

ADOPTTEENS CELEBRATING 10 YEARS

2015 - 2025 Impact report



PAC-UK

Adoption and Permanency Support

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Adopteens Poem

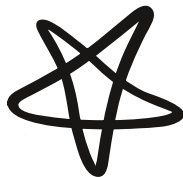


Playing with kids like me
Is how I spent my day.
Making friends with people
Who understand me.

Having a chance to do things
I haven't done before.
Having lots of fun
Oh I'm so sure.

Going through doors
I haven't gone through.
Hoping other people have had
Lots of fun like me too.

Destiny, 13 years old



FOREWORD BY DAVID



Sir David Holmes CBE
Chief Executive,
Family Action

I hope you will all enjoy reading this wonderful Impact Report just as much as I did! It tells the inspiring story of the first decade of Family Action's flagship Adopteens service.

Adopteens was created to give young adopted people a space designed by and for them. It was set up by young adopted people for young adopted people and it has developed over the years into the most extraordinary community of young adopted people that empowers them, amplifies their voices and influences practice across the UK.

Over these first 10 years, Adopteens has remained true to that founding principle: by young adopted people for young adopted people. In consequence, Adopteens has reduced isolation, improved peer connection and has ensured that the voices and lived experience of young adopted people have been heard loud and clear.

Today, Adopteens makes a big difference to young people in a world where adoption is often misunderstood or overlooked. Young adopted people feel seen, heard, accepted and valued by Adopteens

and that in itself can be transformational. have benefitted from being part of Adopteens' journey to date.

Our Adopteens service places co-production and participation at the very heart of what it does, and it excels in this, so much so that Family Action looks to Adopteens as a benchmark for our other services, and within the adoption sector Adopteens is rightly recognised for its ground-breaking innovation.

I commend this report to you - enjoy reading it and finding out about the 330 young adopted people who have benefitted from being part of Adopteens' journey to date.

I can't wait to see what Adopteens achieves in its next decade!

Sir David Holmes CBE
Chief Executive, Family Action

FOREWORD BY TANYA



Tanya Killick
Adopteens Practice
Manager

It has been a privilege to be part of this service over the past ten years and to champion the voice of adopted young people.

Growing up as an adopted person, I didn't have this opportunity myself, so to now enable young people to feel seen, accepted, and empowered is my proudest professional achievement.

This has been not only a journey for the service, but also a personal journey of growth. I continue to learn something new from every young person I meet, each offering their own unique perspective and insight into what it means to be adopted in today's society.

Many professionals miss out on the unique richness that comes from working closely with adopted young people. Their insights are fresh, creative, and often profoundly thought-provoking. This is why bringing their voices into professional spaces is so vital. Through sharing their lived experience, young people from our Adopteens and Adopt a Change programs are challenging even the most experienced professionals to reflect, grow, and adapt their practice.

This impact report shines a light on those young people highlighting the value of peer support for teens navigating adoption alongside the many other aspects of their identity. It also demonstrates the power of meaningful, targeted, and, most importantly, co-produced voice and influence work. While this report contains plenty of numbers showing the impact of our work, much of that impact is difficult to quantify. The true effects ripple far beyond the statistics, influencing countless young people and professionals in ways that can't always be neatly captured in data.

As we look ahead, I'm excited to build on the foundation of these ten years, to see where the young people take us next, and to create new services for 18-25-year-olds, providing that much needed space for young people as they navigate adulthood and all that it brings.

Tanya Killick
Adopteens Practice Manager

WITH THANKS TO...



None of this would have been possible without the ongoing support of our commissioners, funders, and partners over the years. We want to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who has supported and championed our work so far.

Commissioners

- One Adoption
- Adoption England
- Adopt London North
- Together for Adoption
- 5 virtual schools of West Yorkshire; Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds & Wakefield
- Department for Education

Funders

- Family Action
- Children in Need
- Big Lottery Community Fund
- Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

Partnerships

- Thunderbrain Productions
- York Theatre Royal
- Seaglass Collective
- Jane Howroyd
- Creative Switch

“Adoption England is proud to continue its partnership with PAC-UK on the Adoptees and Adopt a Change programmes, which place young people with lived experience of adoption at the centre of improvement and change. The Adopt a Change training, co-produced and delivered by young adoptees, has made a powerful impact across social care, education and health. It aligns closely with the Adoption England Strategy, promoting young people’s voices in shaping professional practice and helping professionals understand adoption through the eyes of those who have lived it. This approach has encouraged greater openness around identity and life stories, improved support for children and families, and helped create a more empathetic and informed culture within adoption services.

At the same time, the programme offers adopted young people meaningful opportunities to develop skills in leadership, communication and public speaking, while seeing the real difference their experiences can make. The continued recruitment and training of new cohorts ensures the programme remains sustainable and continues to evolve. Adoption England fully supports PAC-UK’s work and the incredible contribution of the young people involved, whose courage, insight and leadership are helping shape a more inclusive, forward-thinking and supportive adoption system for the future. ”

- Adoption England

INTRODUCTION



Introduction

As we mark ten years of Adopteens, we're proud to reflect on the legacy of our service- its remarkable growth, and the lasting impact on adopted young people, their families, professionals, and the wider community.

This impact report, highlights our key milestones and findings, while also sharing the voices and experiences of those at the heart of our work: the young people that we work with and their families. By the end of 2025, over 330 young adopted people will have accessed support through our Adopteens and off-shoot projects, over 466 professionals will have attended our co-produced Adopt a Change training and over 30,000 people will have watched our YouTube films where our members share their lived experiences and messages for change.

Since the launch of our new Adopteens website in 2023 which has enabled improved event booking and easier access to our co-produced resources, we've had 5.5k visitors with over 15k page views and 332 downloads of our resources.

Looking ahead, we hope to continue our work in shaping the future of adoption support for generations to come.



"Through Adopteens I have made some incredible friends and feel part of a community. The opportunities available in the project are endless."

