



An evaluation of Activity Days for Adoption

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- Activity Days for Adoption (AADs) are delivered by CoramBAAF and act as an addition to the existing range of matching and family finding practices, which may be well-suited to harder-to-place children.
- This independent evaluation, conducted by Coram's Impact and Evaluation team, aimed to: discover how much progress AADs have made towards project outcomes; understand the experiences of those involved and attending; and focus on the longer term impact of AADs through a case study analysis.

Since BLF began funding AADs from May 23rd 2014:

- **1492 prospective adopters** and **1083 children** attended the 46 AADs.
- A total of **1846 Expressions of Interest** were received, and **399 of these developed into matches** giving a matching rate of **21.6%**.

Demographic data for the period from the formation of CoramBAAF (4th August 2015) to September 2016 highlights the challenge in family finding for the children attending AADs.

- 46% (112) were registered disabled and 43% (105) were aged five and over.
- The majority (77%) of the children attending were White though a significant proportion (15%) of children were of mixed ethnic heritage or from a black minority ethnic group (6%).

Key successes:

AADs led to more matches for harder-to-place children

- Since BLF funding began, 37% of children who attended AADs until September 2016 were matched through the AAD.
- The national matching rate for Quarter 2 2014/15 to Quarter 2015/16¹ was 34%². For this same period, the matching rate from AADs was 40%, which is particularly notable given the higher proportion of harder-to-place children in AADs³.

Children's social workers' and foster carers', adoption social workers' and prospective adopters' feedback indicated positive experiences of AADs

- 93% of children's social workers and foster carers, 91% of adoption social workers and 91% of prospective adopters rated the AAD that they attended as excellent or good.

¹ As of December 2016, this is the most recent publicly available ALB data

² This was estimated using the number of children with a Placement Order but not yet placed at the start of the quarter as a proxy for the number of children not yet matched at the start of the quarter

³ The most recently available ALB data calculates that at 30 September 2015, 70% of the children waiting were considered harder-to-place.

- Adoption social workers and children’s social workers and foster carers generally felt well-prepared for the event.

Attending AADs provides value to many adopters even when a match is not achieved

- In a survey sent to adopters that attended an AAD on October 4th 2014, 41% (7) of those that responded felt that attending the event helped to broaden their perspectives.
- 58% (11) believed that the AAD positively impacted on their family finding journey, even though the majority were not matched with a child from the event, demonstrating the value of AADs for adopters even when a match is not achieved.
- The in-depth interviews with a subsample of participants highlighted that for some adopters, seeing children in person allowed them to more realistically assess whether they could care for a child with a different profile to their initial matching criteria.
- Adopters’ interviews highlighted that just by interacting with children waiting for adoption at these events can help to allay adopters’ concerns about Introductions, even if adopters are not matched with children that attended an AAD. This is because it can help put adopters more at ease around children, foster carers and social workers.
- Sometimes adopters can draw strength from other adopters at these events, and even create long-term friendships.

AADs are a cost-effective family finding initiative for harder-to-place children

- If it is assumed that each day in care costs £100 and, given the matching rate of AADs since Year 1 (37%) until September 2016, AADs are cost-effective.
- 85% of adopters felt that there would be a detrimental impact to family finding if AADs were no longer funded. Most were also willing to pay a monetary contribution to attend AADs.

Key learnings/ areas of further consideration:

Greater consistency around how the event is described by children’s social workers and foster carers to children

- CoramBAAF’s good practice guidance emphasises transparency and honesty when describing the AAD to the child.
- Feedback comments from a number of children’s social workers and foster carers, however, highlighted that in some cases, the event is described to children as a “party”. This is sometimes because the child has limited understanding, perhaps to a disability or age, however this was not always the case.
- Further discussion around best practice in this area needs to take place among so that a consistent message is given to children’s social workers and foster carers.

Scope to provide greater clarity in relation to foster carers’ roles and expectations in relation to the AAD

- Though adoption social workers and children’s social workers and foster carers generally felt well-prepared for the event, a small number of foster carer respondents

called for greater clarification around the “*process [of] taking interest from adopters*” and “*the expectations for a foster carer.*”

- The AAD team could investigate ways to ensure foster carers feel better prepared and confident about their role, e.g. simply providing “*bullet points to discuss with adopters previous to the day*”.

Explore ways of facilitating engagement among attendees at AADs

- A small number of children’s social workers and foster carers suggested that a more structured approach on the day could enable more effective engagement between attendees, perhaps through a networking activity for children’s social workers, foster carers and the adopters to network prior to the event “*to put adopters at ease when approaching children as they will be more familiar with the adults in the room.*”
- A number of practical suggestions were made, including more interactive activities to facilitate engagement on the day and labelling workers to make it easier for adopters to identify which workers were responsible for the children attending.

Further discussion of BLF outcomes and how to measure progress against these

- Given the limited data available, it is difficult to accurately determine the level of progress achieved against the BLF project outcomes: 1) the children that take part in Activity Days have increased mental and emotional wellbeing, and 2) the children that take part in Activity Days (fostering or adoption) have increased awareness and acceptance of the plan for their care.
- The data appears to indicate progress against these outcomes, though more discussion needs to take place around how AADs can increase the child’s understanding and awareness of their care plan.

Introduction

Activity Days for Adoption or Adoption Activity Days (AADs⁴) have been delivered by the British Association for Fostering and Adoption (BAAF) from April 2013, or CoramBAAF⁵ from August 2015, since their pilot in October 2011 to October 2012, which was focused in the East Midlands region of England. The rationale was that these Activity Days act as an addition to the existing range of matching and family finding practices, and are particularly appropriate for harder to place children (i.e. they may be: part of a sibling group, five years old or above, of a BME background or with a disability or a complex health need). The Activity Days provide a way for prospective adopters and children to meet in a safe, fun environment, giving them the chance to explore whether they have a connection or 'chemistry', which is something that may be missed in the standard adoption process.

This independent evaluation by Coram's Impact and Evaluation team, commissioned by the CoramBAAF Activity Days team, ultimately seeks to: discover how much progress the AADs have made towards achieving the project outcomes so far; and understand the experiences of all those involved in the AADs (from the children to the foster carers to the social workers). In relation to the latter point, the evaluation focuses in particular on one AAD at the beginning of the specified time period, interviewing adopters that attended to understand the longer-term impact of the events and the value of AADs to adopters in their journeys to become adoptive parents. Ethical approval for these interviews and the evaluation as a whole was granted via the Coram ethical review process in August 2016.

Due to the point at which funding was granted for the AADs, yearly intervals are, for the purpose of this report, split as follows:

- 2014/15 refers to 23rd May 2014 to 22nd May 2015 (Year 1)
- 2015/16 refers to 23rd May 2015 to 22nd May 2016 (Year 2)
 - o This year can be split further into two categories reflecting the change from BAAF to CoramBAAF: Year 2a refers to 23rd May 2015 to 22nd August 2015 when AADs were delivered by BAAF; and Year 2b (23rd August 2015 to 22nd May 2016) when BAAF became CoramBAAF
- 2016/17 refers to 23rd May 2016 to 22nd May 2017 (Year 3)

Henceforth, all figures pertaining to the AADs in this report, unless otherwise specified, relate to the period from Year 1 to the report date (September 1st, 2016).

The current round of Big Lottery Fund (BLF) funding for the AADs is due to end after Year 3 and this evaluation aims to provide some insight into the value of AADs and their effectiveness, which are important factors when applying for future funding.

⁴ This acronym continues to be used in the report for purposes of familiarity

⁵ On July 31st 2015, BAAF announced its closure and the Adoption Activity Days team was transferred to the new entity CoramBAAF Adoption & Fostering Academy

A change in focus:

Until recently Activity Days for Adoption were referred to as Adoption Activity Days. The subtle change in phrasing reflects that these Activity Days are not solely focused on adoption but on permanency outcomes for children more generally; indeed, in May 2016, the Activity Days team piloted their first Activity Day for Fostering, of which the key findings and learnings will be reported in a separate evaluation.

Objectives of the evaluation

The report is structured around five key research questions in order to gather as much insight and information about the effectiveness, value and impact of AADs for the various parties involved:

- 1. Have AADs increased the number of matches for harder-to-place children?**
- 2. How much progress has been made towards achieving project outcomes?**
- 3. What are the general experiences of attending AADs of: the social workers, foster carers, prospective adopters and children?**
- 4. Focusing on one AAD in particular from 2014, what was the retrospective impact for adopters attending the AADs?**
- 5. Cost analysis of AADs: are they cost-effective? And, would adopters be willing to pay for these events?**

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to answer the questions outlined above. The analysis was undertaken on data from monitoring spreadsheets and feedback forms routinely collected and provided by the Activity Days team at CoramBAAF. Publicly available adoption data from the Adoption Leadership Board (ALB) were accessed in order that rates and figures could be compared with the estimated national average; this is the data which is most recently available as of December 2016, and covers the period ending September 2015. The case study involved a survey analysis and thematic analysis of telephone interviews with adopters.

The Activity Days for Adoption: figures and facts

From Year 1 (beginning 23rd May 2014) until present⁶, there have been 47 Activity Days. Of these, 14 received funding from the Department for Education (DfE) and one was an Activity Day for Fostering pilot.

For the 46 Activity Days for Adoption, nearly a quarter (24%, 11) took place in the North West of England although there were events in a wide range of regions (see **Figure 1**).

⁶ The end of this time period is taken to be 1st September 2016, the period in which the evaluation is being conducted. If data included are from after this period, this will be clearly stated.

