

INTRODUCTION

Since 2015 there has been a significant reduction in the number of children being approved for adoption and being placed for adoption. Initially this led to there being a surplus of adopters available and there was a wide choice of families available for some children but this also meant that some adopters were experiencing a long wait for a placement and in some instances experienced a number of rejections of their expressions of interest which led to them withdrawing from adoption..

More recently the number of prospective adopters coming forward has significantly decreased, perhaps as a result of an awareness of the smaller number of children available, for some people uncertainties associated with the outcome of Brexit but also as a response to some local authorities not accepting new applications or putting waiting lists in place. In August 2017 the Adoption Leadership Board published a paper highlighting their concern that in England we are approaching a position where not enough prospective adopters are being approved overall to meet the future demand for placements and highlighted the need to immediately increase recruitment levels in order to maintain a stable number of prospective adopters available for children.

Information from the National Adoption Register highlights that single adopters tend to wait longer for a placement and can be deterred from applying for children where they see profiles stating a preference for 2 parent families. Research has highlighted that single adopters can be seen as a second choice when social workers are seeking adoption placements. Anecdotally there are examples of single adopters who applied for children, were not initially followed up or pursued and then, having re-applied when they saw children were still available, were finally approved as a suitable match with a considerable

delay having been caused in finding that child the security of an adoption placement.

As local authorities and VAAs are looking at the responses they have received following National Adoption Week 2017 this paper asks whether your agency has a positive attitude towards single adopters and is seeing them as a valuable resource for providing permanence to children in care.

THE CURRENT POSITION

Legislation

Statutory Adoption Guidance is very clear that when looking for adoptive families for children agencies should consider a wide range of families and carers regardless of their status, age or ethnic background and indeed sets out the positive aspects of adoption by a single adopter as follows;

'Single prospective adopters of both genders can have much to offer an adopted child. They may be able to focus all their time on meeting a child's needs and have a good level of physical and emotional availability. Some children may find it easier to relate to just one parent or prefer not to relate closely to a mother or father figure if there are negative associations from the past. SG 4.9.

The guidance states that agencies 'should not put barriers in place, such as specifying the ethnicity of the prospective adopter or ruling out single prospective adopters' but rather that 'the emphasis should be on what skills and qualities the prospective adopter must have in order to meet the child's needs' SG 4.20. It urges social workers to see having a range of carers as an 'opportunity to address more effectively the needs of a range of children who are themselves older, and/or from different backgrounds including mixed and minority ethnic backgrounds' SG 4.4. It also states that 'any practice that

classifies couples/single people in a way that effectively rules out the adoption because of their status, age or because they and the child do not share the same racial or cultural background is not child-centred and is unacceptable' SG 4.5.

The guidance suggests that *'if the prospective adopter can meet most of the child's needs, the social worker must not delay placing a child with the prospective adopter because they are single, older than other adopters or does not share the child's racial or cultural background'* and should then *'consider how the prospective adopter's parenting capacities can be supported and developed alongside the child's changing needs'*. SG 4.4. It also highlights that *'issues of emotional and financial support, health and future close relationships will need to be carefully explored with single prospective adopters.SG 4.9.*

National Statistics (DFE) and comparisons with US.

Over the last 4 years despite initial increases and then more recently the slowing down of the number of children being adopted, the proportion of children adopted by single adopters, subject to minor variations, has remained around 10%. The number of children adopted by a single adopter in England has ranged from 410 – 530 a year during these 4 years.

The majority of single adopters are female (ranging from 420 – 490 who have adopted in the last 4 years) with a very small number of between 20-40 being male. This marked difference in the gender of single adopters contrasts with the proportion of male and female same sex couples in the last 4 years where the number of male same sex couples has equalled and in some years exceeded that of female same sex couples. It raises questions about why, either so few single male adopters are coming forward, or if they are being deterred from applying by the responses

they receive. This was an issue raised and explored in a small scale discussion held by Bridget Betts (2007) for her good practice guide.

