

IMPACT REPORT

2023-2026



This report summarises the development, reach and impact of the Adopt a Change training programme from its first full training day in 2023 through to the expanded national programme in 2026.

The programme has been shaped by adopted young people and centres lived experience as a catalyst for improving professional practice across adoption, education, therapeutic and related services.



PAC-UK
Adoption and Permanency Support

SUMMARY

Between 2023 and June 2026, Adopt a Change developed from an 18-month project into a nationally recognised training programme commissioned by Adoption England, delivered across Regional Adoption Agencies and extended to include wider professionals from across sectors including education & health.

The training has reached hundreds of professionals across adoption, local authority, education, therapeutic, voluntary and national services. Feedback consistently shows that hearing directly from adopted young people is powerful and memorable.

The strongest areas of impact are;

- Improved understanding of adopted young people's lived experience
- More consideration about information to gather for identity and life story work
- Increased awareness of the long-term importance of accurate records and how those records are written and shared
- Practical changes in how professionals communicate with, prepare and support adoptive families and young people.

The programme has also strengthened the confidence and leadership of adopted young people as trainers, presenters and contributors to service improvement.



"I was really impressed at how well the young people delivered the training. They were very confident, open and honest. I felt very privileged to be part of the day."

PAC-UK Family Action

OVERVIEW

Adopt a Change is a young person led training programme designed to help professionals understand adoption through the perspectives of adopted young people. It uses creative, immersive exercises, personal reflections, group discussion, film, practical tools and direct presentation from young people to support learning that has an emotional resonance as well as being practically relevant.

The training has developed around key themes including;

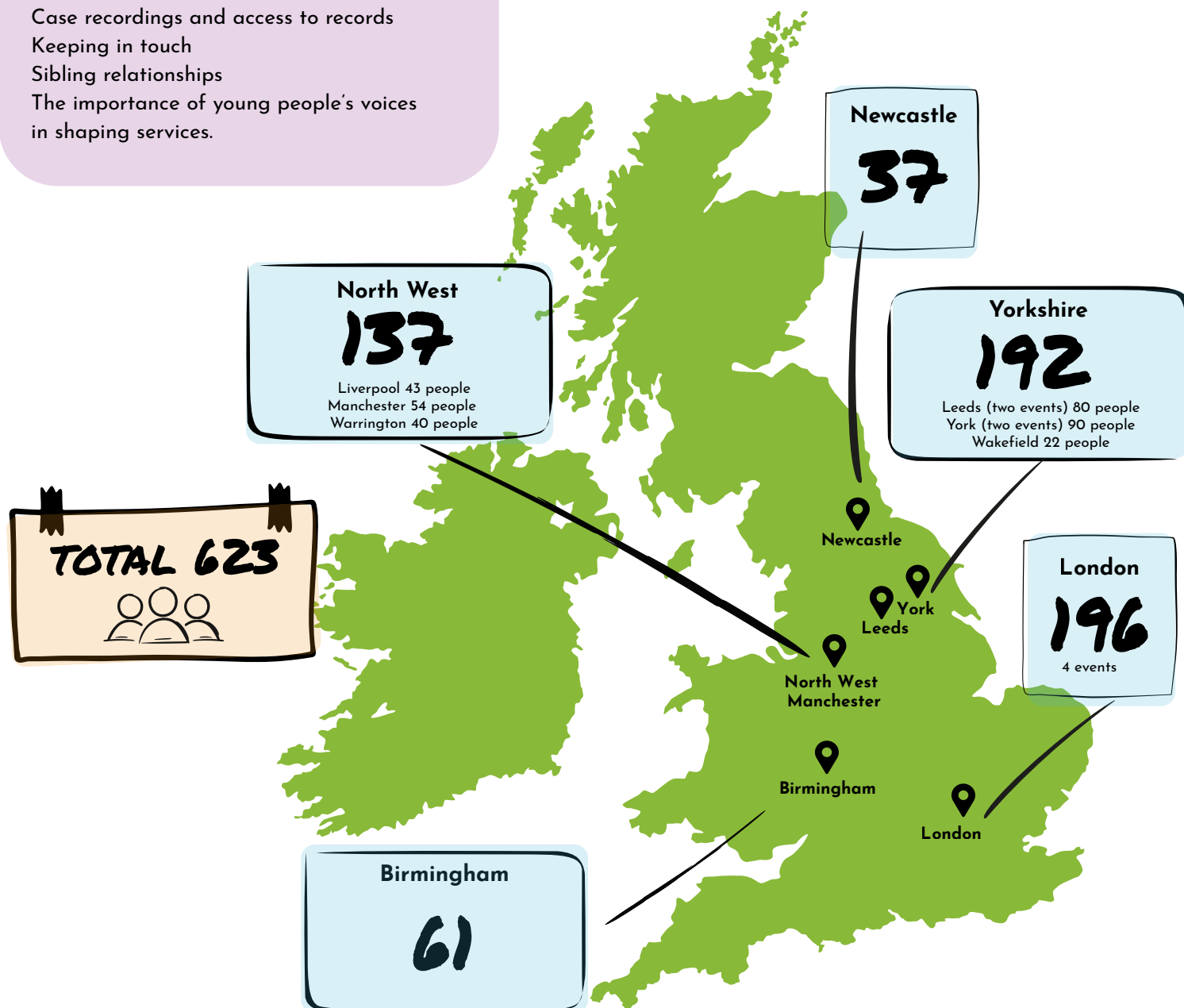
- Identity
- Education
- Unconscious bias
- Microaggressions
- School transitions
- Life story work
- language
- Case recordings and access to records
- Keeping in touch
- Sibling relationships
- The importance of young people's voices in shaping services.