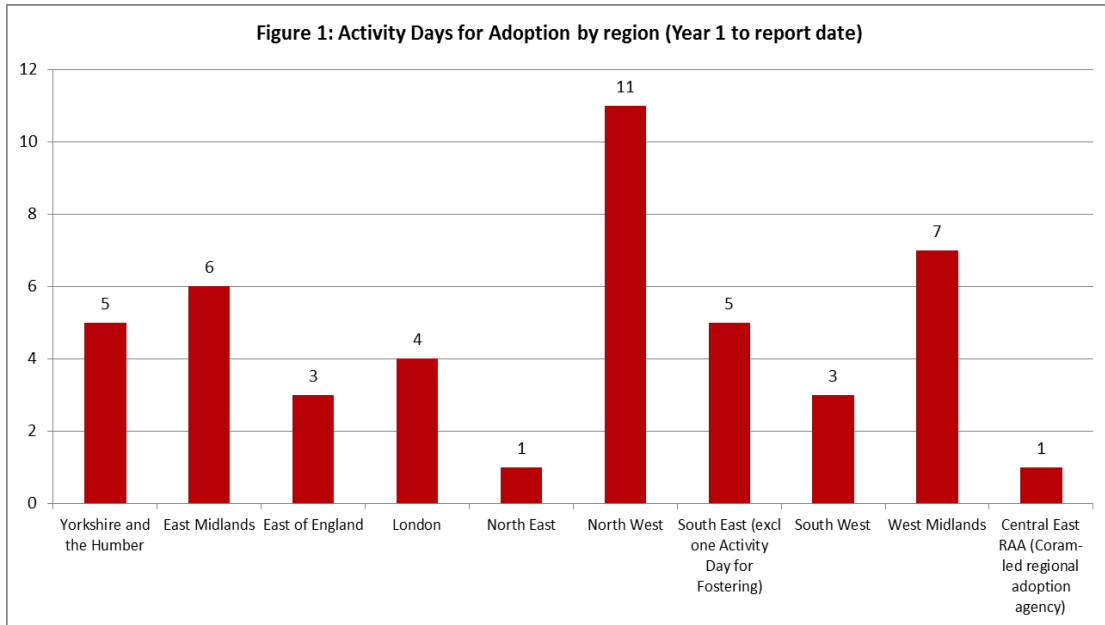
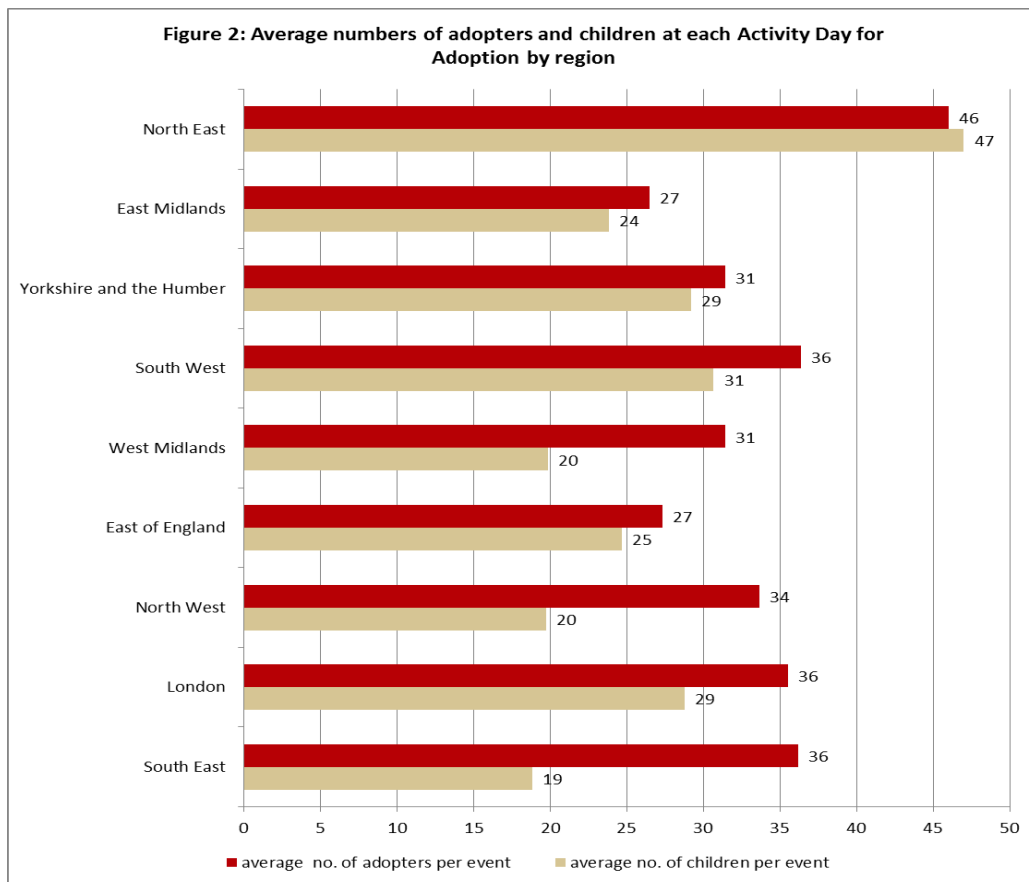


Figure 2 shows that highest average number of children that attended Activity Days for Adoption was in the North East of England. This is likely because there was only 1 AAD that occurred in this region compared to 11 events, for instance, in the North West.

The average number of adopters attending the Activity Day events was generally larger than the average number of children attending, though the difference in averages varied across regions. Events in the South East, on average, had a significantly higher proportion of adopters attending relative to children attending (a ratio of 36 adopters: 19 children).



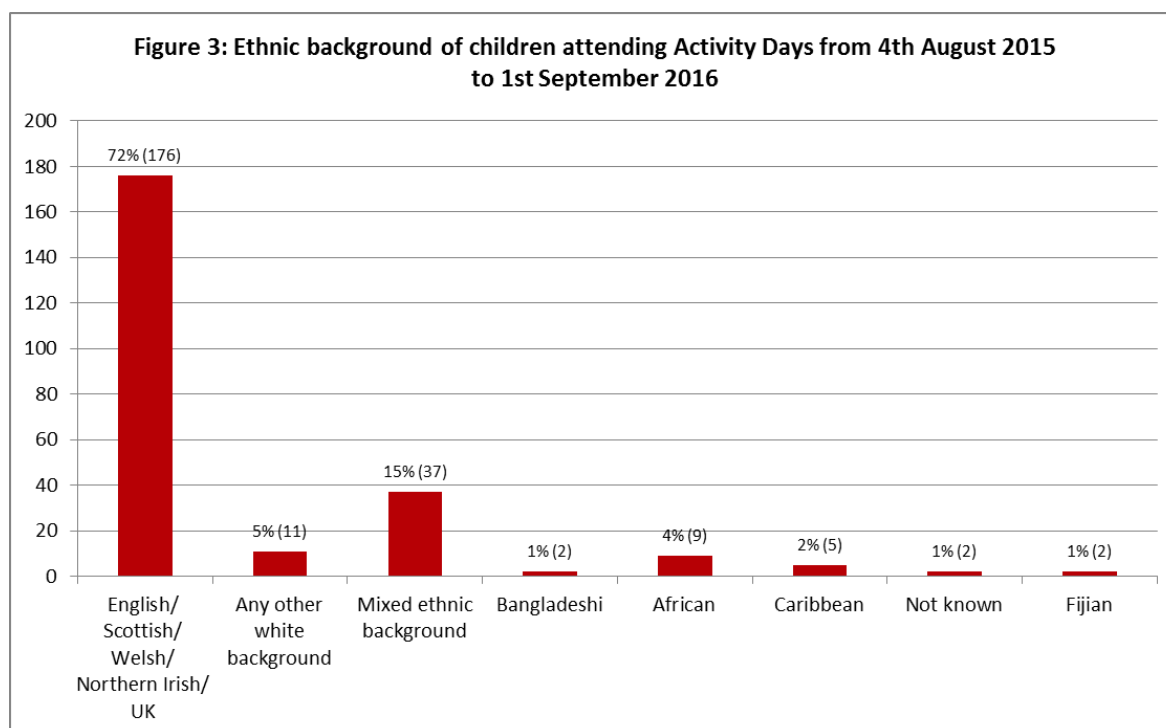
Across the 46 Activity Days for Adoption:

- There were 1492 prospective adopters
- 1083 children attended
- 1846 Expressions of Interest were received. 21.6% of these resulted in matches.
- The events resulted in 399 matches.⁷

Demographics of children:

It is generally the case that most children that attend Activity Days were harder-to-place and were more likely to benefit from more creative family finding initiatives. Children's demographic data for the period after CoramBAAF came into being is available and covers the 14-month period from 4th August 2015 to 1st September 2016. During this period, there were fourteen AADs and one piloted Activity Day for Fostering, which is also included in the data. Only proportions (percentages) were included in the report to the BLF; however, numbers have been revised subsequently based on recent data provided by the Activity Days team⁸ to Coram's Impact and Evaluation team.

As in **Figure 3**, the majority of children (72%, 176) were White and the second largest proportion of children (15%, 37) was of a mixed ethnic background.



Less than half (46%, 112) of the children that attended were registered disabled. Over half the children (57%, 138) were four years old or under; a significant proportion (40%, 98) of children attending events were aged between five and nine years old. Three per cent were

⁷ Data are accurate as of the beginning of December 2016

⁸ Figures may therefore be subject to rounding errors

aged ten to fourteen which is due to the Activity Day for Fostering taking place within this period.

The Activity Days team also provided detailed data on siblings for children attending Activity Days in the period from 23rd May 2016 to 1st September 2016: 40% (31) of the children were not to be placed with other children; 37% (29) of the children were to be placed a sibling group of 2 and 23% (18) were to be placed in a sibling group of 3, highlighting the challenges these children would have in matching.

1: Impact of Activity Days for Adoption on placements of harder-to-place children

The AAD team collect data on the number of matches resulting from AADs, which is used here as a proxy for the number of placements. Looking at the rate of matching in the AADs and nationally enables us to compare rates and understand the impact of AADs on placements of harder-to-place children. Given that the Adoption Leadership Board (ALB) data does not provide child-level data on the proportion of harder to place children that are matched, these calculations utilise the available data on number of children matched with adoptive families and the number of children with a Placement Order (PO) but not yet placed by each quarter (the rationale for using this is explained in **Appendix A**).

Looking at the data from May 2014 (Year 1) until the report date, the proportion of children that attended AADs and were subsequently matched from these events was 37%.

However, as ALB data is only available until the end of Quarter 2 2015/16 (i.e. September 2015), the match rate from the AADs should be calculated for this time period to ensure the comparison is as meaningful as possible.

From Quarter 2 2014/15 to Quarter 2 2015/16, there were 27 Activity Days for Adoption, of which 939 adopters and 614 children attended. This resulted in 1157 EOIs and 248 matches. The match rate of AADs for this time period was therefore 40%.

Using the equation outlined in **Appendix A**, the national match rate (whereby the number of children with a PO but not yet placed at the start of the quarter is used as a proxy for the number of children not yet matched at the start of the quarter) for the same period is 34%.⁹

This demonstrates that the match rate of AADs for this time period is higher than the estimated national match rate. One should of course be cautious about the estimated figure used as the national match rate, particularly as the number of children with a PO but not yet placed at the start of a quarter is likely to be an underestimate of the number of children waiting to be matched. If this is the case, then, the actual national match rate is expected to be larger than the 34% estimate. However, the national match rate looks at the number of all children matched unlike the match rate for the AADs where most children who attend are

⁹ Data for Quarters 1 (needed for the proxy equation) 2, 3 and 4 from the financial year 2014/15 are taken from the '**ALB agency level data: January to March 2015**' spreadsheet available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adoption-leadership-board-quarterly-data-reports>. Data for Quarters 1 and 2 from the financial year 2015/16 are taken from the '**ALB agency level data: July to September 2015**' spreadsheet available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adoption-leadership-board-quarterly-data-reports-2015-to-2016>. The calculation is outlined in greater detail in Appendix A.

harder-to-place. The 40% match rate resulting from the AADs from Quarter 2 2014/15 to Quarter 2 2015/16 is therefore even more notable.

Once the data is made publicly available from the ALB, a matching rate can be calculated to more accurately compare matching rates over a longer period (looking at AADs that occurred since the BLF funding was granted); however, this exercise suggests that **AADs have increased the number of matches for harder-to-place children.**

A note regarding disruptions:

The Activity Days team ask agencies to inform them of disruptions as and when they occur, and the team have as yet been informed of 6 disruptions pre-order from Year 1 of BLF funding to the report date. This equates to a pre-order disruption rate of 1.5% given that there were 399 matches from the AADs in this period. The national matching rate for disruptions pre-order differs across studies (as explored by Selwyn, Wijedasa, & Meakings, 2014¹⁰), from 5-11%, both of which are above the AAD rate of 1.5%. For UK studies that separate pre- and post-order disruptions, a post-order disruption rate of 4% to 11% is reported¹¹. Selwyn et al.'s analysis of a national dataset for adopted children over a 12 year period found the disruption rate in this period to be 3.2%¹². Currently, no agencies have reported post-order disruptions to the AAD team, indicating that AAD placements and adoptions do not appear to be "riskier" than those made through standard family finding processes. Future longitudinal data on the AAD matches from Year 1 of BLF funding to the report date is necessary, however, to allow this to be calculated more accurately and to allow for comparison with the national disruption rate, as calculated by Selwyn et al.¹³

In summary

- The matching rate of AADs (the proportion of total children that were matched through these events) from Year 1 until 1st September 2016 is 37%.
- Using the most recent ALB national data available, the estimated national match rate for Quarter 2 2014/15 to Quarter 2 2015/16 is 34%. This compares to a higher matching rate of 40% from the AADs during the same period.
- Children who attend AADs generally do so because their workers think they are among the least likely to find a match through standard family finding procedure.
- This suggests that AADs increased the number of matches for harder-to-place children.

2: Progress towards project outcomes

The first round of BLF funding for AADs (Year 1 to Year 3 – 23rd May 2014 to 22nd May 2017) was provided with the overall aim that AADs would increase the number of harder to

¹⁰ Selwyn, J., Wijedasa, D., & Meakings, S. (2014). Beyond the Adoption Order: challenges, interventions and adoption disruption.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

place children in care being adopted. Indeed, the children that attend AADs are mostly harder to place. AADs can allow for prospective adopters to interact with the child instead of simply read about them and their harder-to-place status in their profile, which may increase the likelihood of a match. It is important to understand what progress has been made towards the AAD project outcomes identified by the BLF (see Table 1) which will contribute to our understanding of the effectiveness of AAD.

