

South East Wales Performance Report - 2019/20

The end year performance report for 2019/20 includes data on:

- **Children placed and waiting;**
- **Adopter recruitment;**
- **Meeting placement need; and**
- **Adoption support including Life Journey work.**

Highlights

Children placed and matched	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ There is improvement in the time taken to place children; with a further increase in the number of children placed within 6 months of the PO being granted and in the average time taken to place children. ✚ Numbers of children placed and matched continues to decrease.
Adopter assessments and approvals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Timeframes for approvals increased marginally but the region continues to perform well against recommended timeframes including 58% of approvals being within the 6 month benchmark for application to approval. ✚ 36 adoptive families were approved the lowest number for the region since this data began to be collected. ✚ Enquiries and new assessments commenced have begun to reduce albeit that recent investment in marketing and a new website will not yet have had a significant impact.
Children waiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ The number of children waiting at year end reduced by 6% (n4) and stood at 58. ✚ This reduction included 12 children whose placement orders were revoked a smaller number than the previous year.
Adoption support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Significantly more children in SEWAS are supported from the point of placement, 85% in 2019/20. ✚ This is likely to impact positively on the levels of new requests for post approval support at a later stage which are falling.
Life Journey materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ SEWAS is currently not able to provide data on life journey work available at matching. ✚ Availability by the 2nd adoption review is maintained at 56% albeit short of the 100% benchmark.
Birth parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ A similar number of birth parents were supported in a context of fewer referrals.

CORE DATA

2019/20 saw a significant reduction in children being referred to adoption services across Wales albeit not as large as that seen in 2015/16 which was after two significant High Court judgements.

For SEWAS in 2019/20

- Referrals fell to 138 a 27% reduction from 2018/19 and a 32% drop from the 204 referrals received in 2016/17 when this data started to be collected. All NAS regions experienced a reduction with SEWAS being the 2nd highest;
- There were 11 fewer 'should be placed' decisions a fall of 13% on the previous year with SEWAS being one the three regions that experienced a reduction; and
- Placement orders fell only slightly by 1 to 73 or 1% - all regions except for Mid & West Wales experienced a reduction.

The reasons for this are likely to be varied and will reflect the work being done by local authorities with the Welsh Government to reduce levels of 'looked after' children in Wales including the positive impact of 'Edge of Care' and 'Reflect' services. ***It is likely that these factors apply in SEWAS; the region may however want to consider what, specifically for them, has influenced this.***

This provides an opportunity to focus on further reducing the level of children waiting as will the lower levels of referrals and should be placed decisions in 2019/20 which may lead to a further reduction in placement orders during 2020/21.

It remains the case that circa one fifth¹ of all children leaving the looked after system in Wales do this through adoption as the best permanence option for individual children. Regional level data on this is not currently available.

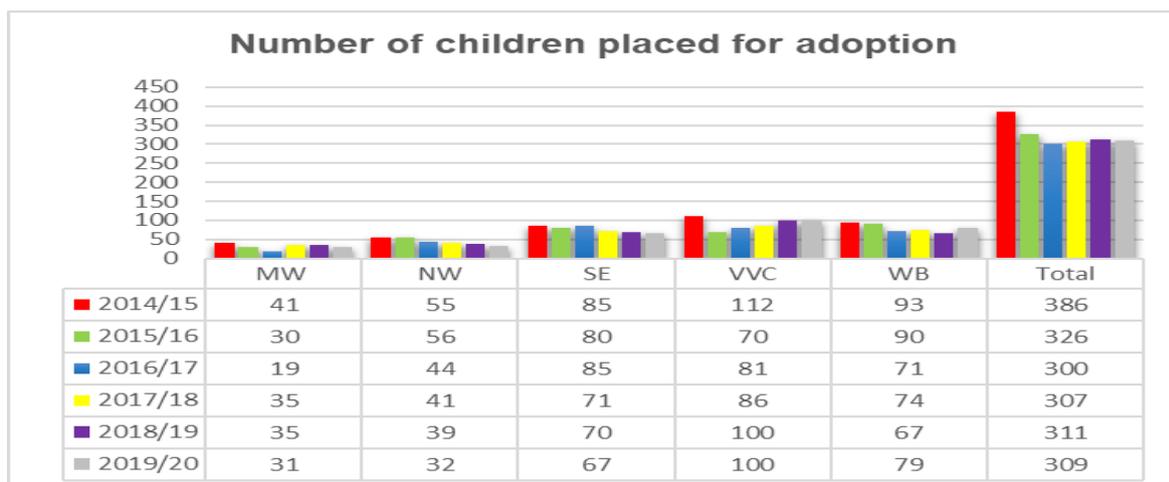
CHILDREN

Children - placed and matched

At 67, the number of children placed for adoption by SEWAS fell by just 3 albeit that this is in the context of a small year on year reduction since 2014/15. The overall reduction since 2014/15 and 2016/17, the years of the previous higher levels, is just over 20%.