- adopted young person

Our Story So Far & Timeline

Following The Big Consult, a large-scale consultation gathering the needs and experiences of adopted young people and their families, Adopteens (formerly AT-ID) was created to give adopted young people a space designed by and for them. Over the past decade, our service has grown into a community that empowers young people, amplifies their voices, and influences adoption practice nationally.

In addition to social opportunities and peer support, we work with young people to create films and resources and to deliver training to professionals. We also provide young people with a platform to share their experiences and influence change in ways that are meaningful to them: both within the services that support them and in shaping wider social beliefs about adoption and being adopted.

The following timeline highlights some of the key moments from our journey so far.



2014

Shaped by Young People

As a result of The Big Consult, adopted young people set about realising their vision for a service designed by and for adopted teens. A small group of thirteen young people, alongside a youth work lead, set about designing this new and exciting service.



2015

Launch of AT-ID (later Adopteens)

Funded by the Yorkshire & Humber Consortium who later became One Adoption after Regionalisation of adoption services. Our service, originally named AT-ID (Adopted Teen Identity), was officially launched from the First Direct Arena in Leeds. It initially included a website, chat forum, rant line, social events and the Youth Council: most of which continue to run today!



2017

Voices Amplified

Our Voices of Adopted Teens film was produced by Thunderbrain productions, exploring public perceptions of adoption and being adopted and raising awareness of these experiences.

Funded by One Adoption

Ofsted inspection rated Outstanding

Ofsted inspection rated Outstanding

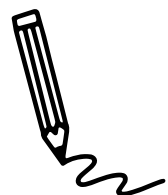
10 Year Timeline



2018

Rebrand to Adopteens and PAC-UK joins national charity Family Action.

Young people led a rebrand to better reflect their identity and vision for the service.



2019

Creative Storytelling

The Youth Council created The Ride of Your Life animation, sharing adoptee experiences across the life stages and what support was most helpful. This timeline animation was commissioned by the One Adoption VAA Expertise Project and funded by the Department for Education.

2020

Adapting to Covid

In order to meet the challenges of providing a service through the Covid lockdown, online events and 'lockdown packs' (now our 'Starters' and 'Leavers' packs) were established in order to help our members stay connected and reduce their sense of isolation at this time. Use of our online chat forum also boomed during this time but was recently closed in favour of pre-event Zoom meetups which better meet the needs and preferences of our current cohort.

2021

Exploring Transitions

Collaborating again with Thunderbrain productions, to create a short film featuring five adopted young adults who share their experiences of transitioning into adulthood with a clear message that adoption is lifelong.

Funded by DFE, as part of National Adoption Week

Adopt a Change

Our innovative, co-produced training was created to drive systemic change in adoption practice through a series of immersive workshops, designed and delivered by adopted young people. This training brings lived experience to the forefront and is delivered on a national scale.

Funded initially by Children in Need 2021 - 2023 then by National Lottery Community Fund and then further commissioning by Adoption England 2024 -2026

2022

Filling the Gap

From September 2021- September 2022 we ran a therapeutic support group for adopted young adults aged 18-25 aimed at supporting their transition into adulthood.

Funded by One Adoption West

Ofsted inspection - Rated Outstanding



10 Year Timeline



2022

Top Tips for Schools

Created by our Youth Council, 'Top Tips for School' features the collective experiences of some of our adopted young people in education settings, and includes suggestions on what schools need to consider in order to better support them.



Myth vs Reality

Another powerful resource created by our Youth Council, the 'Myth vs Reality of Adoption' leaflet explores common misconceptions about adoption and being adopted. It offers practical tips for starting conversations with adopted young people, highlights helpful and unhelpful language, and outlines some of the key differences in experience that young people may encounter.



2023

Three years funding

The National Lottery Community Fund secured between January 2023 and December 2025.

Thanks to this funding, we grew from delivering 11 to 20 events a year, made our offer more accessible and diverse, hired a new Adopteens Mentor with lived experience, enhanced our website and brand, and expanded our trailblazing Adopt a Change training.



2024

National Recognition

Our Adopted in School film was launched and quickly reached over 10,000+ views on YouTube. The film was also nominated for the Smiley Charity Film Awards, and young people and staff involved in the film got to travel to London to attend the ceremony!

Funded by 5 virtual schools in West Yorkshire; Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds & Wakefield - produced by Thunderbrain productions.



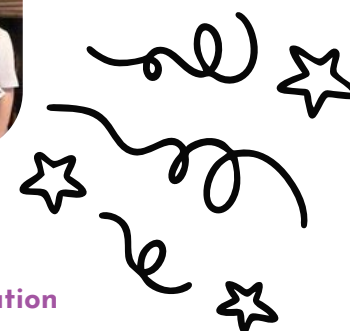
2025

10 Year Celebration

The Youth Council hosted a major anniversary event, showcasing films, creative workshops, a biographical treasure hunt, education space, and the launch of our new Instagram page!

Launched Instagram account @adopteens

Funded by Family Action Summer Fund & The National Lottery Community Fund.



Our Impact in Numbers

Our key services



330

young adopted people will have accessed support through our Adopteens and off-shoot projects.

466

professionals will have attended our co-produced Adopt a Change training.

65

Youth Council events

31

Youth Council members

Our social events



66

social events in 10 years

736

young people attending social events in 10 years



Our online resources



5.5K

visitors to our website where people can book events and access to our co-produced resources.

15K 332

page views

downloads

30,000+

people watched our YouTube films where our members share their lived experiences and messages for change.

Note: The online stat's are from 2023 onwards when our website was redesigned

OUR IMPACT



Introduction

Adopteens has three core strands: the social events, and our two voice and influence groups - the Youth Council and Adopt a Change. Most adopted young people initially join our service to get involved in the social events: safe, fun spaces to try new things and connect with other adopted young people who share similar experiences.