Table 1: Project outcomes as agreed with BLF

Project outcome	Change indicators
Outcome 1: the children that take part in Activity Days have increased mental and emotional wellbeing	1.1: 100 children a year are placed and permanently settled in an adoptive home.
	1.2: 167 children a year will feel more positive about the adoption process.
Outcome 2: the children that take part in Activity Days (fostering or adoption) have increased awareness and acceptance of the plan for their care.	2.1: 500 children a year have an increased awareness and acceptance of the plan for their care
	2.2: 167 children a year who prepare for and attend an Activity Day have a reduced or unchanged level of anxiety.

Table 2 presents an overview of the number of Activity Day events and matches since the BLF provided funding. If the number of matches is used as a proxy for the number of placements, the first change indicator of project outcome one (see Table 1) was met for year one but not for year 2. Indeed, the average number of matches from events in year two is less than half that from year one, which is reflective of the changing adoption landscape, largely in response to Re-B and Re-BS, and the inevitable transition period resulting from the closure of BAAF and the creation of CoramBAAF. At present, there are data for four Activity Days for Adoption in Year 3 so it is not yet possible to tell whether this change indicator will be met for this year. It should also be emphasised that children attending AADs are those for whom family finding is the most difficult.

Table 2: Number of Activity Days for Adoption and matches by year

Year	No. of events	No. of matches	Average no. of matches
1	25	292	12
2	17	83	5
3 (until 1/09/16)	4	24	6

For those that responded to the question in the foster carer feedback, sent at least a week after the event, 14% (3) answered that the children felt more positively or much more positively about their adoption plan relative to before they attended the event. The majority (81%, 7) responded that their children felt 'about the same', highlighting that, for most, attending the event has not negatively impacted children's feelings towards their adoption plan. The second change indicator of project outcome one is therefore difficult to assess given the incomplete data (largely due to structural changes to the AAD team and a low response rate from foster carers) and the AAD team are looking at ways to improve data

collection and increase response rates for the future. There is some evidence in the data, however, that the majority of children who attend AADs feel at least the same or more positive about the adoption process.

A note on feedback data limitations:

There are some periods where there is significantly less feedback data (in particular reference to question 3) relative to other periods, for instance, Year 2 feedback data for children's social workers, foster carers and adoption social workers. The Activity Days team was initially part of BAAF; however since 23rd August 2015 they became part of CoramBAAF. The data before this period and shortly after, therefore, were not always consistently captured or recorded due to the significant structural changes to the team during this period of transition. Data collection from this point forward, however, has significantly improved. Although the gaps in the data present some difficulties in understanding representative patterns and findings, they still provide a useful insight into the general experiences of adopters, foster carers and social workers attending AADs.

The first change indicator of the second outcome focuses on the child's acceptance of their plan for care. Of the 24 foster carers that responded to the question, the majority (83%, 20) felt that the child's understanding of the plan for their care was 'about the same.' Two felt that their foster children had more understanding about their plan for their care, though no further elaboration on these points was provided. In contrast, two foster carer responses indicated that their foster children had less understanding about the plan for their care one week after attending the AAD, with one foster carer attributing this to the event creating an anxiety about leaving her foster carers – “[the child] talked to us about not wanting a new daddy or mummy” and sought reassurance. This highlights the importance of effective preparation before attending the event to make sure the child does not feel overwhelmed. The other foster carer felt that their child had a lesser understanding simply because they were young and viewed the event as a party, therefore did not particularly link it with the plan for their care. Given such a small sample of questionnaires, these should not be taken as generalisable though they are useful to provide an indication of findings.

The second change indicator for project outcome two is again explored in the foster carer feedback form. Of the responses received, 82% (23) commented positively that their child/ren had an unchanged level of anxiety, which seems to support progress against the second change indicator. Indeed, two foster carers commented that their children's levels of anxiety appeared 'somewhat better', though three foster carers responded that their children's levels had worsened, with two commenting that the venue was “cold” and “small.”

The Activity Days team are exploring ways in which they can increase the response rates of such questionnaires, perhaps through follow-up reminder emails to foster carers, to ensure there is a more comprehensive dataset from which to draw findings in the future. In addition, questionnaires may be adapted in order to capture progress to reflect the BLF outcomes more explicitly.

In summary

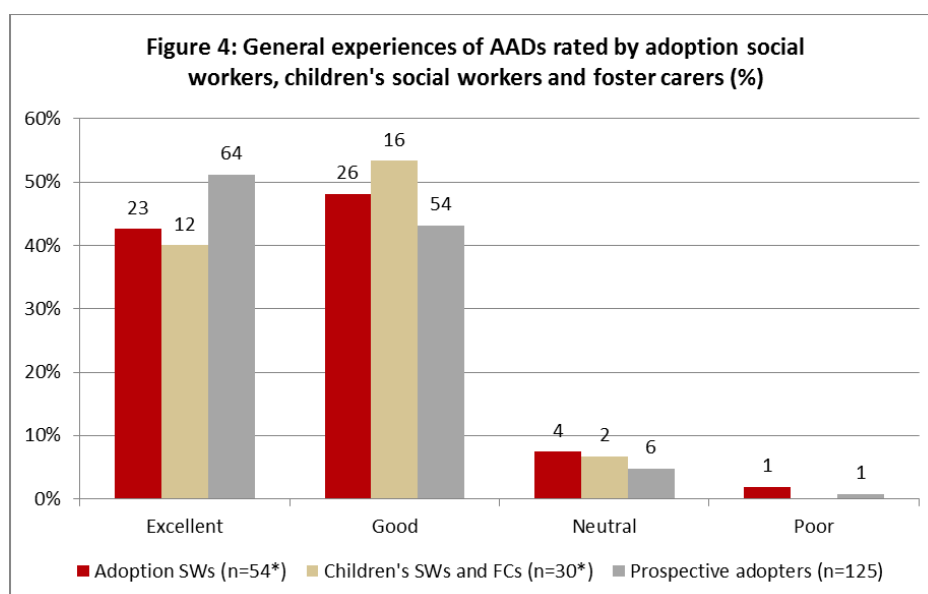
- There seems to be progress made towards all outcomes apart from the indicator that attending the Activity Days should lead to children having an increased awareness and acceptance of the plan for their care (most feedback indicates this awareness and acceptance was unchanged).
- The limited number of feedback responses, however, means that change indicators 1.2, 2.1 and 2.2 are difficult to assess given the available data.
- The AAD team are exploring ways in which they can increase response rates of foster carers' feedback forms (that get sent to them one week after the event). Though not conclusive, these data provide an indication of progress in the right direction.

3: Value of Activity Days for Adoption to foster carers, social workers and adopters

Children's social workers, foster carers and prospective adopters that attended AADs were asked to complete a questionnaire at the end of the event to gauge feelings of preparedness, any initial concerns, observations and views, as well as their general experience of the event. Adoption social workers completed a similar questionnaire too, which aimed also to explore how they went about preparing their adopters. Some children that attended the AADs described their day and what they enjoyed the most on a postcard, which they could colour in.

Responses from these questionnaires were qualitatively analysed using thematic analysis to identify key patterns in experiences across attendees.

Figure 4 below shows how children's social workers and foster carers, adoption social workers and adopters that completed feedback rated their general experience at the AAD.



*refers to total responses received, therefore excludes missing responses

Figure 4 is based on forms received that provided a response to the question. There was, however, a high proportion of missing responses for this particular question across two groups (29 missing for adoption social workers and 43 missing for children's social workers and foster carers), thus the pattern of ratings across the two groups is not generalisable to the wider populations.

Responses across all groups were mostly positive, with 94% of adopters rating it as good or excellent. 93% of children's social workers and foster carers felt the same, as did 91% of adoption social workers. It is interesting to observe that the ratings across adoption social workers and children's social workers and foster carers follow a very similar pattern, with most rating the event as 'Good.' In comparison, a higher proportion of adopters rated their experience of the event as 'Excellent' relative to the other two groups.

Responses from: 1) children's social workers and foster carers; 2) adoption social workers and 3) adopters were analysed and key points are included in the sections below:

3.1: Children's social worker and foster carer responses

There were 73 children's social worker and foster carer responses from events in the period June 2014 to May 2016: 64 from Year 1; 8 from Year 2 and 1 from Year 3 (although this is only up to May).

Concerns/ worries prior to attending

Of the 70 that provided a response, 56% (39) stated that they had no worries or concerns before attending the Activity Day for Adoption.

A greater proportion of respondents from Year 1 (52%, 32) expressed initial worries or concerns than respondents in Year 2 and 3 (78%, 9), though the small numbers of feedback forms for these years mean this finding should be treated with caution. This could reflect the fact that social workers and foster carers in 2014 were less likely to have previously attended an AAD, whereas by 2016, Activity Days were perhaps becoming more familiar.

Indeed, of those that expressed initial worries, a significant proportion (43%, 9) was to do with attending an Activity Day for the first time, which resulted in some "*apprehension*" about the "*unknown*." One social worker previously "*had some negative comments from non-social work colleagues around the concept of activity days*" and was keen to "*form [his/her] own opinion*" and was thus a little "*anxious*" about attending. Common themes in responses also related to concern around the impact of the event on the child in terms of coping on the day and the potential emotional repercussions; two adopters specifically commented that they feared their children feeling "*isolated or rejected*."

Preparedness of the children's social worker and foster carer

Of the sixty nine that responded, fifty six (82%) specifically stated that they felt well-prepared for the event. Of these, six explicitly commented that they had attended an AAD previously, or had spoken with friends or colleagues that had attended an event before. Respondents' comments indicated that they valued speaking with people who attended previously as well as "*a good briefing*" or receiving "*information*" about the day, whether this was through a conversation or an "*information pack*".

Most respondents felt that they had received sufficient information about the event, though three suggested that it would have been useful to know about the theme and venue further in advance. Another foster carer respondent felt there was a lack of information, as they only learnt about the event “*when [their] Social Worker told [them] 5 days before the event*” and had still not received any information at the time of attending the event. The general procedure is that invitations from the Activity Days team are sent approximately two weeks prior to the event and sent direct to foster carers, social workers, adopters and adoption workers. It is unclear why this foster carer did not receive the invitation and why they presumed their child’s social worker would relay the information to them as the foster carer should be aware of the procedure. It is likely, then, that there was an information error, for instance, perhaps the information was sent to the wrong email address of the foster carer. This does highlight the importance in understanding the procedure so as not to have erroneous expectations, which can lead to delay and misunderstandings.

Whilst the vast majority of respondents (94%, 65) knew what was expected of them on the day, a small number of respondents – seemingly foster carers¹⁴ - called for greater clarification around the “*process [of] taking interest from adopters*” and “*the expectations for a foster carer*”. One respondent suggested that it would be useful to be provided “*bullet points to discuss with adopters previous to the day.*”

Most of the suggestions for improvement related to generally obtaining more knowledge in advance, such as “*what activities to expect on the day*” or having a “*briefing*” in advance. The Activity Days team recommend that the supervising social worker has a one-to-one session with the foster carer prior to the event as preparation. This is when a discussion of the requirements of the role, the activities and generally what to expect should be discussed. All agencies who allow the Activity Days team to facilitate AADs will have had a briefing about AADs where they are provided with the suitable preparatory material (which includes a cartoon book for carer to go through, workbook, colouring, questions etc.), therefore all agencies should be aware of expectations as social workers attending AADs and representing children attending these events. They should also make arrangements to brief new teams and social workers as and when necessary.

Another respondent said that it would be useful to have someone go through the colour coding (which distinguished the role of attendees) on the day. This is normally standard practice on the day.

Preparing the children

Nearly half (49%, 35) of the respondents said that the child/ren viewed the day as a fun “*party*” or a “*play day*”. This was, in many cases, because respondents said the children were too young or had limited understanding (due to learning difficulties or disabilities) to comprehend the concept of the day. In some cases, though, the respondent mentioned that they deliberately chose not to reveal the true nature of the day in order to protect the child/ren.

