a summary of the adopter health and advice to the agency.

To address challenges around Medical Advisor capacity, ATV Service Manager has negotiated extensively with partners in the ICB, and Foundation Trusts and fed back to the ATV Board on this key challenge. As the year closes, the ATV Board and ICB have agreed to fund a dedicated “Adult Adopter” Medical Advisor (MA) for ATV to relieve pressure on the paediatricians carrying out adoption health assessments of children, through provision of a MA who will consider all adult health reports. This MA will also have a role in supporting GP awareness of the safeguarding nature of adopter medicals, and in improving GP returns in an improved timescale, through dedicated awareness raising sessions.

What has gone well?

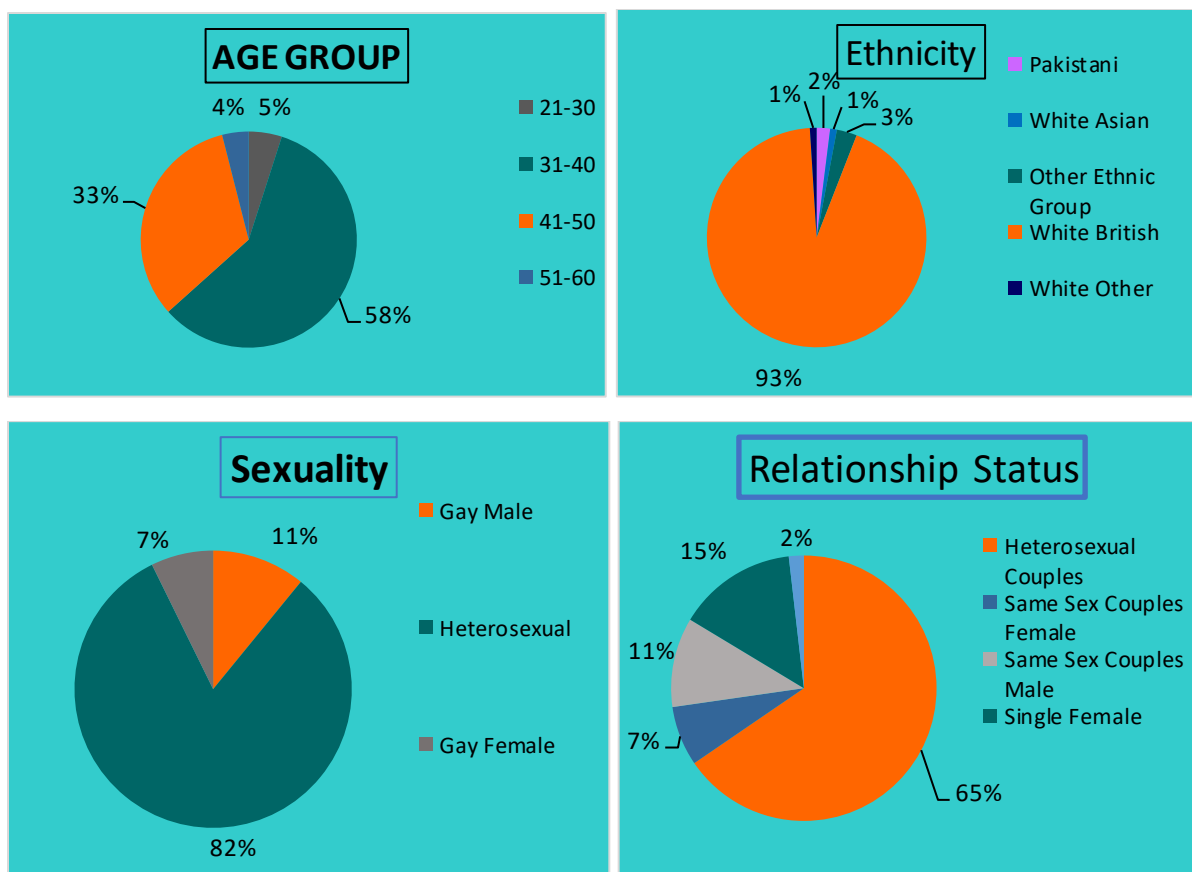
- Strengthening of work around trauma informed practice, and positive partnerships with LA 's, enabling shared resources.
- Increased numbers of adopter approvals in 2022-23
- Improvement in the enquiry to ROI conversion
- Improved timescale from enquiry to ROI
- Response to the LJC safeguarding review- continued review on safeguarding and trauma informed practice.
- Collaborative response to medical advisor pressures.

Challenges?

- Not enough adoptive families for children who have more complex needs.
- Timescales for stage 1 are longer than wished for, and the key reason is delays in health information, either from GP, or from Medical Advisors.

7.1 Who did ATV approve?

Total approvals: 55 families: 99 individuals



Sexuality/relationship status: 35 heterosexual couples; 10 same sex couples; 8 single women and 1 single man.

Prospective Adopters approved for early permanence: 10 (18%)

Age- 92 % of all adopters are aged between 30 and 50 years old.

Ethnicity- most of all adoptive parents are white British, with 93 % in this category.

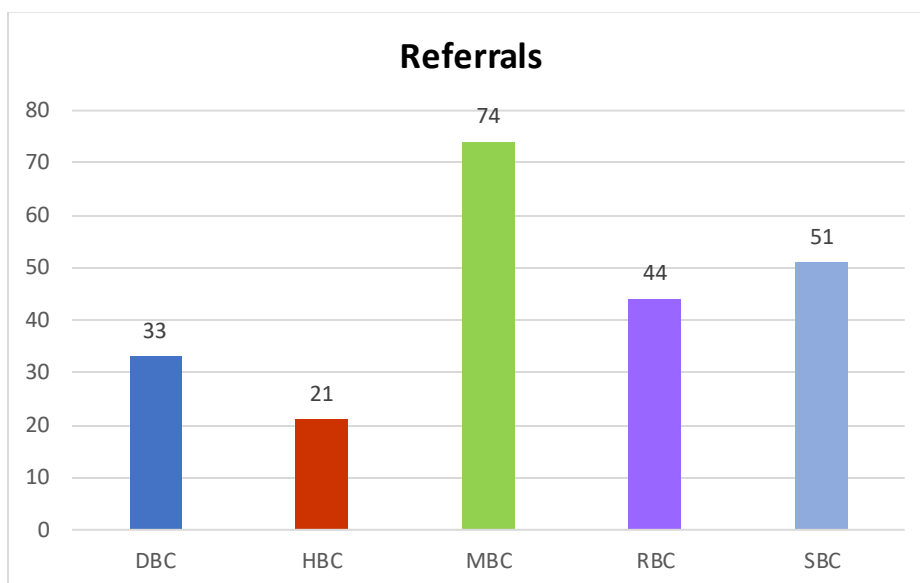
Timeliness of matching adoptive parents: of the adopters approved and matched within the period, 23 were matched with a child within 3 months of approval, and 28 were matched more than 3 months following approval. 4 were not matched within this period.

8. Referrals of children

There has been an increase overall in referrals of children who may require an adoptive family in this year. This has translated into higher numbers of ADM's and POs, although placements remain the same as in the last year.

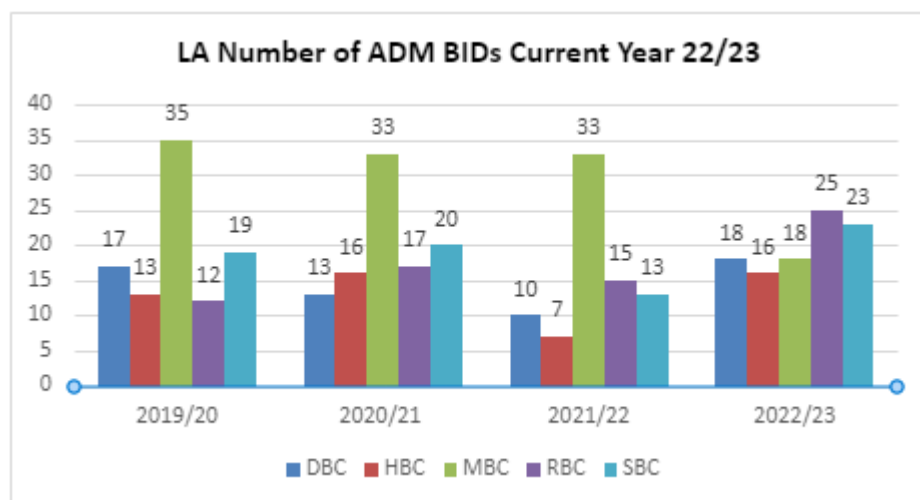
Data is provided below on the number and timescales by Local Authority

