

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition [PE2005](#): Formal response to the annual Adoption Barometer Report in Scotland, lodged by Jonathan Patrick

Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

The petition calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to formally respond to the annual Adoption Barometer Report undertaken by Adoption UK.

The Adoption Barometer is an annual snapshot of the state of adoption in the UK and provides an overview of adoptive families across the UK and the policies and practices that affect adopted people and their families.

The Scottish specific data had 227 respondents. Respondents in Scotland were:

- more likely than in any other nation to be experiencing significant or severe difficulties when contacting adoption support services in 2021
- considerably more likely to be offered universal services (support groups, general training courses) or to be signposted to other statutory services, including mental health services.

7% of respondents said that a child had left the family home prematurely during the year.

Of those who said they had received support from adoption support services, another social work team, mental health services, education services or a family support worker, 40% said the support had no positive impact.

Respondents agreed that adverse early experiences had negatively impacted their child's ability to cope academically and emotionally in education; and 80% said that their child needed more support in school than their peers. However, they were more positive about how well their child's school was working with them to support their child.

The UK-wide data found that more than four out of five children (81%) represented in the survey were reported to need more support in education than their peers, rising to 85% of secondary school children.

The report recommendations are outlined below:

- Create and implement quality standards for the journey of prospective adopters through preparation, approvals and matching, for use by all adoption agencies.
- Introduce ringfenced, multi-year government funding for adoption support across all nations of the UK.
- Produce clear, specific support plans for every child to be placed for adoption, distinct from the placement plan, agreed with their adopters and reviewed at least once a year.
- Adoption agencies to have a duty to provide the adoption support set out in a child's assessment of support needs.
- Train education and health professionals in early childhood trauma and associated conditions, including Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and Attachment Disorder.
- Provide free, expert, lifelong support for establishing and maintaining birth family relationships including during childhood and when tracing birth relatives in adulthood.

The Scottish Government commissioned an [Independent Care Review \(Care Review\)](#) in 2017 which was reported on in 2020. This was a root and branch review of the care system which listened to the voices of over 5,500 people with experience of the care system or who work within it. The Promise makes a series of recommendations in relation to adoption.

The review findings were published in February 2020, setting out the steps toward significant reform to the care system for children and young people. The main findings were set out in the main report [The Promise](#). It highlighted the importance of finding the best place for a child, avoiding adoption breakdown and supporting families who adopt.

Adoption in Scotland

There were 209 children approved for adoption; 199 children placed with their new adoptive families; and 189 children legally adopted in 2021. All of these figures are down from the previous years.

Almost half (49%) of children approved for adoption were in the two to five age bracket and 45% were infants (children under two years old). Prior to this there were more infants than two to five-year-olds being approved.

More adoptions broke down in 2021 than in any of the four preceding years, with 37 adoptions breaking down.

The number of households waiting for a child to be placed was higher in 2021 than in each of the three preceding years, with 205 households waiting for a child to be placed.

At the same time there were 134 children approved for adoption and waiting to be matched to an adoptive household (fewer than in each of the four preceding years).

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Senior Researcher
28 March 2023

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