¹⁴ The AAD team distributes the same feedback form to children’s social workers and foster carers. Going forward it might be better to incorporate a tick-box option at the beginning of the form so that responses of social workers and foster carers are clearly differentiated.

“My child was unaware of the possible outcome as he would have found it to overwhelming; he thought we were meeting new parents with very little experience with young children and he was there to help them.” Foster carer

Indeed another respondent shared a similar story:

“Due to the complexity around the sibling’s case at the moment, we limited the amount of understanding that we gave... they were aware that there was [sic] other looked after children at the day and that they were searching for mummies and daddy’s that may be there.” Children’s social worker/foster carer

This presents a picture that the level of preparation and the message given to the child varied across cases and is largely dependent on what is felt by the foster carer and social worker to be most beneficial for the child/ren at the time. This, however, is not in line with best practice guidance offered by CoramBAAF¹⁵ which encourages an honest, transparent approach with children. This is an area that necessitates further consideration. On one hand, there is merit in transparency and honesty, which could help children grasp a greater understanding of their plan. On the other, it is arguable that foster carers and children’s social workers are better placed to know what would suit their child as an individual.

For the older children (generally five years and above), respondents generally attempted to prepare them by describing the day as *“another avenue of family finding”*, making sure not to *“blow it out of proportion”*. The preparation book and life story work was included in numerous comments as useful ways in which foster carers and social workers sought to prepare the children.

Other observations

Children’s social workers and foster carers were given the opportunity to provide any further comments or observations of the day. Some social workers and foster carers compared the event they had attended to a previous AAD:

“I think this was much better than the previous one I attended in November, partly because of the nicer weather and more opportunities to play outside but also due to the lay out of the school and the magician was much better and had the right balance between engaging the children and the adults.” Children’s social worker

Comments like these emphasise that each AAD is unique and the experience of the day is subject to a number of variables, some of which are beyond the team’s control such as weather. However, there is much that the AAD team has influence over including the venue and the entertainment.

Indeed, achieving the *“right balance between engaging the children and the adults”* was a theme that was touched upon a number of times. Suggestions were made as to how this balance might be achieved better: one participant felt that a more *“structured approach”* for adopters to engage in conversation with children’s social workers and foster carers would be beneficial and help make the experience less nerve-racking for adopters. In a similar fashion, another respondent commented that it would be better for staff and volunteers to *“move adopters around the children”* to *“encourage interaction”* as the particular respondent

¹⁵ Fursland, E. 2015. Organising an Adoption Activity Day. London: British Association for Adoption & Fostering, pp. 51-54

was disappointed that their child was not approached. They suggested that allowing children's social workers, foster carers and the adopters to network before the event might help *"to put adopters at ease when approaching children as they will be more familiar with the adults in the room."*

Having good entertainment was considered to be an important aspect of the day. Three comments praised the quality of the entertainer/ magician act, commenting that the timing of this was particularly appropriate and considered as it *"did well to hold the interest of tired children"* at the end of the day. One respondent suggested that *"some water or sand play and a sensory area would be useful for children who enjoy their own space."* A small number of comments requested a greater number of age-appropriate activities: two commented that they would have liked more for younger children whereas one commented that they would have liked more activities for older children. There was some acknowledgement, however, that it is often *"difficult"* to make each event have a narrow, specified *"age and developmental range"* therefore a range of activities for different ages is perhaps more suitable.

3.2: Adoption social worker responses

There were 83 responses from adoption social workers attending events in the period June 2014 to May 2016: from 67 Year 1; 14 from Year 2 and 2 from Year 3 (although this is only up to May).

Concerns/ worries prior to attending

Of the 80 that provided a response, the majority (69%, 55) had no worries or concerns about coming to the event. For the twenty-five respondents that did have worries or concerns, 12 (48%) were general concerns as they had not attended an AAD previously - typically, these were just around being *"unsure"* or having *"anxieties"* about *"what to expect"*.

Other common worries that adoption social workers expressed were related to feeling uncertain as to whether the concept of Activity Days *"is the right thing to do for the children"*. In particular, three adoption social workers discussed the possibility that attending the Activity Day could have a negative impact on some children that may experience *"a sense of rejection"*, which was a similar concern for children's social workers and foster carers. These concerns were generally around the longer-term impact this might have *"if adoptive parents didn't choose them"*. For two of these adoption social workers, attending the event in question served to reassure them to a certain extent as they were able to see that *"the children really enjoyed themselves and the adopters seemed to be engaging with them very positively."* The two other concerns expressed by adoption social workers were centred on their adopters: 1) how they would cope in what can often be an emotionally *"overwhelming"* event engaging with children, some of whom have experienced *"much trauma"*, and 2) whether there would be suitable children for their adopters on the day so as to make attending worthwhile.

One adoption social worker attended the event with her adopters who had had a *"difficult"* experience at a prior AAD where they were shortlisted for a child but ultimately not chosen. The social worker's account, however, emphasised that by effective, thoughtful preparation with her adopters, attending another time despite a complicated experience at a previous event was possible:

"We were able to talk through the emotions triggered for each of them by their previous experience... [how this] might impact on them again, how they would use their time there, what they expected and hoped for." Adoption social worker

The adoption social worker reflected that attending a second Activity Day for Adoption has strengthened their resolve to adopt, and even helped them to broaden their initial perspective on their matching criteria:

"I think the events have helped them to move from a position of wanting a child to complete their family/a sibling for their birth son to more of a position of knowing that they have lots to offer different children." Adoption social worker

Preparedness of the adoption social worker

Of those that responded to the question, 80% (64) of social workers were positive about their level of preparedness to attend the event, though the comments highlighted that feeling prepared was due to different reasons for different social workers. For some, they felt prepared as they had attended a similar event before and therefore *"knew what to expect"*. Others commented highly about the information received, describing it as *"concise and accurate"*. Two social workers did mention that whilst the preparation was good, there is *"no substitute for experience"*, suggesting that their confidence in their role on the day might increase with the number of events they attend.

Thirteen comments were more critical about the preparation received or some aspect of the preparation received– of these, four suggested that information about the event should be provided sooner. The Activity Days team attempts to provide adoption social workers, along with foster carers and children's social workers, with the information about the event (e.g. the venue, estimated numbers) two weeks prior to the event, though this is contingent on knowing about the children referred.

Other comments related to the type of information social workers would value receiving before events. Three social workers felt that having information about the children attending beforehand would be beneficial, with one stating that if their adopters, who wanted to adopt older children, had known that there would be younger children at the event, *"maybe other couples would have been put forward."* One social worker would have liked to have had an estimate of the numbers of children and adopters that were attending and another social worker felt that information about the local authorities attending would be *"particularly useful in respect of locations of adopters and child being too close and being aware that this may be a potential issue in matching."* The way in which AADs work is that adopters are referred who are not necessarily restrictive in the type/ number of children that they want because the team want an element of chemistry to come into play, for adopters to see the children rather than have pre-conceived ideas about siblings or older children. However, if adoption social workers ask the team (once their adopters are referred, around two weeks before the event), the Activity Days team is able to provide basic information on the children due to attend, e.g. there are no girls, there are only siblings, there are no dual heritage children etc. Adoption social workers should therefore contact the Activity Days team for general information about the children attending. This could be perhaps better emphasised at briefings so social workers are aware of this opportunity.

Two social workers commented that a map of the activities at the event would have been useful to help them to navigate the venue. For the remaining two adopters, their reasons for feeling underprepared were due to external circumstances: one had not received relevant emails from CoramBAAF which was likely due to an *“incorrectly entered or omitted”* email address, and the other felt that their lack of preparation was likely *“due to [their] own agency failing to get its act together on preparing together for the event.”*

Preparing their adopters

Not all the adoption social workers that completed the feedback forms were representing their adopters at the events. However, for those that were representing their adopters, most seemed to have undertaken some preparation work together, particularly if their adopters had not attended an event before. The preparation undertaken beforehand varied in basic format – while most seemed to discuss the event with their adopters one-to-one whether this be via telephone or a home visit, but three social workers also spoke of preparation events like a *“home finding seminar”* and *“briefing sessions”* that provided further information about AADs.

The comments indicated that the type of preparation of adopters tended to emphasise the practicalities of the event, that is, how *“Activity Days work”* and *“do’s and don’ts”* for the adopters on the day. There was also an emphasis on the importance of managing expectations, being flexible and generally having an open mind:

“I encouraged them to see the adoption activity day as finding out for themselves if this method of family finding was for them, (or not) and to try not to think too far ahead about the possible outcome. I prepared them that they may not actually meet their sibling group at the event. I prepared them that it was my first event as well so to a certain extent we just needed to ‘go with the flow’ and practice the skill of adaptability (very much needed as an adopter)!” Adoption social worker.

Similarly, one social worker warned her adopters *“not to lose their heart”* and another advised their adopters to keep their *“expectations low”* and attend the event with the idea to *“have fun”* and engage with children.

The comments also highlighted a difference regarding the point at which adopters began preparation. One social worker commented that *“we talk about adoption activity days early on in our process”* therefore adopters are already *“very familiar”* with AADs before attending. In contrast, a small number expressed the short timescales which leaves them with *“not much time”* so preparation usually consists of emailing relevant information and a chat with adopters.

As expected, those adopters who have previously attended an AAD tend to require less preparation from social workers, although it is still useful to touch base as *“a reminder of what to expect”* and to emphasise that they would be available for *“support”*.

Comments also indicated that social workers, particularly those that had little or no previous experience of attending an AAD, benefited from being proactive and educating themselves about AADs before preparing adopters. For instance, one social worker reached out to colleagues that had experience of attending AADs *“to seek advice and guidance”* about the event and its potential impact on adopters; another researched in detail AADs and

“particularly adopters’ experiences of them so [they] felt able to prepare [the adopters] to some extent.”

Other key observations

Other than the possibility that adopters might get matched with children at the event, adoption social workers identified a number of additional benefits to adopters attending. A benefit that was repeated in numerous comments was the idea that engaging with children at AADs gave them better understanding of the children, which sometimes made them rethink their matching criteria to take *“a different view of their needs”* than they would if they perhaps read about them *“on paper.”* Indeed, another social worker commented *that “it was very useful not to have ages on the profiles”* as this *“certainly got some adopters thinking about children outside of the age range they had “thought” they wanted to be matched with.*

A number of adopters attended the event with a specific desire to meet a child or children whose profile they had seen before. In these cases, attending the AAD was useful in establishing whether these links were feasible – one comment described how their adopters attended to meet two children they were considered *“and really made a connection with one of them, so that was very valuable.”* In contrast, another social worker commented that their adopter found the day *“stressful, as she did not feel any chemistry with the child she specifically went to meet.”* Whilst this is of course incredibly *“disappointing”* for the adopter in question, it highlights that AADs are a valuable opportunity to meet children that may seem suitable in theory to find out whether the adopter and child have a connection. Knowing this at an earlier stage can help adopters progressing further with cases that are not suitable, thus avoiding a waste of resources and greater disappointment further down the line.

3.3: Adopter responses

There were 125 responses from adopters attending events in the period October 2014 to September 2016: 2 from Year 1; 63 from Year 2 and 60 from Year 3 (although this is only up to May). In contrast to the feedback forms for children’s social workers, foster carers and adoption social workers, there are significantly more adopter responses in Years 2 and 3. This is worth keeping in mind when comparing responses, as it could be that in the second and third years, AADs have become more refined as they have had longer time to understand what works most effectively. In question four, key themes from questionnaires are discussed from adopters that attended a specific AAD from 2014 which help to enable some insight into adopters’ experiences in the first year of BLF funding.

Concerns/worries prior to attending

As expected, most respondents felt some nerves and apprehension about attending, particularly if it was their first time going to an AAD. More specific concerns included: how to interact with the children; worrying that the children that were attending would have needs that were too complex for the adopters; that there would be too many adopters to children; that they would be emotionally affected by the event.

There were two comments around bringing the adopters’ own birth children, particularly referring to the emotional impact of the day; one adopter *“wasn’t sure if [their] birth son would be disappointed”* if they were unable to find a suitable match.

