

Think Siblings: findings from a national survey of adopters

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Delivery partner:

Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption is an independent adoption agency created by Coram working jointly with Cambridgeshire County Council and with funding from the Department for Education. It brings together the best skills and expertise from Coram and the local authority to help tackle adopter shortage so children in the care system don't experience drift and delay. For more information: www.coramcambridgeshireadoption.org.uk

Evaluation partner:

Coram is a national children's charity whose mission is to develop, deliver and promote best practice in the care of vulnerable children, young people and their families. Coram's Impact and Evaluation team provide consultancy, service improvement and evaluation for other public and voluntary organisations.

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Executive summary

Programme and research overview

Think Siblings, a programme led by Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption (CCA), aims to develop new ways of supporting the placement of children waiting for adoption in sibling groups. The programme runs until 31 March 2018 and is funded through the Department of Education's Adoption Practice and Improvement Fund. Coram's Impact and Evaluation team were commissioned to support in the development of the programme.

Research method and sample

Coram's Impact and Evaluation team created an online survey for adopters in January 2017. The survey link was sent to adopters via Adoption UK, Coram and First4Adoption. Four hundred and fourteen responses to the online survey were received. All English regions were represented in the survey along with respondents living in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. This report presents the findings from the survey.

Most adopters who completed the survey had their adopted child or children placed with them (61%) and three quarters of these (76%) were post Adoption Order. The majority of respondents were female (90%) and white British (90%). The largest proportion of respondents were aged 35 to 44 (38%) followed by the age group 45 to 54 (29%). Seventy-seven per cent were married or in a civil partnership.

Main findings

Prospective adopters considering siblings

Over half (57% or 80 out of 140) of the prospective adopters who responded to the survey said that they were considering adopting children in a sibling group (58% of these had not yet started the adoption process). Three quarters of these prospective adopters who were considering siblings held the view that adopting children in a sibling group would be more challenging than adopting a single child. This suggests that these prospective adopters who were considering siblings had a realistic idea of the challenges ahead.

All these prospective adopters believed that it was important for sibling groups to remain together and for 91% of these prospective adopters their decision to adopt children in a sibling group was influenced by their own experience of growing up with brothers and sisters. Prospective adopters wanted to see professional support and additional training in place to help them with the adoption of siblings.

Prospective adopters not considering siblings

Forty-three per cent (60) of prospective adopters said that they were not or were not sure if they were going to adopt siblings (75% of these had not yet started the adoption process). Most of these also held the view that adopting siblings would be more challenging, however,

a smaller proportion than those planning to adopt siblings (60% vs. 73%). Factors that affected this cohort's decision not to adopt a sibling group were varied. Around half (53%) said that a lack of understanding about the specific needs of adopted children in sibling groups and concerns about the impact on other children in their household were important factors in their decision. These prospective adopters were the least influenced by the opinions of professionals (69% said this was not an important factor).

Adopters who had adopted siblings

Two hundred adopters who responded to the survey had adopted children in a sibling group. Survey responses indicated that 163 of these (82%) had adopted a sibling pair, 30 (15%) had adopted three children and seven had adopted four or more children.

Eighty-four per cent of adopters who had adopted siblings (120 out of 143) believed that adopting children in a sibling group was more challenging than adopting a single child. These adopters thought that siblings were more challenging because a) of the different behaviours and needs of the individual children b) it was physically more work to do in terms of preparing and managing and c) of the sibling dynamics and competition and conflict between siblings for their parents' attention.

Most adopters (71% or 102 out of 143) had decided they wanted to adopt children in a sibling group at the start of their adoption journey. Adopters who did change their mind about adopting siblings typically did so in Stage 2 or when they were waiting for a match. There were seven overarching reasons that adopters decided to adopt children in a sibling group:

1. Adopters wanted more than one child
2. Adopters believed that siblings should remain together
3. Adopters did not want to go through the adoption process more than once
4. Adopters had personal experience of growing up with brothers and sisters
5. Adopters felt that children in sibling groups were harder to place and therefore wanted to help these children
6. Adopters felt they had the right personal qualities or circumstances to adopt children in a sibling group
7. Adopters felt if they said they would adopt children in a sibling group it would give them a better chance at successfully being matched and adopting.