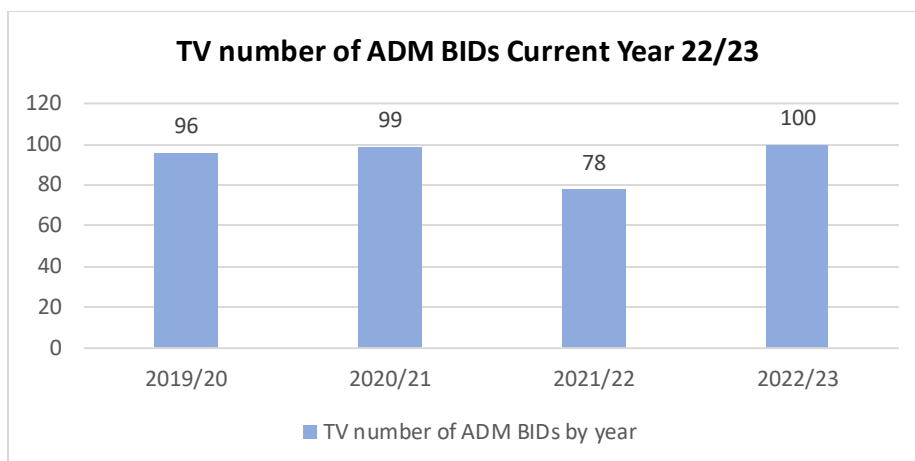
8.1 Referrals – Early Notifications by Local Authority



223 were referred in total. ATV asks for referrals of children at the earliest point they may have an ADM. Not all children progress to a plan of adoption. Middlesbrough are the highest referring LA, followed by Stockton.

8.2 ADM- “Best Interests Decision” by Local Authority



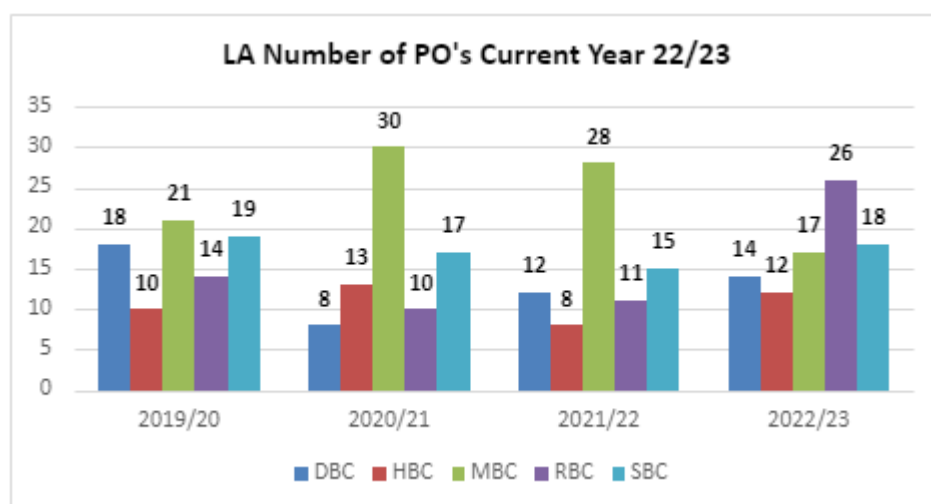


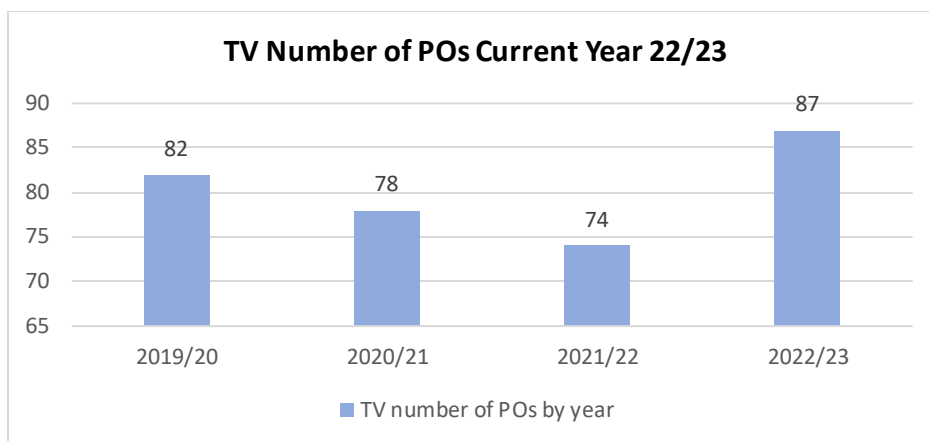
Change by LA on Previous Year

- Darlington increase by 8- 80%
- Hartlepool increase by 9- 128%
- Middlesbrough decrease by 15- 45%
- Redcar and Cleveland increase by 10 – 66%
- Stockton increase by 10- 77%

4 of the 5 LA's have seen a significant rise in the numbers of children for whom they are planning for adoption. Middlesbrough is the outlier with a considerable decrease in numbers of children with an adoption plan.

8.3 Placement Orders- by Local Authority



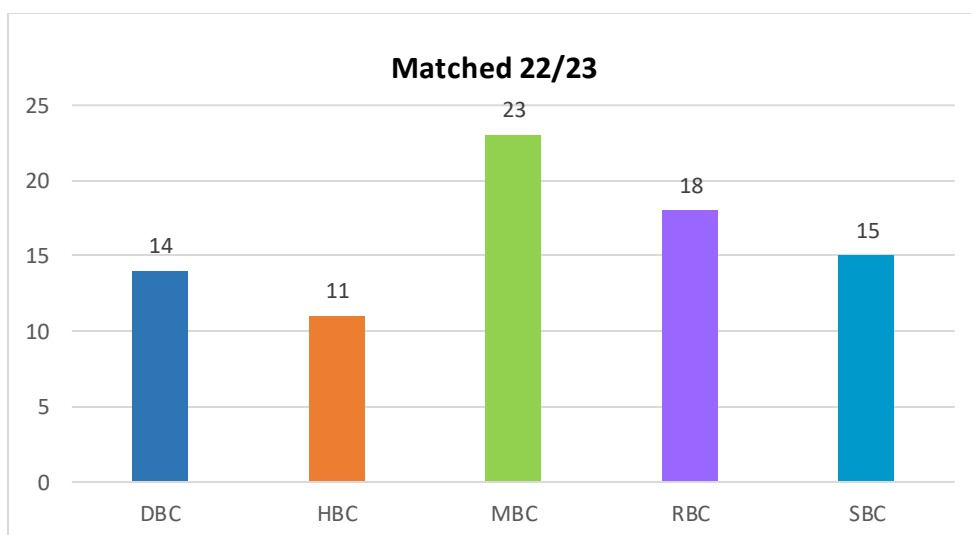


Change by LA on Previous Year

- Darlington increase by 2- 17%
- Hartlepool increase by 4- 50%
- Middlesbrough decrease by 11- 39%
- Redcar and Cleveland increase by 15- 136%
- Stockton increase by 3- 20%