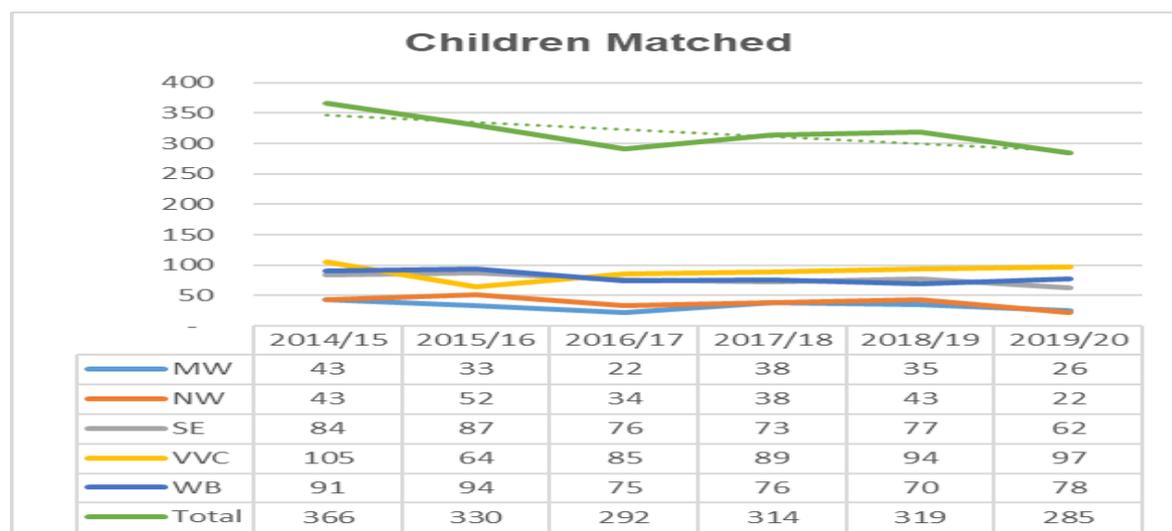
SEWAS increased the proportion of children placed within the region by 4% to 63%, with a further 10% placed elsewhere in Wales in both LA and VAA placements and an increased 27% outside of Wales. This compares to 59%, 23% and 19% respectively last year. 36% of children placed (n24) were sibling groups of two.

¹ Welsh Government Statistical release Children looked after by local authorities, 2018/19. Children leaving care by reason of adoption: 18% 2018/19



South East Wales		67					
Location:	Total Number	Via LA	Via VAA	Single	Sibling Group of 2	Sibling Group of 3	Sibling Group of 4+
Wales - within own region	42	42	0	30	12	0	0
Wales - outside own region	7	4	3	3	4	0	0
England	14	4	10	10	4	0	0
Scotland	4	2	2	0	4	0	0
Northern Ireland							
Other							
Total	67	52	15	43	24	0	0
<i>Number of Families</i>	55			43	12	0	0

The region also saw a 20% reduction in children matched, one of three regions to see this. There were 62 matches made which continues a gradual year on year reduction over the last 6 years; overall there has been a 29% reduction in children matched since the higher level of 87 in 2016/17.

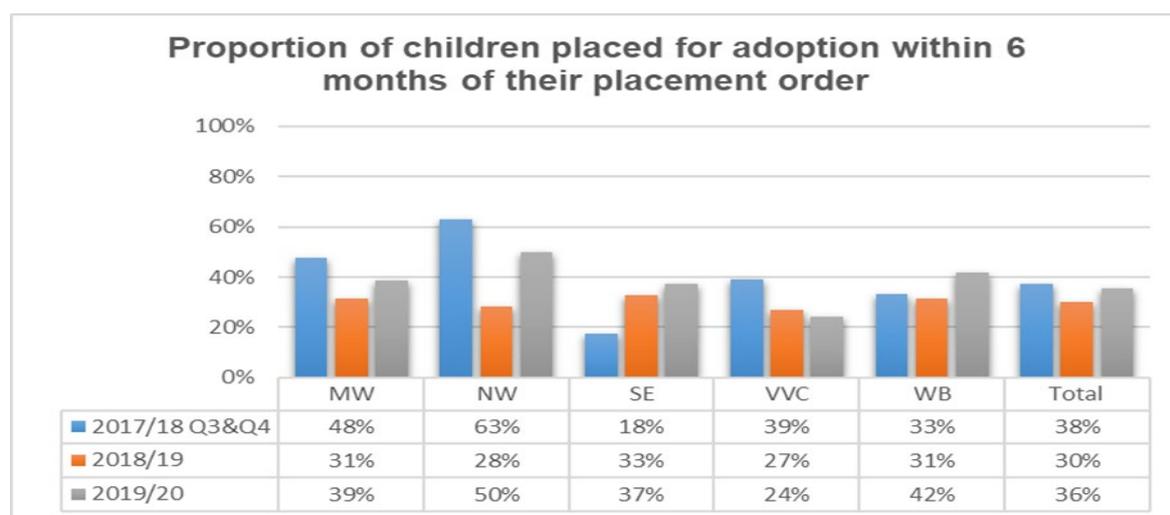


This reduction is likely to lead to a corresponding reduction in placements next year although it is not yet impacting significantly on the level of children waiting.