While we've noticed that young people don't often discuss their adoptions at these events, they have frequently reported to us that they feel safe to be themselves knowing that they are with peers who understand some of what they have been through and are continuing to navigate - some of which is evidenced through our feedback below. These events often help our members grow in confidence and build lasting friendships that continue outside the scope of our services.

For some young people, our voice and influence groups provide an opportunity and platform to share their experiences, challenge misconceptions, and shape adoption practice. Each group consists of members who meet regularly to discuss topics surrounding adoption, with the Youth Council creating films and resources to support various services and educate the public and Adopt a Change delivering targeted training to professionals who work with adopted young people. Together, these spaces have a powerful impact not only on the young people and their families, but also on professionals, services and the wider community.

Crucially, our work reduces a sense of isolation amongst this peer group, promotes a respect for differing views, experiences and opinions, and allows young people to build trust through a significant sense of belonging. The following feedback and statistics highlight this impact and offer a spotlight on the voices that continue to shape and drive our service.

"The enthusiasm and skill of the workers, coupled with the benefits of the project work that the young people are involved in, are examples of outstanding practice. Young people spoken to during the inspection described feeling listened to, being taken seriously and experiencing an increase in their levels of confidence through attending the group."

- Ofsted (PAC-UK, 2017)

"It makes me feel accepted and part of a community"

- Adopted young person

"I have really enjoyed getting to know other Adopteens that feel the same thoughts as I do. I have a delightful couple of friends and have had great opportunities. I feel confident, happy and positive and proud to be adopted"

- Adopted young person

People Together: The Social Events

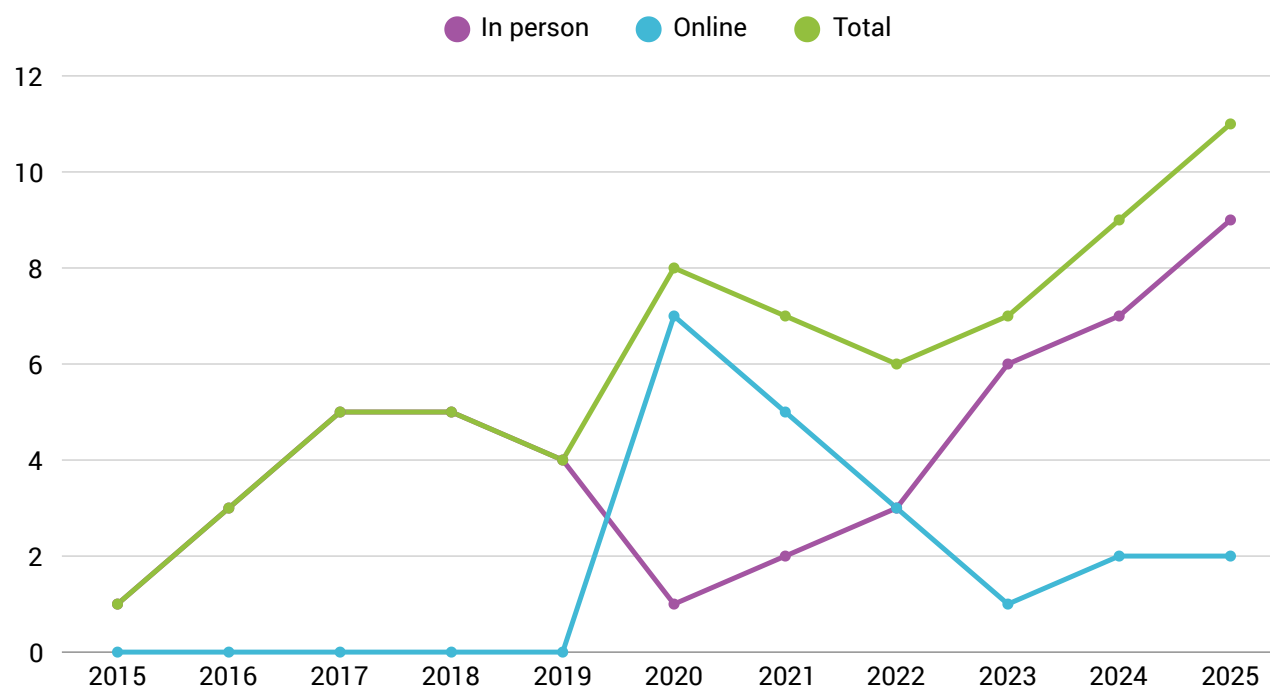
The social events have been an integral part of our service since our beginning, when adopted young people stated that they needed a space to be able to connect with peers in fun, safe and supported ways.

Our events run throughout the year in regions across Yorkshire and Humber, and in recent years have grown to include online sessions and split-day formats in order to ensure accessibility and choice for all of our members.

The chart showcases the growing impact and reach of our social events, reflecting not just an increase in the quantity of events, but also their diversity and accessibility. During the pandemic, we incorporated online sessions to ensure continued access and availability for our members which have continued today. We have since expanded both our in-person and online events, demonstrating our commitment to building an inclusive and resilient community, and providing an abundance of opportunities for young people to get and stay involved in our service.

"Thank you so much for providing these events. It's been amazing for our daughter - she is loving being around other adopted kids. I think it's amazing for her to see she isn't alone"
- Adoptive parent

Adopteens social events 2015-2025



66

social events in 10 years

736

young people attending social events in 10 years

Our social events are free to attend and are designed to reduce isolation, foster peer connection, and strengthen identity and belonging. We ensure there is something for everyone, and some of our previous events have included: graffiti workshops, drama and photography sessions, bushcraft, llama trekking, go-karting, baking classes, treetop adventures, a steam train ride, wreath making and so much more!

These experiences aren't just fun, they're transformative, and young people often report feeling proud of themselves for trying something new, as well as growing in confidence and building friendships in a space where they feel safe, accepted and understood..