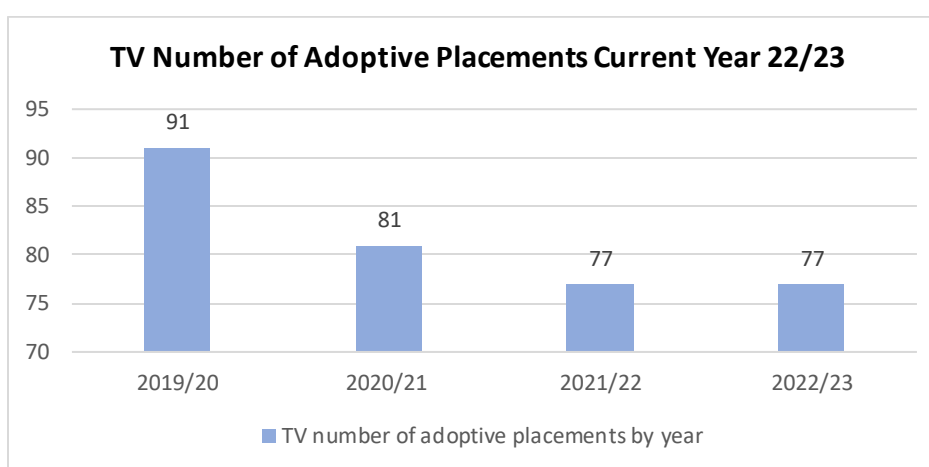
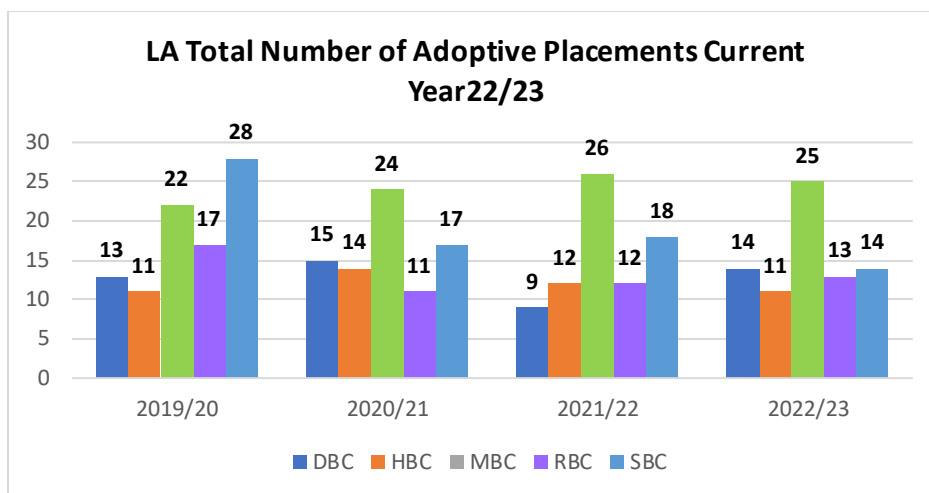
Again 4 LA's have increased the numbers of children for whom a PO has been granted, giving the LA Court authority to place for adoption. Redcar have seen an exceptional increase in numbers on previous years, and Hartlepool have returned to a similar number seen across a number of years, where 2021-22 was an exceptionally low number. Middlesbrough is an outlier with a significant reduction on previous years.

8.4 Matches by Local Authority



The numbers of children matched for adoption will reflect the numbers placed. Slight differences re due to timing within the year period under review.

8.5 Placements of children for adoption by Local Authority



Change by LA on Previous Year

- Darlington increase by 5- 55%
- Hartlepool decrease by 1 – 8%
- Middlesbrough decrease by 1- 4%
- Redcar and Cleveland increase by 1- 8%
- Stockton decrease by 4- 22%

Placement numbers have remained the same over the last 2 years.

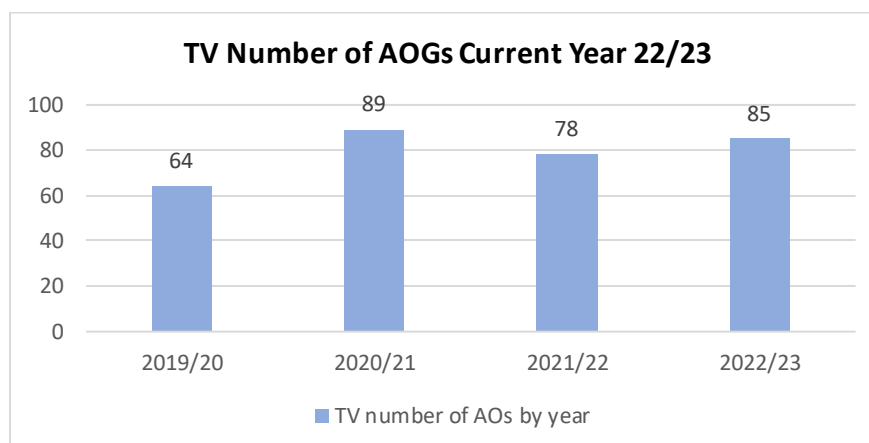
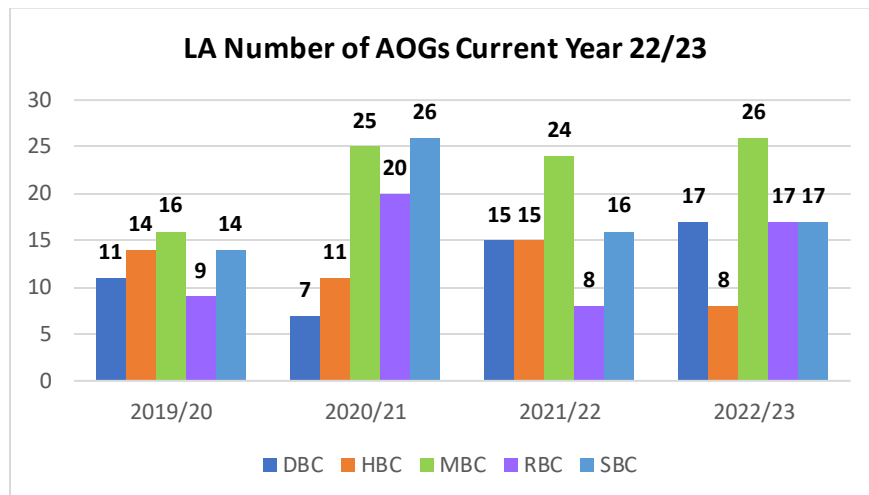
Reviewing the increase in numbers of PO and ADM BIDs overall, it is identified that there was a rise in rate of PO during Q4 2022-23 and these children will be progressing to match and placement in the forthcoming months.

Although placement numbers remain the same, it is reasonable to evaluate that there is an overall increase in the numbers of children progressing for adoption in this region, due to ADM and PO activity.

Middlesbrough is the outlier. There has been a turnover of workforce, including Agency Advisor and ADM in Middlesbrough and this LA has been impacted by capacity in the Medical Advisor role, which is required for ADM to take place. Work is underway, including in partnership between the LA,

ATV and the South Tees Acute Trust to improve and address capacity issues for MA time.

8.6 Adoption Orders Granted by Local Authority



Change by LA on Previous Year

- Darlington increase by 2- 13%
- Hartlepool decrease by 8- 53%
- Middlesbrough increase by 2- 8%
- Redcar and Cleveland increase by 9- 112%
- Stockton increase by 1 – 6%

Hartlepool decrease reflects a lower number of placements in the previous year.

8.7 Timescales for Children Matched and moving in with Adoptive Parents

The headline measures for timeliness of adoption are:

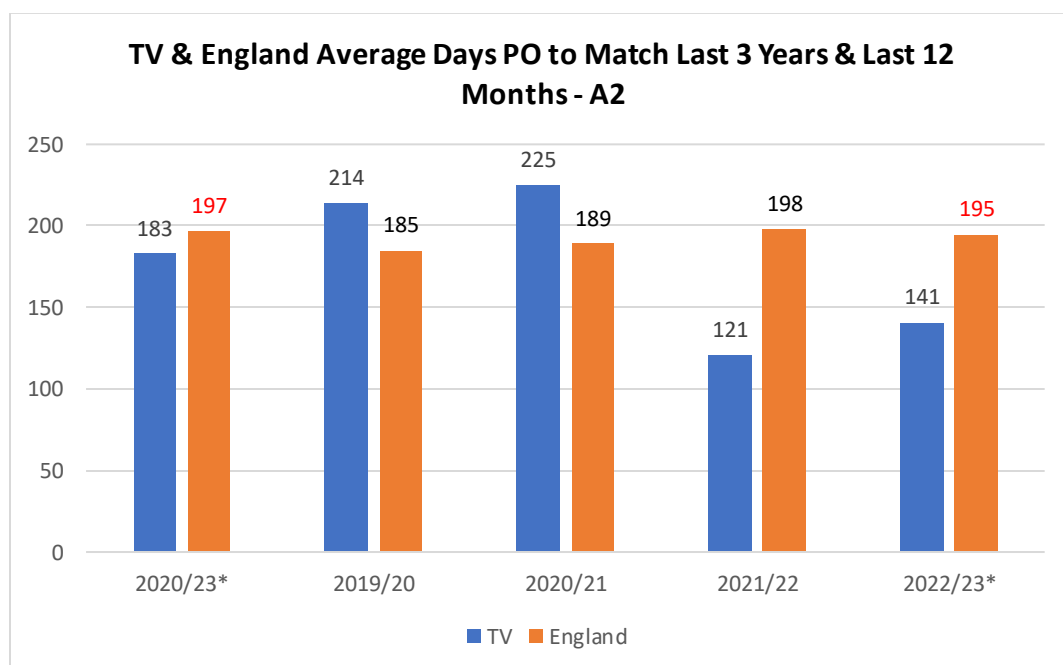
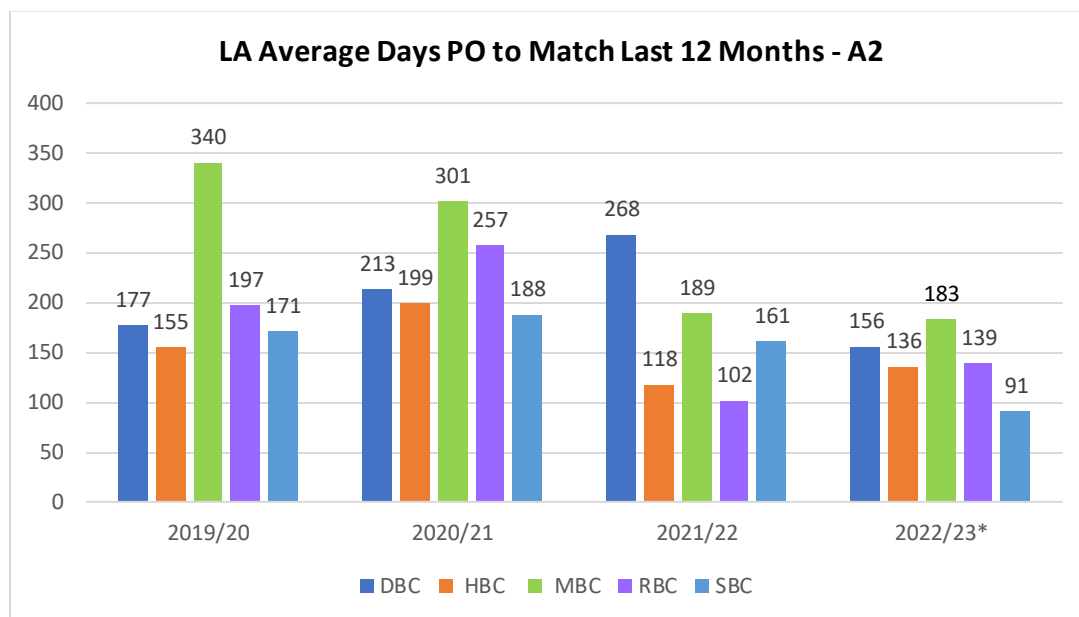
- Adoption scorecard indicator A2- Placement Order to match timescales