Children – timeframes

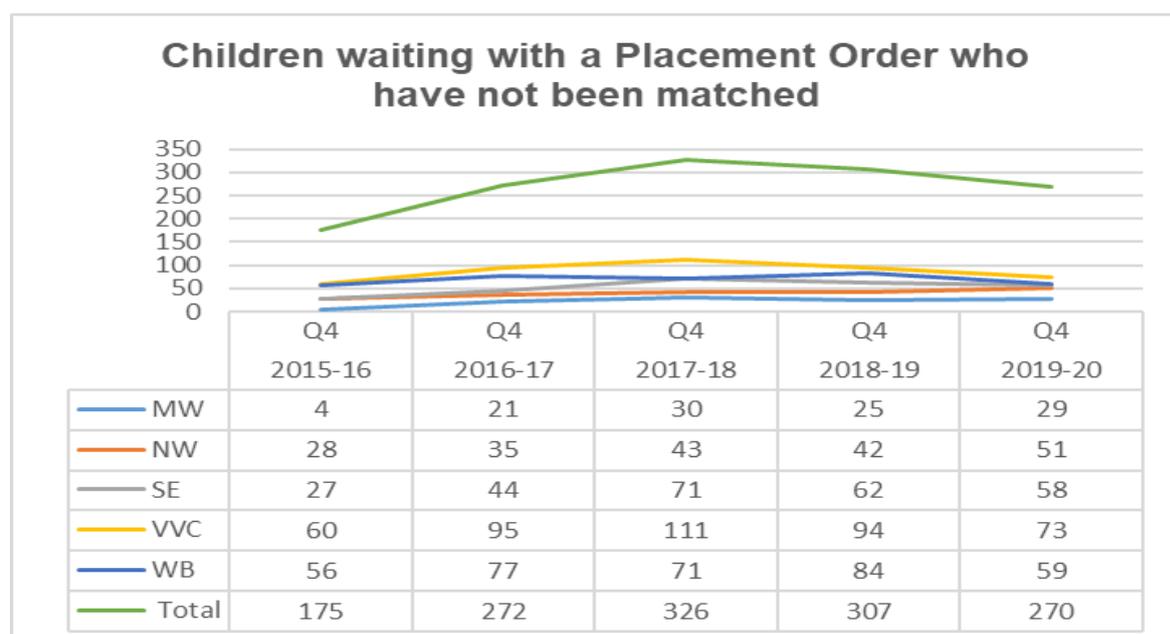
SEWAS improved the proportion of children placed within the 6 months of the placement order to 37%, one of 4 regions that did this. Overall 35% of children across Wales were placed within 6 months of their placement order which is the benchmark.

Linked to this SEWAS also improved the average time taken for a child to be placed once the placement order had been granted by almost a month, to 9.2 months, being the only region to achieve a significant reduction in this.



Children - waiting

The number of SEWAS children subject to a placement order but not yet matched stood at 58 on 31.03.20 a reduction of 6% (n4) from end of last year.



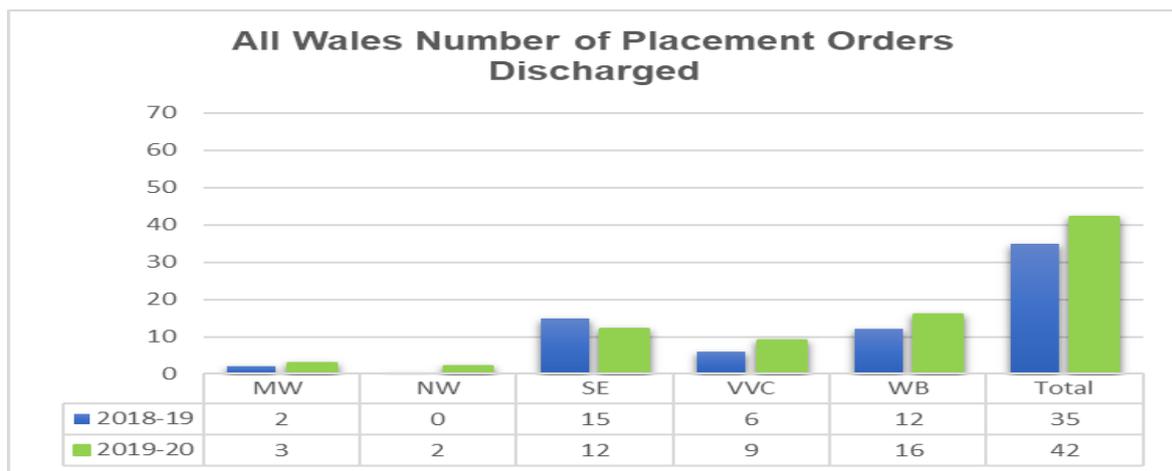
For SEWAS this number includes

- 18 children with a firm 'link' which is likely to be agreed and
- 3 children who are likely to have their status changed back to long term 'looked after' and an application for their placement order to be discharged.

If these children are excluded the overall adjusted number of children for whom SEWAS was actively family finding at year end reduces to 37.

For strategic planning purposes the region needs to aim to be able to place all children with a placement order so that no placement orders are discharged. In order to understand this better NAS has begun to monitor placement order discharges due to the fact that this is the less positive feature underpinning the reduction in the level of children waiting.