"It helped me make some new friends and also gave me more confidence"

"The day made me feel proud and happy"

"I feel as though I can be myself with other adopted people"

"After going to the activity group I joined my local choir because I felt like I was brave enough to do something I loved without having to have someone I knew there"

For many of our young people, the social events are the first time they've met another adopted young person. Parents in particular frequently share how their children leave events more relaxed, connected, and visibly happier than when they arrived:

"She has found a space where she can be herself without suppressing her feelings which is how she feels in school"

"[Her] face was a picture when she heard the worker was also adopted!"

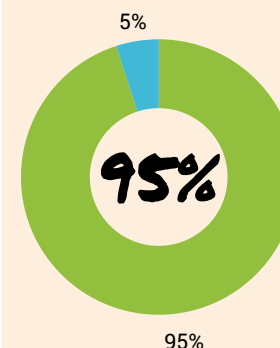
"One of my children said 'Are they really all adopted like me?'"

Over ten years, our social events have grown in reach, variety and impact, and we receive consistently positive feedback from adopted young people and their families.

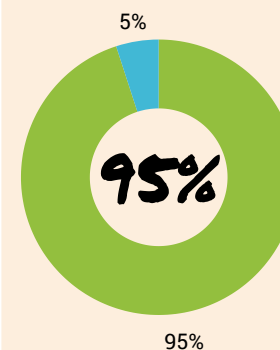
"They got to see other children who were adopted. He was pleased to see another teen needing to take a break from the session. "Mum, that girl is like me, she gets overwhelmed too." He said this with some relief that others feel like he does"

- Adoptive parent

Feedback data collected between 2020-2024 shows:



of respondents rated their event as good or excellent



of respondents said they would attend another Adopteens event

Our social events are more than just fun activities - they are opportunities for growth, belonging and joy.

Shaping the System: Voice and Influence

Some young people find value in using their lived experiences to educate others and drive change: challenging perceptions of adoption and influencing how services are designed and delivered. We currently offer two voice and influence projects as part of our service:

Youth Council

members have led the creation of all of our films and resources. They choose which projects they would like to pursue and are commissioned by external agencies and researchers for their insights. They also play a key role in the co-development of Adopteens: from website design and branding, to interviewing workers for our service.

Adopt a Change

empowers young people to create and deliver impactful training sessions to professionals within adoption services. Their experiences shape the workshops that they use for the training events and is continually being refreshed in response to feedback from attendees and insights and ideas brought in by new members joining the project. The training is now being adapted for schools and education settings, and we have ambitions to continue tailoring the workshops to suit a wide range of services that support adopted young people.

“Adoption England fully supports PAC-UK’s work and the incredible contribution of the young people involved, whose courage, insight and leadership are helping shape a more inclusive, forward-thinking and supportive adoption system for the future.”

- Adoption England



Youth Council

Ofsted:

“The groups provide a lifeline for service users. One young person, who had not come across any adopted individuals before attending the group, described the group as a ‘life saver’, and another said, ‘I feel like I have found my tribe’.” - (PAC-UK, 2022)



Our Youth Council is a dedicated group of adopted young people who meet regularly throughout the year to explore adoption-related topics, share personal experiences, and create educational resources. They recently planned and hosted our 10 Year Celebration Event at Temple Newsam in Leeds, showcasing their initiative, leadership and planning skills, and their latest film ‘Adopted in School- Understanding the Needs of Adopted Young People’ has achieved a global reach, amassing over 11,000 views on YouTube since its launch in October 2024. The film was named a finalist in the 2025 Smiley Charity Film Awards, allowing some of our young people the unforgettable opportunity to attend the star-studded awards ceremony at the O2 in London.

Membership within our Youth Council naturally fluctuates as young people join or age out of our service, but at its peak we’ve had a consistent group of nine members from regions across Yorkshire: Sheffield, Barnsley, North Yorkshire, York, Leeds, Bradford, Kirklees and Wakefield.

This broad geographic spread reflects the diversity of backgrounds, experiences and perspectives within the group, ensuring that the voices of adopted young people across the region are meaningfully represented.

It makes me feel accepted and part of a community” - **Adopted young person**

Young people’s commitment to the Youth Council is reflected in the consistent number of meetings held over the past ten years. Since 2017, the Youth Council has met five to six times annually, rising to nine in 2025 during the planning and delivery of our 10 Year Celebration Event. This sustained engagement highlights the stability of this aspect of our service, and the value placed in offering regular opportunities for adopted young people to connect and contribute. Since 2021, the addition of the annual festive pantomime celebration further demonstrated the strong sense of community and belonging that young people hold as members of the Youth Council.

YOUTH COUNCIL AREAS OF FOCUS

- Improving school experience for all adopted & care experienced young people.
- Campaign for care experience to be a protected characteristic.
- Championing peer support for adoptees.
- Dispelling myths & common misconceptions around adoption.

Youth Council stats in numbers

65

Total number of Youth Council meeting over 10 years (including 5 pantomimes)

31

Total number of Young people who have been part of YC over 10 years

"I feel like I'm part of something"- Adopted young person

Beyond meetings, the Youth Council have produced a series of powerful films and resources that give voice to their experiences. With over 30,000 views on YouTube, these films have resonated widely, sparking reflection, learning and action across both personal and professional settings. Feedback and comments highlight that our films are being used in training, education and advocacy, helping to shift attitudes, practices and becoming a catalyst for meaningful change. For the young people, being involved in the creation of these films and witnessing their impact helps them to recognise the power of their voices, feel valued for their experiences and opinions, and build lasting confidence to continue speaking up.

[It makes me feel] like there's a chance that the way people see us as adopted people could change, that we could eventually get the support we need and deserve"

- Adopted young person

The Youth Council have also led and co-created a wide range of resources, including an adoption fact sheet, internet safety guide, and 'Top Tips for Schools'- designed to inform, challenge assumptions and misconceptions and raise awareness of adopted young people's experiences. From myth-busting tools such as our 'Myth vs Reality of Adoption' to more reflective pieces on change and goodbyes, life story work and siblings, their work brings clarity and honesty to complex topics.