Reasons for attending and hopes for the day

The majority of adopters wanted to attend to have the chance to have “*face to face*” interaction with children for adoption. Some commented that they hoped to meet their “*future child/ren*” at the event whereas others were more curious about the concept and experiencing the day. Nine adopters (7%) indicated that they were attending to interact with children they had already shown an interest in “*to have an opportunity to find out more about them*”, whether this be by “*playing*” with them or by speaking with their social workers and foster carers.

Another key reason for wanting to attend was to speak with foster carers and social workers. Whilst this was mainly to discuss the children, several adopters’ comments revealed that the event can also be seen as an opportunity to “*network*” with other people involved in the adoption process so that “*the carers and social workers... see us as people too.*” This is an interesting insight; quite often, feedback comments highlight the importance of seeing the child behind the profile and this suggests that adopters may also feel somewhat limited by their profile. Attending an AAD event, then, may enable some adopters to feel slightly more empowered or involved in family finding.

Comments reflected a sense of openness in several adopters who were willing to be challenged in terms of their initial matching criteria as a result of attending the event. It should be noted that those adopters attending AADs are probably more likely to be more open-minded and have their preconceptions challenged. Nevertheless, attending an AAD provided adopters a chance to interact with children that they might otherwise have “*overlooked*” on paper. Attending the event was important, then, to help adopters clarify or confirm their own matching criteria; one adopter particularly wanted to attend to meet children with additional needs to realistically assess whether this is something she could “*cope*” with.

Meeting the children and what was gained

Adopters were asked how they found meeting the children and what, if anything, they gained from the experience. Some adopters indicated that they “*felt a bit nervous and anxious at the start*” of the event though for most, this anxiety and awkwardness abated as the day progressed, with one adopter commenting that focusing on play made her “*realise how to get down on [the children’s] level and just relax.*” This was echoed by another adoptive couple who were able to relax “*once we realised how much children [were] enjoying it*”, which encouraged them to interact with the children more naturally.

Despite some adopters feeling initially “*overwhelmed*” when first seeing the children, a common theme that emerged from adopters’ feedback was that, for most adopters, meeting the children was generally an enjoyable experience. Ten adopters (8%) described meeting and interacting with the children as “*fun*”. Only four comments about the experience of meeting the children were more negative, with three unable to effectively interact due to the high ratio of adopters to children and children being “*hogged by some families.*” Another adopter found the experience of meeting the children somewhat challenging, describing her own uncertainty regarding “*how to react*” and general feelings of wariness and apprehension at the task. It is acknowledged that adopters are a heterogeneous population and some may find it easier initially to get “*stuck in*” than others, therefore this may be inevitable for some

adopters to feel this way. Effective preparation organised by their social worker to explore the emotional impact and discuss practical strategies to facilitate positive interaction with the children could perhaps help to allay some of these concerns.

Seeing and interacting with the children in person provided adopters with a *“much more realistic understanding of their personalities.”* It also gave adopters the opportunity to just engage with the children and assess *“chemistry”* without considering their *“ages, circumstances or problems”*. Indeed, for some, having this opportunity to interact with children helped adopters *“to expand [their] criteria”* in relation to what type of child/ren they thought they wanted to adopt.

Practical suggestions

Whilst most of the feedback from adopters was positive, a common critical observation was in relation to the *“high adult to child ratio”* at the event they attended. There are limitations to what the AAD team can do in terms of the ratio. It is important for the AAD team to invite a larger number of adopters relative to children in order to increase the likelihood of matches at the event and thus ensure that organising the AAD is worth the resources to run. Whilst the number of children attending is organised in advance, the number that actually attend on the day is largely out of the AAD team’s control and it is typical for a small number of children due to attend the AAD do not actually attend the event itself. Perhaps there could be greater attempts to ensure the children due to attend do so by contacting the foster carers beforehand for confirmation, and then adjusting the adopter ratio accordingly, though time pressures can make this tricky. It is also worth noting that the high number of adults at the events is not simply due to the adopters but the children’s social worker, foster carers and adoption social workers attending, who need to represent their children and adopters respectively. As one of the main negative consequences of this is that adopters may not be able to interact with the children in the way in which they would like, it might be beneficial *“if there were more activities that involved interaction”* in order to engage with the children and *“hold their attention”*.

There were eight comments requesting clearer labelling of attendees, in particular, greater clarity around which child/ren foster carers and social workers were representing as *“sometimes it wasn’t obvious who the children’s foster carers and social workers were.”* In a similar vein, three adopters would have liked badges that *“stay on”* as they were susceptible to *“fall[ing] off”*.

Some adopters would have liked further information on the day, for instance, one adopter felt that it would be useful to include information about sibling groups on the badge, as they presumably found it tricky to identify which children were siblings at the event.

In summary

- The majority of children’s social workers and foster carers, adoption social workers, and prospective adopters’ feedback after attending an AAD were positive about their experience, rating the day as excellent or good.
 - A smaller proportion of children’s social workers and foster carers (56%, 39) relative to adoption social workers (69%, 55) had no worries or concerns before attending.

- This is to be expected as most of the concerns, other than first-time nerves, related to the children coping on the day and potential emotional repercussions for the children. It was generally the case that those who had attended previously were less likely to have concerns or worries before attending the event.
- Concerns around emotional impact in relation to adopters were also discussed by adoption social workers. Good preparation exploring adopters' emotions and expectations appeared to be beneficial.
- Both adoption social workers and children's social workers and foster carers felt well-prepared for the event.
- A number of foster carer comments called for greater clarification around the practical elements of the process and what was expected of them.
- Children's social worker and foster carer comments indicated that nearly half described the event to the children as a "party". In many cases, this was due to the children having limited understanding or being very young. However, some deliberately chose to describe the day this way; this is not in line with CoramBAAF's good practice guidance, which emphasises transparency and honesty in the process.
- Most adoption social workers that attended with their adopters had undertaken some preparation work with their adopters beforehand, which ranged from home visits to briefing sessions to a phone call.
- Comments from children's social workers and foster carers emphasised the importance in achieving the "*right balance between engaging the children and the adults.*" Some suggestions for encouraging more effective engagement were given including allowing the children's social workers, foster carers and adopters to network before the event with no children present, or perhaps a more structured approach on the day to encourage effective engagement between attendees.
- Adopters greatly enjoyed the opportunity to meet and interact with children waiting for adoption and some felt that attending the event helped to broaden their matching criteria. They also saw the AAD as a good opportunity to meet with social workers and foster carers.
- Adopters were sometimes critical of the imbalance of adults and children, though this often cannot be helped. More activities that encourage interaction might help facilitate engagement. Better labelling of children's social workers and foster carers was requested by adopters to identify which children they were representing.

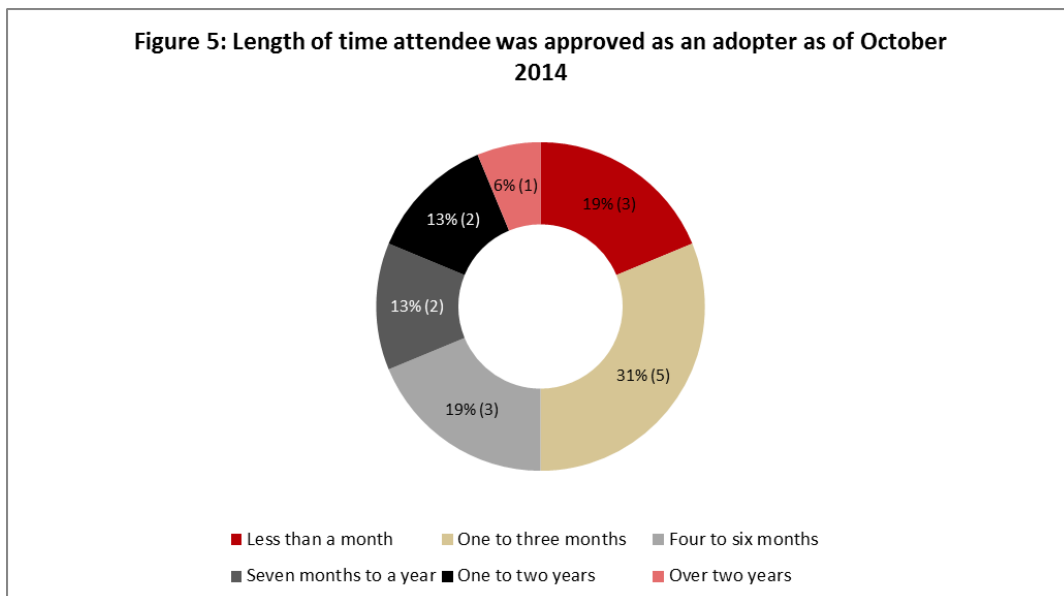
4: Case study: findings from an Activity Day for Adoption on October 4th 2014

Exploring adopters' experiences of a past AAD that occurred at the beginning of the specified time period allows us to understand the longer-term impact of the events and the value of AADs to adopters in their journeys to become adoptive parents. The event chosen to be the case study in this evaluation was the East Midlands AAD on October 4th 2014 at Beaumanor Hall in Leicestershire. The only criterion was that the case study should focus on an event that occurred in the first year of BLF funding (2014), and this event was randomly selected from the 25 AADs that occurred that year.

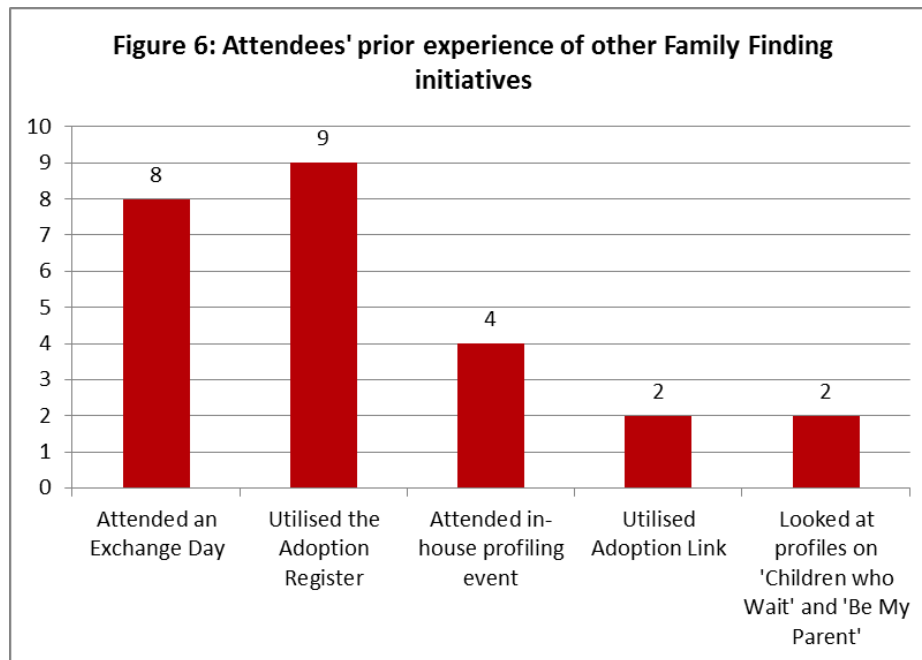
From the data routinely collected by CoramBAAF, 58 prospective adopters and 43 children attended. There were 65 EOIs received from the event, and a subsequent 14 matches, giving a matching rate of 33%.

4.1: Key findings from survey exploring experience and impact of attending the AAD on October 4th 2014

Emails were sent to the 58 adopters that attended the event, after first contacting adopters' previous agencies to understand if there were any adopters for whom it would not be appropriate to contact. 19 respondents completed the survey, giving a 33% response rate. The attendees varied in the length of time they had been approved as adopters at the time of attending the event (as in **Figure 5**). Of the sixteen that responded, most (31%, 5) had been approved as adopters for one to three months at the time of attending the event; three (19%) had only been approved less than a month and three (19%) had been approved between four to six months at the time of attending the event. In general, then, adopters that attended the AAD on October 4th at Beaumanor Hall tended to be more recently approved, though one adopter that attended had already been approved for over two years (see **Figure 5**).