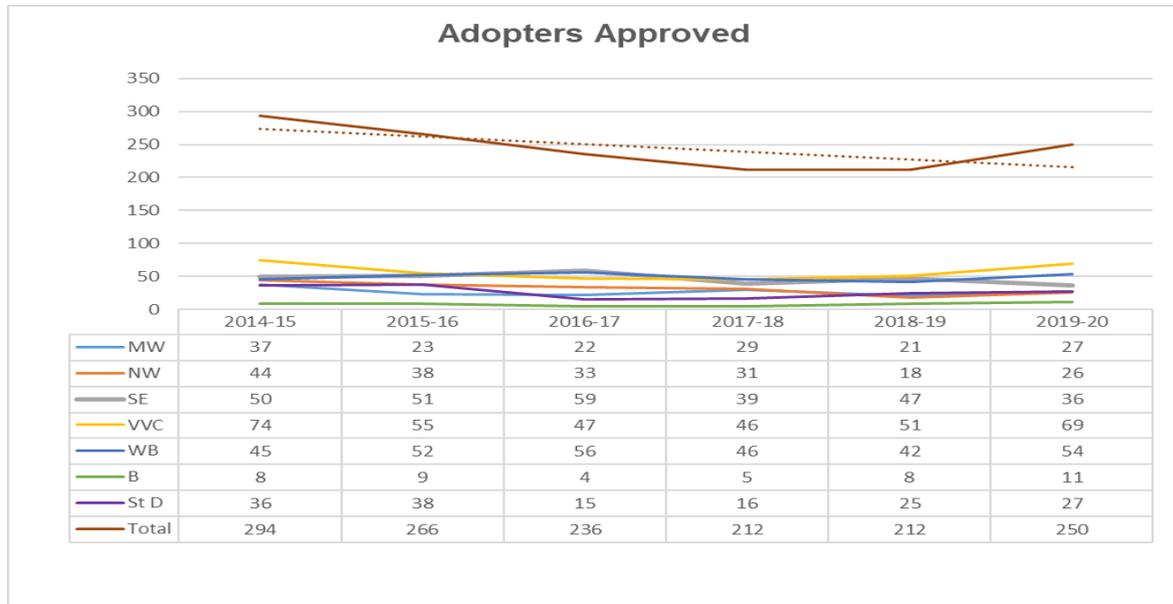
The number of placement order discharges reduced by three to 12 for SEWAS in 2019/20. SEWAS reports that short court ordered searching timeframes as well as placement availability are behind this; features which are shared in some other parts of Wales. Further Wales-wide analysis of this will be undertaken in 2020/21.



ADOPTERS

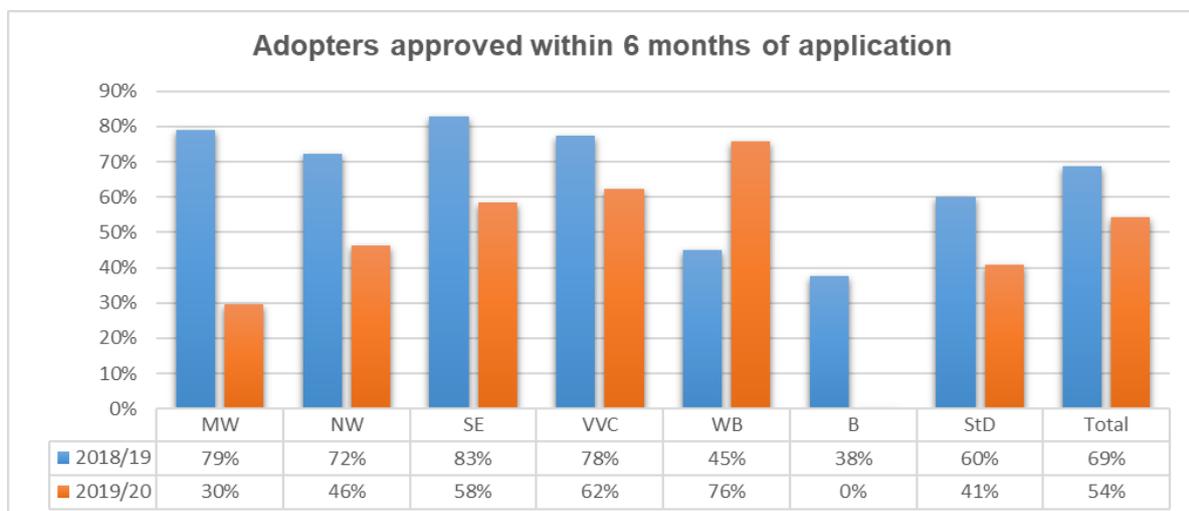
Adopters - approved and waiting

SEWAS approved 36 adopters during 2019/20, a decrease of 19% on last year and the only region to experience this; other regions / agencies experienced increases ranging from 8% to 44%.