Data from the Adoption Leadership Board (ALB) quarterly reports between 2013 - 2014 and 2016 – 2017 shows that single adopters are the group that have the longest wait from the point of approval to match.

It is interesting to note that in the USA there are a significantly higher proportion of children being placed with single adopters. The latest figures on children adopted from public care showed that in 2016, 29% of adoptions were made with single adopters – 13,671 (26%) were with single women and 1,623 (3%) were with single men. However it is also the case that 52% of their adoptions are made with foster carers and 34% with relatives so more of these adoptions will be taking place where there is an existing relationship between the carer and the child and evidence of the quality of care and positive outcomes seen for the child. A briefing paper written by the University of Oregon in 2012 states that the shift in attitudes and legislation came in the US came about when there was an expansion of adoption in the 1970s to include 'hard to place' children with additional needs and notes that recent statistics would still show that a quarter of all children with special needs are adopted by single adopters and there is still reluctance amongst some professionals to give equal consideration to single adopters compared with couples.

There needs to be some consideration (and challenge) of whether we could be doing more to encourage and support single adopters to come forward to help meet the needs of the wide range of children waiting for adoption with social workers being at the forefront of challenging 'traditional' models of parenting which don't reflect the reality of many children's experiences.

Information from Adoption Match/ National Adoption Register

In the last year 43 single adopters were matched with children, with 20 of these being matched with BME children and 4 of these taking a sibling group of 2. Many of the other single adopters were matched with older children and/or children with significant needs but some of these single adopters had been waiting for some time before being matched. The matches were made mainly through Exchange Days or by Regional Business partner searches but three of these matches were achieved during the pilot of adopter-led searches which has now been opened up to all adopters encouraging them to take an active role in their family finding activities.

When looking at the 316 adopters who have waited over 12 months however, single adopters were over represented with 70 single adopters (22%) still waiting. The majority of these single adopters were looking for a single child of White British origin. The matching profile of some of those single adopters waiting over 12 months showed they felt unable to consider a child with significant needs.

There is an overall shortage of families available to consider siblings – in July 2017 61% of children active on the Adoption Register are part of a sibling group with only 25% of the active families available wanting to consider sibling groups.

- The experience of staff at Adoption Match is that practitioners are more likely to be actively looking for a 2 parent family for a sibling group and may specifically request this in their profiles which may deter single adopters from putting themselves forward.

In July 2017 there were 146 single adopters on the Adoption Register who were actively searching for a match. Most of them were open

to taking a child of either gender with only 18% who had a preference for girls and 5% who had a preference for boys.

Only 23% of single adopters wanted to adopt a child under 4 years old with 77% being open to taking children over 4, who are usually seen as harder to place.

- Whilst some may be opting for an older child to fit with their need to continue working after taking Adoption Leave, it may also be that they are being advised by their assessing social worker that they will not be chosen for younger children and therefore opt for older children rather than choosing to wait for a younger child.

The majority (75%) had a preference for a White child while 25% would consider a child of any ethnicity and 88% of single adopters had a preference for a single child with only 12% being open to taking a sibling group.

- Again we need to consider whether this is reflecting the choices of the single adopters or a more cautious view from their assessing social worker.

Single adopters referred to the Adoption Register wait longer for a match – in 2016-17 whilst couples waited an average of 360 days, single adopters waited an average of 406 days.

- This would be in addition to the time taken to refer them once they had been approved and raises the question of whether there is a case for referring single carers following approval if no in house match is available.

Information from the Adoption Register also shows that a higher proportion of single adopters have withdrawn from adopting after they have been referred to the Register – 18% of the total number of adopters who withdrew between April – August 2017.

WHAT DOES RESEARCH TELL US?

The major research study on adoption disruption in 2014 by Selwyn, Wijedasa, and S Meakings found that **there was no statistical difference in the likelihood of the young person having left home where their adoptive parent was a single parent.** It did note though that of the adopters studied that 34% of foster carer adopters were single compared with 13% of stranger adoptive parents.

- This again raises the question of whether social workers are more likely to consider placing a child with a single adopter where they already have evidence of the quality of the care being provided and the existing relationship.