REACH AND GROWTH

The programme has grown significantly since its first full-day training in York in 2023, when 60 professionals travelled from across the country, including Cornwall and Wales. In 2024, two further training sessions were delivered to 90 professionals across Adopt London North and Together for Adoption. In 2025, Adoption England commissioned four pan-regional training events, plus a taster session for Regional Adoption Agency leaders, reaching 235 professionals across York, Manchester, London and Birmingham.

In 2026, Adoption England recommissioned four further pan-regional training events, with an expanded focus that included cross sector professionals, including education and health.

By July 2026, 623 professionals have already been trained from 80 different organisation, with additional commissioned sessions delivered or planned for education-focused audiences, including CAPA College and the Adoption Counts education conference.



DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRAINING MODEL

The 2023 training was the culmination of 18 months of development and included five core workshops: I Believe, Identity, Get to Know Me Now, a school drama scene and a question-and-answer session. These workshops established the foundation of the programme.

In 2024, the model was strengthened through new interactive and reflective elements. These included the use of a buzzer to demonstrate how school transitions can feel unsettling, an unconscious bias video linked to the I Believe workshop, a microaggressions video exploring comments commonly experienced by adopted people, linked to unconscious bias and thinking about care experience as a protected characteristic, and an education film featuring young people, parents and professionals discussing how schools can better support adopted young people.

Two new young people were recruited with diverse experience of adoption to continue to develop and shape the training.

In 2025, the training expanded to include two new workshops, one based around Shakespeare translation which is used to highlight how professional jargon can obscure meaning and how interpretation, accuracy and clarity affect young people when they later read their records.

The second workshop focuses on the importance of direct communication with young people and how organisations can improve the way they engage with them. It draws on learning from national audits of Regional Adoption Agency practice, alongside research highlighting the benefits of youth-friendly services for improving health and wellbeing. Through group discussion, participants consider why improved communication such as youth friendly webpages, matters in adoption services and identify practical ways agencies can strengthen their approach.

New members also brought additional perspectives, including transracial adoption, international adoption and home education.

In 2026, the programme responded directly to previous participant feedback by adding powerful personal reflections on school, college and university transitions, which have routinely been praised as stand out parts of the training. It has also developed to include examples of young people's contributions to service and policy development; and a new access to records workshop which explores life story work, sibling relationships, contact and the importance of including different forms of information, including voice recordings.

Two new young people were also recruited bringing different lived experiences to shape and develop the training and build skills in becoming facilitators of the training.



THE FACILITATOR DEVELOPMENT

A significant part of the programme's impact has been the development of adopted young people as facilitators. Over time, young people have moved from contributing ideas and sharing personal reflections to co-designing workshops, to creating their own workshops.

In terms of presenting again many move from contributing to workshops delivery, taking specific parts, through to leading workshops and group discussions. This has supported confidence, communication skills, and a stronger sense of ownership over the messages being shared.

Facilitator development has been intentionally embedded through the year. We build in regular planning and development sessions and use a hybrid model of in person and online meetings. We also have a strong focus on relationship building as we know that team cohesion, wellbeing and support are the foundation of the group and producing a program that excels. We therefore build in social events to the Calander, as well as time for social connection during development sessions.

For facilitator development we use a variety of methods including rehearsal, modelling, feedback, debriefing and peer support. We know that delivery is most impactful for everyone when it comes from the young person and when they have ownership over it rather than it being something they have learnt that is not theirs or is not authentic to them.