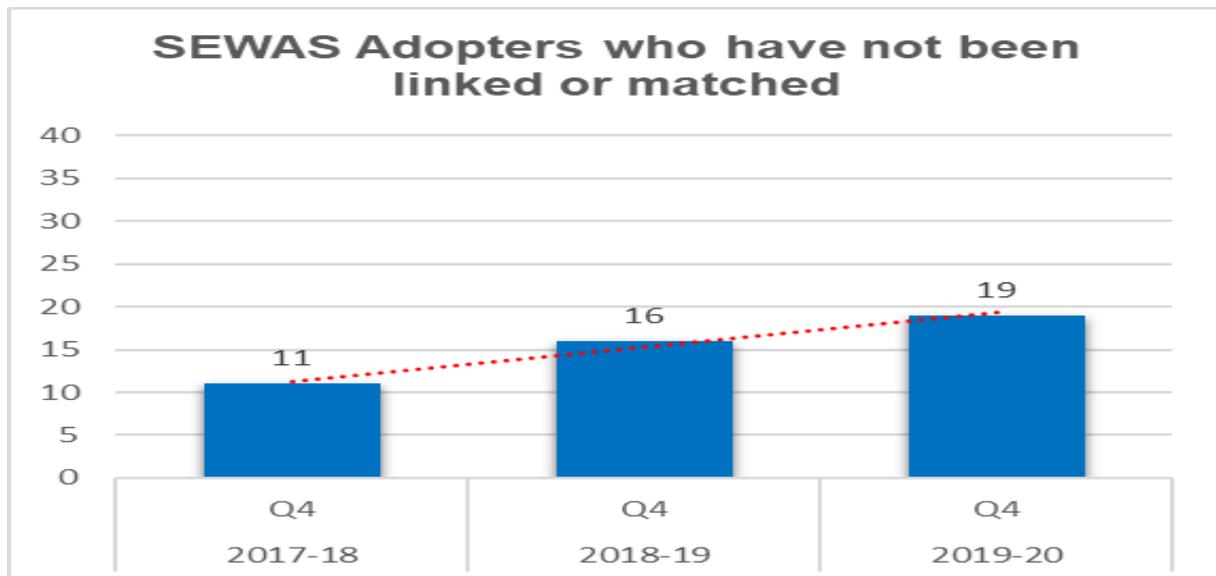


In terms of timeframes, the overall Wales average from the initial adopter enquiry to approval increased by just over a month to 10.4 months. SEWAS saw an increase of just over a month to 8.7 months but this remains near the guideline timeframe of 8 months.

A better measure of agency performance is the average from formal application to approval for which there is a benchmark of 6 months. Although seeing a small increase SEWAS continued to meet this benchmark with approvals taking on average 6 months. 58% of SEWAS adopters were approved within 6 months of the application.



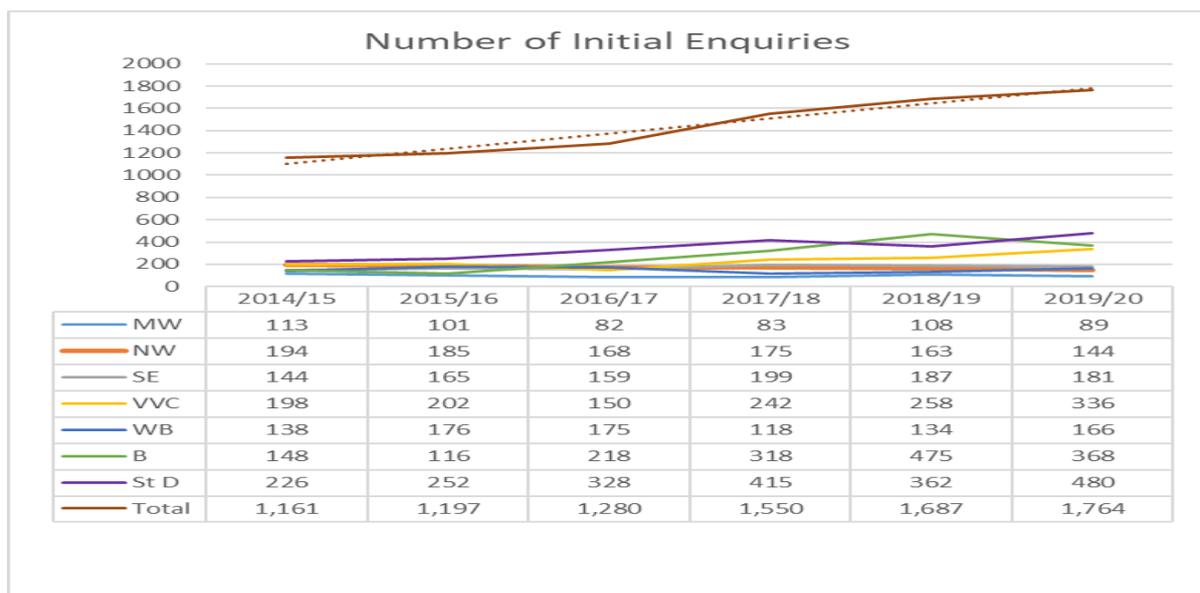
96 approved adopters waiting across Wales who had not yet been linked or matched at 31.03.20, an increase of 51 compared to 31.03.19. SEWAS saw an increase of 3 to 19.



Adopters – enquiries and new assessments

Levels of enquiries and assessments started are indicative of whether continued increases in approvals is likely into the future.

Generally across Wales the level of initial enquiries continues to increase showing a further rise of 4% during 2019/20. SEWAS saw a small decrease on 2018/19 but this is the second year with a reduction which totals 9% since the previous high of 199 enquiries in 2017/18.

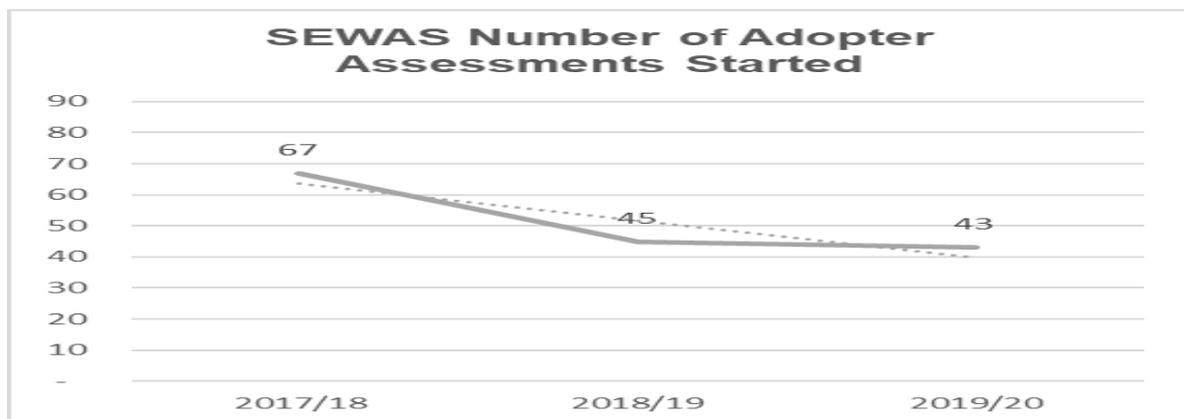


As outlined in the NAS Recruitment Strategy bigger increases of circa 33% are needed to meet need. Alternatively smaller increases combined with increased

conversion rates could facilitate increased approvals. Conversion in SEWAS was circa 12% during 2019/20 compared to 33% in the region with the highest conversion rate.

