FIRST4ADOPTION

Second Year Impact Report 2014

First4Adoption - the national adoption information service for England
supported by the Department for Education

What is First4Adoption?

First4Adoption is the national information service for people interested in adopting a child in England. The First4Adoption website includes an Agency Finder and e-learning materials while the telephone information line allows potential adopters - and those already in the adopter approval process - to speak to friendly trained advisors.

Service users can access up-to-date information about adopting a child - from their suitability to apply to become an adoptive parent - to how to navigate the adoption process. First4Adoption is independent of any adoption agency. It is provided by the charity Coram Children's Legal Centre in partnership with Adoption UK and Coram. It is funded and supported by the Department for Education and steered by the National Recruitment Forum, a sub-committee of the Adoption Leadership Board.

Our mission

First4Adoption's primary role is to welcome, encourage and increase the number of potential adopters by providing clear and accessible information, dispelling myths and removing barriers. First4Adoption provides a single national access point for all those looking to adopt in England, whether they are beginning their adoption journey or already working with an adoption agency.

Executive Summary

In the second year of operation First4Adoption has supported 209,242 unique visitors to its website and handled 3,232 calls to the telephone information service, an increase of 119.16% on the first year. This means that the service received 212, 474 contacts from people interested in adoption in 2014, which equates to 840 contacts each working day. This equates favourably with the 34,615 initial enquiries to adopt recorded during 2013-14 [1].

Gemma Gordon - Johnson First4 Adoption Customer Service Manager

Since First4Adoption was launched, it has handled 5,428 calls and supported 303,994 unique visitors online[2]. Of those using the First4Adoption service 34,360 users searched for and accessed adoption agencies' websites having first visited the First4Adoption agency finder – a referral rate of 16.4% up 1.4% on the previous year.

Awarded Digital Service of the Year in the British Association of Adoption Fostering (BAAF) National Adoption Awards, First4Adoption this year launched new e-learning resources which have, to date, been used by 1326 prospective adopters. This is more than 25% of the likely approval level by all agencies [3]. Website traffic experienced fluctuations during 2014 as a result of media and advertising activity. January saw the number of unique visits reaching 28,317, a 2014 monthly record for web enquiries and we also received 562 calls – our highest monthly total. Viewer responses to the TV programme about adoption- "Finding Mum & Dad" were a significant contributory factor in this. Another peak of activity occurred in April when the TV programmes; "15,000 Kids and Counting and Wanted: A Family of My Own", contributed to the high number of web enquiries (unique users, 27724 and 441 calls). The average number of unique visitors per month was 17,435. Average time spent on the site was 3 minutes, and users read an average of 4 pages on their visit.

The number of calls to the telephone information line has grown by 47% compared with year 1 and the service received 3,232 calls between January – December 2014, an average of 269 calls a month. 76% of callers to First4Adoption are female while 57.6% of all calls are made by people between the ages of 31 and 50. Although call length varies depending on the subject, the average length of a call to the service is 5.7 minutes[4]. Most calls involved the adopter approvals process but advisers also fielded enquiries about Pupil Premium funding, foster carers wanting to adopt, difficulties with agencies and questions prompted by TV programmes.

[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/adoption-agencies-data-in-england-1-april-2013-to-31-march-2014
[2] Website data gathered from Google Analytics and telephone data gathered from CHARMS database
[3] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/adoption-agencies-data-in-england-1-april-2013-to-31-march-2014
[4] Data source for First4Adoption calls – Call Handling Service

Although the service has been fully operational for just 2 years, First4Adoption has made a tangible impact in recruiting new adopters and referring them to agencies. Of the 88 service users surveyed during a 4 month period in 2014, 55 (62.5%) had contacted either a local authority or a voluntary adoption agency since speaking with First4Adoption and 21 had attended an information session (a conversion rate of 23.9%). 12 are now prospective adopters and have started the 2 Stage adoption assessment process and a further 7 callers have already been approved as adopters, with 2 users having children placed with them. (Information gathered from First4Adoption customer satisfaction survey 2014)

From the survey 22% of callers went on to register to become a prospective adopter. If this is then applied to the total First4Adoption calls for the year it shows that First4Adoption's contribution to the national supply of adopters would have been 711, which would be 9.5% of all registrations[5].

One caller gave the following feedback:

'Last year my husband and I experienced a lot of difficulty with the adoption agency we applied to adopt with. I called your line a few times to gain help with the process. We wanted to thank you for the guidance and advice you gave which supported us in sticking with the process when we were being treated unfairly. The outcome of us getting advice and acting with continued integrity and strength meant we were approved as adoptive parents'

First4Adoption has directly supported the adoption sector in increasing visibility and accessibility and reducing duplicated cost in several ways:

- The First4Adoption team, which includes adopter volunteers, provided 23 "mystery shopper" reviews and directly handled calls on behalf of 29 agencies to support their adopter recruitment campaigns.
- We have created free adoption information resources including e-learning and marketing materials available for all agencies to use.
- During 2014 First4Adoption has supported and provided call fulfillment for 3 adoption-related TV programmes and attended key events such as the Alternative Parenting Show and The Fertility Show.

First4Adoption looks forward to continuing to provide a high-quality, customer-focused information service for potential and prospective adopters over the next year. I look forward to working with all adoption agencies ensuring First4Adoption is providing you with the support and service you require.

Gemma Gordon-Johnson,
Head of Service
email: gemma@first4adoption.org.uk **telephone:** 020 7841 0511

[5] Based on Ofsted figures from 2013-14 – the latest year for which the data is available

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National information service for potential and prospective adopters

Overview

First4Adoption launched in January 2013 and is now fully established with an information line and website providing information for people interested in adopting in England. In First4Adoption's second year of operation we have supported 209,242 unique visitors to the site and handled 3,232 calls to its telephone information service. Of those using the First4Adoption service 34,360 went on to adoption agencies websites from the agency finder page – a conversion rate of 16.4%. Since First4Adoption was launched we have handled 5,428 calls and supported 303,994 unique visitors online. First4Adoption has always focused on providing a valuable and useful service helping those interested in adopting in England to pursue their adoption journey.

Digital First

This year has been an exciting year for www.first4adoption.org.uk with a 120% increase in unique visitors to the site compared with our first year of operation. We were recognised at the 2014 National Adoption Week awards where we won Digital Champion of the year. We also received a certificate from Children's Minister Edward Timpson in recognition of reaching 250,000 unique website users.

While 2014 has seen an overall increase in the number of users visiting the First4Adoption website, the volume of online traffic has fluctuated depending on other media and advertising activity. The highest number (28,317) of unique users visiting the website in January 2014 correlates with the broadcast of "Finding Mum and Dad"on Channel 4. Equally, in comparison to January 2015 and with reference to research by Kindred which identifies January as a peak time for adoption enquiries[6], April also saw a surge in activity. This can be partly attributed to the two adoption series which aired; "15,000 Kids and Counting and Wanted: A Family of My Own" (unique users, 27724 and 441 calls) . The lowest (13,327) number of unique visitors was in December, along with the Summer months, is often a quiet time for enquiries The average monthly unique visitors for 2014 is 17,437[7].

6 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/322051/Department_for_Education_adoption_research_report_FINAL.PDF

7 All data about www.first4adoption.org.uk taken from Google Analytics ble

E-learning

The biggest development on the website has been the introduction of a suite of specially created e-learning materials. "First Steps" is the first national, free e-learning resource created specifically for potential and prospective adopters. A working group, including representatives from local authorities, voluntary adoption agencies, consortia, AdoptionUK and BAAF - established to devise and develop course content, decided on 4 key subjects to offer insight into the adoption process.

The 4 modules are:

- Backgrounds of children and why they come into care
- Attachment and its importance in adoption
- Identity, heritage and life story work
- Challenges and transitions to new situations

The e-learning modules were published on 17th June 2014. There have been 1,554 registrations in the first 6 months. Of these, 1,326 (85.3%) were potential/prospective adopters and 228 (14.7%) were adoption professionals[8].

Table 1 – E-learning analysis

	No. of people who have started exercise	Number of people who finished exercise	No. of exercises within each subject	Average time to complete exercise
Attachment and its importance in adoption	1139	802 (70.4%)	9	3 Days
Attachment and its importance in adoption	807	593 (73.5%)	12	3 Days
Identity, heritage and life story work	551	465 (84.4%)	6	1 Day
Challenges and transitions to new situations	482	419 (86.9%)	11	1 Day

The table above shows that the most popular subject started was 'Backgrounds of Children' although this has the lowest completion rate. The module about challenges has the lowest number of starters but the highest number of learners completing it . All modules have a completion rate of over 70%. The e-learning section was designed to encourage those who wanted to adopt and to enable them to gain further knowledge before or during Stage 1 of the approvals process. ; It also serves to encourage and assist people in their adoption journey while presenting the realities of adoption. It might be that those exploring the Backgrounds of children module are at a very early stage of their enquiry and that they may decide that adoption is not for them or not for them right now as they learn more about adoption. The most popular day for completing e-learning is Sunday.

8 Data gathered from First Steps Google Analytics

Feedback received about 'First Steps' (e-learning) has, in the main, been positive, although a few users have experienced problems when registering with the platform. This issue relates to email service providers mistakenly sending the 'First Steps" registration e-mail to users' "spam" folders. First4Adoption has made changes to ensure that the registration email sent to users does not look like spam and this problem has now been resolved.