A research study on linking and matching in 2006 (Dance, Ouwejan, Beecham and Farmer) found that 6% of children were placed with single adopters and 3% with same sex adopters. As part of the research a survey of 74 local authorities and 16 VAAs explored views held by professionals – one question asked was if single carers were usually a second choice in linking and matching. 74 agencies responded to this question with 45 agencies showing some agreement to this. VAAs were more likely to agree, perhaps due to their experience of trying to find placements for their approved adopters.

A review of earlier research on single adoptive parents was reported by Betts in her Good Practice Guide on recruiting, assessing and supporting single carers (2007). The findings, from studies in both the US and the UK, were noted to be generally positive, finding no significant differences in the outcomes for children being adopted by single adopters.

There were though particular strengths commented on in the adoptions with single adopters;

- the benefits for the child from the intensity of the one to one relationship,
- a strong commitment to the children they adopted,
- being able to offer a consistency of parenting, with no opportunities for manipulation of two parents or disagreements about parenting styles
- a willingness to persevere, with adopters showing a high degree of sympathy and understanding of their children's situations.

Owen in her UK research in 1999 looked at the experiences of single parent adoptions from both the perspective of the adopters and the children. Messages from that research are still relevant to practice today. She highlighted the importance of agencies offering encouragement to single adopters that they were equally welcome and needed and recognising that they will bring their own skills and experience.

She also highlighted that there may be some children who would particularly benefit from being placed with a single parent namely;

- children who could benefit from a close one to one relationship with a single parent which puts less pressure on them than having to form relationships with 2 parents,
- where it may be beneficial to be able to choose the gender of the carer, for example where the child has been sexually abused or
- where the carer can offer a high level of commitment and brings particular skills or relevant experiences.

When assessing single adopters Owen highlighted the importance of not focussing solely on their single status but rather looking at all aspects of what skills and experience they were bringing to the role as an adoptive parent and their confidence to parent as a single person. She also

highlighted that single adopters need ‘an exceptionally good social support system’ whilst noting that she had found evidence in her study of adopters being well supported by friends and others as well as their family members. This was also emphasised by Betts and in addition she noted the need for responsive and flexible support packages which took account of the individual’s situation re income and employment and the need for agency support where challenges are presented in the placement.

Feedback from a small survey of single adopters on their adoption support needs and a follow up focus group conducted by Adoption UK in October 2017 highlighted some particular issues about support when adopters were experiencing difficulties with their children post adoption order. Whilst they echoed the experiences of other adopters the impact was greater because they were dealing with these issues on their own.

They felt social workers needed to be realistic about the children they were approaching single adopters for and considering the support, including financial support that would need to be in place, both before and after the adoption order, given the particular strengths and limitations of what single parents can offer.

The support needs they identified were;

- having to find new networks for babysitting etc where family or friends felt unable to manage a child’s presenting behaviour
- needing support through peers or professionals to deal with schools and be advocates for their children
- opportunities for peer support through buddy schemes or organised group activities with other single adopters
- being offered financial support when they were needing to reduce, change or give up their employment because of the needs of their children.

IS YOUR AGENCY DOING ALL IT CAN?

The following checklist poses questions that can be discussed in agencies’ management groups or adoption teams to identify any areas of policy and practice where changes could be made to ensure best use is being made of single adopters.

- Does your recruitment policy address recruiting and approving single adopters and recognise the importance of specifically targeting single adopters as part of your recruitment?
- Does your website and all published adoption information reflect a positive attitude from your agency’s to recruiting and placing children with single adopters? Do you ensure that single adopters receive information about the children waiting both nationally and locally so they have a realistic understanding of who the children are that need adoption.
- Are you confident that single adopters will receive a consistent and informed response from workers across your agency, i.e. from the adoption team, childcare teams, adoption panel members and your agency decision maker? How do you address reservations about placing with single adopters held by individual workers?
- Within your consortium or Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) have you considered holding a specific recruitment event for single adopters or an Adoption Exchange event featuring single adopters who are being assessed or approved and waiting?