Other outputs such as film reviews and guides on self-care and social media help spark meaningful conversations amongst our young people, showcasing the breadth and creativity of their contributions, as well as making their resources practical, relevant and powerful.

"[I am] free to say what I think. The adoptees and workers really understand us and make us feel comfortable and included"

- Adopted young person

It was the Youth Council who initiated the planning and development of our Adoptees 10 Year Celebration Event, showcasing our work and impact over the last decade, as well as exploring, educating and challenging common public misconceptions about adoption and being adopted. They creatively designed a biographical treasure hunt based on some of their collective experiences in order to achieve this, and in conjunction produced a new film building on themes from our original 'Voices of Adopted Teens' film to compare how perceptions of adoption have evolved over the past ten years, while also capturing highlights from the event itself.

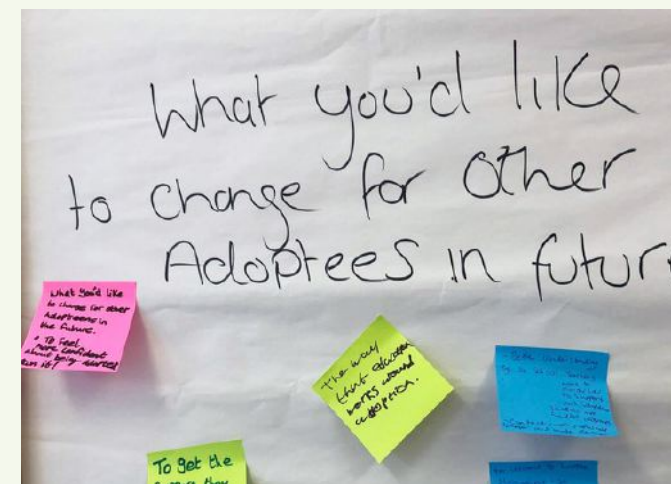
With determination to make the day inclusive and engaging, the Youth Council also organised a range of family-friendly activities, including thread weaving, bracelet making, and a magician! The event was a huge success, and received outstanding feedback: a testament to the Youth Council's creativity, resilience, leadership, teamwork, advocacy and decision-making skills.

"How amazing these young adults in this programme are. I learned that this incredible event was their brainchild and based on their journey from childhood. It was very moving. These kids have been validated, empowered and armed with a toolbox for success"

"Surprised by how many young people are involved in the event, contributing to the organisation & running of it

- Adoptive parent

The skills young people develop during their time on the Youth Council continue to serve them as they begin to build their futures. These experiences support them in navigating their personal journeys with adoption, strengthen their sense of belonging and identity, and build their confidence. Many go on to apply these skills in education and employment, with one former member having built a successful career as a solicitor specialising in family law: a powerful reminder of the legacy and impact of the Youth Council, and how involvement can inspire long term purpose well beyond their time as members of Adoptees.



Adopt a Change

Ofsted:

“These speaking events create opportunities to influence and shape the adoption sector. One professional commented, ‘The opportunity to experience the voices of young people and see in action how they are being supported to use their voices and experience to influence and impact social work and education is long overdue. These were exceptional young people who were engaging, brave, and appropriately challenging of professionals.’”

- (PAC-UK, 2022)

Adopt a Change emerged from adopted young people expressing how misunderstood they felt by professionals. Inspired by training that was already being delivered by the Children in Care Council, they designed a unique program which reflected their own life experiences with the aim of educating those who work with adopted young people. The program is continuously being shaped by their voices, particularly as new members join the project and bring their own ideas and perspectives.

Similarly, we take time to reflect on every training session that is delivered and incorporate the vast amount of professional feedback that we receive into reshaping and incorporating new workshops. This ensures our training remains relevant, authentic and responsive.

Since securing a national contract, the team has delivered sessions across the country, training 135 professionals between July 2024 and June 2025 alone. Professionals trained during this time included social workers, educators, team managers and therapeutic staff.

Professionals attending the training events report lasting change, including; using resources & workshops within their own adopter preparation processes; enabling workers to better advocate for young people in school, change the language they use to communicate with young people, supporting workers to better understand the lived experience of adopted young people because of the power of hearing it direct from them. Through this work, adopted young people are not only educating professionals, but reshaping entire systems.

Young people also report a great sense of personal growth, confidence and pride through their involvement with this project. One described being “anxious and unsure” at the beginning of their time with us and now identifies as a confident public speaker. Another shared: “I’ve gone from feeling like my adoption was something to hide, to feeling proud of what I’ve survived- and what I can do with it.”

As part of the new contract, in March this year our young trainers were invited to deliver a condensed version of our training to Regional Adoption Agency leaders from across the



Feedback for these events has been overwhelmingly positive:

88% rated the presentation as excellent, praising its clarity, confidence, and emotional depth

89% learned something new, especially around education, identity, and transparency

85% said it would directly impact their practice, influencing language, advocacy, and relationship-building

98% agreed it's ‘extremely important’ for adopted people to share their experiences to shape social work practice

country and representatives from the Department of Education. This session not only captured the essence of the program, but also marked a pivotal moment for the project, cementing its credibility and strategic value at a national level. These events not only equip professionals with insights rooted in lived experience, but also help shape service culture in lasting ways.