Potential and prospective adopters have provided the following feedback about e-learning:

'my kind of learning and studying'

'caller advised that his wife had told him to use First Steps – he said it's really opened my eyes to it all, I found it hugely beneficial and he'd clearly learned a lot'

'nice easy to use format and interesting information. I like the recordings supplemented with the text and a quiz which can be redone to cement the learning'

'I found this a really useful consolidation of my reading so far. My only minor quibble is about the quiz questions. When a question had say 3 correct answers, and I only ticked 2, the explanation didn't make it clear which one I had missed. Otherwise, very good, thank you for developing it'

The following feedback has been provided by adoption professionals:

'I have just been looking at the newly publicised e-learning materials on the First4Adoption website, and I am impressed with the thoughtful way the messages come across. I think the site as a whole gives a good introduction to some central ideas which are probably new to a lot of people, and the way the text is written has credibility and professional authority'.

'We now advise all our potential adopters to complete the e-learning on First Steps'.

'I have been working through the exercises so I am familiar with them prior to recommending to applicants. I have sent the link to all the applicants I am assessing and who are interested in adoption. Really valuable resources. Clear, simple to use, bite size exercises and really interactive. Listening to the recorded voice of adopters is also really helpful and the people who applicants get the most from too'.

Agency finder development

The Agency Finder was adapted and refined during 2014. Prospective adopters who submit their home postcode will now see the 6 closest agencies to them with an option to display more agencies further afield. The agency finder has been designed to work with the prospective adopter in mind, so they can search and list agencies that are closest to them. There is no preferences with the searches-they work purely on distance.

Of the 209,242 unique users of the First4Adoption website, 34,360[9] were directed to agencies own websites via the agency finder pages– a conversion rate of 16.4%. This high referral rate indicates that users of the First4Adoption website are finding the information they need before contacting adoption agencies to continue their adoption journey.

Since April, First4Adoption has been publishing quarterly information about the number of online and telephone referrals to adoption agencies.

These figures are available at www.first4adoption.org.uk and can help adoption agencies see if their agency page on the website is working for them or whether they need to make changes. We would recommend that agencies regularly review their pages to ensure they are accurate.

Regional digital data

The First4Adoption website is used by people throughout England and the table below shows the regional distribution of these users[10].

Table 2 – E-learning analysis

Region	Number of unique users	Children waiting to be adopted in England at 30 September 2014[11]
East	12,965	450
East Midlands	10,633	420
Greater London	44,032	550
North East	6,110	320
North West	20,359	770
South East	20,508	660
South West	12,926	410
West Midlands	14,511	670
Yorkshire & Humber	12,424	570
	154,468	

9 Data from www.first4adoption.org.uk Google Analytics

10 Current data-protection legislation does not allow us to chart all user activity. Hence the disparity between some regional figures and totals

11 Adoption Leadership Board quarterly data reports https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adoption-leadership-board-quarterly-data-reports

The table below shows the number of unique users who visited an adoption agency website after using the agency finder. We have split this information to show local authority and voluntary adoption agencies figures[12].

Table 3 – Local authority and voluntary adoption agencies regional data

Region	Local Authority unique users	Voluntary Agencies unique users
East	849	490
East Midlands	729	383
Greater London	2,153	1,530
North East	370	187
North West	1,054	741
South East	1,353	855
South West	810	526
West Midlands	1,029	484
Yorkshire & Humber	692	458
	9,039	5,654

The table above shows the regional spread of unique users from the agency finder pages, it shows activity for local authority and voluntary adoption agencies unique users. This highlights how many users of the agency finder on the First4Adoption website have clicked through to both voluntary and local authority adoption agencies. The figures will include those users who have contacted more than one agency, for example their local council and a voluntary adoption agency. However, the data indicates that in some areas for example in North-East - 50% more users are searching local authority agencies but in other areas like Yorkshire & Humber it is 66%. It is encouraging that potential adopters are looking at both local authority and voluntary adoption agencies and that more people are aware of the different agencies in their local areas and that they have a choice in which adoption agencies they contact.

Telephone Information Line

First4Adoption has continuously monitored the patterns of calls to the information line to ensure our opening hours reflect the needs of callers. It is clear that there is no demand to change our existing opening hours of 10am – 6pm, Monday to Friday. Our experience suggests that most people do not make a knee-jerk reaction in response to an advert or broadcast but take a few days before contacting the service. This was exemplified when First4Adoption opened the 'phone lines after a national adoption-themed TV programme in the evening and the call numbers were extremely low.

12 Data taken from Google Analytics – www.first4adoption.org.uk

Trends in calls

First4Adoption experienced a 47.2% increase in calls during our second year of operation. 2014 saw a total of 3,232 calls compared with 2,196 calls in 2013-14. The highest number of calls (465) was in January 2014 which correlates with the broadcast of the "Finding Mum and Dad" TV programme. The lowest level of calls came during December when the number was 145. All calls to First4Adoption are treated as confidential and callers are not required to provide their personal information. The graph below shows the number of calls received between January 2014 and January 2015. The call pattern is sporadic during the year with August and December predictably quiet due to holidays. January is the busiest time for calls and receiving enquiries about Pupil Premium adding to the numbers. April saw a peak due to two TV series about adoption, October was also a peak time, possibly due to Infertility Awareness Week and First4Adoption's presence at fertility related events.

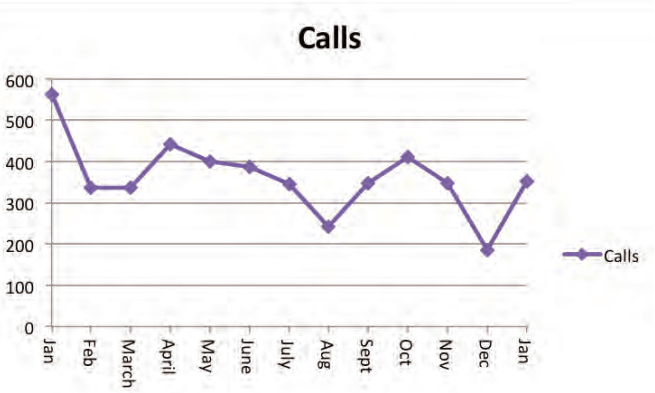


Table 4 – Breakdown of Types of Callers

Type of callers	Number
Potential adopters (initial enquiry)	1193
Prospective adopter working with an agency	121
Approved adopter	143
Adoption Agencies	221

The table above shows the types of enquiries received by First4Adoption. The majority of these were initial enquiries from people seeking very basic information about adoption These types of calls would cover eligibility to adopt, adoption process and working with an adoption agency. Most initial enquiry calls will also include debunking of adoption myths –a caller may think they are too old to adopt, that unmarried people cannot adopt or that the adoption process takes years. These calls are handled very sensitively, callers are welcomed, thanked for their interest and time is taken to explore their concerns and questions about adoption.

Table 5 – Nature of enquiry

Type of enquiry	Number
Initial enquiry	971
Pupil Premium	48
Foster carers wanting to adopt	46
TV	43
Difficulties with agencies	41
Matching	29
Post adoption support	26
Assessment	26
Choosing an agency	25
Negative decision	22
Step parent	22
Adopting for second time	20
Fostering for adoption/Concurrency	17

Table 5 shows that the majority of calls received by First4Adoption are initial enquiries –potential adopters' first calls made about adoption. During the year (predominately in January) we took 48 calls about pupil premium, these calls were from adoptive parents and from professionals e.g. schools. We have seen a relatively large number of calls from foster carers who are interested in adopting the children placed with them. These range from general questions about the process to specific difficulties experienced by foster carers in adopting children living with them. There have also been 41 calls from prospective adoptive parents who were experiencing difficulties with their adoption agency. First4Adoption has provided these people with information about what they can do to resolve the situation and, where necessary, how to change agency.

National data

The information below shows the national demographic data recorded from all calls to First4Adoption in 2014. The profile of callers shows that 75% were female, 20% male and 1% transgender. There has been an increase in the number of transgender individuals calling the service as we recorded no calls in the previous year. We also received 42 (3%) calls from those who declared themselves to have a disability. The national data conveyed in the charts overleaf does not include any callers that have not given their demographic data or wish to remain anonymous.

Chart 1 – Relationship Status

The following chart shows that the highest proportion of callers (51%) to First4Adoption are married or in a civil partnership, followed by 13% are single and 11% were separated.

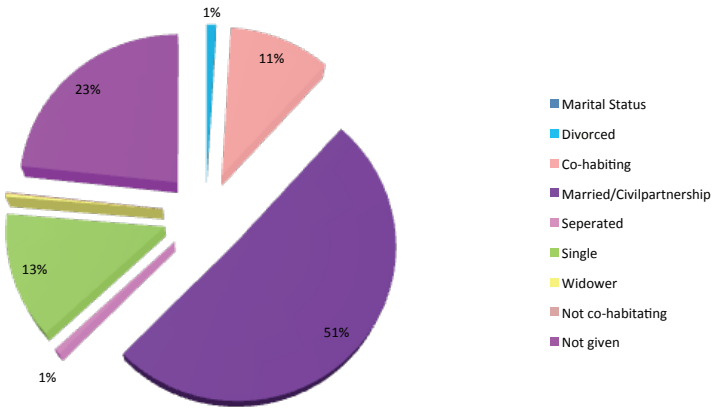


Chart 2 – Age profile

We have seen a slight shift in the age of callers this year with nearly the same number of calls received from people between the ages 31-40 and 41-50, whereas last year (2013-14) the most calls received were from people aged 41-50. We also saw similar numbers of calls from individuals ages 21-30 (143) and over 50 (149).