ADOPTION MANAGERS AND WORKERS

- In your contact with prospective single adopters, do they have the opportunity to hear about the experiences of single adopters and to be later buddied with a single adopter through the assessment and approval process? Is there clarity about the role of a buddy and what they can offer?
- Do you make use of positive messages from research about what single adopters can offer as well as the issues for them to consider and include these in your recruitment and training materials?
- Do **all** your recruitment and training materials address the questions and training needs of single adopters? Do they include quotes from single adopters and their children and avoid references to parents or a mum and a dad?
- Do single adopters have an opportunity to invite a supportive adult to accompany them to preparation and training events? In these situations is there thought given to how to maintain confidentiality of the adopter and any child being matched?
- Are single adopters given opportunities throughout the assessment and approval process to learn about **all** the children waiting for adoption i.e. those being featured nationally as well as those within your agency? Does this include looking at children of all ages and looking at the needs of siblings and whether this is something they could consider? Do your profiles of children give clear information

about what support can be offered, including financial support?

- Do you refer single adopters to the Adoption Register after their approval if you know there are no suitable matches for them in house rather than wait for the 3 month period allowed?
- When matching and placing children with single adopters, are you proactive in identifying their specific needs so that support packages can be developed prior to matching, offering both practical and emotional support as well as realistic on-going financial support where needed? Is there any acknowledgement / recognition that where a single adopter needs to take further time off because of the needs of the child and cannot return to work at the end of Statutory Adoption Pay and Leave they will need additional financial support.
- Do you have a specific support group for single adopters within your agency, consortium or RAA? These have been shown to be valued by single adopters and demonstrate the agency's commitment to meeting their specific needs.
- Do you maintain contact with adopters post adoption order through social events, keep in touch phone calls etc recognising they may appreciate a higher level of contact?

CHILDCARE MANAGERS AND WORKERS

- What training do childcare workers receive on the issues to consider when matching children for adoption? Does this include research on the outcomes of children placed with single adopters?

- What consideration is given to the language and messages given when writing children's profiles? Do they encourage a wide range of prospective adopters to consider whether they can meet the child's specific needs? Is there a quality assurance process in place so that statements such as 'must be placed in a 2 parent family' can be appropriately challenged?
- How are decisions made about matching? Is this a joint venture with input from the adoption team (as suggested by research by Farmer et al) so there is an informed consideration of all potential adopters regardless of their gender or status? Is there appropriate challenge if a worker or team discriminate on placing children with single adopters?

SOME SUGGESTED MESSAGES WHEN RECRUITING SINGLE ADOPTERS

- Use positive statements such as '*we are looking for /would like to hear from / would welcome applications from single adopters*' rather than '*we accept applications from single adopters*'?
- Provide information about the support that will be available during the process and post adoption – '*there will be support available at every stage of your adoption journey*'.
- Use real life quotes from single adopters and their adopted children in publicity material – see examples below.

WHAT NEXT?

If you have good practice examples of your agency's work in placing children

with single adopters please email them to [Elaine Dibben](#) or [First4Adoption](#) so these can be shared on the First 4 Adoption Professionals page or in the adoption stories section.

CONCLUSION

At a time when there is growing awareness of a shortage of adopters this paper has provided reminders of statutory requirements, research and practice guidance, highlighted some practice wisdoms shared by agencies and challenges local authorities and adoption agencies to look at how they are making best use of the resource offered by single adopters.

It is hoped that agencies will continue to share areas of good practice and what they find works within their consortia, through their Adoption Regional Boards and in the development of Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs) so that single adopters are recognised as a valuable resource for children who need adoption and are encouraged to come forward but also then offered the appropriate support reflecting their particular needs.

Paper prepared by Elaine Dibben, CoramBAAF with contributions from NRMF members and case studies provided by After Adoption, ARC Adoption NE, CCS Bristol, Essex County Council and Families for Children

November 2017

CASE STUDIES - AGENCIES

Families for Children - Establishing a Support Network

An adoption social worker decided to look at forming a single adopter network as she had a number of single adopters on her caseload who were all asking for the same thing i.e. an opportunity to get together with other single adopters and their children.