- Adoption Scorecard Indicator A10- date child became looked after, to date moved in with adoptive parents

All are based on the timescales of children who have been adopted in the year and are an average of those children. As numbers are low, children with exceptionally high timescales can distort figures.

8.8 A2 – PO to Match by Local Authority

The government target is 121 days



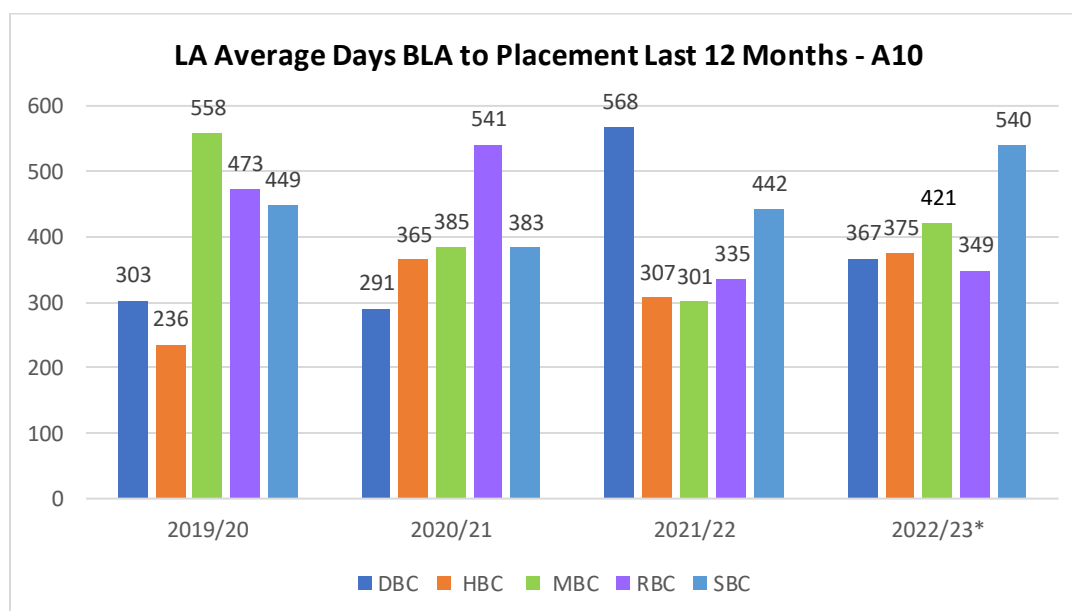
Change by LA on Previous Year

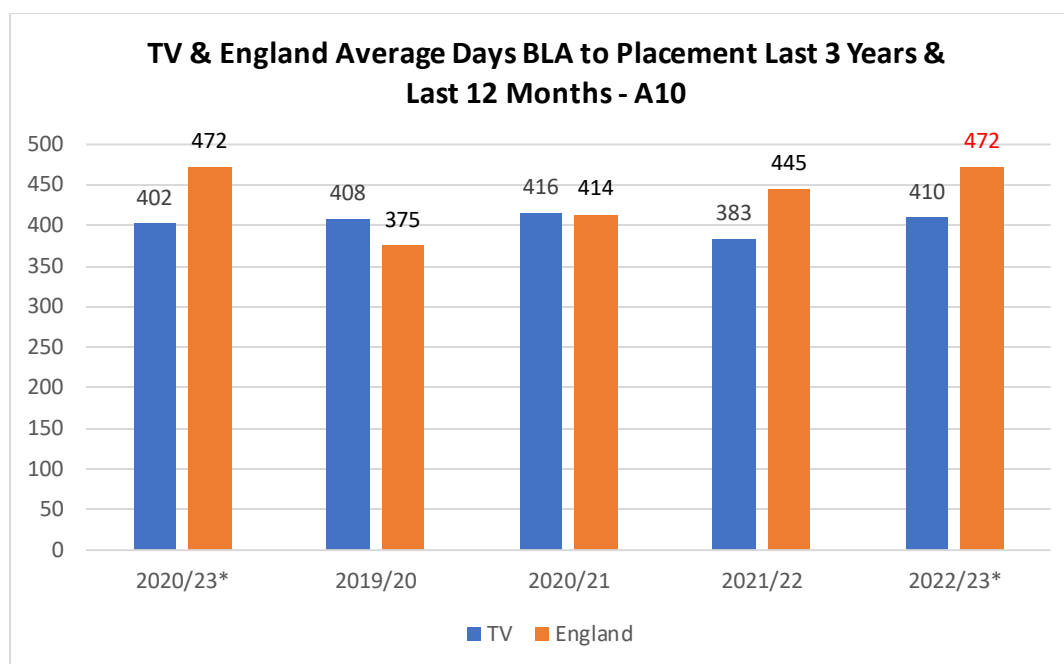
- Darlington reduced PO to match by 112 days, which is positive. The LA remains over the target time, but a reduction by 42 % in average timescale is positive.
- Hartlepool increase by 18 days, an increase of 15%
- Middlesbrough have reduced by 20 days, a decrease of 11%
- Redcar and Cleveland have increased by 37 days, an increase of 36%
- Stockton have reduced by 70 days, which is a decrease of 43%, which is extremely positive.

PO to match timescale is dependent on finding the right family for the child, and having good quality information on which to seek a family who is well positioned to meet the needs of the child. Family finding is most effective where there is an up to date good quality child permanence report, a good quality profile of the child, with high quality photographs and video imagery. Where social workers know the child well and consider the profiles and prospective adopter reports offered in a timely way, linking is effective, and centred around children's needs. Where children are to be placed alongside siblings, have more complex needs, or need to have contact with family members, it is important to have a good, well evidenced and up to date assessment of needs, as this is critical for successful matching.

8.9 A10- Became a child in our care, to moving in with adoptive parents, by Local Authority

The government target is 421 days.