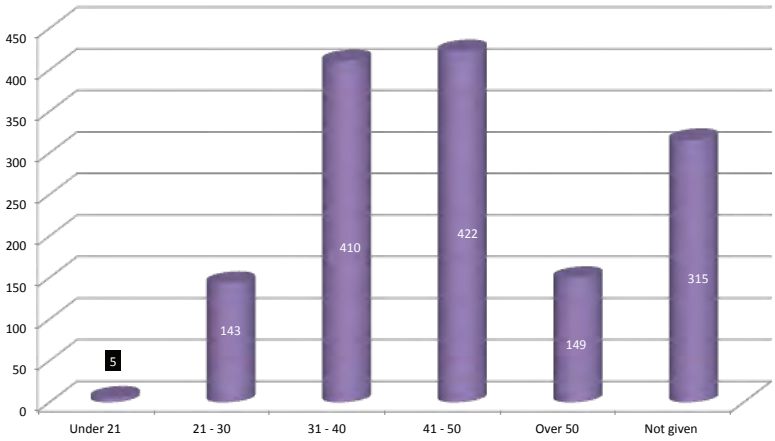


Chart 3 – Ethnic origin

The highest proportion of callers was White British (53%), followed by Asian callers (11%). We received 34 (2%) calls from Black Caribbean individuals, 26 (2%) calls from Black African individuals and 63 (4%) calls from individuals from a mixed background. 20% of callers did not provide their ethnic origin.

We ask callers their sexual orientation when they contact First4Adoption, the majority of callers are heterosexual (73%), 8% homosexual and 19% of callers did not provide this information.

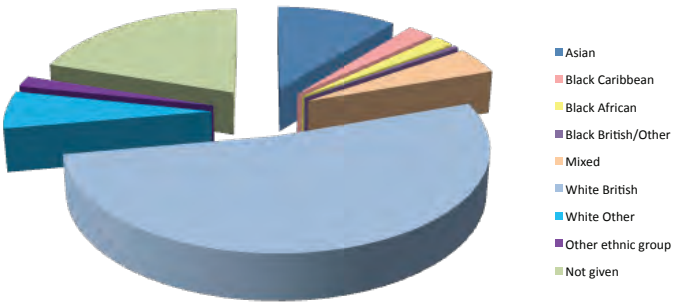
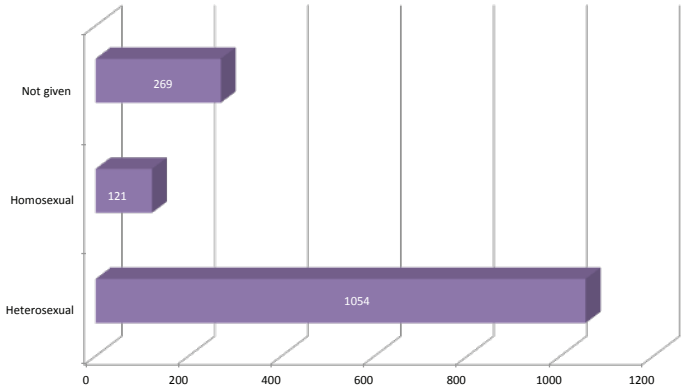
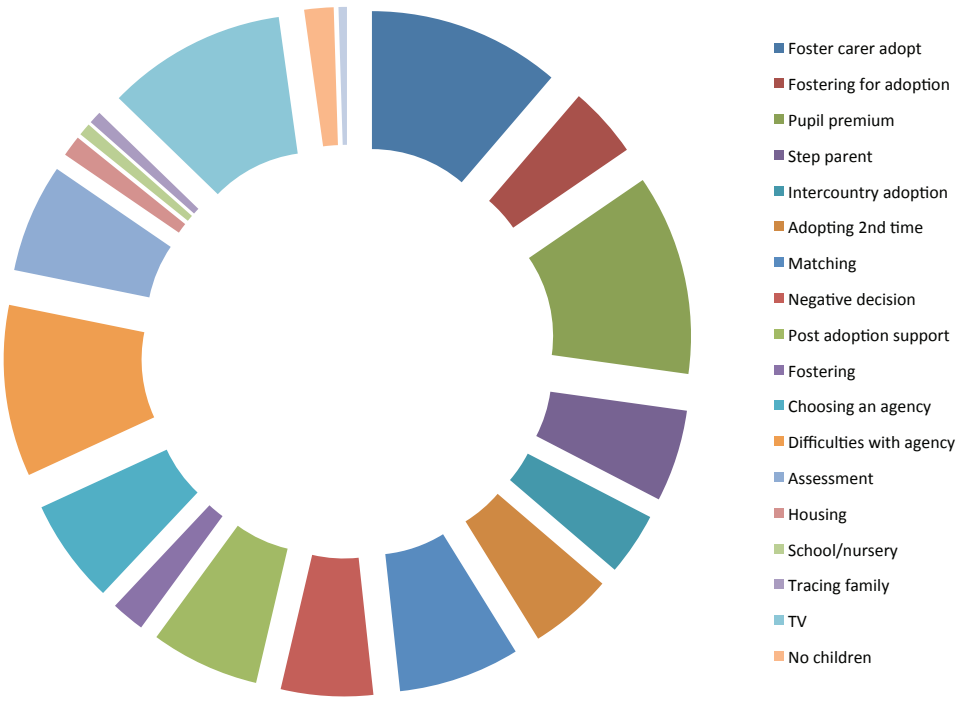


Chart 4 - Sexual orientation



In 2014 we fielded 971 (67%) calls from potential adopters in the early stages of fact-finding. Chart 5 shows the other types of calls we have received in 2014. The highest number of calls received was about Pupil Premium (48) these calls were from adopters and professionals seeking advice. 46 calls were received from foster carers wanting to adopt the child/ren placed with them, some of them calling about difficulties with this. We had 43 calls specifically about the TV programmes that were aired in 2014 – this was encouraging as a diverse range of individuals called the service. We also took 41 calls where individuals were having difficulties with agencies. These ranged dramatically, and included advice on how to resolve issues around applying to adopt as well as how to change adoption agency.

Chart 5 – Types of calls received in 2014



Regional analysis

First4Adoption produced a regional breakdown of the 1,444 calls[13] received between January – December 2014. As the table below shows, the highest number of calls received was from Greater London followed by the wider South-East and then the East of England.

Table 6 – Regional call numbers

Region	Local Authority unique users
East	185
East Midlands	92
Greater London	395
North-East	38
North-West	139
South-East	224
South-West	114
West Midlands	125
Yorkshire & Humber	132
Total	1,444

East

Those who called First4Adoption from Eastern England were predominately female with 140 (75.7%) enquiries coming from women as opposed to 39 (21.1%) from men. 146 (78.9%) identified themselves as heterosexual and 4 (21.1%) were homosexual. 108 (58.4%) callers were married or in a civil partnership.26 (14.1%) were living with partner and 10 (5.4%) were single. In terms of age, 32 (17.3%) were 21-30, 39 (21.1%) were 31-40, 68 (36.8%) were 41-50 and 12 (6.5%) were over 50. 120 (64.9%) callers were White British/ Irish, 13 (7%) were Asian and 10 (5.4%) identified as White Other. The highest number of enquiries, 139 (75.1%) were requests for initial information, followed by Pupil Premium, 9 (4.5%), Adopting for a second time, 9 (4.5%), Foster carers wanting to adopt, 8 (4.3%) and Matching queries, 3 (1.6%).

East Midlands

76 (82.6%) of callers from the East Midlands were female and 13 (14.1%) were male. The enquiries received can be categorised as follows: initial enquiries about adoption, 66 (71.7%), foster carers wanting to adopt, 6 (6.5%), difficulties with agencies, 3 (3.3%) and choosing an agency, 2 (2.2%). The caller age groups were: 21-30, 16 (17.4%), 31-40, 28 (30.4%), 41-50, 27 (29.4%) and over 50, 9 (9.8%). 55 callers (59.8%) were White British, 11 (12%) were Asian and 4 (4.4%) described themselves as White Other. 48 (52.2%) were married or in civil partnership, 14 (15.2%) single and 1 (1.1%) were divorced. 72 (78.3%) callers classified themselves as heterosexual and 1 (1.1%) was homosexual.

[13] The data is not 100% accurate due to data-protection issues (which prohibit 100% accuracy) and the wish of some callers to remain anonymous

Greater London

287 callers (72.7%) from Greater London were female and 93 (23.5%) were male. The majority of enquiries, 266 (67.3%) were for initial adoption information. 266 (67.3%), enquiries followed TV programmes, 17 (4.3%) involved choosing an agency, 11 (2.8%), 11 (2.8%) calls came from foster carers wanting to adopt. 253 (64%) callers classified themselves as heterosexual and 93 (23.5%) homosexual. 21 callers (4.3%) were aged 21-30, 114 (28.9%) were 31-40, 112 (28.4%) were 41-50 and 53 (13.4%) were over 50. 121 callers (30.6%) were White British, 60 (15.2%) Asian, 38 (9.6%) White Other, 28 (7.1%) Mixed and 20 (5.1%) Black Caribbean. 173 (43.8%) callers were married or in civil partnership, 65 (16.5%) were single and 34 (8.6%) were co-habiting.

North-East

24 (63.2%) of the callers logged from the North East were female and 12 (31.6%) were male. 31 (81.6%) were heterosexual and 2 (5.3%) were homosexual. The queries raised were: 28 (73.7%) initial enquiries about adoption, 2 (5.3%) questions regarding Matching and 2 (5.3%) enquiries prompted by TV programmes. 5 (13.2%) callers were aged 21-30, 12 (31.6%) were 31-40, 12 (31.6%) were 41-50 and 33 (7.9%) were over 50. 28 (73.7%) callers identified themselves as White British, 2 (5.3%) Asian and 2 (5.3%) Mixed. 19 (50%) were married or in civil partnership, 8 (21.1%) were living together and 4 (10.5%) were single.