The identified aims were to (a) provide a network of support for single parents (b) to provide adopted children, often placed on their own, with a network of other adopted children (c) to provide time for fun and acceptance (d) to meet at times and venues that were easy and natural – particularly when more formal groups close down at weekends and school holidays (e) to be able to offer a professional ear for adopters or children to explore their worries and (f) to be able to signpost individuals to more formal support resources if needed.

30 families from within a particular geographical area were invited to make suggestions about the type of events/support group they would value. A camping weekend was originally suggested, but felt too much too soon initially so a planned walk, including children and dogs, with a pre-planned treasure hunt was arranged. The setting was calm, tranquil and safe, and two social workers were there to oversee. 5 Families attended this initial event, and the children were aged between 7-11 years – all with varying attachment styles. The dogs played an important part of their family support as the children were able to dis-engage with the group for brief periods to look after their dog and then return to join in the play. The children interacted well, played with simple toys provided by the social worker (such as balloons and puppets) and they also developed imaginary play when they arrived back for tea.

The parents had talked to each other individually on the walk, and then came together to talk in a group and offer each other some of their individual reflections on how things were now and what support was helpful to them.

The outing lasted for 4 hours and was felt to have been very successful. The participants have now shared contact details and have been introduced to other support groups that each other have found for themselves. Future events are now being planned - the overnight camping trip and another structured walk in the half term holidays.

These initial events seemed to also promote other opportunities - as a group they are good at finding support for themselves and sharing with each other when they meet up.

Essex County Council – The A Team

The 'A' Team single adopters group (name chosen by the children) was originally set up in 2011. The group meets 6 weekly at a venue in central Essex that is suitable for both adults and children. Two adoption Outreach Workers support every event, supervise the children's play and engage them in fun and creative activities. They are also there to answer any queries or concerns the parents may have.

Single adopters are invited to join at all stages, including when they are in Stage 2 of the assessment process, giving them the opportunity to start building relationships before a child is placed with them.

The 'A' team has proven to be an excellent way for single adopters to build a strong support network. Through the years of its existence, many of the parents have forged close and supportive relationships with each other, they have supported and encouraged each other through difficult and challenging times and have welcomed new families into the group at all stages during their adoption journey. Many of the families meet outside of the group for days out, they are in touch by phone and email, provide babysitting for each other and some of the families regularly have short holidays together during the summer.

Attendance at the group fluctuates but averages between 6 to 10 families.

In 2014 as part of the support to the group, we arranged a long weekend break at an Essex Outdoors venue for ten of the families in the group – we plan another weekend again in 2018.

Feedback from adopters-

- 'We had a fabulous time. You gave the children an adventure with plenty of support workers, which made me at ease...The time I spent with the other mums was nice and relaxed. We got to talk more, especially in the evening.. I would like to see some of them outside the single group. I hope we get the opportunity again.
- 'Great weekend which worked well because ...we all understand each other and each other's children. A. has really strengthened her connection with F which I hope will be a comfort to her as she gets older and has more questions about being adopted and what that feels like! All of the children played so well together and showed a lot of compassion toward each other. I had time to relax and catch up with the other mums which is very important for me and the outreach helpers were as always fantastic.

After Adoption - Targeted Recruitment & Support

After Adoption have successfully recruited and approved 48 single carers since 2000. The majority have been female but they are trying to encourage more male carers to come forward
50 children have been placed with their single carer adopters, including 6 x 2 sibling groups and even an sibling group of 3! Only 3 single adopter placements have experienced a breakdown since 2000, which is a success rate of 93%.

The agency has an inclusive approach to all potential adopters regardless of gender, sexuality, relationship status or ethnicity and has naturally encompassed and promoted the rights of a single person to adopt.

The agency recognises the challenges single parents may face and these issues are explored throughout the assessment process and during family finding. Once a match is approved a tailored support package is put together to give the adopter and their child the best chance of success and access to help. This includes being linked to an 'adoption buddy' a single adopter who can empathise and offer help and advice based on their own personal experience.