Change by LA on Previous Year

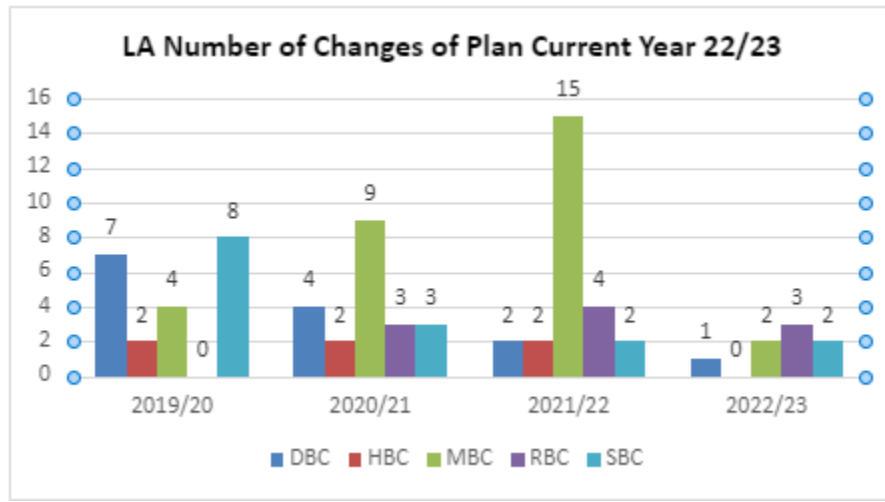
- Darlington reduced by 201 days, and 35% overall. Darlington has significantly reduced timescales for the children adopted, which is extremely positive.
- Hartlepool has increased by 95 days, which is 31%, Hartlepool remains on average within the government target timescale. 3 children had timescales which were higher than expected. As only 8 children were adopted in the year, these 3 children have increased overall average.
- Middlesbrough increase by 90 days, an increase of 30%
- Redcar and Cleveland increase by 14 days, and increase of 4%
- Stockton have increased by 98 days, an increase of 22%

Only Stockton have an average timescale which is over the government target timescale for children in this year, although 4 of the 5 LA's have increased overall timescale averages.

The analysis of timescales for Adoption Tees Valley shows that the average timescale overall for Placement Order to match has increased and is slightly above the government target. However, compared with the England average ATV continues to perform well, and there are generally few children waiting with a PO.

The timescales from a child entering care (CIOC) to moving in have increased for 4 out of the 5 Local Authorities. 4 remain within government target timescales on average, while one LA has a significantly higher average timescale, which is accounted for by a number of children. A theme is a child returning home on a care order, then coming back into care, and going on to be placed for adoption.

8.10 Changes of plan away from adoption by Local Authority



The total numbers of children for whom there is a change of plan away from adoption has reduced year on year, with a significant decrease in this year, which is largely accounted for by Middlesbrough continuing with a plan of adoption for more children (following ADM BID). Changes of plan can arise for a number of reasons, which can include the RAA being unable to find an adoptive family, the needs of children changing, or family members being identified at a late stage during care proceedings.

8.11 Interruptions

There were 2 children who had an interruption to their planned placement. This is where the child is in introductions to their new family, and the plan does not proceed to placement. The 2 children were siblings.

8.12 Disruption

One child has had a disrupted placement. A disruption is where the child leaves the family prior to the granting of an adoption order.

A disruption meeting has taken place, independently chaired, and learning disseminated, and considered by the ATV team, and panel.

8.13 Children Returned to Care, post Adoption Order

6 Children are identified as having returned to care post adoption order, all being in the teenage age range.

9. Children Matched and Placed 2022-23

9.1 *Internal- External Families*

	Totals 2021-22	2022-23 Q1 and Q2	2022-23 Q2 and Q3	2022-23 Totals
ATV children placed with ATV adopters	58	31	21	52
ATV Children placed with external adopters	19	15	10	25
External children placed with ATV adopters	0	0	0	0
Total ATV children placed	77	46	31	77
Total placements	77	46	31	77

52 of the children were placed with ATV families, and 25 with external agencies.

17 of the 25 (68%) children placed with external agencies were placed with the regional VAA's, with whom ATV works in partnership.

Of the 7 children being placed away from the region, 4 were placed with RAA's, in the North region.

ATV continues to strive for sufficiency of adoptive parents. The gap for ATV is adopters who can take siblings, and older children or children with additional needs, including needs arising from maternal alcohol consumption in pregnancy, and significant attachment difficulties.

9.2 *Children waiting with PO – not linked at the year end*

On 31.3.23 there were 5 children with a PO not linked or matched.

Of these children, 2 were siblings, and there were 3 single children.

No child had a PO for over 7 months, and 4 of the 5 had PO for less than 3 months.

The single children were aged 4, 2 and 1.

One child was of mixed ethnicity, Asian- White British.

9.3 *Demographics of Children*

Of the 85 children adopted in the last 12 months:

Aged under 5 years	73	Aged over 5 years	12 (14%)
Female	39	Male	46
Minority ethnic background	10 (12%)	White British	75
Disabled	0	Part of Sibling Group	27
“Harder to Place”	37 (44%)		

9.4 Matching and Family Finding Developments

The first option for considering families for ATV children will always be with ATV approved adopters, and all children with an ADM, or progressing to ADM are considered for available ATV families. Children are placed with families who match their needs, and if no internal family is a suitable match, the agency will seek external families approved to adopt.

ATV has a developed process for family finding regionally, through regular VAA meetings with ATV Family Finding managers. 8 children were linked through these meetings in the reporting period.

Any child not linked by the time of PO is placed on Linkmaker, the national portal for linking children to the right family. In the reporting period 16 children were linked through Linkmaker to external adopters.

There have been 3 funded activity days for children, through the national RAA programme. 1 child has been linked through the Activity Days programme.

ATV has commissioned a professional photographer, to do high quality photos where these are not available, showing children in a positive, and playful light.

10. Early Permanence

Key developments and Vision

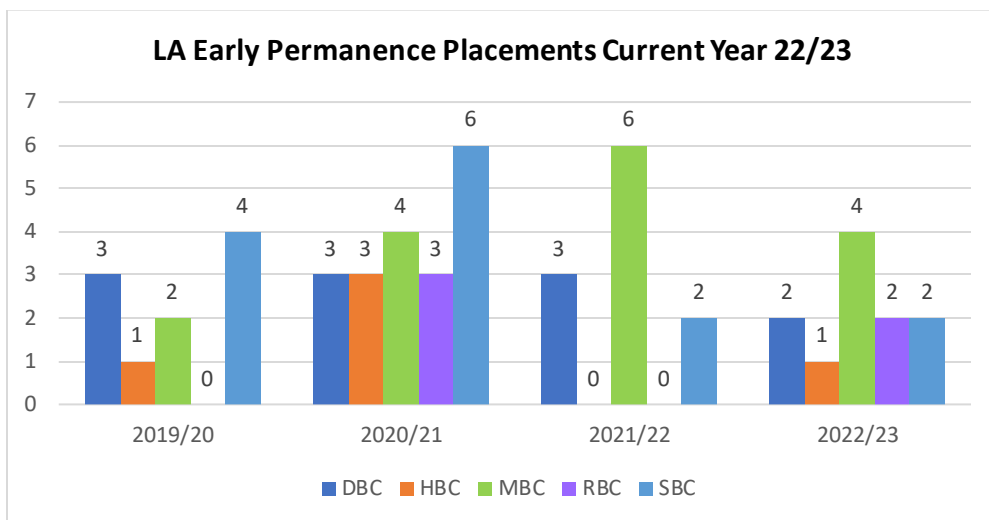
Early Permanence is a key strategic priority for ATV. The reason is that this reduces moves for children, while care plans are being developed, provides the potential for earlier secure attachments, but is not a pre-emptive placement prior to final Court decision making. The service has continued to practice a dedicated early permanence approach for children. Close monitoring of all new referrals by Permanence Champions enables early consideration of those children for whom early permanence may be an option to be considered.

ATV sets out what early permanence means from an early stage with all people approaching the RAA to adopt. This starts with the Information Events, and is followed through initial visits, preparation training and assessments.

Learning from practice, ATV has:

- Moved to a dedicated 2 day preparation programme for all carers wishing to undertake early permanence, following the Coram BAAF EP training programme for carers. The focus is on the fostering role, and working with the wider system, and with birth parents.
- Started a support group for EP carers which is facilitated by one of the senior social workers in the team.
- Commenced wider system engagement through working with Fostering Managers and Fostering Supervising Social Workers, to increase working together. Each Fostering service has a named EP Champion who will promote knowledge and awareness of EP in the LA Fostering team.
- Continued with workforce development of LA social workers by delivering training to LA staff and managers.
- Worked across the regional Sufficiency and EP Placement Project footprint to develop more consistent practice in the North East, and to secure more availability of EP placements.
- Following learning from the National EP Conference, is now moving to attend Legal Gateway meetings in all LA's, where earlier knowledge of children during PLO enables active consideration of EP for more children.
- Has a suite of leaflets available for various parties, including birth parents.
- ATV now has experience of returning children to parents' care. It is viewed as a positive option where this is safe and right for the child, and the RAA is confident and experienced in promoting a better understanding of this with staff and EP carers.
- ATV will in 2023-24 create a dedicated EP team, to increase sufficiency of carers and promote more children having access to EP.