The team also spend time thinking about how to hold professional conversations safely and constructively. This has helped create a model where lived experience in collaboration with professional experience and with respect for everyone's contributions.

Overall the programme creates opportunities for young people to develop transferable skills; including public speaking, group facilitation, critical reflection, teamwork, adaptability and professional communication. As new facilitators join the programme, more experienced young people are increasingly able to model delivery, share learning and support others to find their own voice within the training.

Facilitators feedback & reflections

"I always got very giddy when new people started doing that work with us, and it was always so special to have people join us. It is a lot to ask of people when you're also in the thick of being a teenager at school... But I think the offer of free food is very tempting! Every meeting has pizza and if you eat enough you can make your value back!"

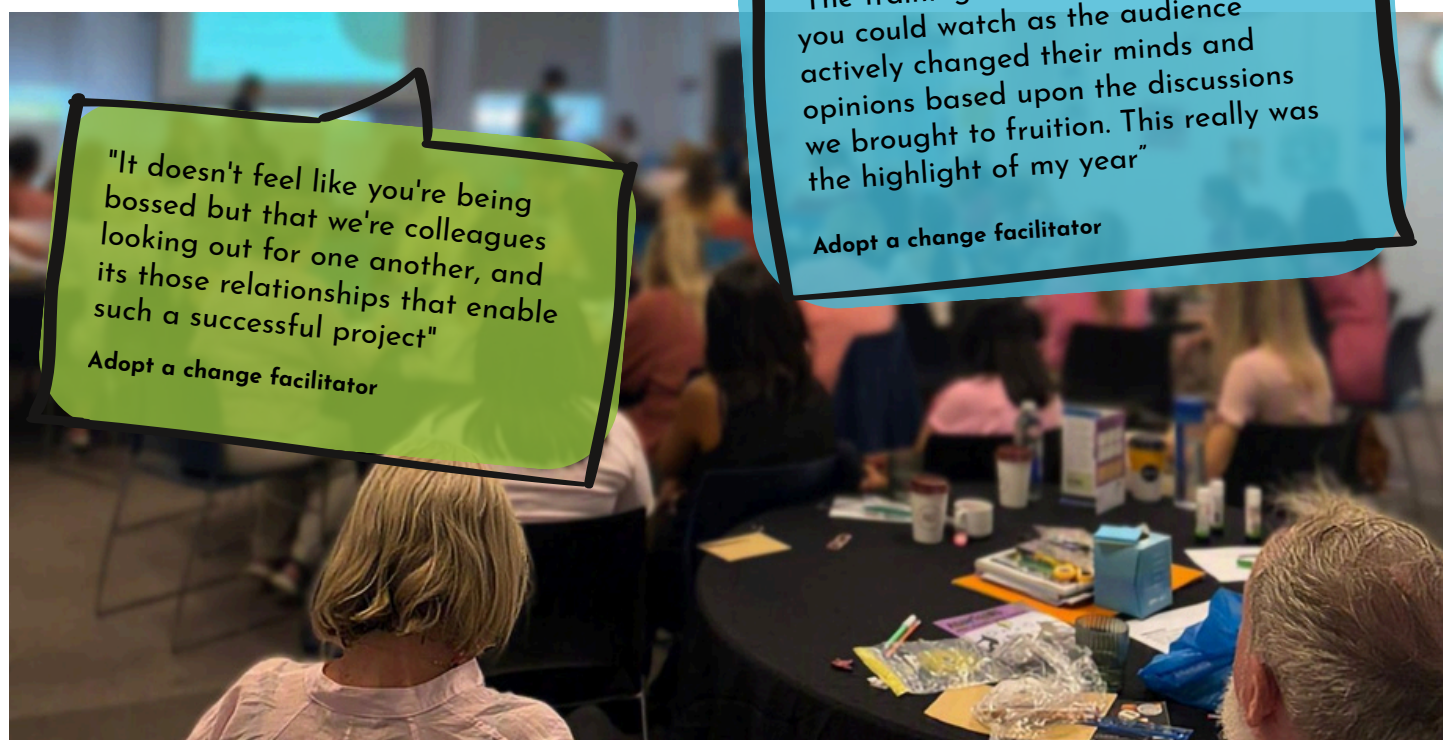
Adopt a change facilitator

"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"

Adopt a change facilitator

"It doesn't feel like you're being bossed but that we're colleagues looking out for one another, and its those relationships that enable such a successful project"

Adopt a change facilitator



IMPACT ON PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Feedback across the programme shows that the training has influenced professional thinking and practice in several consistent ways. Participants described being prompted to reconsider how they write records, prepare adopters, support young people in education, approach life story work, and ensure that young people's views are represented accurately.