The agency is able to rely on their single adopters to share their experiences with others and they regularly speak at the Exploring Adoption events, Adopter Training groups, promotional campaigns and AGM meetings.

Single carers are encouraged to bring along a family member or friend to attend groups, panel or any other meetings they would like to be supported at. The agency will also discuss with placing authorities the appropriateness of single adopters being supported by a family member or friends during the introduction process which placing LAs are becoming open to.

Arc Adoption NE – Support during Matching and Linking

The agency has seen their single applicants wait longer than most of their applicants in a partnership.

To enhance their chances of selection the agency has asked their psychologist to produce a "strengths and vulnerabilities" analysis which also identifies how the vulnerabilities can be supported either by the agency or by the applicant's support network. This is placed as an introduction to the PAR so that children's social workers or family finders are presented with this as the first introduction to the applicant and it appears to get them off to a positive start. Most of the issues are addressed in the PAR anyway but they have found that if you provide people with this information at the beginning of their reading it reduces their anxiety or apprehension.

When single applicants have felt under stress with the wait and have no one immediately to turn to in order to share this burden, the agency have provided access to their counsellor. Here they can freely offload their frustration which helps them to retain a positive outlook and to prepare themselves for when social workers visit.

Single applicants have always been encouraged to bring a friend or family member to attend both preparation training and the approval panel with them and many have taken this offer up

They also operate a buddy system for their own families and those of a couple of LAs in the area and would link single applicants to a buddy who is also a single adopter unless asked not to do this.

CASE STUDIES – ADOPTERS

S is a 32 year old dual heritage **single male adopter** who first came to the agency 3 years ago . Following his initial enquiry he went away and began to gain further experience with children as well as build his support network up to ensure he was in a good position to be an adoptive dad.

S's biggest support was his mum and best friend and so when he again contacted the agency they were involved in attending the information evenings and joined part of the initial visit. It was important for S that he could bring his mum to the prep group as he wanted to ensure that she had the same understanding of the journey he was taking.

During the assessment period S linked himself to a number of single adopters in the agency and was active in following their advice to strengthen his position

S encouraged several of his family members and support network to attend the family and friends training and also asked for a session around post placement visiting support and parenting to be undertaken because as a single adopter he knew having support from his identified support members was important and was also aware of the need for any child placed not be overwhelmed by other adults.

Following placement of a six year old boy S and his mum have accessed the specialist parenting program and this has ensured S and his mother are aware how to be attuned to the child.

The adoptive mum is in her early 30's, she is white, she is a teacher, and is a specialist in SEN. She has a very close support network of family and friends who have been very supportive of her adoption. She is a very positive, warm, enthusiastic and nurturing person who has a natural affinity with children. She has some health issues including asthma, and food allergies which she manages very well.

Her adoptive son is just two and has been placed for 5months. He is of mixed race - Black African/Caribbean and white. He had some complex health issues when he was born, which have mainly resolved, but he has severe food allergies and is susceptible to chest infections. He is also significantly developmentally delayed, possible due to his health complications, and also his birth mum has a learning disability.

When first placed her adoptive son was very unsettled and refused to eat and this was very difficult for his adoptive mum who become very worried about him, but with a lot of reassurance from her support network and hard work from his adoptive mum, he started to feel settled and relaxed and started eating again and is now thriving and has grown. Because of his adoptive mum's skills at dealing with her own allergies, she is confident in dealing with his and the household is set up in a way that is safe for both of them. Because his adoptive mum is a teacher, she has worked hard on his language and development and he is showing a huge improvement in a relatively short space of time.

The local authority tried to find mixed race adopters as well as adopters who could meet his health needs and uncertain future, but after a year, they knew they could not delay any further and looked for adopters who could manage his complex health needs and uncertain future.

His adoptive mum does not live in a very diverse area, but she is going further afield in the very diverse city she lives in to find activities where he will meet other mixed race children. She is also coming to a single adoptive parent's support groups to meet other single parents with mixed race children.