North-West

112 (80.1%) women called First4Adoption from the North West , 24 callers (17.3%) were male and 1 caller was transgender. 79 calls (56.8%) were concerned with initial adoption information , 11 (7.9%) involved negative decisions. There were 8 calls (5.8%) concerning pupil premium support, 7 (5%) and 6 (4.3%) about assessment. 103 (74.1%) callers were heterosexual and 3 (2.2%) homosexual. The age range of callers was 15 (10.8%) 21-30, 40 (28.8%) 31-40, 34 (24.5%) 41-50 and 16 (11.5%) were over 50. 77 (55.4%) callers were White British,, 20 (14.4%) were Asian and 6 (4.3%) were Mixed. 68 (48.9%) callers were married or in civil partnership, 23 (16.6%) were single and 13 (9.4%) living with partner.

South-East

Over three quarters, 179 (79.7%) of these callers were female and 33 (14.7%) were male. The enquiries received were about: initial adoption information, 142 (63.4%), difficulties with agencies, 12 (5.4%), negative decisions, 8 (3.6%), foster carers wanting to adopt, 7 (3.1%) and enquiries following TV programmes, 7 (3.1%). The majority of callers were heterosexual, 175 (78.1%) and 7 (3.1%) were homosexual. The age range of callers was: 21-30, 16 (7.1%), 31-40, 66 (29.5%), 41-50, 66 (29.5%) and 25 (11.2%) over 50. 139 (62.1%) of callers were White British, 14 (6.3%) White Other, 12 (5.4%) Asian and 6 (2.7%) Mixed. 123 (54.9%) callers were married or in a civil partnership, 25 (11.2%) were single, 21 (9.4%) were living with partner and 4 (1.8%) were divorced.

South-West

There were 88 (77.2%) callers who were male and 22 (19.3%) were female. The enquiries received were about: 69 (60.5%) initial adoption enquiries, 7 (6.1%) pupil premium and 5 (4.4%) difficulties with agencies. 77 (67.5%) callers identified themselves as heterosexual and 1 caller (0.9%) was homosexual. The age of callers was 1 (0.9%) under 21, 7 (6.1%) 21-30, 33 (29%) 31-40, 35 (31%) 41-50 and 10 (8.8%) over 50. The ethnicity of callers was 69 (60.5%) were White British, 9 (7.9%) White Other, 3 (2.6%) Mixed. 64 (56.1%) callers were married or in civil partnership, 13 (11.4%) living with partner and 10 (8.8%) were single.

West Midlands

The majority of callers were female 93 (74.4%), 19 (15.2%) were male and 1 caller was transgender. The majority of enquiries were general ones, 81 (64.8%), 5 (4%) involved choosing an agency, 4 (3.2%) were foster carers wanting to adopt, pupil premium, and matching related. 48 (69.6%) of callers were heterosexual and 3 (4.3%) were homosexual. The age breakdown of callers was: 17 (13.6%) 21-30, 39 (31.2%) 31-40, 26 (20.8%) 41-50 and 7 (5.6%) were over 50. Callers identified their ethnicity as follows: 66 (52.8%) White British, 19 (15.2%) Asian, 5 (4%) Mixed and 3 (2.4%) Black African. 63 (50.4%) callers were married or in a civil partnership, 26 (20.8%) single and 10 (8%) were living with partner.

Yorkshire and Humber

There were 98 (74.2%) Yorkshire and Humber based female callers and 33 (25%) males. The calls received were: 101 (76.5%) initial enquiries about adoption, 4 (3%) responses to TV programmes, and 4 (3%) came from people wishing to adopt for a second time. 105 (79.6%) callers were heterosexual and 3 (2.3%) homosexual. The ages of callers were 14 (10.6%) 21-30, 39 (29.6%) 31-40, 42 (31.8%) 41-50 and 14 (10.6%) over 50. 83 (62.9%) are White British, 16 (12.1%) Asian and 5 (3.8%) Mixed. 67 (50.8%) were married or in a civil partnership, 22 (16.7%) living with partner and 14 (10.6%) were single.

Service Evaluation

Our primary aim is to make the adoption process easier for prospective adopters by providing clear and accessible information. First4Adoption engaged Coram Policy & Research Team to undertake an evaluation of non-professional calls and emails to assess whether the service was meeting this objective. The survey (see Appendix 1) looked at callers from a 4 month period (April – July 2014). During this time 799 people called First4Adoption and 172 of them consented to being surveyed. Callers were asked if they preferred to be contacted by phone or email.

Of the 172 that consented to be contacted; 88 individuals completed the survey. Those who consented to be called where called up to three times to complete the survey by phone and then emailed the survey. Those who requested the survey by email were sent the survey automatically. Thirty-seven respondents completed the survey by phone and fifty-one responded via email.

Those surveyed:

- (75%), were potential adopters.
- 10% were prospective adopters working with an agency
- 5% were foster carers interested in adopting
- 2% friends/relatives interested in adoption,
- 2% approved adopters wanting to adopt again
- 1% approved adopters waiting to be matched
- 5% were categorised as "other"
- 93% of respondents found First4Adoption useful
- 87% would recommend First4Adoption to a friend
- 79% respondents said First4Adoption helped them reach a clear decision when adopting
- 81% said First4Adoption helped them feel more confident
- 80% said First4Adoption helped them feel more prepared to proceed with adoption.

The majority of respondents (32%) contacted First4Adoption as a result of visiting the First4Adoption website. 28% of those surveyed found First4Adoption as a result of a Google search and other respondents were advised to contact First4Adoption by a GP, Citizens Advice Bureau and counsellors at fertility clinics.

Some comments from respondents about First4Adoption:

'It was everything I needed at the moment, and the adviser was brilliant! I'm not the only person who calls them, without (adviser's) help I wouldn't be approved adopter today.'

'I think at the stage we made contact it did what we needed it to – it might have helped if we'd been told about you sooner. It was great speaking to the same adviser both times. She was great.'

'They gave me encouragement which is sorely lacking in our agency'

'Before calling we definitely wanted to adopt but didn't feel we really knew what to do, afterwards we felt quite certain and we knew we needed to do and were ready to adopt.'

'She (adviser) had a very kind voice, was very knowledgeable and sounded like she knew the job and knew how to talk to us, as if she knew what we were going through'.

'In each of my 3 calls, First4Adoption have been extremely helpful.'

Call fulfillment

First4Adoption has provided call handling services for 29 adoption agencies this year and continues to offer a cost effective service provided by trained advisers. We provide call fulfilment for Lambeth and Southwark and 2 consortia:

Being Family – Barnsley, Bradford, Calderdale, Doncaster, East Riding of Yorkshire, Hull, Kirklees, Leeds, North East Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire, North Yorkshire, Rotherham, Sheffield, Wakefield, City of York, Barnardos (Yorkshire).

West London Adoption Permanence Consortium - Brent, Ealing, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Royal borough of Kensington & Chelsea, Hammersmith & Fulham, Westminster, Coram, PACT, Intercountry Adoption Centre.

First4Adoption introduced this service to assist agencies and consortia who are experiencing challenges managing their initial enquiries and requiring the expertise of the national information service. All calls are monitored and quarterly information is provided to each agency and consortium. The service offered yearly with a one-off payment, mirrors the operational hours of First4Adoption (Monday – Friday, 10am – 6pm).

If any adoption agency or consortium is interested in finding out more about this service contact Gemma Gordon-Johnson via **gemma@first4adoption.org.uk**

Year Two Successes

As part of the 2014 caller survey, respondents indicated where they were in their adoption journey and this is detailed in the table below.

After calling First4Adoption the largest group of respondents contacted a local authority (45%), spoke to a social worker or adviser (52%), looked at First4Adoption website (50%) or contacted a voluntary adoption agency (50%), see table 7. Three respondents had been approved as adopters while many more intended to be approved in the future. Furthermore, twelve respondents had started an adoption assessment. We also received feedback from callers outside of the survey sample indicating that 4 further users have been approved as adopters.

From the survey 22% of callers went on to register to become a prospective adopter. If this is then applied to the total First4Adoption calls for the year it shows that First4Adoption's contribution to the national supply of adopters would have been 711, which would be 9.5% of all registrations based on Ofsted figures from 2013-14).

Table 7 – Adopter's journey

Action	Actual	Planning in the future
Attended an information session	21 (24%)	14 (16%)
Contacted a local authority	30 (35%)	9 (10%)
Contacted a voluntary agency	25 (28%)	16 (18%)
Spoke to a social worker	26 (30%)	15 (17%)
Started an assessment	12 (14%)	15 (17%)
Approved adopters	3 (3%)	13 (15%)

Sector and social media communications – award winning digital service

First4 Adoption has continued to support sector and government announcements by sharing this information on our website e.g. the launch of the Adoption Support Fund, changes to Pupil Premium and the publication of national statistics on adoption.

National TV coverage

2014 has been a significant year for adoption in the media. Between January and April alone, there were 3 major television programmes about adoption and First4Adoption supported each of them. The first – **"**Finding Mum and Dad" (Channel 4) was aired in January and focused on Adoption Activity Days and how siblings are often separated to find adoptive families. The programme followed the process of finding a home for 2 brothers and a boy who had already been separated from his sister. This programme provoked the most enquiries of the 3 TV programmes both in terms of phone calls (49 calls) and unique visitors (5,626 unique web hits from transmission to 1pm the following day) to the First4Adoption website.

The second programme **15,000 kids and counting (Channel 4)** was a 3 part examination of the adoption process, from social workers making decisions about taking children into care, the search for a family and introductions to adoptive parents. This generated more enquiries than normal in terms of visitors to the website and these numbers increased as the series progressed. The first episode saw 1102 unique visitors (21.00–00.00), second episode saw 1966 unique visitors (21.00–000) and the final episode saw 5198 unique visitors (21.00-00.00).

The four part "Wanted: A Family of my own" (ITV) aired in April and focussed on the journey of prospective adopters from initial assessment to matching. Like 15,000 kids and counting the level of interest increased as the series continued.

