

The period January 2015 – March 2016

1. *Project Outline:*

To establish a unique, faith-friendly adoption pathway focused on harder-to-place children, encouraging churchgoers to consider adoption and providing seamless, ongoing support throughout the process.

2. *Participants:*

Voluntary Adoption Agencies

- Adoption Matters (AM) (Lead Partner)
- DFW Adoption Durham (DFW)
- Families for Children (FfC)
- Family Care Nottingham (FC)

Region(s) Covered

- Northwest / Yorkshire & Humberside
- North East
- Southwest
- East and West Midlands

3. *Aims of the Project*

- The aims of the consortium are to:
- Raise awareness of adoption across church communities
- Address and overcome perceived barriers to adoption within those communities
- Provide a supportive, peer led community for those at all stages of the adoption journey

In addition, it is the ambition of the partnership to establish a sustainable model for delivering this work once the grant funding has ended.

4. *Key outputs*

Home for Good – Outputs

- 5 new Regional Development Manager recruited
- National Mother's Day Adoption campaign
- 5 Adopters in Waiting groups established
- 25 new HfG church activity 'Hot Spots' established (5 per area)
- 100 Enquiries received through the pathway
- 25 new Adoption Champions recruited and trained
- Adoption Sunday events held in 450 churches
- 20 Adoptive families approved for HTP children
- 30 Harder-to-place Children placed
- Fully costed 'payment by results' model agreed going forward

VAA's Outputs –

- Find permanent placements for at least 30 'harder-to-place' children.

5. *Summary of activity relating to those Outputs*

➤ Regional Development Managers

The Northwest Regional Development Manager was already in post at the point the grant funding commenced. Once that was in place the remaining four posts were advertised and recruited. Staff commenced from in March and April 2015, each working two days per week.

Regional presence focussed on;

- Information events
- Vision events
- Church engagement
- Individual engagement
- Outworking national campaigns and projects
- Other events

Regional work has also been carried out by core team and staff through attendance at speaking engagements, champion gatherings and additional projects which have also impacted on both national and regional presence.

- Since January 2015, we have run a number of successful national campaigns. Our Mothers Day and Fathers Day resources were free and used widely – although we have not obtained specific data on geographical spread or numbers of church and individuals who used them. However, the number of enquiries to our enquiry line does have a clear relationship to our national campaigns (Mothers Day, Fathers Day, and Adoption Sunday).
- The 'Adopters In Waiting' project has developed beyond the initial envisaged scope. Through analysis of the attendees at our Information and Vision events, we recognised that a significant proportion of people attending our events and engaging with us were much saying that adoption and fostering is something that they are keen to consider, but not in their immediate future, perhaps 3, 5, 10 years down the line. Reasons given were that they themselves were very young, had just got married, had very young birth children etc. We therefore concluded that it would be important to resource these people during this period while they consider these options further. This is an important time and can be used wisely. We therefore want to look at what we can do to prepare them, keep them motivated, and resource them during this time.

We have partnered with Threads, and more recently Just Love (organisations whose vision is to inspire and resource students to engage with social justice issues and equip them to do so) to engage with the student and young adult population to inspire and support them with their adoption and fostering journey. We ran a series of events aimed specifically at this demographic and wrote a series of blogs to accompany these.

The project has developed significantly and will include a Study Guide to accompany the Home for Good book. The outline concept for this has been finalised and writing is due to commence imminently. In addition, we are developing a series of other events and tools to support people at this stage. These include an online information event (which is the nearest to completion at this stage) which can be accessed by anyone considering fostering or adoption and a series of chat show type events with social workers and key people from within the church community who will continued to inspire and motivate those engaging with this project. Other tools include reading lists and resources for book clubs, tools to link with Home for Good champions who can provide peer support during the journey, and links to local staff. Discussions have also begun with social workers about how this project can help those who are ready to begin their adoption journey but need some support and encouragement to consider those children who are waiting the longest for adoptive families.

The concept and structure of the project has been mapped and work will now commence on developing these.

- In identifying 'hotspots' Home for Good recognises that the long term sustainability of our work will be achieved by having excellent connections and activities running at a local level. To support this we have established a number of 'Local Movements' who become responsible to run the work of Home for Good in their area. Each Local Movement is supported by a local Christian Charity, with whom Home for Good have an agreement to use our branding and resources. We then support them on an ongoing basis through our staff network of Regional Develop Managers. Our Local Movement have full access to all our template materials, as well as homeforgood email addresses, webpages and the use of a comprehensive on-line manual to support their work. Some of the activities that our Local Movements have run include hosting a conference on Fostering & Adoption; organising many information evenings; running regular Connect Groups to support foster carers and adoptive parents.

We now have eight Local Movements, and in the last six months we have established 4 new ones with a further 10 expected for the coming year.

We now have 40 Home for Good Churches, 26 of those signed up between March 2015 and March 2016.

The data from our enquiry line is still being analysed but we received 260 enquiries (telephone, website and email) between June and December 2015. We also launched our live chat service.

- Our champion activity continues to have a clear correlation to the effectiveness of our events. We currently have 302 champions, 113 of those are new since January 2015. We have carried out a number of regional training events and have increased the resourcing of champions at our annual national summit through seminars. We also use our social media presence and tele conferences to connect and further resource those champions. We have also developed written resources which were sent to all champions earlier this year with a particular focus on how they can be supportive of others, and our national Hope and Hospitality Tour is due to commence in April 2016. These events will gather Home for Good champions and anyone who is passionate about inspiring and equipping the Church to find a home for every child who needs one and welcome and support families who foster or adopt. They will further equip those Champions to influence change and put fostering and adoption on the agenda of their church.