A significant proportion of respondents had already explored other family finding initiatives prior to attending the AAD on October 4th (see **Figure 6**), with 53% (9) having utilised the Adoption Register and 42% (8) having attended an Exchange Day.



The majority of respondents (76%, 13) were positive about their experience of attending the AAD. Thirteen respondents provided comments elaborating on their experience; four (31%) highlighted the positive aspect of being able to meet and “*spend some time*” with the children. Five respondents (38%) commented positively on the organisation of the event, and two found having the opportunity to speak with the children’s foster carer beneficial.

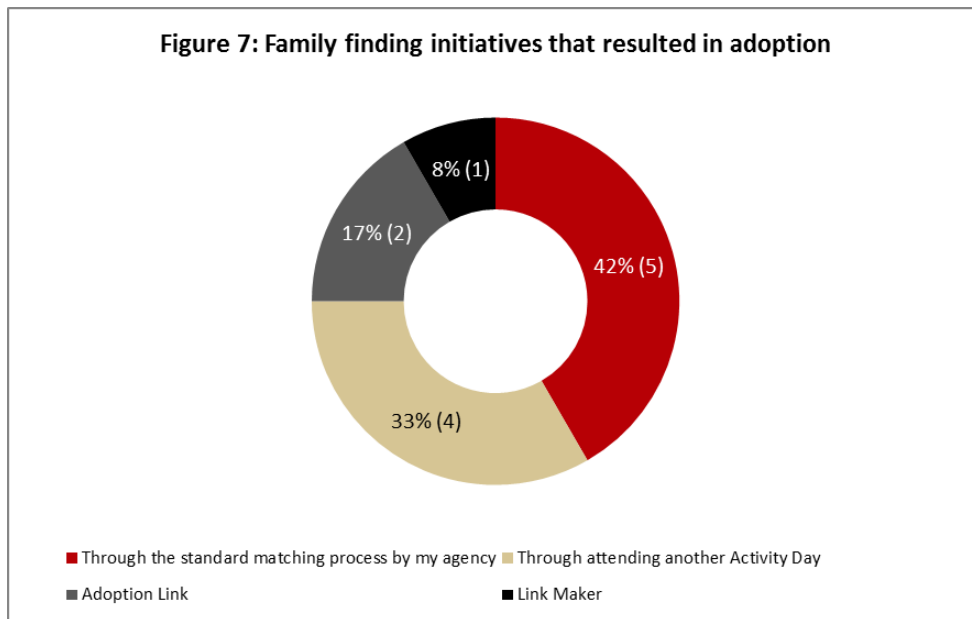
Adopters matched from the event

Four respondents were matched with children from the event. Two felt that their adopted child/ren matched their initial criteria, though one of them commented that had they not met their sons at the event, “*we would have seriously considered older children as we met a girl there that really made us think*”, indicating that the AAD had contributed to a broadening of perspective on matching. While another respondent felt that their child did meet their initial criteria, there was a history of abuse that the adopters had not previously fully considered in their initial criteria. It appears that attending the AADs can sometimes encourage adopters to explore different factors of a child’s history they may otherwise have overlooked.

All four respondents who were matched with children from the event have spoken with their child/ren about the event since, with one stating that the child is too young to fully remember and understand the event and another commenting that their child looks back fondly as a “*place where we all played with playdoh!*”

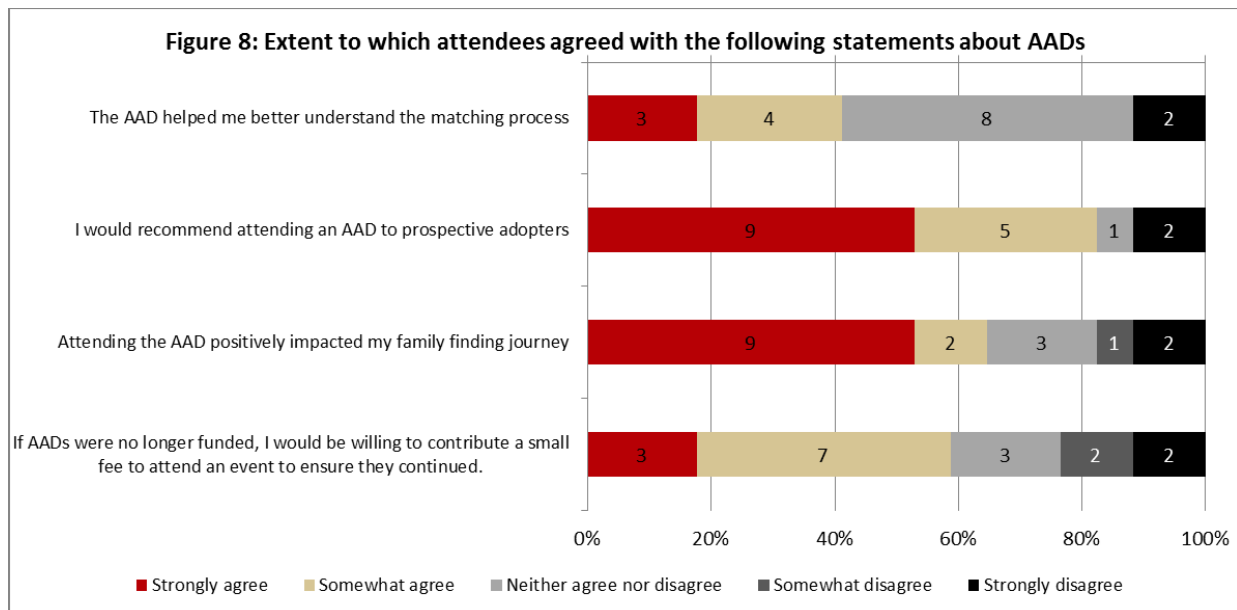
Adopters not matched from the event

Of the fifteen prospective adopters that were not matched from the event, most (11, 73%) submitted Expressions of Interest (EOIs). Twelve (80%) respondents have since adopted children (see figure below). Five respondents adopted their child/ren through their agency’s standard matching process. Interestingly, a similar number went on to adopt their child/ren through attending another Activity Day. Two respondents adopted their child/ren through the online linking services, Adoption Link and Link Maker.



Impact of attending the AAD

Of those that responded, seven (41%) felt that attending the event helped to broaden their initial matching criteria. For ten respondents, however, attending the Activity Day for Adoption did not lead to a change in adopters' initial matching criteria.



As in **Figure 8**, 82% (14) of respondents agree (strongly or somewhat) that they would recommend attending an AAD to prospective adopters. 58% (11) felt that attending the AAD positively impacted on their family finding journey – interestingly, whilst this included those four that were matched with children from the event, seven respondents did not receive a match from the event, yet felt that attending the event was an important aspect of their journey to become adopters.

Fewer adopters, however, felt that the AAD helped them better understand the matching process, suggesting that for most, attending the AAD was useful as a family finding activity

in itself but not in providing further insight on the matching process – this is further explored in the interviews with participants below. Respondents also varied in whether they were willing to contribute a small fee to attend an event if funding for AADs was discontinued, despite the majority highlighting the positive impact of AADs. The majority were willing to make a small monetary contribution to attend (10, 59%), although nearly a quarter of respondents disagreed with this concept.

4.2: Interview with adopters

Adopters that completed the survey were asked whether they were happy to speak with a researcher to discuss their responses in greater detail. Eight of the 19 participants (42%) agreed; of these, seven (37%) actually completed interviews with a researcher in the Coram Impact and Evaluation team, revealing some common themes that elaborated further on the earlier survey findings and provided greater insight into the idiographic experience of the adopters who attended the event:

Adopters had mixed feelings before attending the AAD but the majority attended with an “open mind”

The interviews highlighted the variety of feelings and emotions of the adopters around attending the event on October 4th 2014, whose experiences of family finding at that point varied. In particular, the comments indicated the delicate balance of being “*positive*” and “*open-minded*” about attending, whilst not getting “*too invested*” in the outcome of the event. This seemed to be the consensus among all participants regardless of their differing family finding journeys, and was also raised as an important point to cover by adoption social workers (in question 3) in the preparation of adopters.

One participant who, at the time of attending the event in question, had had a “*very long*” family finding journey which was something of an “*emotional rollercoaster*” due to a prior unsuccessful link at an AAD. Despite this, the participant felt it important to attend the October 4th AAD with a “*positive*” attitude, though she was admittedly “*more guarded*” than at the previous AADs where she felt she had perhaps invested too heavily in a potential outcome. Most participants, however, attended the event after being approved relatively recently (up to six months) including two participants who attended before being approved as adopters. For these, concerns seemed to stem more from general anxiety around “*not knowing what to expect*” and engaging children in play, though all commented that they went “*with quite an open mind*”. One participant commented that going to the AAD without a “*specific plan*” other than to engage with children was particularly helpful in that it meant they “*didn’t have any expectations*”; another simply viewed the event as being a “*very exploratory*” way to family find. Indeed, two participants viewed the AAD as a good opportunity to “*spend time with kids*” regardless of whether they fit within their criteria as they felt it was “*important*” for all children attending to feel included and “*a part of everything*” which is in keeping with the ethos of AADs.

Attending the AAD encouraged adopters to think carefully about their matching criteria

Of the seven interviewees, six suggested that attending the AAD (or AADs in general) had the potential to make one think carefully about their matching criteria. Of these, two felt that attending the AAD on October 4th 2014 made them “*reconsider*” their initial matching criteria,

with particular emphasis on being more open to adopting older children. This impact was not reserved solely to attendees that were matched with a child at the event; one participant who was not matched at the event, and later went on to adopt through the standard matching process, felt that the AAD was “*enormously*” helpful in clarifying the sort of children he and his partner were looking for. He commented that the sibling group he ended up adopting were three and five at the time of adoption which was “*older than [they] would probably have adopted beforehand.*”

The effect of attending the AAD on adopters’ initial matching criteria was sometimes more subtle. One attendee adopted a child from the event, and though the child largely fitted within her initial matching criteria, there were allegations of abuse that the participant was concerned about, particularly the impact this might have on the adopter’s birth children. The child was very young so it was unlikely that this would manifest but seeing the child in person, and engaging with him at the event, helped to “*reassure*” the adopter that they were a suitable match. This idea of reassurance was echoed by another participant, who ended up adopting a child with special needs in a subsequent AAD; seeing the child at that subsequent event “*made [them] confident [they] could do it*” as it provided them with the confidence and realisation that they “*can cope.*”

The interviews also demonstrated that those adopters that had given “*a lot of thought*” to their matching criteria beforehand or were more restricted in their criteria by certain characteristics (such as wanting a child of Asian descent only) were less likely to reconsider their matching criteria as a result of attending the AAD. Despite this, there was a general acknowledgement that attending the event could “*open somebody up to new possibilities*”. One participant, however, who had a more negative experience of attending the AAD, found that attending the event did not have any effect on their initial matching criteria.

Experiences of other adopters at the event presented a conflicting picture of competition and support

The interviewees engaged with other adopters at the event to varying degrees. Most (57%) discussed the “*competitive element*” that other adopters at the event presented, with one participant reflecting on the negative emotions and “*self-doubt*” this aroused in them. Another participant talked of the ease with which one can begin to compare oneself to other adopters which made engagement with other adopters tricky: if they shared their adoption experiences and they were negative, the participant might feel demoralised; if they had largely positive experiences, the participant might feel jealous.

The difference in adopters’ choice of approach on the day was a recurring theme, as some interviewees commented that some adopters were more “*dominant*” than others, with one participant waiting “*nearly two hours to speak*” to the social worker of the child they were interested in as the social worker was predominantly engaging with another adoptive couple. Another found it “*strange that it did seem sometimes people were kind of chasing the kids*” and this often provoked comparisons as well, with interviewees wondering whether that was the right approach to take instead.

Despite this, there was a sense of recognition among participants that everyone attending “*is in the same boat*” and even a feeling of “*comradery*” and support. One participant enjoyed talking to other adopters, particularly those from their same agency, and another is still

friends with *“a couple that were there”* suggesting that Activity Days can be a good opportunity for adopters to meet similar people and create a support network.