10.1 Early Permanence in Local Authorities



There have been 11 EP placements made this year. The distribution is shown across the partner Local Authorities.

11 adoptive families have been approved who can undertake EP.

The service will aim to increase the numbers of children who have access to EP and are placed through this route, and the numbers of adopters approved who can also undertake this placement type.

11. Adoption Support

Adoption Support continues to be a key focus for ATV and as a national priority. We know that adopted children and their families need every bit as much consideration for support as foster carers. The child is no longer in the care system, but their needs associated with early adversity, and identity with a birth **and** adoptive family do not change because they are adopted. Adoption is a good outcome for children where no family members can provide the assurance of permanence for the duration of childhood and beyond. We know adoptive families accept, love and care for their children, and relatively few return to Local Authority care. However, many children and families need support to help them thrive and ATV continues to develop its support to adoptive parents and children, aiming to create a community of adoption, and early support for all children and families as they start their lives together.

Tier 1

Support made available and provided for all adoptive families:

- Access to ATV closed Facebook group
- Monthly newsletter
- Face to face Stay and Play weekly- a facilitated support group where adoptive parents come, make friends, talk about parenting and the

children play. This also enables an early help offer where more support is required.

- Loud and Clear music group, facilitated by the Sage, Gateshead. A music group encouraging relationships, bonding and fun, through the sensory world of music.
- ATV events available to all adoptive families, subject to numbers- events such as Christmas party, art days, etc... which engage children and families with ATV.
- Letterbox contact arrangements to support keeping in touch and maintaining significant relationships moving forward. Includes direct support to birth family members where needed.

In this year, 21 children and 23 parents have joined the weekly Loud and Clear music group, bringing opportunity for bonding, sensory development and building relationships between families for the future.

Tier 2

Focussed groups, to support children and adoptive parents, according to needs.

These are:

- Children's Groups, ages 7-11, and 11-16. See below
- Nurturing Attachments- a therapeutic parenting training programme
- Talking about Adoption- a life story course to help parents talk about adoption as their child grows up
- Future Stars- a sensory therapeutic parenting programme for adoptive parents and children
- Non Violent Resistance- a 10 week programme for parents of children who are violent to parents/carers
- STEP group- a 6 weekly support group for adoptive parents undertaking early permanence placements, at any stage of that journey
- Education support provided by ATV dedicated Education Support Worker (ESW) . In many cases, the ESW works alongside an allocated social worker, to provide a multi-disciplinary approach to adoption support, according to the needs of the child.

Partnership work with Virtual Schools

ATV continues to work closely in partnership with the 5 LA Virtual Schools who co-fund the Education Support Worker in ATV. Additionally, VS Heads, and ATV Managers and ESW meet termly to work together to develop a comprehensive education support service developing in partnership with local and regional priorities and changes.

This year, Darlington and Redcar and Cleveland VS's have collaborated to share their virtual reality headsets with ATV, enabling prospective adoptive parents to gain this realistic and experiential insight into the early experiences of children placed for adoption.

Jo Johnson, Redcar and Cleveland Virtual School Head said:

"It is fantastic that partners are so supportive of each other, focusing on the issues that are imperative to strengthening our offer to children and families. ATV have embraced the VR headsets, trained staff and are beginning to deliver headset sessions advocating a trauma based approach to the wider audience of our adopters, early permanence carers and the impact that this undoubtedly has upon our previously looked after cohort of children. This develops what the Virtual Schools are working on within schools and education providers across the Tees Valley."

In this year, 15 parents have attended Nurturing Attachments to develop therapeutic parenting approaches and skills.

7 families/7 children have joined the Future Stars programme, benefiting from a therapeutic sensory programme for children.

13 families have attended the "Talking About Adoption" workshops, aimed at supporting adoptive parents to talk about adoption as their child grows up.

Tier 3

A dedicated specialist adoption support service, with an allocated social worker from the ATV adoption support team. The adoption support assessment will have indicated a need for a specific adoption support intervention, provided through the Adoption Support Fund (ASF), or for more specialist intervention from a partner agency. ATV has expanded its work with Local Authority early help and assessment teams, to create a shared understanding of adoption support needs, and a shared responsibility for provision of advice, supports and services, including financial support packages.

The service has in this year changed the way in which adoption support assessments are responded to, with a shorter 1 hour telephone assessment

within 10 days, enabling parents to feel confident there is access to support and therapy more quickly. Although delivery of therapy remains within timescale of the Adoption Support Fund (28 days application agreement process) this early response is better for adoptive parents and children and is reflected in a better response on the adopter survey – see below. The early duty response to requests for assessment involves:

- A social work response to requests for an adoption support assessment, either for a specific identified support, or a more comprehensive assessment of support needs.
- An offer of services available under tiers 1 and 2
- Therapeutic support provided by one of the commissioned therapy providers who have been agreed to join the ATV providers framework.

Currently, the gap is a more joined up approach with health services, provided via TEWV and CNTW mental health specialist services. It is planned that this will be improved through the new partnership model for adoption support, outlined in the introduction to this report.

In this period, work has been undertaken to agree shared Adoption Support procedures across all 5 Local Authorities, and ATV. These detail the responsibilities of ATV, the local authority and how the agencies work together in respect of statutory responsibilities for assessment and provision of adoption support.

12. Commissioned Services

12.1 Independent Birth Parent Support and Access to Adoption Records

Adoption Tees Valley commissions independent birth parent support, and an access to adoption records service from a regional VAA.

In this year, the contract for these services was re-tendered, and was awarded to Arc Adoption, having previously been awarded to Adoption Matters.

The transitional arrangements have been supported by Stockton Procurement, as the host Authority for the RAA. The transition of the contract has been smooth and well managed, and recognition is given to both VAA's for the work that they have/are undertaking for the support of birth parents and adopted adults.

12.2 Framework of Therapeutic Providers

ATV has operated a Framework of Therapeutic Providers for delivery of adoption support therapeutic services for children and families. The framework has been in operation since 2018 and has been fully retendered

within this period. The funding for therapies for children is drawn down from the Adoption Support Fund.

Assessment is undertaken by the adoption support social work service as detailed above, and application is made in each case for the most appropriate therapeutic intervention based on the assessment, and in some cases, specialist assessment- also a commissioned service, through the Framework.

There are a total of 20 providers on the framework, who are awarded the contract for specific therapeutic input, as detailed within each aspect of the framework, dependent on their successful application. The providers are a mix of small and larger local and regional therapy providers, and the range of providers is valued, giving a range of options for therapy for children and families. Therapeutic approaches include: theraplay, Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP), play therapy, family therapy, sensory integration, therapeutic life story work.

The new multi-disciplinary adoption support service under development (MDASS) will bring the added benefit of a partnership with health, enabling more clinical oversight of assessments and of commissioned services.

12.3 ASF Applications

The value of applications to the ASF is set out below. A new process is in place, whereby invoices are paid once the therapy has been completed, and so actual payments are less than the value of applications.

The numbers of referrals and assessments, including cases with education support is set out below.

	2021-22	2022-23	
Number of adoption support referrals	106	126	Inc 19%
Access to Files requests/completed	40	45	Inc 12.5 %
Adoption Support Assessments completed	106 +94 repeated assessments	126 + 163 repeated assessments	Inc 19 % inc 74% repeated assessments

Successful application to ASF	200	289	Inc 44 %
Unsuccessful application to ASF	0	0	0
Value of applications to ASF	£718,302	£1,060,651	Inc £342,349
Education Support Cases during year	77	32 new 114 total	

The information shows an increase in adoption support activity during the year.

ATV makes group applications to fund the Tier 2 therapeutic programmes, and the increase in Tier 2 supports accounts for some of the increase in funding applied for, and assessments.

It is planned that ATV will trial a new outcomes framework- measuring the outcomes of adoption support and therapeutic intervention during 2023-24. This is a national pilot, and a voluntary arrangement. However, ATV will be progressing to develop an outcomes framework, in line with national development moving forward.

13. Involving Children and Adults in ATV

ATV has made good progress in working together with adopted children, and with adoptive parents, to help the service be shaped and informed through the voices of people with lived experience. This year has seen a resumption of groups for children, and of the adopter partnership forum, following the pandemic.

13.1 Children's involvement – Childrens Groups

There has been a full resumption and development of work with children and young people who are adopted, following the pandemic. In April 2022 ATV recommenced the children's groups, which are face to face groups led by one social worker, 2 adoption support workers, and the Education Support Worker.

