



Reference Number: FOI-101004681674

Response provided under: Freedom of Information Act 2000

Request and response:

- 1. The Cornwall Council said there are '153 children currently waiting for adoptive parents in the South West', is the number of children needing to be adopted increasing?**

No, this quarter showed a slight decrease within England

- 2. Why do you think there are so many children that need adopting in Cornwall?**

Whilst the FOI Act doesn't cover opinions or recollections unless they are already recorded so we are not obliged to create new information in order to respond to requests, social and economic policies have placed more strain on vulnerable families (mental health problems, drug and alcohol use and domestic abuse) and more children into poverty. There is a causal link between poverty and adverse childhood experiences, like neglect and abuse. As a result more and more children need to be supported by local authority children's services and more are coming into the care of the local authority because their parents cannot provide them with safe and consistent care.

- 3. What demographic are you finding the hardest to find homes for?(keeping siblings together/disabilities/mental health/emotional trauma)**

The term 'harder to place' children is used for:

- older children (4 and above)
- siblings who need to be placed together
- children whose birth parents have severe mental health problems which could be hereditary,
- children who have an enduring or life-limiting health condition, and
- children with a severe disability such as Foetal Alcohol Syndrome or a complex physical or learning disability

4. Are you doing anything to actively find adoptive parents? (Are there any new campaigns to find adopters?)

We are constantly campaigning for prospective adopters to match the needs of the children whose plan is for adoption. We have just had National Adoption Week where there were various activities around Cornwall and increased media coverage. In January 2020 there will be a further campaign, in Cornwall and nationally, which will focus on 'harder to place' children.

5. How many children have been placed with families in the last 12 months?

1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019, 29 children were adopted in this period. 1st April 2019 to 30th Sept 2019, 12 children have been adopted in this period.

6. How many current families are being assessed for suitability?

There are currently 18 people being assessed to become prospective adopters

7. Is there a lack of social workers?

The FOI Act doesn't cover opinions or recollections unless they're already recorded so we are not obliged to create new information in order to respond to requests. However, it is a fact that social work across the country, including Cornwall is under immense pressure due to increased need (see 2 above) and reduced funding across the wider system supporting children.

8. How many children in Truro/Falmouth are waiting to be adopted?

As of the 30th September 2019 there were 28 children within Cornwall waiting to be adopted. It is not appropriate for us to break this down into specific communities within Cornwall because there is a risk that the children could be identified due to the small numbers.

9. Do you think potential adoptive parents are put off by how long the process takes to become adoptive parents?

No. The process to become a prospective adopter is 6 months in order to ensure a really good understanding of the prospective adopters (to make the best match with a child) and to ensure the prospective adopters have a really good understanding of adoption. The process is in 2 stages.

Stage 1 (2 months) which is about gathering baseline information, such as medicals, DBS checks and references. Applicants complete a self-assessment about their lives and undertake a 2 day preparation training course with other prospective adopters.

Stage 2 (4 months) which is the assessment stage.

The assessment of prospective adopters is subject to national minimum standards and statutory guidance to ensure it is safe and effective. Prospective adopters understand that the adoption process needs to be thorough as adopters will be parenting vulnerable children and will need support so that they can provide therapeutic parenting.

Information provided by: Together for Families

Date of response: 06 December 2019