It seems, then, that the *“heightened emotions”* of attendees may mean that some level of self-comparison and competitive feelings is to be expected. However, the large size of the event and the ratio of adopters to children may have exaggerated this experience, giving it more of a *“marketplace”* feel.

Additional benefits of attending AADs over and above simply engaging with children in person

As expected, most adopters felt that the opportunity to engage with children on the day that might potentially lead to a match was most beneficial. However, a number of benefits over and above this interaction were identified including the ability to bring the participants' own birth children to the event which was valuable in enabling them to understand first-hand that children waiting to be adopted *“are just kids, just like [them].”* However, one participant questioned the number of times that birth children would benefit from attending these events, commenting that attending more than two AADs may be detrimental to their *“emotional well-being”* as it may add to confusion and disappointment if links do not progress.

Another benefit identified from the interviews was around how attending AADs can help to stop the *“pressure building”* of Introductions, which can be *“incredibly stressful”* for many adopters. Indeed, this is not only reserved to those who are matched with children from the event; one participant who later adopted through the standard matching process commented that having experience with children who are waiting for adoption takes the *“fear”* out of Introductions, not because it means that adopters necessarily *“know what to expect”* but simply because they have shared the same space together. This is echoed by other participants, one of whom felt that seeing the children in person *“put [them] at ease”* about the adoption process and another that enjoyed the opportunity to meet children waiting to be adopted, including those they knew would not be an appropriate match.

Interaction and presentation of social workers and foster carers

Most participants felt that interaction with foster carers and social workers at the event was beneficial, though more comments focused on engagement with the foster carers that attended. One participant, who was not matched with a child at the event at Beaumanor Hall had previously *“never really come across any foster carers before”* and felt that engaging with foster carers at the AAD *“really helps when you meet the ones for your own children.”* This highlights that some adopters may feel quite removed from foster carers and engagement at these events can help to bridge this gap. Another participant that was matched at the event felt that speaking with the foster carers provided them with more of a *“3-D”* understanding of what looking after the child/ren in question realistically entails. It is important, however, that foster carers and social workers are mindful to distribute their time fairly. It is expected, of course, that social workers and foster carers will interact more with adopters that are interested in their children relative to others; nevertheless, there should be a level of awareness of other adopters at the event that may wish to speak with them in order that certain adopters are not able to unfairly dominate social workers and foster carers' time, as one participant spoke of how she *“waited nearly two hours to speak to [the] social worker”* of a child that she was interested in.

Interviews also demonstrated that foster carers and social workers' attitudes and the way in which they present themselves at these events can affect adopters' experiences of the event. One participant commented that the social worker for an older sibling group that attended the event "*followed [the participant] around a little bit*", which contributed to their negative experience. This highlights the important balance social workers and foster carers should endeavour to achieve at these events; whilst it is important to appear interested and approachable, acting perhaps *too* eager can be off-putting to some participants. That said, another participant's interview highlighted the importance of foster carers and social workers having a positive, friendly attitude to all adopters, not just those that may be potential matches for their children. This participant in question had an experience at the AAD whereby her and her partner were made to feel "*quite uncomfortable*" by a foster carer who did not engage with them because they were not potential matches for their children. The participant commented that "*a lot depends on, if there's a foster carer there, how they greet you*" and this has consequences for the general atmosphere, though she emphasised that, in general, "*the foster carers were really lovely*" at that event. An environment whereby foster carers, social workers and prospective adopters engage in "*general chat*" and are supportive to one another is crucial to a positive experience for all.

Complementarity of AADs and the standard family finding activities

Six of the seven participants perceived AADs to be complementary to the standard family finding process. Most expressed a general positive impression of AADs as only being "*an advantage*" and "*an extra opportunity to make a link.*" Even for those adopters that were not matched with a child from the AAD, the experience of interacting and engaging with children waiting for adoption was deemed to be beneficial. As discussed earlier, it allowed for interaction with children's social workers and foster carers, and also allowed adopters to realistically question whether their initial matching criteria was relevant. A subtheme that was explored by several adopters was control - attending an AAD was often perceived by the adopters as a "*proactive*" step in their adoption journeys, of which they generally tend to have limited control.

For the remaining participant that did not view AADs to be complementary to the standard family finding process, this was predominantly due to their opposed views to AADs, which they felt to be "*unfair*" to children. It was not, therefore, the fact that the participant viewed the standard family finding activities to be more than sufficient; the emphasis by the participant was to be "*proactive in a different way*". Instead, she advocated different family finding activities such as Exchange Days and Adoption Link, demonstrating that it is not the case that one size fits all; certain family finding activities may be more suited to different people.

Practical aspects of the event – what worked, what didn't

The majority of participants were positive about the practical aspects of the event, in line with the survey findings. In addition to the main points raised in the survey, one participant also felt that the fancy dress aspect of the event added additional "*pressure*" for adopters, and actually increased their feelings of self-consciousness in an already emotionally-charged event. The participant and her husband felt obliged to attend the event in fancy dress, which was their first AAD, because they were conscious that they wanted to look like they were "*joining in the fun*"; however, they found this "*stressful*" and detrimental to their experience.

Whilst this point was only raised by one participant, it is worth considering whether clearer instructions about the voluntary option of fancy dress could be better emphasised – in particular, the fact that not dressing up will have no negative consequences for adopters, which may help to allay concerns from first-time attendees.

The main criticism was that there were too many adopters to children. This is something which should be taken on board, although there are limitations as to how much the AAD team can control for this, as discussed earlier in this report. One Asian participant suggested that there could have been greater consideration around the timing of the event as the AAD on October 4th 2014 occurred during Eid which may have been a contributing factor to the smaller number of Asian children that attended compared to the number of children that were expected to attend, as *“the kids might not have been Muslim but maybe the families they were being looked after by were so they weren’t there on the day.”*

In summary

- A survey was sent to adopters that attended the AAD on October 4th 2014 in Leicestershire:
 - Most felt positive about their experience, though the *“competitive”* nature of other adopters was surprising to some.
 - There was a sense that attending the event helped to broaden perspectives and initial matching criteria, though it did not really provide adopters with greater information about the matching process.
 - A significant proportion of adopters that attended the event tended to have some prior experience of other family finding initiatives – 44% (8) had attended an Exchange Day and 47% (9) had utilised the Adoption Register.
- Telephone interviews were conducted with seven adopters, which allowed for a more idiographic insight into adopters’ experiences and revealed an interesting set of themes:
 - Adopters were conscious to attend the event with an open mind, without getting too invested in the outcome.
 - Not only did attending help some people to broaden their mind in relation to what they were looking for, it also provided adopters with an opportunity to understand whether they could realistically understand whether they could care for a child with complex needs.
 - The presence of other adopters provoked feelings of self-doubt in a small number of adopters attending; however, in other cases, they provided a positive sense of support and reassurance. In the main, other adopters at the event had a neutral effect on participants.
 - Just interacting with children waiting for adoption helped to allay some concerns about Introductions, even if adopters were not matched with children that attended an AAD, as it made them feel more comfortable with children, foster carers and social workers. In fact, a number of participants enjoyed the chance to communicate with social workers and foster carers; one participant felt it was an opportunity for social workers and foster carers to see the adopter beyond their profile.
 - It is important for children’s foster carers and social workers to present themselves in a friendly, approachable manner on the day, even with

adopters that are not suitable links for their children. Their attitude has significant consequences on the general ambience.

- o Greater consideration should be given to the timing of AADs to ensure that they do not fall on important religious holidays.

5: Value of AADs

5.1: Cost analysis of AADs

It is important to try to understand whether the results of AADs (i.e. the number of matches) justify the costs. Whilst questions three and four investigated other benefits of AADs, the most obvious and quantifiable outcome is the number of adoption placements that AADs result in. The number of matches is used as a proxy for the number of placements.

The total cost of Activity Days for Adoption for Year 3 (2016/17) was estimated to be £316,680 for 15 events with 15 children at each event. The Activity Days for Adoption are cost-effective, then, if: at least one child out of total 225 children is matched through an AAD that would not get matched otherwise¹⁶ and is placed before 9 years old.¹⁷

As the report end date is 1st September 2016, the last year for which there is full information is 2015/16 (23rd March 2015 – 22nd March 2016). In Year 2, there were 17 AADs and the matching rate for this year is 32% (see the below calculation and **Appendix A** for more detail).

$$\text{Match rate of AADs for Year 2} = \frac{83 \text{ matches}}{258 \text{ children}} \cdot 100\% = 32\%$$

Using this matching rate for Year 3, 72 children from the forecasted 225 children attending the 15 events would get matched through the Activity Day. It is likely from this prediction, therefore, that at least one of these 72 children would be matched and placed before they are 9 years old, in which case AADs would be cost-effective.

Of course, this is based on numerous assumptions. Firstly, the 32% matching rate was picked because it was the matching rate of 2015/16, however is by no means indicative of Year 3's matching rate, as there are a number of exogenous factors that can affect this figure year to year (e.g. trends in number of adoption orders, relative imbalance of potential adopters of a particular ethnic background).

Secondly, the assumption that cost of care is £100 per day is often contested and the calculation does not take into account that even if the child is adopted, they may require further adoption support. If we assume, for instance, that cost of care is £150 per day, this means that Activity Days for Adoption would be cost effective if: at least one child out of the total 225 children is matched through an AAD that would not get matched otherwise and is placed before 6 years old, which illustrates the importance in assumptions.

¹⁶ This is not unlikely given the matching rate from AADs and that most children who attend AADs are harder to place.

¹⁷ This is based on the assumption that cost of care is £100 per day, so the total cost of care for a child of 9 years would be £328,500.

On the whole, given the matching rates of previous years, it seems likely that these criteria will be also met this year and that Activity Days for Adoption are cost-effective.

A note on costs:

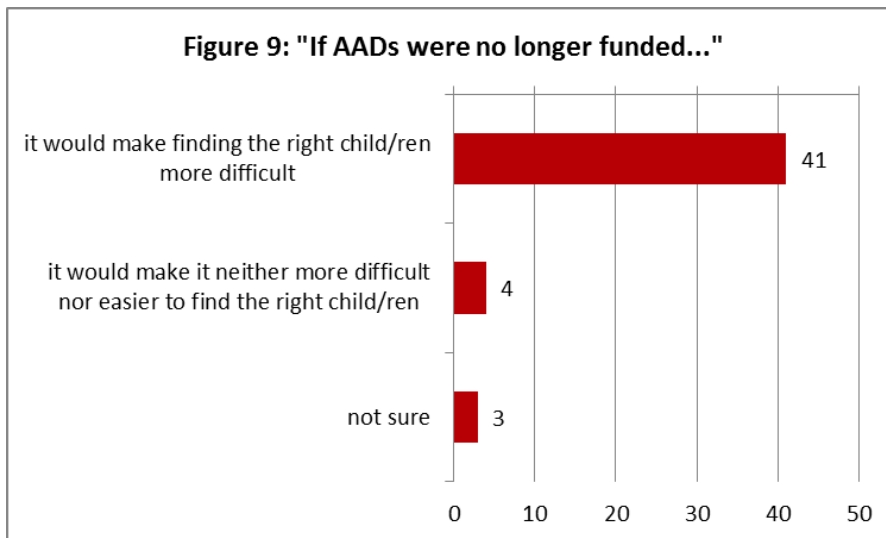
According to the demographic data (explored in the section 'The Activity Days for Adoption: figures and facts') over half the children attending the AADs from August 2015 to September 2016 were four years old or under. As a simple costing exercise, let us suppose a four year old child is matched through an AAD who would not have been matched otherwise. This would lead to cost savings of £511,100 (if the cost of care was £100 a day and the child would otherwise have stayed in care until they were 18 years old). Even if the AAD simply accelerated the matching process, i.e. the four year old child matched at the AAD would otherwise have been matched three years later through standard family finding procedures, this would still provide a cost saving of £109,500. Of course, these calculations are hypothetical; however they do provide a useful indication of the potential savings that can result from matches through AADs.