First episode – 1614 unique visitors (21.00 – 00.00), 1 call (22.00- 23.00)

Second episode – 902 unique visitors (21.00 – 00.00), 1 call (22.00-23.00)

Third episode – 879 unique visitors (21.00 – 00.00), 2 calls (22.00 – 23.00)

Fourth episode – 1363 unique visitors (21.00-00.00), 3 calls (22.00 – 23.00)

The First4Adoption information line was open for an hour after each show and the level of calls were very low at these times. This correlates with research suggesting that it can take anywhere between 1 and 7 years for a prospective adopter to make their first telephone call to enquire about adoption.

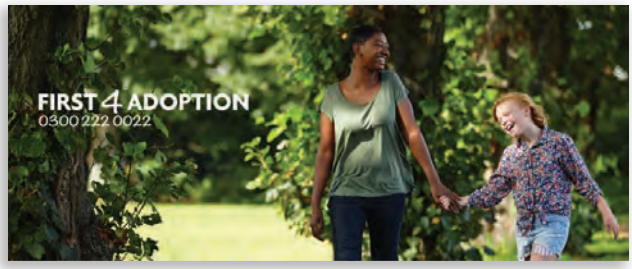
There was great learning to be had from supporting these three TV series and it was apparent that any programme featuring children generates interest.

After the first series there was considerable concern amongst those who contacted First4Adoption about the fact that siblings are often separated prior to adoption. It was also encouraging that there was a wide spectrum of people interested in adopting children of differing ages.

With unprecedented TV coverage, it has been an important year for raising the profile of adoption and highlighting the on-going need for adopters for the children that are waiting. It has been gratifying to see the sector rise to the challenge of the increased enquiries about adoption.

Social Media

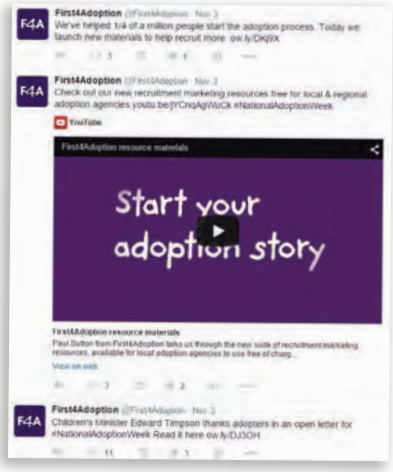
First4Adoption has increased its social media presence greatly during this year and has also provided guidance to adoption agencies on how best to manage social media (see Appendix 3).



Facebook grew steadily for the first 8 months of 2014, starting at 99 likes on 1st January 2014 and rising to 300 likes by the end of August. We experimented with paid posts in September (to support the advertising pilot that was taking place in East Anglia and the North East) and November (as part of our support for National Adoption Week). During this time we saw considerable growth in page likes, rising from 300 to 500 in September and from 500 to 1,300 in November.

Across the year there were over 23,000 engagements (posts, likes, comments, shares and clicks) with content posted on our page. We are carrying through the learning made towards the end of 2014 to inform our Facebook strategy in 2015. This includes the creation of a 'How To' guide which focuses on managing a Facebook page. Twitter followers tripled during the year, going from 570 at the beginning of 2014 to almost 1,700 by the end. Our tweets were favourited 387 times and retweeted 927 times. We were listed 27 times and mentioned 550 times. Most excitingly of all, our reach from retweets and mentions was almost 10 million. This is important because the focus of social marketing is to expand audience and promote messaging to a wider segment of the population. The reach metric is a good indicator of the content that's working to grow your audience and ultimately "reach" new people. This is a true look at the audience you have the potential to engage with.

During November we worked with marketing agency, Kindred to test our national recruitment materials, following the pilot testing period in September. We have been trialling paid for digital advertising and boosting spend on Facebook – we are currently gathering intelligence and evaluation from this spend in November and January –we will share the evaluation with the sector.



National Adoption Week

First4Adoption marked National Adoption Week with a media campaign focussing primarily on television and radio activity. In addition to reinforcing the need for adopters to come forward to adopt siblings, we also took the opportunity to communicate the following messages:

- More than 4000 children are still waiting to be adopted in England
- Single, older, LGBT people and those living in rented accommodation may be unaware that they are eligible to apply to adopt
- There are some parts of the country with a higher proportion of children for whom adoption orders have been granted and would-be adopters should be aware that they are able to adopt outside their own area
- First4Adoption is the national adoption information service with a quarter of a million people accessing the service since January 2013*
- First4Adoption has launched (November 2014) a range of recruitment marketing materials available free of charge for use by adoption agencies.

First4Adoption began our National Adoption Week media activity with a 2 part television feature on the Sky News breakfast programme, Sunrise which has a viewer reach of 400,000[14] people. The programme included interviews with Head of Service, Gemma Gordon-Johnson and first-time adopters, Amanda and Tarquin, which were later streamed online at **news.sky.com**

The television broadcast was followed by radio interviews with 2 national, 16 regional and 7 local BBC and independent radio stations reaching a total of 4, 857, 500 listeners[15].

First4Adoption also secured news and feature coverage in local and regional newspapers across the North East, South West, the Midlands, Yorkshire and Cambridgeshire.

Our engagement with traditional media was augmented by online, social media and digital marketing activity during National Adoption Week. One of the best performing posts on our Facebook page was the photograph captioned 'I'd forgotten how much fun playing dress up can be until I adopted Ben & Mia'. This image generated 516 Likes, 29 comments and 73,344 views.

14 Broadcast Audience Research Board (BARB) 2014

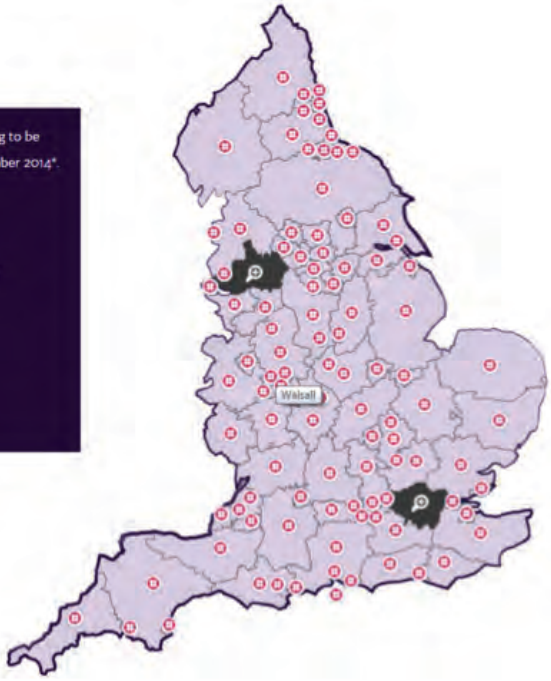
15 Radio Joint Audience Research (RJAR) Quarter 3 2014

Adoption Maps

During 2014 First4Adoption has worked to improve and extend the range of adoption data maps available on our website. In December we launched a new map showing all voluntary agencies and their performance as well as publishing an amended map of local authorities. The design of the maps has been simplified and is now easier for prospective adopters to use. It is envisioned that during 2015 these maps will be updated quarterly with information provided to the Adoption Leadership board through their quarterly data return. First4Adoption has received some feedback from callers suggesting that they would value regular up-to-date data and we look forward to providing this useful resource for prospective adopters in 2015.

There were 4,820 children waiting to be adopted in England at 30 September 2014*.

320 were in the North East
770 were in the North West
570 were in Yorkshire & Humber
420 were in East Midlands
670 were in West Midlands
450 were in East of England
550 were in London
660 were in South East
410 were in South West



Customer service: support to the sector in meeting the needs of prospective adopters

First4Adoption received a large number of requests in 2014 for mystery shopping reviews; this service is offered as a free resource for adoption agencies. The mystery shopping review includes a full report with recommendations and an overall assessment of the service. First4Adoption carries out 3 calls to your initial enquiries number and a website review with the findings included in the mystery shopping report.

During 2014 First4Adoption received 24 requests for mystery shopping with 8 requests outstanding from 2013. We completed 23 full mystery shopping assessments during the year[16]*. Most of the agencies (15, 65.2%) were rated as providing an average level of customer service. Four agencies (17.4%) were rated above average and 4 agencies (17.4%) were deemed to be providing a below average service.

The mystery shopping assessments are reviewed in line with the national customer care standards[17] which aim to ensure a welcoming and informative initial enquiry service (including websites). Where agencies are meeting customer care standards and providing a sound initial enquiries service they are deemed average. If they fall short of the customer care standards and are inconsistent in service delivery, they are deemed below average. Where agencies are providing a service that is tailored to the prospective adopter, exceeding the national customer care standards, they are deemed above average.

The mystery shopping assessments continue to compare agencies performances against the national customer care standards, professionalism, information given, the welcome provided to a potential adopter. Many of the calls to agencies are carried out by adoptive parents – First4Adoption continues to be a critical friend to agencies and will assist and aid agencies in improving their services where necessary.

It should be noted that there has been an overall improvement in the provision of customer service compared with mystery shopping assessments from 2013. However, there are still huge disparities in the quality of that service. Many agencies have made changes to their teams, including reviewing or implementing dedicated staff to deal with initial enquiries and managing social worker resources for the adoption assessment process.

If you are interested in mystery shopping or want to find out more contact Gemma Gordon-Johnson gemma@first4adoption.org.uk

Customer Care Standards

The Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), Adoption UK, the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF), and the Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies (CVAA) consider that the following customer care and service standards represent good practice and encourage all agencies to observe them.

Our aims:

- To ensure that there is a positive welcome for all who may be able to care for children in the care system.
- To increase the number of prospective adopters able to meet the needs of children in care.
- To speed up the process of adoption whilst ensuring that it is effective and supportive for children and adults.
- To embed best practice in customer service across the sector.