The goals provided by the region for the 'incremental model' aim to increase recruitment in order to reduce children waiting. For the 2019/20 the goal was 43. For 2020/21 the region aims to approve 72 adopters to meet calculated need.

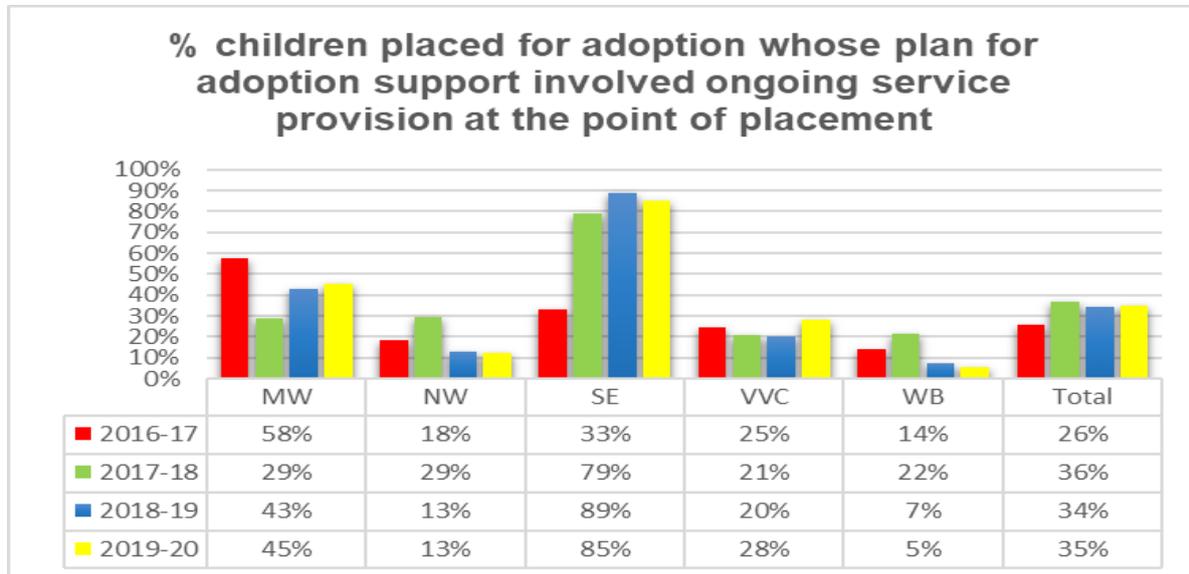
Across Wales, the number of assessments started increased slightly by 3% (n8) during 2019/20. SEWAS saw a marginal reduction from 2018/19 (n2) but this continues a lower level of assessments started, circa one third lower, compared to 2017/18 when this data began to be analysed.



In the last year the region has used investment to recruit a marketing officer and to launch a new website alongside numerous initiatives to attract interest. Now these are in place, the region will wish to capitalise on these to increase interest and applications to achieve desired numbers. ***The region may wish to consider whether there is other action possible or needed in the short term while these changes take effect.***

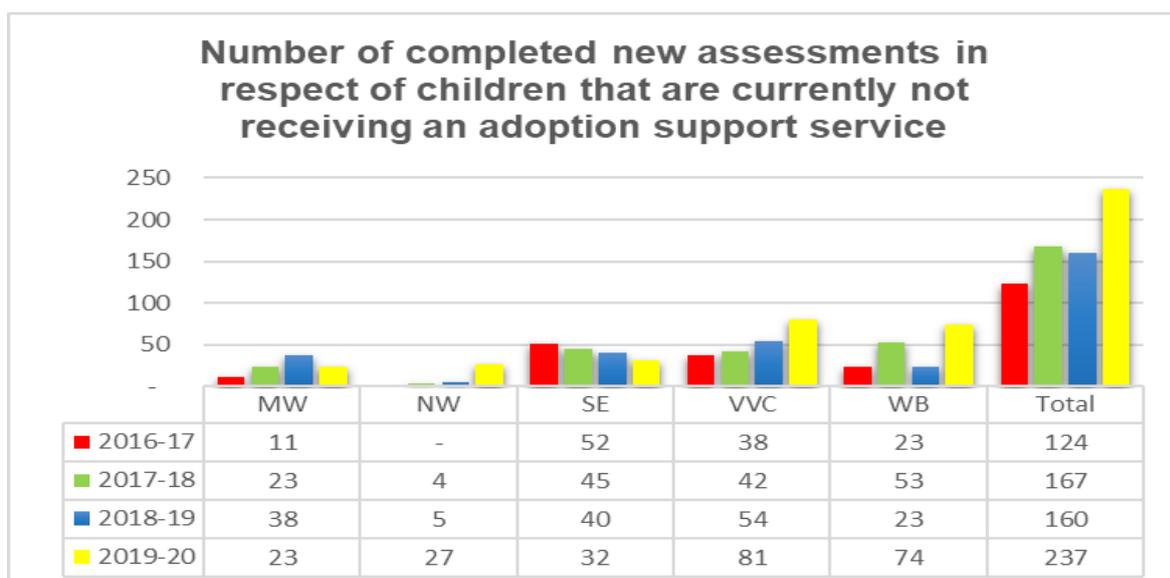
ADOPTION SUPPORT

Across Wales, the number of children whose plan included support from the time of placement remained relatively stable during 2019/20 comprising circa 35% of children placed. This is a fairly low percentage but an increase from the estimates of circa 25% in pre NAS research.