"The training itself was clearly impactful you could watch as the audience actively changed their minds and opinions based upon the discussions we brought to fruition. This really was the highlight of my year"

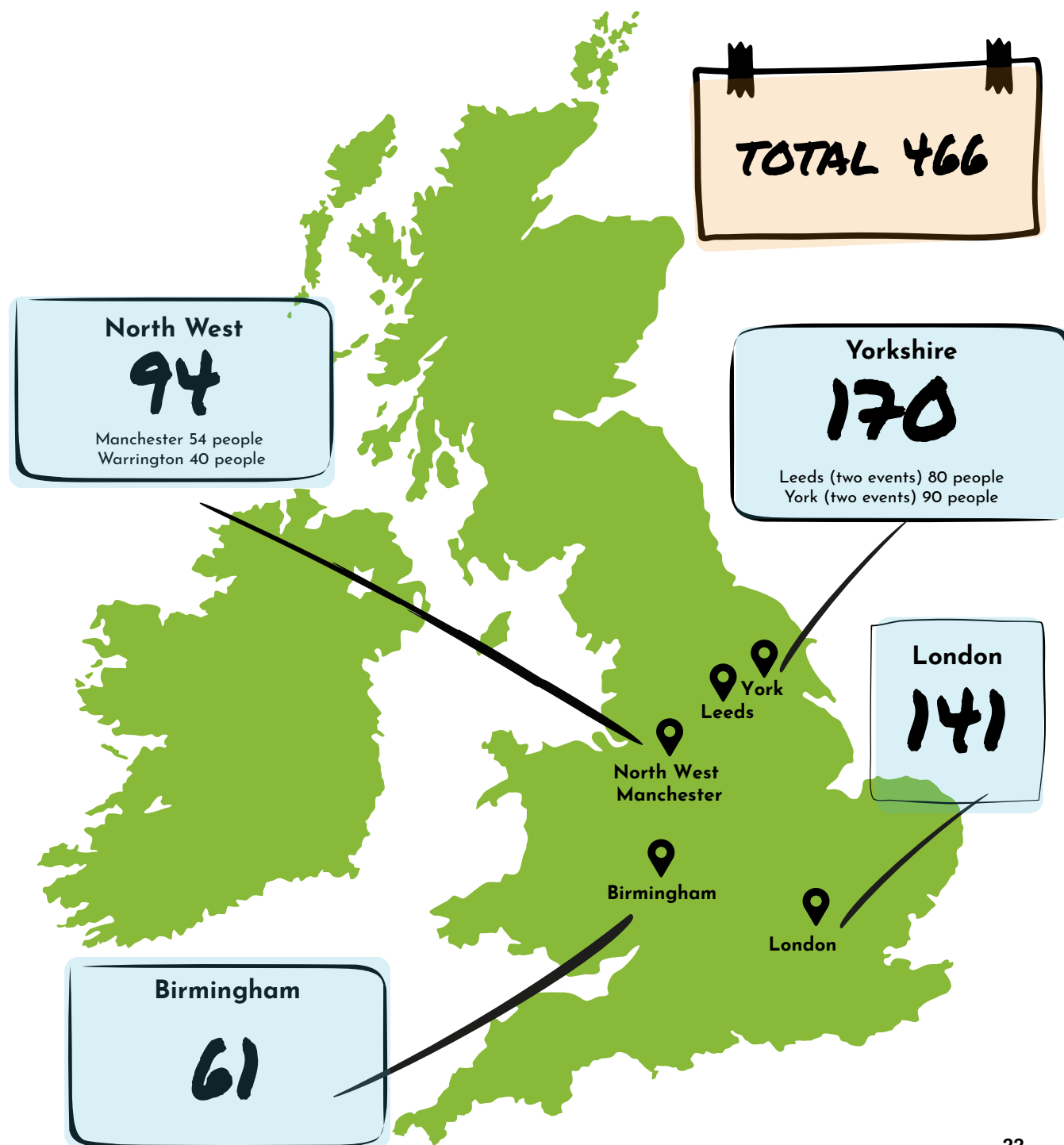
- Young trainer

Since its pilot in Leeds in 2022, young people have now delivered to a total of 466 professionals over 10 events, reaching professionals from across England and Wales. (see graph opposite).

The scale of this engagement over just a few years highlights not only the relevance of this program, but also how the training fulfils a clear gap in the sector for experience-led learning and youth voice, offering professionals unique insights they might not otherwise have access to.

"I came back and said to my team, that was the best training I have ever been on and I've been in the job 30 odd years. The group of young people were honest, funny and really held their own which isn't always easy when delivering to a group of professionals. I thought it was just so powerful."

- Service Manager - Adoption Central England



Four key themes from the feedback

1. Confidence and delivery

Attendees of our training often remark on the maturity and openness of the young people delivering our training: likewise for our young people, this training offers them the opportunity to develop skills in presentation, public speaking, confidence, planning and delivery:

- "The young people were articulate, open and honest... delivered the training very confidently"
- "They were absolutely amazing- very confident, kept me engaged and interested"

2. Impact of lived experience

Adopt a Change empowers young people to educate and appropriately challenge professionals on their practice, based on the truth of their lived experiences. This can be particularly powerful and motivating for professionals, creating a lasting impact.

- "The experiential exercises allowed me to feel the impact- this will stay with me"
- "Really fantastic training and the young people were amazing. More confident and engaging than some adults who've trained me"

"Our agency are going to update our stage two adopter training with the identity exercises from the program - such a powerful tool to reflect on the importance of knowing your story." - **Coram Ambitious for Adoption**

3. Content

Our workshops blend playfulness and creativity with powerful and emotive learning, ensuring insights resonate long after the training day ends. Participants are often surprised by the types of challenges that adopted young people face, particularly in education, and when conducting life story and identity work.

- "The school bell exercise was genius- it helped me understand how chaotic school can feel"
- "I didn't realise how much bullying and misunderstanding adopted young people face in schools"
- "The identity questions were thought-provoking - I'll use them in life story work"

4. Impact on practice

Based on this impactful learning, professionals are often able to quickly identify where they can begin to include this training in their practice:

- "I'll change how I write case notes- young people may read these one day"
- "This training will shape how I prepare adopters and advocate in schools"

Recommendations

95% of attendees said they would be likely (or very likely) to recommend the Adopt a Change training to other professionals.