Commitments:

- To respect and value you at all times
- To provide accurate and useful information
- To manage all information in line with the Data Protection Act
- To treat you with sensitivity and empathy
- To listen to you and take your feedback on board
- To be polite, courteous and professional
- To respond to your enquiries in a timely manner
- To provide responses to your enquiries which are clear, accurate and easy to understand
- To ensure all services are accessible and easy to use
- To apologise when we get things wrong and work with you to put them right
- To offer the opportunity for you to explore/share experiences with those who have successfully adopted.

These standards are endorsed by the Department for Education, the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), Adoption UK, the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF), and the Consortium for Voluntary Adoption Agencies.

16 Due to increase calls to First4Adoption in 2014 been some delays in providing mystery shopping assessments

17 http:/www.first4adoption.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Customer-Care-Leaflet.pdf

Learning to improve customer service

Some of the main recommendations this year are:

- Not to ask for personal data at the beginning of the call. When handling a call you should allow the caller to talk freely about the questions and information they seek, then ask them for the information you want to record. Through mystery shopping we noted that some agencies would not provide information until the caller disclosed personal details. This approach is extremely detrimental to the customer service experience of a potential adopter who may, in all likelihood, be feeling vulnerable and emotional.
- Where agencies have multiple offices it is important to ensure that the department dealing with initial enquiries is clearly advertised alongside the appropriate contact details. Potential adopters may be dissuaded from continuing their enquiries if their first enquiry results in a referral to another telephone number.
- Where there is a duty system to cover initial enquiries with a number of staff answering calls - do ensure that everyone has sufficient understanding of adoption to answer questions posed to them.
- External phone calls should be answered with a clear greeting such as 'Good Morning, Adoption team' – professional shorthand (e.g. 'You can go through to Duty) can be confusing to the general public and it is important to ensure that callers know that they have come through to the right team.
- There are still many occasions when agencies are not signposting to First4Adoption – particularly important during 2014 when many agencies were not recruiting or were seeking adopters for specific children. Equally, it is very important to notify First4Adoption if agencies are not recruiting so we know not to refer enquirers to you.

Resources for agencies and adopters

First4Adoption has continued to offer and provide free assistance and or training for agencies including:

- Series of Insight workshops – adopter recruitment
- Presentations at BAAF recruitment workshops
- National recruitment resources including image library

We now offer customer care training to agencies and have a number of sessions already booked in with adoption agencies. First4Adoption is happy to provide bespoke half day training workshops to agencies that have completed a mystery shopping assessment. It is important that we understand your service before we provide the training so that it can be tailored to your needs. If you are interested in booking customer care training contact Gemma Gordon–Johnson **gemma@first4adoption.org.uk**

Future trends and insight

Insight research

First4Adoption commissioned insight research from Future Foundation to understand the attitudes and profiles of potential adopters. This was conducted on the basis of Future Foundation's trends profiling analysis developed over 20 years to understand and anticipate market and social development drivers. The work was presented to the National (Adoption) Recruitment Forum in January and, as a result, First4Adoption ran a programme of workshops for adoption professionals. These events were an opportunity for sector professionals to share learning and best practice in adoption recruitment and marketing.

Insight workshops

First4Adoption and Future Foundation delivered workshops in London, Birmingham, Manchester and Bristol, 98 individuals attended the sessions including social work practitioners, marketing and communications officers and managers. The feedback in the main was positive with attendees embracing a new way of looking at profile and attitudes of future potential adopters.

The main focus of the workshops was to identify the trends and drivers that are most likely to influence potential adopters from the 6 target segments highlighted in research by marketing agency, Kindred[18].

People with the greatest propensity to adopt

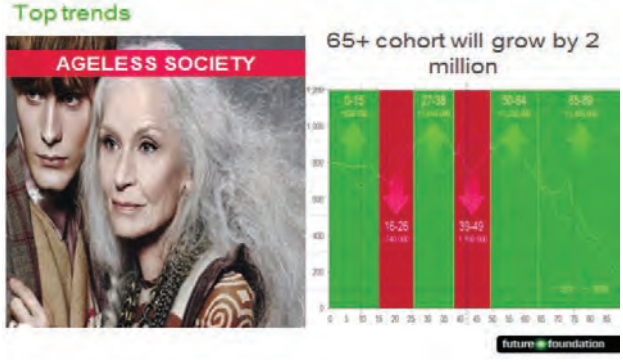
- Those in higher managerial roles
- Single people (men and women)
- Gay couples
- Asian and black middle class couples
- People with a health condition, or previous health problem that has resulted in infertility
- People considering second families

Future Foundation's research identified 20 significant trends affecting the lives and attitudes of these potential adopters. (full explanation of each trend in Appendix 5)

Delegates at the workshops subsequently drew up a shortlist of the most important of these trends and how they might impact on the behaviour of future potential adopters:

Key trends influencing adopter recruitment

- Personalisation of authority - individuals trust experts but place particular value on those with first-hand experience e.g. approved adopters over professionals
- Concierge living - individuals expect a VIP service thus highlighting the importance of customer care throughout the adoption journey
- Work life balance – may impact negatively on adoption
- Ageless society - the average age group of adopters will reduce by 1.15 million within the next 5 years

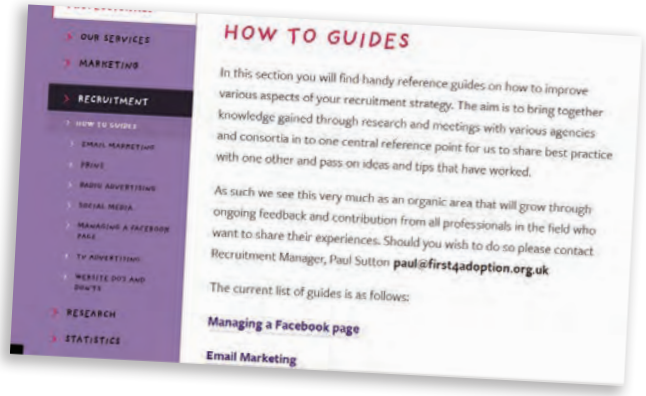


18 'Understanding attitudes, motivations and barriers to adopting and fostering' Kindred, 2014

National recruitment development

Creation of national recruitment resources

This year, as a response to agency feedback about the need for recruitment resources, First4Adoption appointed a National Recruitment Manager. We subsequently created a number of 'How to' guides, available on our website and aimed at assisting agencies in the recruitment of adopters.



Working with Kindred, First4Adoption also produced a suite of marketing resources inspired by adopters' experiences of family life and aimed at creating a nationally recognisable identity for adoption. The materials were based on the previously cited research into the motivations of adopters and were developed in consultation with sector professionals and potential adopters.

Pilot

A prototype set of resources was tested in a pilot which took place across two regions – the North East and East of England – between 8 and 22 September. The pilot tested adverts with two types of image and two types of message. The images featured either people or props and the messages compared quotes to statements.

The examples below show both a 'quote' and a 'statement' advert each featuring images of people

Images with people performed better as Facebook posts compared with images featuring props. Images featuring props performed better than images with people when used as internet banner adverts. Adverts with statements performed better than adverts with quotes on Facebook and when placed as digital ads. It is best to use people on Facebook and props when running digital adverts and advisable to use statements rather than quotes on both media.

The results from the pilot were positive:

- 20% increase in page views and visitors to the First4Adoption website on the previous week
- Page views and visitors more than doubled when compared to the previous year
- Phone enquiries increased 34% on the week preceding the pilot
- 100% increase in referrals to agencies where adverts with 'statements' were tested. Adverts with 'quotes' resulted in a 20% increase

National launch of marketing resources

After the pilot the national resources were amended and new resources created. The full suite of resources including radio adverts, posters, social media images and an image library (over 200 new photographs) for all adoption agencies to use free of charge.

The national recruitment resources were launched at the National Adoption Week Awards. The resources are user friendly and many allow agencies to add their own logo and agency contact details. First4Adoption and Kindred created a marketing resources guide to assist agencies in how to use the national resources.

The initial results around the effectiveness of the recruitment resources during National Adoption Week were promising with over 400 new Facebook likes and engagement levels were up 26% on the previous week.

During National Adoption Week First4Adoption promoted its posts on Facebook, during this period, Facebook was the largest referrer to the First4Adoption website, sending over 1,000 unique visitors. First4Adoption created a how to guide on how to manage Facebook – the full guide can be found in Appendix 4. Some of the advice from the guide is shown here.

Time your posts properly

Posts on Facebook can be scheduled in advance. Ensure they reach as many people as possible by scheduling them for a time when more people are online. Popular times include weekdays pre-work (between 7am and 9am), post-work (between 6 and 8pm), or lunchtime, when many people will check Facebook. It's important to monitor your posts once they're live and reply to any comments or messages.

Always add a picture

Whether you're posting a link to an interesting article, or writing your own copy, get better engagement (that's more likes, comments and shares) for your post, by accompanying it with a picture. Use the images on our image library, or our ready-made Facebook picture posts.

Vary your call to action

Facebook is a great platform on which to push your own messages and generate discussions about adoption in general. However, it's not about 'quick wins' and can be a lengthy process. There should be a balance between asking people to contact your agency, and starting discussions to create engagement. Ask questions, post links to interesting articles, and talk about adoption successes.

Next Year

First4Adoption provides a central point of contact for information that is useful and adopter led whilst also offering marketing and recruitment guidance and materials for agencies to utilise.

Following a variation to the First4Adoption contract, we will now be operating until March 2017 rather than March 2015 this is a positive outcome for First4Adoption, the adoption sector and all prospective adopters.