However, SEWAS has for a number of years provided higher levels of support due to its service configuration and the access to psychology service. This continued in 2019/20 resulting in support being provided to 85% of children placed, significantly more than in most regions.

Unlike other regions, and likely as a consequence, SEWAS saw a decrease in the number of new assessments for adoption support carried out. These are for families / children who are not in receipt of ongoing support who develop support needs. This reduced to 32 from 40.

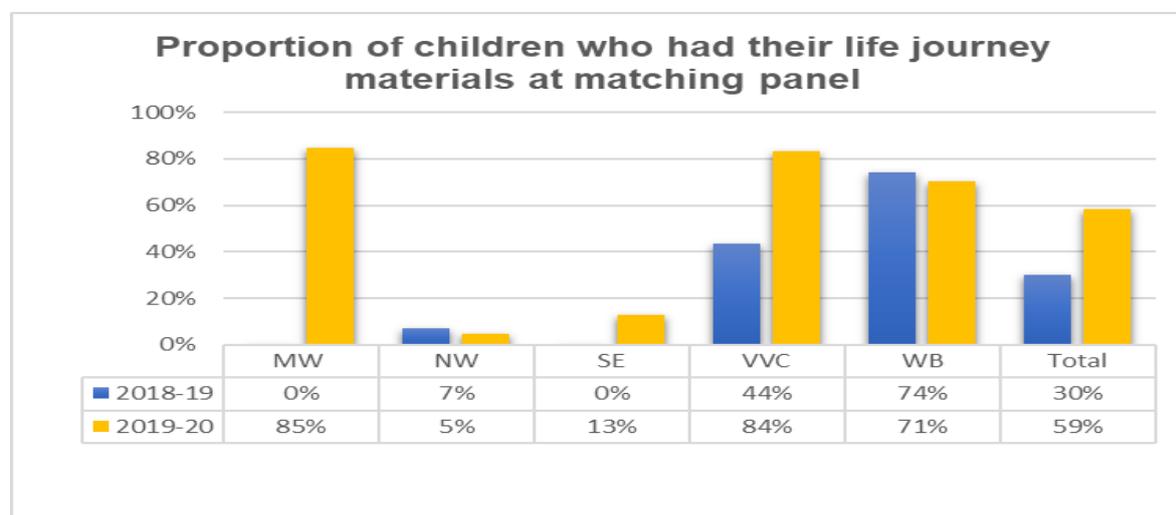


In common with other regions, a high level of new assessments undertaken by SEWAS result in therapeutic or practical support being provided.

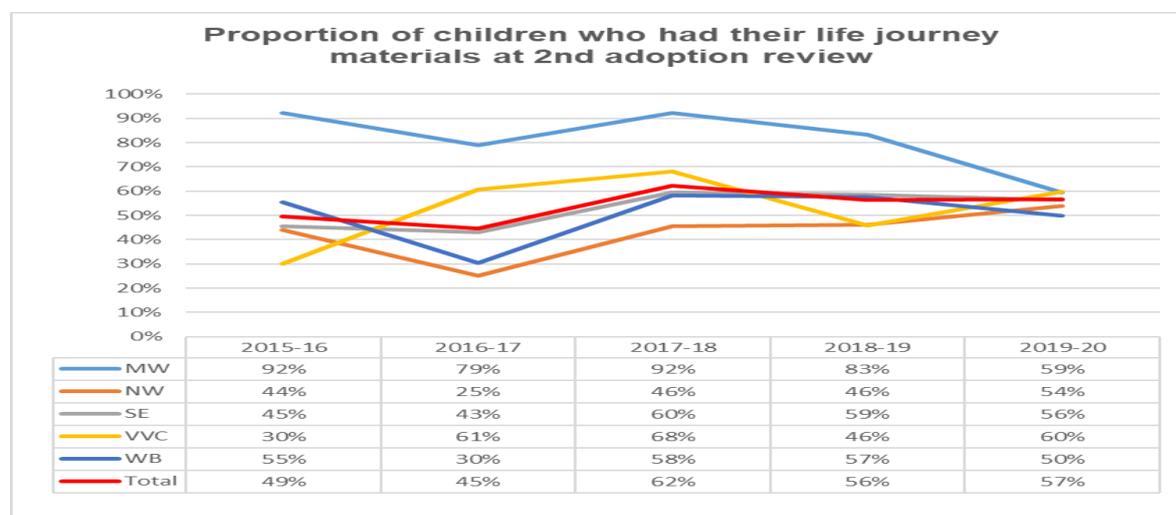
Requests from birth siblings for an assessment were at a similar level to last year (n8). Requests for support access to birth records stayed at a similar level (n53) while requests for intermediary services fell (n5). There has been a year on year reduction in the latter.

LIFE JOURNEY MATERIALS

Levels of materials in place at matching panel across Wales has improved significantly overall to 59%. SEWAS is one of two regions are still developing reporting capability for this measure; performance is low at 13% compared to a range of 71% to 85% in the other three regions which is in sight of the 100% benchmark.