CASE STUDIES – ADOPTERS

The single adopter has a female child aged 3½ years old. The child has complex emotional needs and a history of neglect and abuse.

Until her adoption leave the adoptive mum worked in television. She had established experience of different cultures, a diversity of people and a significant ability to communicate with children and adults. She had worked in some challenging environments. She is an accepting and patient person and she really understands why children who are hurting may behave in challenging ways. She is open, warm, and tenacious and had established sound advocacy skills. All of this was reflected upon in assessment and at matching.

The adopter felt able to offer a close 1-1 relationship with a child who needed lots of reassurance and re-parenting. She wanted that child to be the sole focus of her parenting attention.

The adopter was able to take a full years' adoption leave which was required to settle the child and establish her in her new family. The child has really struggled at times with her emotional reaction to the past, often presenting as aggression, lack of concern for her personal safety and frustration. All of these things have undoubtedly presented challenges for the adopter and she has viewed them as issues/responses they will manage together. Even when times have been really tough and she has been exhausted, her agency have never doubted the adopter's long-term commitment to the child.

A robust and regularly accessible support network has been vital. The adopter's friends and family undertook some of the preparation training with her and have been available to support her and the child throughout the introductions and ongoing placement. The adopter also had a definite ability to ask for help when she has needed it from her support network, from her SW and other professionals; she has been able to follow advice and engage in continued learning about how to meet her daughters' needs. The adopter has been shown to be a strong, safe, female role model for the child.

The adoptive mum is 50, she is white and has a background in education and now works as an OT specialising in mental health. She is a laid back, warm and accepting person, she has a great sense of humour and does not take things too seriously, but always tries to see the positive side and keep everything on the up. She is also very resourceful and has sought support from a local single parents group through which she has been on camping trips with her daughter. Her adoptive daughter is mixed race, Black African/Caribbean and White, and was placed about a year ago just before her third birthday. She has a background history of neglect and domestic violence. She was with her foster carers for 18 months and had a very strong attachment to them and still talks about them. On the surface her attachment to her adoptive mum is strong when they are together, but as soon as they are out and about, she will almost abandon her adoptive mum and go to any other adult and she rejects her mum. The agency's psychologist believes that she is scared of losing her adoptive mum and will therefore attach to any available adult, as a result of her early experiences where she had little adult attention. Her daughter also has a great sense of humour and is a very positive and sociable child, despite, or possibly because of her early experiences.

The adopter has a very diverse support network and lives in a very diverse area, and is able to take her daughter to activities and to a nursery where she meets Black African /Caribbean and mixed race children and other white single parents with mixed race children. The local authority had spent time trying to find a family that had a white parent and black Caribbean parent, but were not able to and this caused a year's delay in finding a placement for her.

The adopter was able to take a year of adoption leave, and has invested this time in lots of one-to one activity with her daughter. There is still a lot of work to do before her daughter accepts that her mum will not leave but the fact that the relationship between them can be so intense and there is not another adult trying to build up an attachment or complicate the dynamic will make the process quicker. The adopter feels that having a very good relationship with your social worker is vital; that as you go through the process together and the social worker is the only other person that shares it with you when you are a single adopter and the only other person who can share the anecdotes of when things went well or went wrong and this is important to her to be able to laugh or reminisce about this.

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<http://pages.uoregon.edu/adoption/topics/singleparentadoptions.htm>

Examples of Recruitment Initiatives

<http://www.southwestlondonadoption.org.uk/all-about-adoption/meet-our-adopters/single-adopters/>

https://www.dfw.org.uk/storage/app/media/downloads/enhanced-services/14-DFW-Adoption_SINGLE_CARERS_LEAFLET.pdf

<https://www.sfcs.org.uk/naw-adopter-q-a/>
Elaine's story

<https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Andrea-is-a-single-adopter.pdf>

Resources for Single Adopters

<http://www.first4adoption.org.uk/who-can-adopt-a-child/how-do-i-decide/single-thinking-adoption/>

<https://www.adoptionuk.org/forums/single-adopters>