Below is a brief summary of our key focus for 2015:

- Series of 'Meet the adopter webcasts' – first webcast occurred in January 2015 focusing on LGBT adoption
- Mystery Shopper and customer care training for agencies
- Personalisation – content on website for adopters including launch of a new section produced with adopted young people who are part of The Adoptables national young ambassador programme
- Creation of a new Adoption Support agency finder and new content on website about adoption support in support of the national development/roll out of the Adoption Support Fund.

In 2015 First4Adoption will continue to support adoption agencies, build new partnerships, lead recruitment initiatives and promote best practice in customer service to ensure that together we welcome as many prospective adopters as possible to meet the needs of the children we serve.

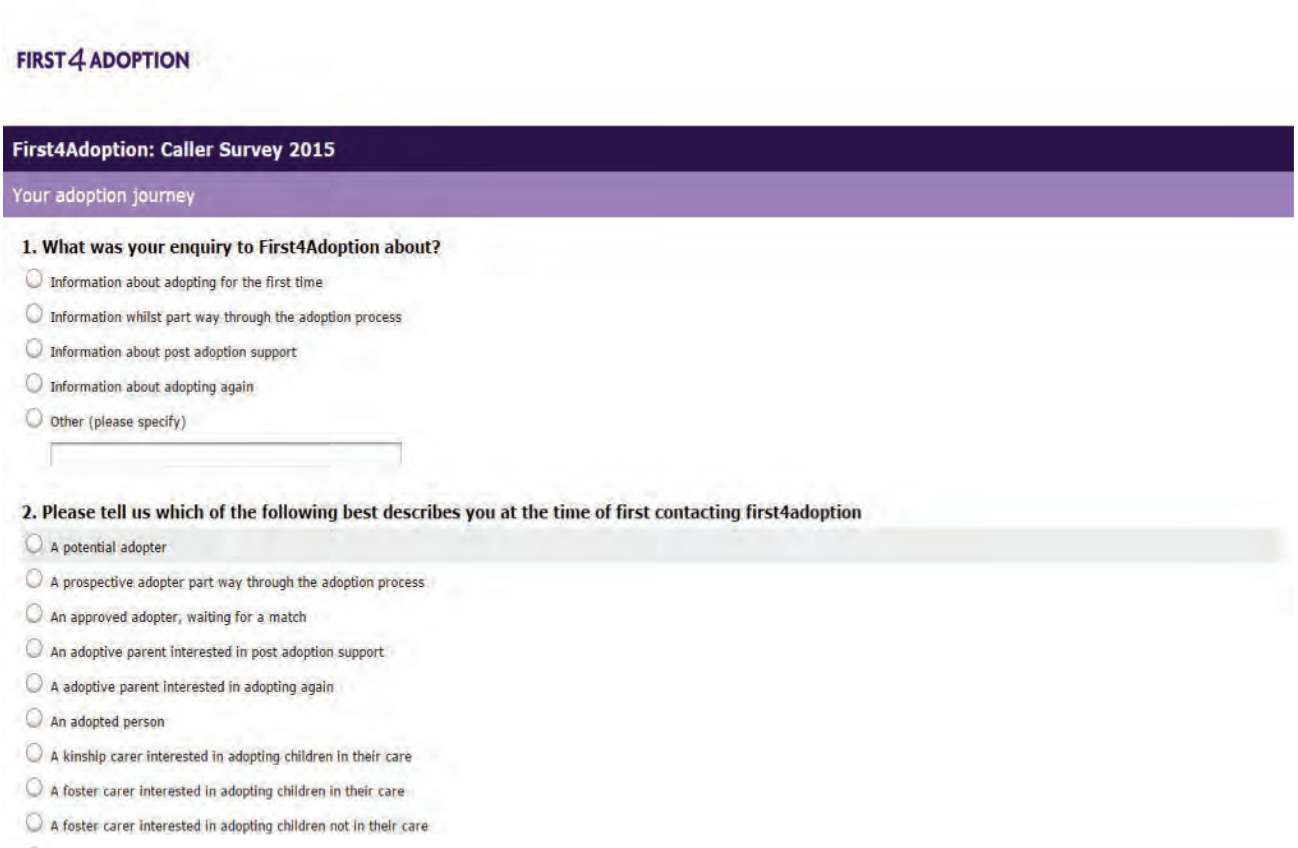
Appendix 1

Annual First4Adoption Satisfaction survey

Creation of national recruitment resources

When callers ring First4Adoption they are asked if they consent to us calling them back to conduct a satisfaction survey. Of those callers that agree to survey a sample of callers throughout the year are taken. For 2014, all callers from April - July 2014 who consented were contacted to take part in the survey. A total of 799 individuals called First4Adoption during April – July 2014 and 172 consented to being contacted by the evaluation team. Callers were contacted between 2 and 3 months after their initial contact with First4Adoption. This allowed enough time to pass after the call so that action could be taken. Callers were contacted in two batches: those who called in April/May were contacted in July, and those who called in June/July were contacted in September. The survey was completed on SurveyMonkey via their preferred method of contact: either by telephone or email.

The survey can be found at - https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DNLQK2N



FIRST 4 ADOPTION

First4Adoption: Caller Survey 2015

Your adoption journey

1. What was your enquiry to First4Adoption about?

- Information about adopting for the first time
- Information whilst part way through the adoption process
- Information about post adoption support
- Information about adopting again
- Other (please specify)

2. Please tell us which of the following best describes you at the time of first contacting first4adoption

- A potential adopter
- A prospective adopter part way through the adoption process
- An approved adopter, waiting for a match
- An adoptive parent interested in post adoption support
- A adoptive parent interested in adopting again
- An adopted person
- A kinship carer interested in adopting children in their care
- A foster carer interested in adopting children in their care
- A foster carer interested in adopting children not in their care

Appendix 2

2014 Communications milestones

January 2014
First4Adoption provided call fulfilment for TV programme – Finding Mum and Dad

February/March 2014
First4Adoption supported LGBT Adoption & Fostering Week - webchat with Stonewall, attendance at New Family Social flagship event
New Children and Families Act given Royal Assent

April 2014
3 new voluntary adoption agencies open

First4Adoption provided call fulfilment for TV programmes Wanted: A Family of my Own and 15,000 children and counting

May 2014
Government extends guidance for prioritised school admissions to all adopted children

June 2014
First4Adoption launched first national e-learning for prospective adopters

Government announcement about further changes to speed up adoption process including removing ethnicity as barrier to adoption placements

Kindred published research 'Identifying effective marketing methods'

July 2014
£20 million further funding for adopted children through Pupil Premium - First4Adoption hired

National Recruitment Manager and began project to create national resources

August 2014
Government pledged £19 million to adoption support fund

September 2014
First4Adoption launched pilot to trial new national recruitment materials in East and North East England

First4Adoption attended Alternative Parenting Show

October 2014
Fertility Awareness Week - First4Adoption attended Fertility Show and conducted webchat with Infertility UK

November 2014
National Adoption Week – First4Adoption received Digital Champion award

Launch of new national recruitment materials for the adoption sector

December 2014
New adoption maps launched including new map for voluntary adoption agencies
http://www.first4adoption.org.uk/adoption-map

Appendix 3

Social Media Guidelines

Social Media Guidelines

Build and strengthen your social media activity and encourage deeper engagement.

1. **Integrate into wider recruitment strategy** – social media needs to complement organisational goals.
2. **Complete your profile** - social networks require you to set up a profile. Make sure this is complete and accurate. Often these can be indexed by search engines and can help improve your search ranking.
3. **Resource** – make sure you have the resources to manage engagement. Social media by definition is not broadcasting; it's social. Engagement takes time. You should be prepared to allocate a minimum of 5 hours a week. If you can't afford to invest the time you should avoid social media until you can.
4. **Research** – look at adoption agency Twitter and Facebook pages. Explore blogs and forums to find out topics of interest. Think about messages that will interest your audience. Follow other people and organisations interested in adoption.
5. **Plan** – list the important issues and plan to address them using a content calendar.
6. **Integrate offline and online media** - include your social media details in adverts (print, TV and radio). Give people the opportunity to make contact using the method of their choice.
7. **Link back to your website** –your website should be a rich source of information for potential adopters. Regularly try to drive traffic to your site by linking to relevant content.
8. **Encourage people to call** – invite people to pick up the phone and give you a call.
9. **Be personable** –use the right tone of voice. Ask questions. Respond to followers posts and they will be more likely to respond to yours.
10. **Be active** – consistent posting and engagement is fundamental to social media success, both in growing communities and maintaining them. Create a content calendar to ensure regular updates, continual engagement and ensure a strategic approach to messaging.
11. **Ask people to share content** – sharing will extend the reach of your messages.
12. **Encourage conversations** – ask questions and share tips to generate discussions that will connect other users and strengthen the community.
13. **Find out what people want** – ask fans and followers what they would like to see and let that help shape your content planning.
14. **Share your content with First4Adoption** – we can retweet and help amplify your messages.

The above has been collated from research and expertise in the adoption field. It is not an exhaustive list and we welcome a continued dialogue with our partners up and down the country so that we may evolve and share new ideas together. If you have any comments you'd like to add about this guide then please email them to Paul Sutton **paul@first4adoption.org.uk**

Appendix 4

Managing A Facebook Page

A Facebook page can help build a strong relationship with potential adopters. However, the emotive subject matter can often provoke negative comments and discussions.

This is a quick guide to ways of dealing with unwanted, unnecessary and unconstructive comments.