Life story work and identity: Professionals reported using identity questions, mood boards and creative activities in direct work with children and young people.



Preparation and assessment: Family finders and recruitment workers described incorporating young people's perspectives into adopter preparation, stage two training and conversations about future challenges.



Education: Participants developed a deeper understanding of the challenges adopted young people can face in school and the need for education settings to become more adoption aware.



Records and language: Practitioners reflected on the long-term impact of written records and the importance of factual accuracy, sensitive language and capturing young people's voices.



Team learning: Attendees shared resources, films and learning with wider teams, supervision groups, conferences and local authority partners.



Support and peer connection: Participants recognised the importance of adopted young people being able to access support directly and connect with peers who share similar experiences.

PARTICIPANTS VALUED MOST

The most consistent feedback across all years was the impact of young people presenting directly to professionals. Participants described the young presenters as confident, open, knowledgeable, thoughtful and powerful.

Many stated that hearing lived experience from young people changed their understanding in a way that professional-led training could not. Participants also valued the diversity of the program in terms of learning styles and workshops.

The exercises were repeatedly described as engaging, varied and easy to adapt into practice. For example numerous professionals have taken away the top 10 tips to use with schools, the 'get to know me now boards' to use with young people and teams and the 'identity questions' to use in adopter preparation training. Deeper understanding of the challenges adopted young people can face in school and the need for education settings to become more adoption aware.



FEEDBACK

"This should be mandatory training for everyone that works with adopted children and prospective adopters."

"Extremely informative and will help shape my teaching, planning and processes going forward"

I will definitely refer to the identity questions when doing life story work with young people."

"It has been the most useful training our service has done. Hearing directly from the young people has impacted in a way you never get from professionals. The whole day was incredibly powerful."

"I work with prospective adopters and your experiences will impact how I assess and think about adoption over a young person's life."

"Hearing directly from the young people gave things I thought I knew a different light and improved my understanding."

LEARNING AND AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Participant feedback also identified opportunities to strengthen the programme further. Professionals asked for more focus on contact and keeping in touch, life story books, access to adoption support, writing records, engaging adopted teenagers, and practical examples of positive school practice. Some participants also wanted the training to include more solution-focused material alongside the exploration of difficulties and systemic barriers.

The programme has already responded to several of these themes. The 2025 and 2026 developments around records, transitions, access to records, sibling relationships and education professionals demonstrate a clear cycle of listening, adaptation and improvement.

2026 FOCUS

The 2026 programme marks a further stage of maturity, with a stronger focus on access to records, education and transition. The access to records workshop supports professionals to understand how records, life story materials and everyday information may be experienced by adopted people later in life. It encourages practitioners to consider accuracy, tone, context, the inclusion of young people's voices and the value of different forms of information.

The inclusion of education professionals has also broadened the programme's reach. It enables schools, colleges, virtual schools and related services to better understand the overlapping issues adopted young people may face around identity, contact, records, trauma, neurodiversity, mental health and educational transitions.

OVERALL IMPACT

Adopt a Change has demonstrated clear impact at individual, team and service levels. It has increased professional understanding of the lifelong impact of adoption, strengthened the centrality of young people's voices, and provided practical tools that professionals can take away and immediately to their work.

The programme's distinctive strength is that it does not only teach professionals about adoption; it inspires through the creativity and leadership of adopted young people. This has made the learning more memorable and has encouraged professionals to question assumptions, improve recording, think more carefully about identity and strengthen the way they support adopted children, young people and families.

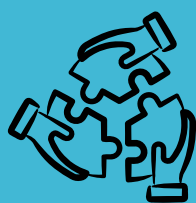


LOOKING FORWARD: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE COMMISSIONING

Future commissioning should build on the programme's demonstrated impact by sustaining the involvement of adopted young people, broadening the professional audiences reached, and embedding the learning more consistently across adoption, education, health and wider children's services.

The following five recommendations would support the continued development, quality and reach of Adopt a Change.

- 1 Commission a sustained national programme:**
Move from short-term or one-off commissioning towards a planned multi-year model, enabling consistent delivery, stronger evaluation, facilitator development and continuity for young people involved.
- 2 Maintain young people's leadership at the centre:**
Ensure commissioning includes sufficient time and resource for young people to co-design, rehearse, review and adapt content, rather than only being funded for delivery days.
- 3 Expand cross-sector reach:**
Continue to include professionals from adoption, local authority, education, health, mental health, virtual schools and voluntary sector services so that learning is shared across the systems that support adopted children and young people and also think about expansion into teacher training programs within universities.
- 4 Invest in facilitator development and support:**
Look at accreditation of the program with a college that builds towards formal qualification as well as employment pathways for young people who join the program to become employed as core facilitators and program developers.
- 5 Resource development to support implementation:**
improved develop of follow-up materials, reflective prompts, team discussion tools and practical resources so that professionals can embed the learning after the training day.



