



# Meeting the challenge of COVID-19

## Learning and practice



### **How moving events and services online increased Adoption UK Scotland's support**

#### **What was the challenge faced?**

When the COVID-19 lockdown came into effect from March 2020, the impact on the people who are supported by Adoption UK Scotland's services – including families, parents and carers, children and young people, prospective adopters and professionals - was significant. A national charity, run by and for adopters that provides a range of services for anyone involved or working in adoption, the services included a dedicated helpline offering general information and support, community support groups, family events, and more specialised support.

Many parents and carers moved to working from home whilst also caring for and home-schooling their children. Some families also faced additional challenges as a result of the disruption to their regular routines, including increased behavioural support needs and mental health concerns.

The charity had to make swift changes to how their services could be delivered to ensure that the relevant information support people relied on was still accessible, and that people from the adoption community were still able to connect and engage with other.

#### **What change in practice took place?**

The Adoption UK Scotland helpline was able to continue as normal. Run by colleagues working from home, this ensured that anyone involved in adoption could still speak to an advisor privately on a one-to-one basis. But now it seemed like the only option for providing the other services that people needed to continue to be supported, particularly at such an uncertain time, would be doing this online, something that pre-pandemic felt unmanageable.

As well as moving the support groups, therapeutic services, training sessions and events online, delivered through a range of platforms, including Zoom, Microsoft Teams and private Facebook groups, new online resources, including podcasts and blog posts were also created to provide additional support.

In-person 'family fun events' were adapted so that a range of creative events for families and children of all ages could be enjoyed online while they were at home, including online discos, quiz sessions developed by young people, and art therapy sessions and science sessions, for which materials were posted out to families in advance.

Social media was used more frequently to connect and communicate with the people, and online surveys and polls were developed to encourage people to share their views and experiences of living through lockdown to inform how to develop further new resources which could be helpful.

### **Who was involved in making the change?**

The team had to react quickly to the speed at which the lockdown came into force to ensure that the services provided were still accessible. Everyone at Adoption UK Scotland team was involved in making the changes, from the Training Lead and Communities Lead to helpline advisers and the Therapeutic and Education Support Services team.

### **What difference did this change make?**

One of the most significant and positive changes from providing support online has been the ability to reach adoptive and kinship families across Scotland who hadn't previously used Adoption UK Scotland's services, or weren't able to due to a range of challenges, including their geographical location, caring responsibilities, and other commitments. Wider access largely came as a result of the increase in social media activity and amount of information, resources, events and support available online.

More families and prospective adopters than usual were able to attend events as online offered more flexibility, for example, families didn't need to consider their geographical location, travel costs, or other issues that can sometimes make attending in-person events more of a challenge. Similarly, moving the support groups and training courses online has enabled parents and carers to attend without the concern of childcare needs or travel requirements.

As COVID restrictions eased, the charity considered how to address what might have been lost from informal engagement and enjoyment of in-person events and rethought some of the ways of interaction with and between people and families in-person could happen. Now, many family fun events are now held in the style of a 'forest school' to accommodate more space to socially distance, but where parents, carers, children, young people and other participants can join together in with other outdoor activities, whatever the weather.

A combination of online and in person support now looks here to stay for the children, families and professionals using Adoption UK Scotland's services.

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