1. Establish a policy

It's important to be clear from the outset what your Facebook page will and will not tolerate. At First4Adoption we have drawn up a list of guidelines outlining posting policy and designed to encourage constructive discussion amongst those who visit the page. The First4Adoption Facebook posting policy is published on our page and reads as follows:

When posting comments please:

- respect other people, comments should not be malicious or offensive in nature, and should not constitute a personal attack on a person's character
- don't reveal personal details, such as private addresses, phone numbers, email addresses or other online contact details
- don't incite hatred on the basis of race, religion, gender, nationality or sexuality or other personal characteristic
- be reasonably concise, and don't constitute spamming of the channel
- don't include swearing, hate-speech or obscenity
- avoid party political discussion
- don't break the law, this includes libel, condoning illegal activity, and breaking copyright
- don't advertise commercial products and services, you can mention relevant products and services as long as they support your comment
- don't impersonate or falsely claim to represent a person or organisation
- write in English, unfortunately, we do not currently have the resource to moderate comments in other languages
- stay on-topic; please don't post messages that are unrelated to the topic of the web chat

2. Block trigger words

Blocking certain negative trigger words will act as a filter to remove offending comments and posts. When Facebook detects these words, it marks them as spam, and they will be automatically hidden from the page. Blocking certain words and phrases upfront will mean you can spend less time moderating the page. You can find the official Facebook instructions on how to block words here.

3. Ban abusive users

If, after highlighting your tolerance policy, the same user persists in posting negative comments, you may feel it necessary to permanently block them. You can find the official Facebook instructions on how to ban users here. You can also hide comments when you feel they are unhelpful or potentially disruptive to your community.

4. Disable all posts where necessary

It's useful to check activity on your Facebook page at regular intervals (particularly after you've posted some new information or if adoption has been in the news). If this proves difficult because of other work commitments – or perhaps during a holiday period – it's possible to prevent anyone from posting on the page. Instructions for disabling posts can be found here

5. Different types of post and how to deal with them

With the appropriate measures in place, Facebook pages can be mostly self-regulating and it can be gratifying to watch people who visit begin to form an on-line community.

Before you choose to respond (or not) it may be helpful to place comments on your page into the following categories:

Posts that require a public reply

These can include positive responses to your posts, extra information and anecdotes, constructive and other criticism. It's important to remember that most people who have taken the time to engage with your page in a polite and measured way will expect and welcome a public response. In some cases e.g. grievances, this may involve a public acknowledgment of the message and an invitation to continue the conversation privately.

Private responses

Some comments are best dealt with on a one-to-one basis where possible. As in the 'real' world, disagreements are best resolved away from the public gaze. Abusive users should be reminded of your Facebook policy while those with genuine grievances can be referred to a line manager or appropriate colleague. On a positive note, Facebook can also promote offers of help which need to be followed up via emails or telephone calls.

Likes and thanks

It's common for conversations to develop between people posting on Facebook. When this happens it's often enough to endorse these by "liking" those comments. This can also be a positive way of responding to statements where a specific reply is unnecessary.

No further action

In some cases there's no need to respond at all. These might include: negative but inoffensive or irrelevant comments and discussions or debates that are resolved naturally amongst visitors to your Facebook page.

Appendix 5

Future Foundation Trends Overview

Trends driving adoption:

Death of Risk:

Summary of trend - Nowadays, people have a greater ability to track the consequences of their behaviours. This is creating a hyper risk-aware appetite for protection and prevention of danger. Safety is now the new morality, shaping peoples approaches to the consumption choices that can impact negatively on themselves or others around them.

'Impact – People will look to minimise risky behaviour including childbirth and IVF. Potential to position adoption as a safe option.

Connected Communities:

Summary of trend – We have long witnessed the pull of the local on peoples' consumption preferences but also memberships of clubs and society. Going forward, digital, social networks will bolster connections by aiding communication and organisation amongst locally based or like minded communities of interest.

Impact – Adoptions linked to local communities will tap into people's desires to stay connected and help out their local community. There is a potential to also tap into local networks for easy and more influential marketing opportunities.

Multiculturalism:

Summary of trend – The face of modern day Britain has evolved into a mosaic. For some people, globalisation has changed the notion of citizenship and global connections. This has propelled portions of the population to seek out connections to other ethnicities and cultures around the world.

Impact – People looking to embrace new cultures and ethnicities will look to adopt babies from different backgrounds to become more of a global citizen and enhance their connection to other parts of the globe.

Magic Nostalgic/Murdered by Modernity:

Summary of trend – With the past holding considerable emotional appeal for large numbers of consumers, brands/companies are invited to capitalise on our enduring fondness for all things nostalgic and familiar. Furthermore there is a pulsing feeling that modern day life is in decline. Thus the appeal of traditional values grows.

Impact – New life in the appeal of forming families and leaving a legacy.

Consuming with Ethics/Pop Radical:

Summary of trend – While ethical consumption may not always translate into till profits, consumers do take ethical considerations into their consumption decisions and lifestyle choices. In recent times we have seen consumers choosing brands and companies to champion their causes as well.

Impact – The ethical add-ons to adoption will pull some consumers into championing the adoption cause. This will aid adoption recruitment.

Trends impacting business strategy and marketing:

Concierge Living/Demanding Consumers:
Summary of trend – Online and bricks and mortar company outlets are devoting considerable energy to providing concierge-style services designed to

enhance and transform the shopping experience. In the 10s, every customer is a VIP.

Impact – Expectations of commercial companies will apply to charity services such as First4Adoption. Adoptive parents will expect a full service concierge style support system and tailored solutions.

Personalisation of Authority:

Summary of trend – Influence is shifting away from traditional authority-sources towards individuals, the opinions and attitudes of friends, relatives, colleagues - even complete strangers - have been propelled to the fore.

Impact – Word of mouth is very powerful in adoption and online chat rooms and social media are becoming a first port of call before making any decisions. First4Adoption may want to think about integrating networking services into their website/community.

Mobile First:

Summary of trend – As phones get progressively smarter and the mobile internet grows ever faster and more ubiquitous, the one-time supremacy of the fixed internet platform is becoming a distant memory. In so many contexts, mobiles are now the default choice. This reflects increasing mobile populations living at distance from family.

Impact – Many companies and websites are building bespoke mobile only platforms to optimise mobile viewing. First4Adoption may need to look into a dedicated mobile microsite to optimise information retrieval for mobile savvy adopters but also recognise support impacts.

Narrative Data:

Summary of trend – Narrative Data beckons a new era of brand engagement where personal data is analysed and tracked to create unique experiences tailored to the individual. This is the decline of mass message marketing - this is telling a story about just one character.

Impact – Potential adopters will expect a personalised experience based on customer data. First4Adoption will have to develop data systems to collect and analyse user data for a better customer experience including proactive offers of support at lifestyles stages (eg school transition).

Managed Transparency:

Summary of trend – Galvanised by both the Digital Revolution and the suspicion that not all companies are inherently fair to consumers, expectations about corporate transparency are becoming ever sharper.

Impact – Potential adopters will have high expectations for transparency on all First4Adoption's information areas – adoption background, facts, and adoption status. There is a potential huge payoff for proactive transparency campaigns.

Trends impacting demographic shifts of adopters:

Lifestage Delay:

Summary of trend – Over the last decade there have been significant shifts in the rigid age-based definitions of traditional lifestages and the reality of individuals reaching key landmarks at later points in their lives.

Impact – Traditional definitions of ages for adopters will have to shift if not decrease in importance altogether.

Ageless Society:

Summary of trend – As the nation grows older, attitudes to the ageing process are evolving and the relevance of age-specific marketing messages

falls under scrutiny. As such, age becomes less of a defining factor shaping people's lives, second to social determinants.

Impact – Similar to the trend above, restrictions on age of adopters will come under scrutiny as still active old consumers may look to adopt. Moreover, advertising will need to be age-neutral so as to not alienate older consumers.

Intergenerational Families:

Summary of trend – As childcare and housing costs rise, there has been a subsequent rise in different generations in families moving in and supporting one another. The family unit it terms of housing and money has seen a revival in importance and strength.

Impact – When considering applications for adopters it may well be important to look at entire families including grandparents in order to re-assess eligibility and recognise shared parent arrangements.

Once is Not Enough:

Summary of trend – Tracking the human consequences of multiple experience peaks and, from lifestage to lifestage, the death of only once and never again.

Impact – Slightly different to the trends above, this trend speaks to consumers enjoying more than once life events such as having kids – this could herald some adopters looking to have two rounds of raising kids, and in which adopting is attractive.

Urbanism:

Summary of trend – The proportion of the population living in urban areas will continue to grow in the UK.

Impact – Greater portions of UK citizens and thus adopters will be living in urban areas redefining the average housing situation (smaller, coop etc) and strengthening the North-South divide.

Singleton Society/Ish:

Summary of trend – As people are more prepared to reform relationships and a higher proportion live alone, there is a rise in single households.

Impact – There will be a rise in single households/ persons looking to adopt and thus need to re-examine housing requirements.

Trends decreasing adoption:

Paranoid Parenting:

Summary of trend – The growth of more compact, multigenerational, networked families raises new questions about the extent of parenting. There has been a recent rise in the overall influence and amount of energy parents expend on their kids and level/ cost of giving them consumer power.

Impact – With parents expecting to spend a significant amount of time and money on each child might depress new adoption interest. First4Adoption will need to address these potential concerns.

Work-Life Tension:

Summary of trend – Consumers face significant challenges as they attempt to balance the often competing demands of work, home life, parenthood and leisure.

Impact – Consumers will have significant concerns over time pressure. Any and all dialogue with potential adopters will have to speak directly to this concern to alleviate any worries and including work patterns requiring shift work and travel.

Naked Citizen:

Summary of trend – How austerity is engineering a new relationship between citizen and state and a re-think of the social contract.

Impact – Consumers no longer see government as a reliable source of aid and will have to make preparations independently. As above, First4Adoptionwill have to directly speak to this concern in order to avoid a drop in adoption interest due to financial and state support concerns – a potential advantage of the Adoption Support Fund.

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