5.2: Value of AADs to adopters

In order to understand how much adopters value AADs in their family finding journey, feedback forms from September 2016 onwards were expanded to include a number of additional questions around adopters' prior experience of AADs, the distance they travelled to attend the day and their willingness to pay to determine how adopters valued these events. As of the end of November 2016, there are 50 feedback forms in total gathered from four AAD events from September 2016 onwards.¹⁸

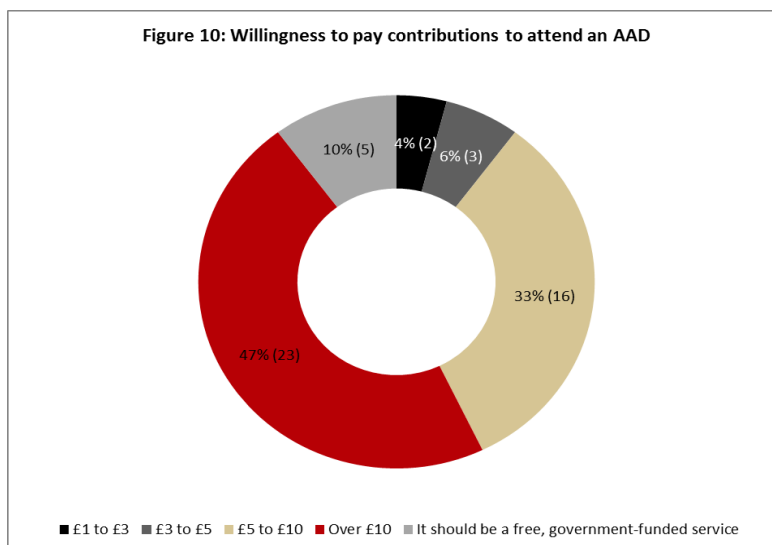
The responses highlighted the variety of distances adopters had to travel to attend the event, ranging from 5 miles to 383 miles, with an average distance travelled of 58.3 miles (with a standard deviation of 79.1) This emphasises the wide appeal of AADs and the value that adopters place on attending these events.

¹⁸ These forms are from events in October (1st, 15th and 18th) and November (5th) 2016.



Of the 48 that responded, 85% (41) felt that if Activity Days for Adoption were no longer funded, it would make finding the right match between adopters and children more difficult (see **Figure 9**). This highlights how much adopters value these events as family finding initiatives, with most emphasising that these events provide an “*invaluable*” opportunity to meet and engage with children, which has a number of benefits, including establishing whether adopters and children have a “*connection*” and allowing adopters to perhaps consider children “*[they] wouldn’t have done on paper.*” In contrast, four respondents felt that this would have no impact on adopters’ family finding journeys and three were not sure of the impact, though all that commented were positive about the experience in general.

The positive value of AADs is also reflected in adopters’ responses (in the figure below) to the question about how much they would be willing to contribute when attending an AAD to ensure they continued, if AADs no longer received funding. Almost half (23) were willing to pay the maximum contribution listed (over £10) and a third (16) would be willing to pay between £5 and £10. Five participants were willing to pay between £1 and £5. Two participants were willing to pay between £3 and £5. Three participants were willing to pay between £1 and £3. Five participants were willing to pay between £1 and £5.



The remaining five participants felt that the service should be free and government-funded. An additional 22 participants also felt this way; however, should they no longer be funded, they were still willing to pay a contribution. In total, then, of the 49 adopters that responded,

55% responded that Activity Days for Adoption should be a free and government-funded service.

In summary

- The budgeted cost for Year 3 AAD events (15 events with 15 children attending each) was estimated to be £316,680.
- Using the AAD matching rate for Year 2 predicts 72 children in Year 3 will get matched through the AADs. If we assume each day in care costs £100, then AADs will be cost-effective if at least one of the 72 children is placed before they are 9 years old.
- It is likely that at least one child will meet this criteria, thus it is likely that AADs are cost-effective. However, this calculation is based on various assumptions.
- Since September 2016, adopters attending AADs were asked additional questions to try to assess how they valued AADs. Most felt that there would be a detrimental impact to family finding if AADs were no longer funded.
- The majority were also willing to pay some monetary contribution to attend AADs (from £5 to over £10) though they also felt this should be a free, government-funded service.

Key points to consider for future AADs:

The evaluation has identified some **recommendations** and **points for consideration** going forward:

- Thinking of more ways in which AADs can improve a child's understanding and awareness of their care plan e.g. through tailored preparation materials
- Exploring whether a more structured approach to the day would allow for better engagement between attendees
- Investigating the possibility of allowing children's social workers, foster carers and adopters to network at the beginning of the event to put adopters at ease
- Carefully considering the timing of AADs to ensure, for instance, that they do not fall on important religious holidays
- Discussing whether informing adopters about the matching process is a relevant, useful objective for AADs and if so, how this can be improved
- Providing foster carers with a clearer sense of their role on the day and what is expected of them
- Regarding feedback forms:
 - Thinking of ways to increase the response rate of foster carer feedback forms sent one week after the event
 - Providing a tick box on the feedback form for children's social workers and foster carers to differentiate between the two respondents and allow for analysis within categories

Conclusion

This evaluation report found that AADs are successful family finding activities that have increased the number of matches of harder to place children. The key messages from the feedback indicated that most adults involved (children's social workers, foster carers, adoption social workers and prospective adopters) had positive AAD experiences, though there are several areas that require further consideration, including how AADs can improve the child's understanding and acceptance of their care plan. The data, based on foster carer feedback forms, indicated that for most children, this level of understanding and acceptance remained unchanged. On the adopter side, attending AADs did not seem to enhance their understanding of the matching process for the most part. There is perhaps scope, therefore, to assess whether these indicators are particularly useful measures of effectiveness of AADs, and if they are deemed to be important, how AADs can better perform against these indicators. Other suggestions included: improving preparation for the event by clarifying roles and expectations to foster carers to addressing practical concerns on the day including using different stickers/badges to identify everyone easily at the event.

In relation to the project outcomes, it has been difficult to accurately identify the progress of AADs against outcomes, given the limited available data, though most appear to indicate positive progress being made. The first project outcome – the children that take part in Activity Days have increased mental and emotional wellbeing – was somewhat met. The AADs resulted in a substantial number of matches, though this was significantly larger in Year 1 (292) than Year 2 (80) and this is likely due, in part, to the decrease in adoption

orders and the formation of CoramBAAF.¹⁹ The foster carer feedback forms also implied that most children that attended the AADs felt at least the same or more positive about the adoption process. A similar picture was presented for progress against project outcome two: the children that take part in Activity Days have increased awareness and acceptance of the plan for their care. Most foster carer feedback forms indicated that the children had an unchanged level of anxiety. The majority also felt that the children's understanding of their plan was roughly the same after attending as opposed to an increased understanding, thus more can be done to ensure that children become more aware of their plan after preparation and attending the AAD. Indeed, in the section on general experiences, it was discussed that a number of foster carers chose to describe the event as a "party" to the children even if they were old enough and able to understand, which might help to explain these findings. This is an area that requires further consideration for the Activity Days team.

The case study, which focused on an AAD that took place on October 4th 2014, involved contacting adopters that attended the event to complete a survey. Seven adopters, 3 of whom were matched from the event, also agreed to take part in a telephone interview to discuss their experience, in retrospect, and whether it impacted their family finding journey. These interviews raised a number of interesting points, including: the importance of the foster carers and social workers in maintaining a positive atmosphere; the differing ways in which adopters attending these events perceive other adopters attending; and the importance of attending the event open-minded and that AADs will not be suitable for all adopters. In addition to the survey results, these presented a greater insight into adopters' experiences of this event and of AADs in general.

It is highly likely that the results of AADs justify the costs, although the limited ALB and costing data on children in care means that a full analysis cannot be calculated. Of the adopters that were asked additional questions about value, most felt that family finding would be more difficult if AADs no longer existed. Almost half were willing to pay a contribution of over £10 to attend the event and a third would pay between £5 and £10, indicating that AADs are highly valuable to adopters' family finding journeys.

¹⁹ Year 3 figures cannot of course be calculated yet.

Appendix A: Calculating matching rates from AADs and nationally

The number of matches resulting from the AADs in the specified time period can be calculated from the quantitative secondary data stored for each event. The match rate for the AAD events can be calculated by:

$$\begin{aligned} & \textit{Match rate for Activity Day events} \\ &= \frac{\textit{Number of matches resulting from AD events}}{\textit{Number of children that attended AD events}} .100\% \end{aligned}$$

In terms of determining whether the AADs have “increased” the number of matches for harder-to-place children, some form of national comparator is required.

Although the Adoption Leadership Board (ALB) data do not provide child-level data on the proportion of harder to place children that are matched, data are provided on the number of children matched with adoptive families and the number of children with a Placement Order (PO) but not yet placed by each quarter.

Let us consider the number of children with a PO that are not yet placed - this includes children with a PO that have a match and those that do not have a match. Given that the timescales guidance states that placement should occur two weeks after the ADM match approval, this measure (the number of children with a PO that are not yet placed in quarter 1) can act as proxy for the number of children with a PO that are waiting to be matched in the same quarter. Of course, there are limitations to this – the timescale guidance presents an ideal which may not reflect the reality, i.e. it may actually be a rarity that placement occurs two weeks after the ADM matching decision, in which case using the number of children with a PO that are not yet placed as a proxy for the number of children with a PO that are not yet matched would exaggerate the number of matches each quarter. However, given the data available, this can be used with caution and a proxy national match rate can be calculated:

$$\begin{aligned} & \textit{Proxy national match rate for Quarter 1} \\ &= \frac{\textit{Number of matches with adoptive families in Quarter 1}}{\textit{Number of children with a PO but not yet placed at the **start** of Quarter 1}} \end{aligned}$$

Appendix B: Topic guide for telephone interviews for adopters attending AAD on October 4th 2014 (case study)

Introduction:

- Data to be used for an evaluation report that seeks to find out whether AADs have met their intended outcomes. This interview will form part of a case study, looking at outcomes for adopters and children that attended one specific AAD to get an insight into their adoption journey and how they found the event.
- Emphasise anonymity and confidentiality, and participants' rights including right to withdraw at any time
- Oral consent
- Interested in views, no right or wrong answers
- Confidentiality – explain specifically what this means
- Tape recording, ask consent
- Any questions?

Background information:

- Confirm information gathered from survey responses they have already completed.

Learning about their FF journey

- Emotions/ feelings they were experiencing at the time.
- Experience of other family finding (FF) initiatives
- Understanding of their FF journey at that point – had they been linked with any other children?

Learning about the AAD

- How did you first hear about AADs?
- Did you initiate attending the AAD or did your agency?
- What were your initial thoughts about attending an AAD?

For those adopters that were matched with a child/ group from the AAD:

- Regarding the child/ren that you adopted, did they fit into your initial matching criteria? (should know this from survey e.g. gender, age, disability, BME status) – ask to elaborate. Did attending the AAD make you rethink your initial matching criteria?
- The actual event – thoughts, impressions, improvements – did you feel it was of value as an adopter even if you had not adopted?
- Did you and your child/ren talk about the AAD together? (should know this from survey) What was their recollection/experience of the day?
- AADs and FF – complement each other, contradict each other? Does AAD offer anything that FF didn't and vice versa?
- Additional benefits not related to child – e.g. chance to meet other adopters.

For those adopters that were not matched with a child/ group from the AAD:

- The actual event – thoughts, impressions, improvements – did you feel it was of value as an adopter?

- EOIs submitted on the day; did these get explored further? Did you find later that this was not suitable? Probe for understanding why EOIs did not progress (understanding of the process).
- If you haven't adopted, what was the reason? Did you decide adoption wasn't for you or are you still waiting for a suitable match?
- Did attending the AAD make you rethink your initial matching criteria?
- Relationship of AADs and general family finding practices – do they complement each other, contradict each other? Does AAD offer anything that FF didn't and vice versa?
- Discuss additional benefits not related to child

Anything further to say?

Thank them for their time; reiterate what the interviews will be used for.