There are 2 groups in place, each of which meets monthly.

There is a group for 7-11 year olds, and a group for 11-16's.

The groups have been well attended and are very valued by adopted children and their parents. Activities are collective, and promote adopted children meeting with each other, forming friendships, and getting more comfortable with their identity as adopted young people.

13.2 Voice and Influence – Children and Young People

The service has started a dedicated Voice and Influence Group, and development of this is underway within the reporting period, and into this new reporting year (2023-24).

The team have been supported in the development of this group through specialist training: they have learned that it's important to take time to develop the confidence of young people and seek their involvement in having a voice in service development as a separate activity to the focus of the young people's groups. With support from the National RAA project team, ATV has commenced its journey of development of our own Voice and Influence group.

There are 9 young people who have begun involvement, ranging from age 11 to 17, and the group has started to form its aims, and goals, which will include presenting to the ATV Board its ideas.

Young people have been involved in interviews for staff and have begun exploring their big issues which they feel need better understanding for adopted children, including education, and life story work.

13.3 Adoptive Parents- the Adopter Partnership Forum

The Adopter Partnership Forum has recommenced following covid. A survey via the ATV newsletter was sent to adoptive parents to seek expressions of interest for the forum, and a good response was received. The forum has now reconvened, with a monthly meeting, joined by the Service Manager and one of the Team Managers. Attendance is still relatively low, however, is increasing gradually, and the group is forming ideas for involvement of more adopters, and how the voice of adoptive parents can influence the service delivery.

The forum has considered the adopter survey (see below) feedback, and some changes have been made as a result of the feedback and discussion. For example, a new matching agreement, to enable newly approved adoptive parents to tell the service how they want to be kept informed of potential matches.

The ATV Board has decided that the Adopter Forum will be asked to select the next ATV Non-Executive Director for the ATV Board. This has been discussed and will be progressed in the next 3 month period.

A further benefit of the Forum is that one adoptive parent has been able to generate positive links with the Tees Valley museums, who are now considering ways in which adoption and adopted people can be given support through the Museums network.

ATV Board continues to hold 2 Non-Executive Director seats for Adoptive parents in the ATV community. Currently, Pete Kirby Bowstead holds one position. Pete is also a headteacher in a primary school in the region and has been a voice and support of adoptive parents in Tees Valley. Pippa Turner has decided to step down from her position as NED after 3 years on the board. ATV is grateful to Pippa for her contribution on behalf of adoptive parents.

13.4 Adopter Survey

An adopter survey was undertaken with adoptive parents, circulated through the ATV mailing list. There were 44 respondents- all adoptive parents at different stages of their journey.

The survey mirrored a previous adopter survey undertaken at the end of 2021, and much of the feedback is encouraging.

87% were satisfied or very satisfied with ATV response to their initial enquiry.

87% were satisfied or very satisfied with the adoption process through ATV.

88% were satisfied or extremely satisfied with their preparation training.

81% were satisfied or extremely satisfied with the linking and matching process.

90% were satisfied or highly satisfied with the plan of introductions to their child.

72 % were extremely satisfied or satisfied with the adoption support provided in the last 18 months, and 79% were satisfied or extremely satisfied that adoption support was offered in a timely manner. This is a huge and positive development with this figure being much lower at the last survey. As detailed above, ATV has restructured how adoption support initial contacts and assessments are undertaken, and the improved adopter satisfaction is encouraging.

Similarly, the survey tells us that many adopters are aware of the Adoption Support Fund, that they find the CATCH on line training platform valuable, and that they value the monthly ATV newsletter.

Where do we need to pay most attention?

58 % were satisfied or very satisfied with the education support offered, which appears lower than expected. We believe this may reflect some families who

have not needed or taken this up, and therefore are not providing a positive response.

29% of those replying said that they experienced some mental health problems, sadness and/or depression following the child joining their family.

Taking these issues forward, all of the areas for reflection and improvement are tabled for discussion, or have been discussed with the adopter forum, and have been included in the ATV 2023-25 Service Plan.

14. Adoption Panel

Within this year ATV Board has agreed additional funding for a 3 day per week Panel Manager and Agency Advisor to the adoption panel. This has enabled improved performance, quality assurance and consistency in relation to all panel matters and has brought a dedicated focus to panel from one single panel manager. This has brought an improved quality assurance feedback process, with Local Authorities and ATV receiving evidence based quality feedback in a more focussed way. The Panel Manager has provided training on key aspects of adoption panel related work, including production of quality Child Permanence Reports (CPR's).

Panel Business meetings with panel chairs and the Agency Service Manager, who is also ADM for adopter approvals have continued, and are now convened by the Panel Manager. These are supported by 6 weekly business meetings between the Panel manager, Chair, and vice Chairs. The panel now has an improved QA function in relation to feedback forms for applicants, attending social workers, and panel members, and feedback is acted on.

The panel members have all undertaken annual appraisal, using a new more efficient and effective 360 approach, which has been positively welcomed. Panel members have undertaken training on a number of key aspects of adoption related business including early permanence. Panel chairs, vice chairs and the panel manager have undertaken training on Cultural humilities, and a session for all panel members is planned.

The panel chairs 6 monthly reports have been produced and presented to the ATV Board. This details in full the work of panel, including timescales, and quality issues and themes.

In this year, there have been:

- 56 adoption panels convened.
- 71 matches presented, including 79 children.
- 9 cases presented where the child was already placed in an early permanence placement.
- 1 consensual adoption case (previously known as relinquished)

- 55 approvals presented.
- 1 brief report presented.

Panels have remained largely virtual in this year. A survey has been undertaken with all parties to seek views on the question of virtual or face to face panel meetings. The feedback received indicated that a significant minority would value some opportunity for face to face panels again. This has been incorporated into a new plan, with one face to face panel per month, which any applicant who wishes for it can ask to be booked on to.

The agency continues to seek to increase diversity into the Central List, and this year a new panel member who is a young adult with lived experience of being adopted has joined. There are now more male members of panel also. The agency continues to strive to find more panel members from ethnic minority communities, with the aim of having at least one non white panel member wherever a child or family from a minority ethnic background is presented. We have heard nationally from black adoptive parents who feel very disempowered when an all-white panel hears their case, and ATV is placing a priority on this issue. Currently there are 2 black central list members, however, the service is currently seeking to increase this number.

Feedback from panel:

- Quality of matching documentation good
- Child's trauma timeline is appearing in most matching documentation
- Number of children having life appreciation days is increasing
- Quality of CPR's is improving
- The need for continual workforce training in LA's is noted
- PARs are generally good quality.

As part of their role, all 5 Local Authority ADM's have now observed the adoption panel, to be assured of the practice and approach of the RAA adoption panel. Feedback from ADM's has been positive.

The ATV Board has considered the full Panel Chairs report.

15. Staffing

As noted above, the service has appointed a 0.6 FTE Panel manager and Agency Advisor, which is a new post. 2 further social workers (2FTE) have been agreed and are now in post.

The service has 18.85 FTE Social Workers, which includes 12.85 in recruitment, assessment and Family Finding and 5 in Adoption Support. 1 FTE is dedicated to partner adoption assessments.

Within the current year, the service will be undergoing a temporary change in structure, for succession planning for the future. The current Service Manager will be reducing to 3 days per week, a new temporary post of Deputy Service Manager has been created, which is now recruited to, and the service has moved from 2 Team managers, and 2 Assistant Team managers, to a 3 Team manager structure. All appointments are temporary secondments and have been internal.

This will be further reported on in the Bi Annual report, 2023-24.

Overall staff retention remains good. In this year, 1 permanent part time business support staff member retired. This post has been filled by the apprentice, who was successful in gaining a position.

16. Quality Assurance

ATV operates from a position of continuous improvement, across all areas of the work. The service continually develops and seeks to improve through alignment with wider sector influences, changes, and developments; its own feedback mechanisms; audit; research; inspection; self-assessment.

Quality assurance is carried out through a variety of mechanisms. Key means of assuring quality are outlined below, and the service plan 2023-25 is underpinned by a cross cutting platform of continuous improvement and quality assurance.

The ATV Board has a role in being assured of quality of the service delivery, and a risk register is in place around key areas of risk for delivery, and/or quality concerns.

- *Service Plan*

There is an updated service plan, which has been developed through work with managers and staff, and is reflective of local development, and the national strategy and agenda on adoption. This plan will be updated quarterly and presented to the ATV Board with monitoring of progress against target measures, and outcomes.

- *Practice Model*

The service adopts elements of several key practice models in delivery of the adoption service.