- "This should be mandatory for schools and social workers"
- "It's a game changer... now is the time for change"

Together, these reflections highlight the depth, relevance and effectiveness of the Adopt a Change training. Young people delivering the sessions develop a number of core skills as well as a sense of agency and empowerment to turn lived experience into leadership to drive change. Professionals are offered a meaningful insight into those most affected by adoption, and feedback demonstrates how this training prompts reflection and immediate shifts in practice, driving a systematic shift into a more empathetic, informed and inclusive adoption practice.

Growth and reach: our members

Over the past decade, our service has grown into a regional network supporting adopted teenagers across Yorkshire and Humber. We've steadily expanded our reach, particularly into rural communities and areas where access to peer support and social events are typically limited.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we fulfilled a gap in support for adopted young people, many of whom faced increased isolation and disruption to their usual services. Our shift to include online delivery created an accessible, safe space for connection and continuity, and our service experienced a surge in membership which reflected an urgent need for community during this time.

Since then, membership levels have remained consistently strong, with young people continuing to access both our in-person and online events. This sustained engagement demonstrates the relevance of our service and the importance of creating spaces where adopted young people feel seen, supported and understood.

As we draw to the end of 2025 we have the highest membership we have ever had with nearly 160 members. We have supported 330 over the last ten years. Young people have joined us through a variety of pathways, including referrals from social workers, recommendations from other families, and directly through our website. Regional Adoption Agencies also play a key role in extending our reach by including information about our upcoming social events

through their mailing lists and networks. This ongoing collaboration helps us connect with new families and ensures that more adopted young people have access our services.

Our members bring with them a diverse range of lived experiences, identities, and support needs, some of which we have been able to demonstrate in the EDI information below. Based on information provided by our members, we are able to provide a snapshot into the varied makeup of our community, including gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnic background, religion, and neurodiversity considerations.

Inclusive safe spaces

The importance of creating safe and inclusive spaces for our members as they navigate complex and evolving identities cannot be overstated. We recognise that adoption, and the trauma and loss that often accompany it, forms the baseline experience for many adopted young people. Beyond this, there are often additional layers of need and identity. Adoption frequently intersects with race, gender identity, disability, and neurodiversity, with many of our young people navigating multiple



aspects of these experiences simultaneously. It is intrinsic to our service that we continue to value and empower all youth voices to express themselves authentically, and respond with sensitivity and adaptability in our practice.

Our data, while not exhaustive, offers a meaningful insight into some of the identities and experiences within our membership. In particular, almost half of our young people report neurodiversity considerations, with many others marking 'not known', which highlights the prevalence of these experiences and that many may still be underreported or still emerging.

Sexual orientation data shows that while 10 members identified as LGBTQIA+, a significant majority either preferred not to say or were unsure, which may reflect the sensitive nature of identity exploration among adopted young people. The presence of non-binary members also highlights a need for inclusive language, representation and safeguarding practices that affirm gender identity within our service.

Similarly, data on ethnicity and religious belief show a predominance of White British members, alongside smaller numbers from mixed and other ethnic

backgrounds, and a wide range of religious affiliations or non-affiliations, underscoring the importance of cultural sensitivity and inclusive practice across all aspects of identity.

Our inclusivity is also demonstrated in the sustained engagement that we see across our service, with a significant majority of young people remaining involved with Adopteens until they turn 18, suggesting that the spaces and opportunities we offer continually meet their needs over time. Alongside new joiners to our events, just over half of participants are, on average, repeat attenders, highlighting the safety and accessibility of our activities, as well as the sense of connection that they foster. Many members go on to form friendships that extend beyond the project, underscoring the safe, neutral space that adopted young people are actively seeking and Adopteens is able to provide.

Collaborative discussions with local authorities and regional adoption agencies suggest that their in-house provision does not attract the same level of consistent engagement or long-term involvement. This contrast highlights the depth of connection and belonging built within our community that reaches beyond the service.

Even after aging out of their membership, some young people continue to stay involved in adoption services by joining adoption panels, contributing to research, and even supporting Adopteens in a voluntary capacity:

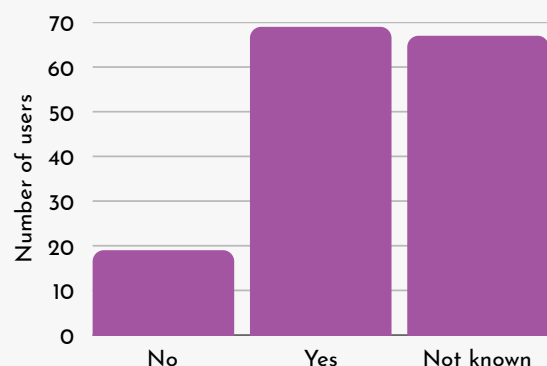
"I wanted to become a volunteer because I have always wanted to work with people similar to me (adopted). I have got experience working with young people and something out of my comfort zone."
- **Former Adopteens member**

This continued involvement demonstrates the legacy and long-term impact our service helps cultivate, as well as the sense of ownership that many of our members have over a service that they helped shape.

Our members are not just participants; they are co-creators. We have followed the lead set by our founding young people and continued to build a service by them and for them. Looking ahead, we're committed to deepening that ethos by expanding access to those in the most rural parts of Yorkshire and Humber. We are currently looking to invest in travel solutions to ensure that no young person is excluded from our social events because of geography or financial barriers.

We're also committed to strengthening our EDI work by exploring barriers to access, commitment to ongoing training and improving engagement with diverse communities, so that every member of our service feels represented, respected and able to engage on their own terms. The past decade has shown us what is possible when adopted young people are given the space to lead and connect, and our next chapter will be rooted in that same spirit, with even more young people at the heart of it.

Neurodiversity considerations of our service users



OUR VOICE

Adopteens members say...

'The impact Adopteens has had on me has been immeasurable- it gave me a voice and a sense of belonging when I thought adoption was a taboo subject. I found that I grew and learnt so many new skills such as helping set up a website that helped other adopted teens while also integrating myself into an Adopteens youth council who discussed all sorts of subjects such as how schools handle the topic of adoption.