During the grant period we have also run a number of Speaker Training sessions aimed at equipping our Champions to speak at engagements on behalf of Home for Good, either at a local level, or national media and church events.

- Our Adoption Sunday resources were downloaded and used by over 400 churches, and again, our enquiry line saw an increase in activity following that.
- The data relating to whether 20 Adoptive families have been approved for Harder-to-place children, and whether 30 Harder-to-place Children have been placed isn't clear and we await further details from the partner VAAs in this respect. Once that has been provided we will be in a position to confirm the number of enquiries, the number of people currently in Stage 1, the number of people currently in Stage 2, the number of people currently approved and the number of people who now have children placed with them.
- The model for the ongoing duration of the partnership has developed and moved away from a Payment by Results method. The agreement between Home for Good is now with each VAA and four of the five involved in the expansion grant have agreed a sustainable model moving forward post March 2016. The fifth is keen to remain working with us but is unable to do so due to financial constraints.

6. *Summary of Activity in addition to those relating to specific outputs above*

Information Events

All our Information Evenings are similar in style and format, although there are differences. Some are aimed at people just beginning to think about fostering or adoption, others are for people who are much further along their 'thinking about' it journey. Some Information Evenings are for those considering fostering only, some adoption only, while others are for both fostering and adoption. We call all of these events 'Information Evenings'. However, the varying template publicity leaflets outline the differences. Event where these events are focussed primarily on fostering (most notably the London events listed below) these will have impacted on our presence as an organisation and subsequent engagement in that and the surrounding area.

East Midlands - 6

London - 9

North East - 1

North West - 9

South East - 11

South West - 6

West Midlands - 1

Yorkshire & Humber – 4

Approximately 800 people have attended the above events with some ranging from intimate and informal events to larger events with more varied content.

Information Events – Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

These events have occurred as a result of a project we have run raising awareness of the current and potential needs for foster carers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. The project itself has had a significant impact on our presence both nationally and locally with churches and other organisations. In excess of 800 people have attended these events to date.

The events have focussed on fostering but have had a significant impact on our presence as an organisation and subsequent engagement in the areas where events have been held including church and champion contacts. These are crucial for our ongoing work in each region.

East Midlands - 4
London - 2
North East - 1
North West - 3
South East - 6
South West - 1
West Midlands - 3
Yorkshire & Humber – 3
Scotland – 1
Wales - 1

Vision Events

This is an event where we gather people in an area to explore what Home for Good might look like there. They are aimed at people who are already passionate about fostering and adoption these events usually attract existing foster carers, adoptive parents, those thinking about it, and a few interested family members, church leaders, youth workers and children’s workers. The desired outcome is that people are inspired about the Home for Good vision, sign up as champions, and are equipped to start getting their churches involved and the first steps of an action plan established.

East Midlands - 1
London - 1
North East - 1
North West - 4
South East - 3
South West - 4
West Midlands - 2
Yorkshire & Humber – 2
Northern Ireland – 2
Scotland – 3

In excess of 750 people have attended these events. Again, events outside of the participating VAA regions is expected to have had an impact on our national presence reaching beyond the location where the event is held.

Faith Literacy

The Faith Literacy Training has been run in each of the five participating VAAs, twice for some to allow for new staff of those who were unable to attend previously. The training has been developed and feedback has been sought from each VAA. The response has generally been positive. The content is currently with CCPAS (The Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service) who are collating it into a format which can be delivered on a wider, more sustainable, scale.

Speaking Engagements

Both the regional and national team have collectively had over 80 speaking engagements over the grant period, with an audience of over 17,000. The Pathway to Adoption, and particularly the VAA situated within that locality, will have been featured at those engagements to varying degrees as appropriate. There will have been some where the VAA will have been invited to attend, where it has been appropriate to do so.

Social Media and Website

Our social media presence has been increased throughout the grant period. Our Facebook presence relates mostly to our national work but has been utilised for regional activity. Most recently it was used to profile a sibling group of three girls. Our post was viewed over 1,700 times and shared beyond that. Our twitter account is resourced daily for both national and local activity and promotes local events. Statistics for our website and social media activity can be provided upon request.

Other Media

We continue to use other media engagements for both national and regional activity. The majority of our national media presence relates to our national work and overall vision, as well as more recently our project relating to the support of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. For Mothers Day 2015, Songs of Praise featured Home for Good and focussed on the needs of children in care.

Our regional managers have also participated in local and national radio coverage of our core vision and activity as well as Pathway related events. The Big Adoption Day, and the VAAs involvement in that, was covered in a specific national radio interview and one of our regional managers participated in a 5 day series of interviews which featured specific children being profiled by the VAAs, as well as our partnerships with the Pathway VAAs.

Conclusions

Although the data we have is not complete it is clear that Home for Good has clearly achieved the majority of the outputs set at the beginning of the grant period. We are reasonably confident that the number of approved adopters will also have been achieved (subject to the VAA data). What could not have been foreseen at the outset is the change that has happened in the adoption climate over the past 12 months and the number of children placed is yet to be confirmed.

Whilst the data we have is incomplete, some analysis can be carried out on what we have. By correlating the number of events with enquiries received we see some, but less than expected, relationship. The number of enquiries to our enquiry line does have a clear relationship to our national campaigns (Mothers Day, Fathers Day, and Adoption Sunday) and activity in regions where we have a strong Champion and Church presence. Investment in the relationships with those individuals and churches moving forward will be key to the effectiveness of our work.