The **Secure Base Model** (Schofield and Beek) is an operational model of attachment for children placed with alternative care givers and is used in preparation training and in assessment of adopters, and adoption support.

The **UEA Moving on to Adoption** is adopted in practice in many cases and is adapted dependent on the needs of the child, and family.

As detailed above, the service has adopted the **Trauma Timeline**, and is promoting trauma informed practice, within the RAA's own work, and across partner agencies.

Aspects of **Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy and Practice (DDP)** (Dan Hughes) are supported through the service delivery, including PACE parenting.

The Education Support worker is trained in the **Thrive** approach and adopts this within work with families and across schools.

ATV adopts a relational based approach throughout its work, both with families and children, and with staff in the service.

- *Performance Monitoring*

The RAA collates detailed adoption performance data, as required by the (former) ASGLB for quarterly returns. ATV has a key role in co-ordinating with partner LAs on adoption performance data. A quarterly balanced scorecard (BSC) is produced, which details performance measures, as set out within this annual report. There is a quarterly meeting with each Local Authority adoption service lead, to review each individual LA performance, key practice themes, and also for the LA to be assured about the adoption service. The BSC is presented quarterly to the ATV Board.

- *Panel*

Panel forms a key QA function for the work of ATV and partner agencies. In this year a separate Panel Quality Assurance Action plan has been developed, which is shared and reviewed by the Panel manager, Service Manager, and panel chairs.

- *Surveys and Feedback*

An adopter survey has been undertaken, as reported on above. Changes have been made as a result of feedback and will continue to be made.

Children and Young people have fed back on the groups that have been run. The voice and Influence group will have a role in seeking children and young people's views more widely.

- *Policies*

ATV policies are in a process of review. These are being reviewed to ensure that they reflect current and most up to date practice and expectations. The Adoption Support procedure has been implemented to reflect the shared responsibilities across all 5 agencies with respect to assessment and support of adoptive children and their families.

Policies will be available on the ATV website.

- *Supervision*

All staff receive monthly supervision in ATV, which includes reflective practice.

All staff have an annual appraisal which sets out their further personal development plan for the year ahead, aligned to their own career and role, and service planning.

- *Workforce development*

The service offers and supports workforce development, aligned to service and sector development, and learning needs of staff. Workforce development may be through attending a training event, shadowing, or through group reflective sessions.

Examples within this year are:

- Early permanence training- national
- Whole team reflection on the LJC Safeguarding review.
- ADM training day facilitated by RAA leaders/Coram BAAF.
- National Adoption Support Conference, focussing on trauma informed practice.
- Team day -developing trauma informed practice and the trauma timeline.

3 managers are currently undertaking level 5 management qualification. This will strengthen the management capacity in ATV and support overall succession planning.

- *Audit*

Audits have been regularly carried out with staff involved in individual cases. The audit process has been LA specific in this year, due to a number of partner LA's undergoing full ILACS inspections by Ofsted. The ATV Board has had one overview report presented, following audits within the service. A further overview report is planned.

Audit has helped the service reflect on quality of case records and ensuring that records reflect what an adopted person may need in the future. It has also informed practice standards and implementing these within the team.

- *Ofsted*

4 of the 5 partner LA's have been inspected by Ofsted, which includes inspection of the RAA- Adoption Tees Valley, through the lens of the Local Authority. These are- Redcar and Cleveland; Darlington; Stockton; Middlesbrough.

While a lot of preparation goes into being ready for each Ofsted inspection, reports only include a single short paragraph on the Adoption Agency. In

each Ofsted inspection, the report on ATV was positive, with strengths being the experience of adoptive parents, timeliness of adoption, and the adoption panel.

Ofsted is planning for inspection of RAA's as a single inspection in 2023-25.

17. Finance

Adoption Tees Valley is joint funded as a shared service under the Education and Adoption Act (2016) and is a joint funded on a shared basis, with the allocations of funding per LA as detailed below.

17.1 General Running Costs

Expenditure	Budget 2022/23	Outturn 2022/23	Variance 2022/23
Employees	1,640,000	1,596,000	(44,000)
Running Costs	244,000	377,000	116,000
Support Service Costs	113,000	114,000	1,000
Subtotal	1,997,000	2,087,000	73,000
Interagency Fees	500,000	652,000	152,000
Total	2,497,000	2,739,000	225,000

Employee costs underspent due to delays filling vacant posts in year and savings in staff mileage.

Running costs overspent due to additional utility costs of premises and additional adoption support and post adoption costs.

Excluding interagency fees, additional contributions from each Local Authority are:

	New % contributions	Additional 22/23
Darlington	14.6%	11,000
Hartlepool	14.9%	11,000
Middlesbrough	28.1%	20,000
Redcar & Cleveland	15.5%	11,000
Stockton	26.9%	20,000
		73,000

17.2 Interagency Fees

Interagency fees exceeded the budget figure by £152,000. Additional contributions from each Local Authority are as follows as follows:

	Percentage	Budget 22/23	Actual 22/23	Additional 22/23
Darlington	15.95%	80,000	104,000	24,000

Hartlepool	14.22%	71,000	93,000	22,000
Middlesbrough	27.16%	136,000	177,000	41,000
Redcar & Cleveland	15.95%	80,000	104,000	24,000
Stockton	26.72%	133,000	174,000	41,000
	100.00%	500,000	652,000	152,000

18. Service Development Plan

The service developments planned at the end of 2021-22 were:

Development Planned	Progress	Forward Plan
Strengthening voice and involvement of adopted children in ATV	Positive progress- V&I group in place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to develop the group, with dedicated staff to support
Strengthening preparation and assessment of adopters, to support more adopters taking more children with additional needs	Preparation strengthened through the Trauma Timeline – trauma Informed Practice, and addition of virtual reality headsets. Challenges remain in ATV adopters providing sufficiency for children with additional needs	Strengthening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopters waiting group. Ongoing training and support to adopters waiting. Clear information on profile of children from the outset of the adopter journey
Strengthening sufficiency of adopters, through increased marketing	More adopters approved in 2022-23.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to focus marketing on the needs of children ATV needs to find families for
Taking early permanence strategy to the next stage – phase 2	Pan regional Project-funded for 2 years in place. 2 ATV social workers dedicated to EP lead roles Work ongoing with fostering services LFJB discussions on EP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicated recruitment plan for EP carers- Autumn 2023 Full range of information for all stakeholders about EP LFJB development session on adoption to include EP Target increase of 20% EP carers, and 20% more children accessing EP

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance at legal gateway- all LA's, to jointly plan for early permanence
Strengthen partnership working, including with early help, to strengthen support to adopters when they need it.	New model of assessment has significantly reduced waiting times. Ongoing work with early help/CHUBs across TV to strengthen understanding of adoptive families, and challenges. MDASS team is in progress for more multi-disciplinary adoption support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wider multi-agency representation on ATV Board Develop shared approach of ATV involvement with any child referred to LA CHUB, to prevent child/YP prematurely leaving the family home/return to care.
Continuing to address life story book model.	Now with LA SW's LA's are responding to any LSB's identified as not being completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor for completion of LSB's and liaise where not provided to plan for completion
Continuing to address timescales for adoption support assessments	New model embedded, and survey indicates more satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New staff to be trained in early response, and assessment
Taking forward Panel improvements to maintain a streamlined approach to panel, and quality CPR's	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversify membership of Panel Quality feedback to individual LA's.
Continue to develop a focus on children's diversity needs, and welcoming/increasing prospective adopters from ethnic minority backgrounds	More adopters have been recruited. Children from minority ethnic backgrounds are placed with ethnically and culturally matched adopters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed a dedicated focus on ATV approach to valuing and strengthening diversity including access to adopting for adults and understanding children's racial, religious, cultural and ethnicity needs for the future, and in matching
2023-25 – Key new Developments Planned		
Planned Development		Target timescale

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restructure for future resilience in adoption activity, and for succession planning. 	September 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a dedicated EP team. • ATV attendance at Legal Gateway - more children identified for potential EP, reducing moves for children, and releasing pressure on fostering resources. • Recruit more carers for EP 	October 2023 – March 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase sufficiency of adopters, able to take ATV children, including siblings and children who have more complex health and development needs. 	April 2023-March 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen adopters' family and friendship network support 	By December 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access to early medical assessments for adoption for children, and for adult health reports by appointment of dedicated adult health Medical Advisor 	By October 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce development across Tees Valley on adoption, early permanence, and CPR 	By December 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement and test new outcomes framework in adoption support 	By March 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on developing post adoption direct and indirect contact plans to maintain relationships, and promote life long identity and connections 	By March 2024

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July 2023