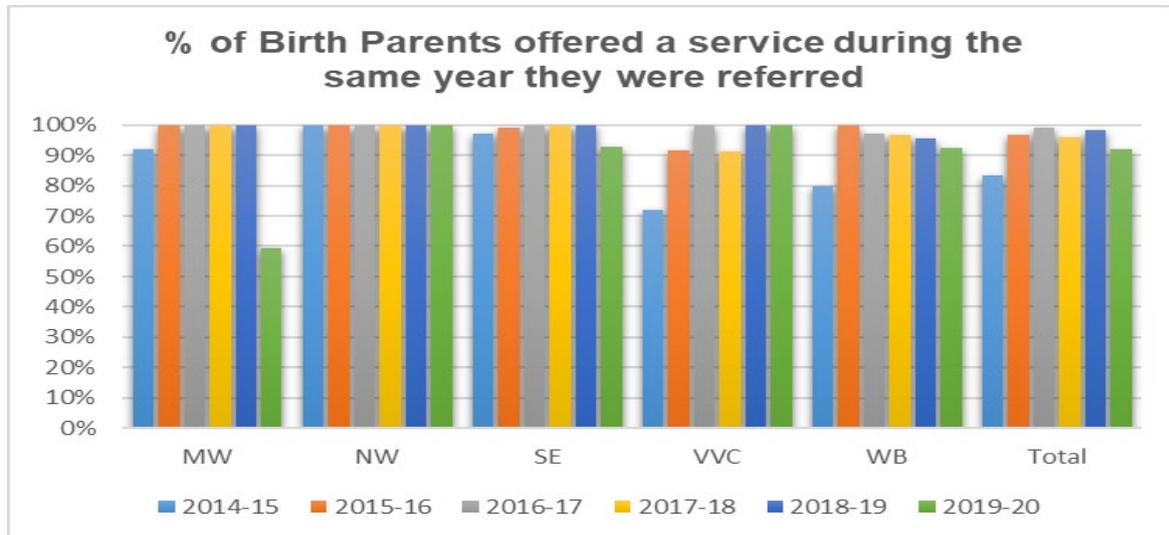


There has been no further improvement in the level of life journey materials in place for children at the second adoption review. Overall across Wales this was 57% over the year and on a par with 2018/19 albeit remaining significantly short of the 100% benchmark. This reduced in SEWAS for a second year by 3% to 56%,.



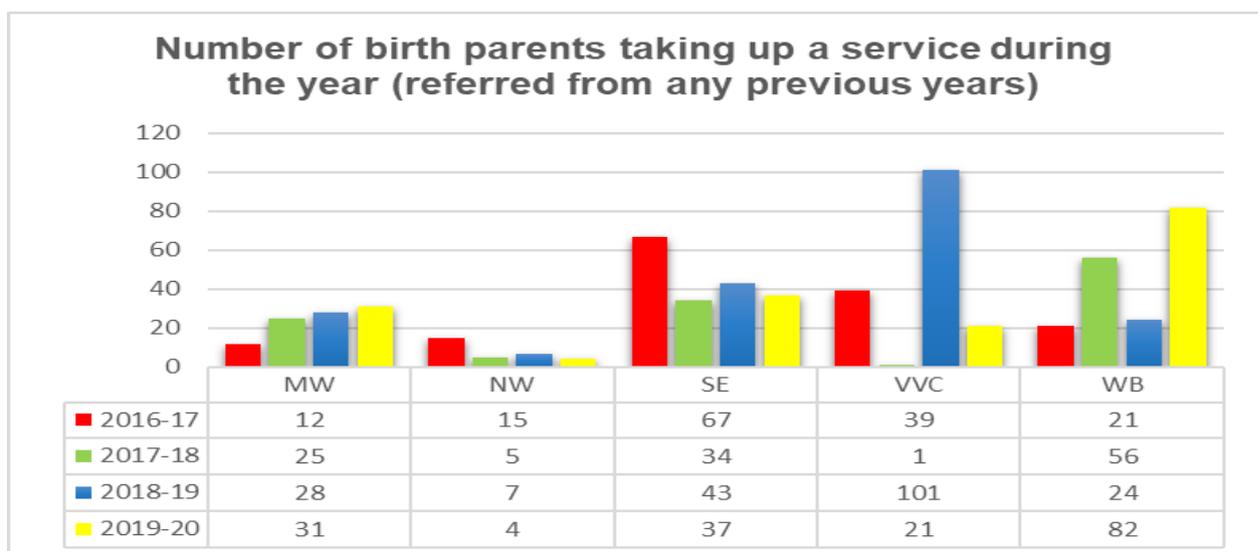
BIRTH PARENTS

Overall across Wales birth parents are offered a service in a timely way. There was a small reduction in the proportion offered a service by SEWAS to 93% in a context of a reduction in referrals from 222 to 179.



Take up in the year offered remains low across Wales although at 25% it was the highest in 2019/20 since NAS was established. Likewise 16% (n30) of birth parents offered a service by SEWAS took it up in the same year, the highest level to date which compares to a range between 7% and 63% in other regions.

There continue to be a significant number of birth parents who seek services at the time that works for them rather than within the year of referral. The pattern in SEWAS mirrors this.



Overall SEWAS offered a service to just under 70 birth parents during 2019/20 a similar level to last year.

National Adoption Service Central Team 10.07.20