Commissioning the programme in this way would help sustain the distinctive value of young people's lived experience while increasing the likelihood that the learning leads to measurable change in practice. It would also support Adopt a Change to continue developing as a high-quality, responsive and nationally relevant programme shaped by adopted young people themselves.

OUR 2026 IMPACT IN NUMBERS



155

Professionals trained
so far



70+

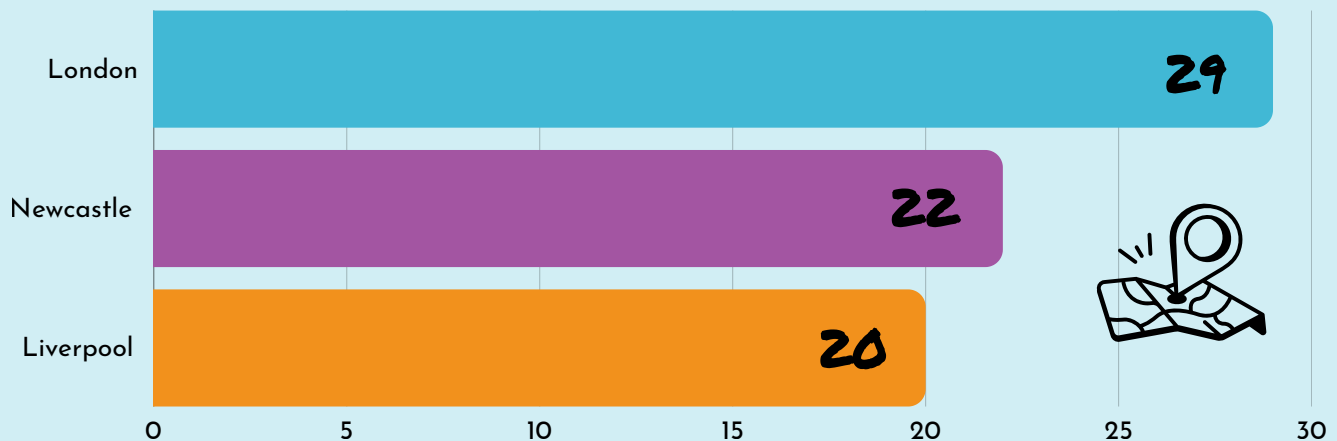
organisations
engaged



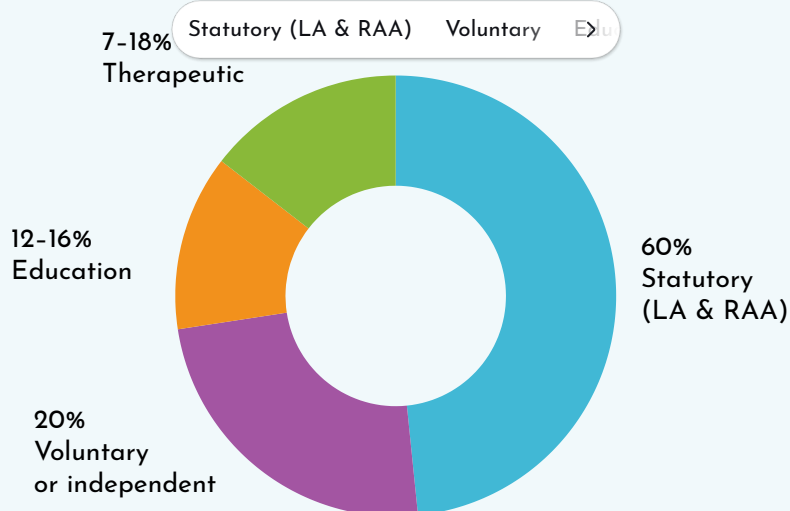
240+

professionals trained
by end of 2026

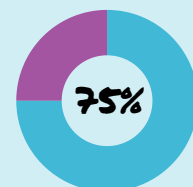
Number of organisations reached



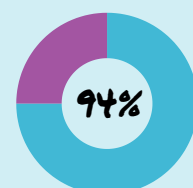
Workforce mix



Feedback



feedback response



Learned something new

Adopt a Change offers training that combines authentic voices, lived experience, and professional insight to transform understanding and strengthen practice.

For more information or to book a training session, please contact us.



adopteens.org



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