I've loved being part of making a lasting impact about what adoption looks and feels like, not just for me but for others. And helping other authorities get the right tools to deal with adoption. And getting it right." - **Teresa**



Online social event - Kawaii Keyrings

Adopteens has helped me become

**SMART
BRAVE
BELONG
KIND
ADVENTUROUS**

Parents say...

"My daughter has been an Adopteens member for about a year now. She has really enjoyed the activities and made some friends. It is really great to know that appropriate support is there for her during the activities so I can worry less about some of the vulnerabilities she has when meeting new people and finding her place. She enjoys seeing those she has met already on further events.

Thank you so much."

"I heard of the Adopteens group when my adopted son was 13. Our son at the time was feeling very alone and different and whilst he was part of other youth style groups, he was very conscious of his differences, particularly the fact he was adopted. He also didn't have any friends. He felt like his adoption was hanging over him always, like a secret he has that he didn't want finding out. Our son joined the Adopteens group and went to some of the social events, coming back buzzing and happy each time. It was so nice for him knowing that he didn't need to hide his adoption "status". He didn't need to bring it up but being around other adoptees just meant there was nothing to hide and he felt he could be himself. Adopteens has become such an important part of his life. I think a massive contributing factor to this are the adults who facilitate the group.

"Both my twins have attended several Adopteens events. They particularly love the practical events: snowtubing, go karting. They've thrived on being around other adopted teenagers & seeing others with similar backstories to themselves. It's been great for us as parents to join Adopteen events, as many 'mainstream' events for children / young adults leave us feeling anxious about trying to make sure our kids didn't stand out or focusing on making sure they didn't cause a scene. Adopteens events meant that we could just focus on making sure they enjoyed themselves & be kids."



Social event - Bush Craft
at Forest Quest, York

Parents say...



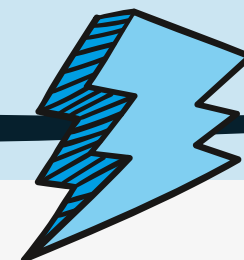
"My daughter is 13 - being adopted is a curious thing in all truth. My daughter has always known she was adopted, and she has always been good with everything. But it's always there, it's always this thing. People say "Oh, you look just like your mum" usually, when said, a kid would just cringe when hearing that. For an adopted kid, that's an immediate reminder that you're different from other kids. That can feel isolating, like you're alone.

We found out about Adopteens through a newsletter, and we were excited. Most things are aimed at younger kids, Christmas parties are aimed at little kids, easter meets ups - little kids. So to have something specifically for my daughter's age was refreshing.

When we told my daughter about Adopteens, I wish I had the eloquent words to adequately explain her face. She lit up, and looked incredibly excited. The first meet up she went to, she was of course apprehensive but excitement was the overwhelming emotion. Being apart of Adopteens, my daughter finally felt "normal", everyone else there was literally just like her.

No one judges you, no one has a shocked face if you mention adoption. And the way the team operates, adoption isn't this centre of attention thing. It's all focused on whatever activity they're doing, so that it isn't like they're constantly being reminded of being adopted. That makes it the perfect environment for teenagers, who typically don't want to sit around and dissect their emotions. The kids can talk to each other, about football, music, food...everything kids talk about. But they also have the opportunity to ask their peers about adoption, and it isn't looked at as some big thing. For my daughter, simply being around other kids who are just like her, makes her feel safe, secure and accepted.

We finally found a place for my daughter, a place where she feels she belongs. This service is more valuable than any training session, any meeting, any webinar. This is something that you cant get through any other approach, something for kids to simply 'be'.



OUR VISION



Our vision

Subject to funding - over the next 10 years we hope to:



Expand
Adopteens services
nationally by
establishing hubs
across the UK.



Develop
Adopt a Change
and engage
in wider advocacy
around protected
characteristics.



Strengthen
partnerships
with health,
education, youth,
mental health and
justice services that
support adopted
young people.



Grow
our membership
by offering more
social events and
opportunities across
further regions,
and by reinstating
a service for 18-25
year olds.



Maintain
our core values
while responding
to the evolving needs
of the cohort through
continued co-
production.

How to support Adopteens

There are so many ways for you to fundraise - the list is virtually endless. Here are a few brilliant ideas to get you started.



Make a donation via our
PAC-UK JustGiving Page

Fundraise

Rally your community! Organise a bake sale, hold a charity car wash, or host a quiz. Every pound raised will make a significant difference.

Challenge Events

Push your limits and inspire others! Participate in a marathon, climb a mountain, or host a gaming marathon. Announce your challenge and encourage friends and family to sponsor you.

Grants

Grant opportunities from trusts and foundations can provide substantial resources for specific programs.

Get your company involved

Looking for a meaningful cause-related marketing opportunity? Partner with us to create a win-win situation. Increase brand awareness while making a real difference in the lives of adopted teens.

Leave a gift in your Will

You can pass on something wonderful to less fortunate families and support them to nurture the same relationships you value. By leaving a gift in your Will to Family Action, you'll help all those affected by adoption, Special Guardianship and other forms of permanent care are supported. Your gift will give them the strength to raise a safe, healthy and happy family. Every contribution, big or small, will make a significant difference.

Contact Us

To learn more about specific donation options or discuss a partnership, please Contact our Fundraising Team by emailing fundraising@family-action.org.uk
Together, we can build a brighter future for all those affected by adoption.





[Click to watch video](#)

If you are interested in our service and you think Adopteens is something the young people in your area would benefit from we would love to talk to you about setting your own service up and how you can commission Adopteens to be developed in your area.

Having seen the success and growth of Adopteens over the last 10 years and the positive impact it has had on members, as well as its influence on professionals and their practice, our passion is to create a national network of regional Adopteens services bringing together a powerful, diverse, inclusive and connected voice please contact us at **Adopteens@pac-uk.org**

ADOPTTEENS



adopteens.org



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