Adopters found the support that they had received in their adoption journey helpful. Seventy-three per cent of adopters found preparation group training helpful in preparing for adopting siblings, 76% found therapeutic support helpful and 78% found additional parenting training helpful (although only 39 respondents had received additional training of this kind).

Adopters generally had a positive experience of the transition of their adopted children from foster care to their care – 76% reported that it was handled well. Comments from adopters revealed that transition tended to go smoothly when there was good support and preparation in place from both the social worker and foster carer.

Adopters with siblings reported about the behaviour of 328 adopted children. Of the responses about the behaviour of adopted children, 141 adopters had two children, 32 had three children and seven had four children. Adopters reported that their “Adopted Child 1” was the most challenging in behaviour (74% said their behaviour was “very” or “quite challenging”). Sixty per cent reported that their second adopted child’s behaviour was challenging, 62% said their third adopted child’s behaviour was challenging (based on a smaller sample of 39).

The majority of adopters with siblings (86%) felt that their adoptive placement was stable and would last into the future.

One hundred and twenty-one adopters (85%) said that their adopted children in a sibling group had brothers or sisters that did not live with them. Half of these (49%) reported that their child had contact with some or all of these siblings. Forty-two per cent of adopters said that they found managing this contact “very easy” or “easy”. Adopters felt that contact could be improved by having more support in place from, and more contact with, professionals in relation to contact. Adopters who made comments about what worked well with contact said that the type of contact they had in place was effective and practical arrangements, such as location and activities during contact, were important.

Adopters who did not adopt siblings

There were a small number of responses from adopters who had not adopted children in a sibling group. Nineteen adopters who had not adopted siblings responded to the survey. Most of these (73%) agreed that it would be more challenging to adopt children in a sibling group. Six of these adopters said that they could have been persuaded to adopt children in a sibling group. Fourteen adopters said that their adopted child had siblings that did not live with them and nine of these said their adopted child had contact with some or all of these siblings.

Introduction

This report presents the findings of an online survey for prospective adopters and adopters run between January and March 2017. The survey asked about prospective adopters and adopters' views on adopting children in a sibling group, including experiences and perceptions about the challenges of adopting siblings, preparation and support in adopting siblings, the transition from care to the adoptive home and experiences of managing contact.

Overview of programme

Think Siblings, a programme led by Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption (CCA), aims to develop new ways of supporting the placement of children waiting for adoption in sibling groups. The programme is funded by the Department for Education's (DfE) Adoption Practice and Improvement Fund and runs until 31 March 2018. Think Siblings was developed in response to the number of children in sibling groups experiencing delay in being placed with adopters and therefore deemed a "hard to place" group. This is highlighted by the 1,130 children in sibling groups with placement orders waiting to be placed and the 380 of these children who had been waiting 18 months or more to be placed, according to the most up-to-date data available at the time of this report¹.

Research partner aims

Coram's Impact and Evaluation team were commissioned by CCA in September 2016 to support in the development of the programme. The team were appointed to provide research support to help with the development of an "end product" (something designed, delivered and tested by the CCA project team in order to improve the assessment and placement of siblings) and to evaluate this "end product".

Research method

The survey forms part of a wider piece of research to support the programme. The research uses a mixed methods approach; collecting quantitative data from local authorities about child and adopter timescales and qualitative data using an online survey and semi-structured interviews and focus groups with adopters and social care professionals. This report presents the findings of the survey for adopters. Other elements of the research have been reported separately, or have not been conducted yet.

Online survey for adopters

Coram created an online survey for adopters in January 2017 (see Appendix 1 for survey questions). The survey link was sent to both prospective adopters and adopters via Adoption

¹ Department for Education (2017), Adoption Leadership Board quarterly data reports: 2016 to 2017, ALB agency level data: July to September 2016.

UK, Coram and First4Adoption. Four hundred and fourteen responses to the online survey were received².

Ethics

Ethical approval was granted by Coram's Research Ethics Committee in November 2016.

² 421 responses were received in total but seven response were removed because they were invalid.

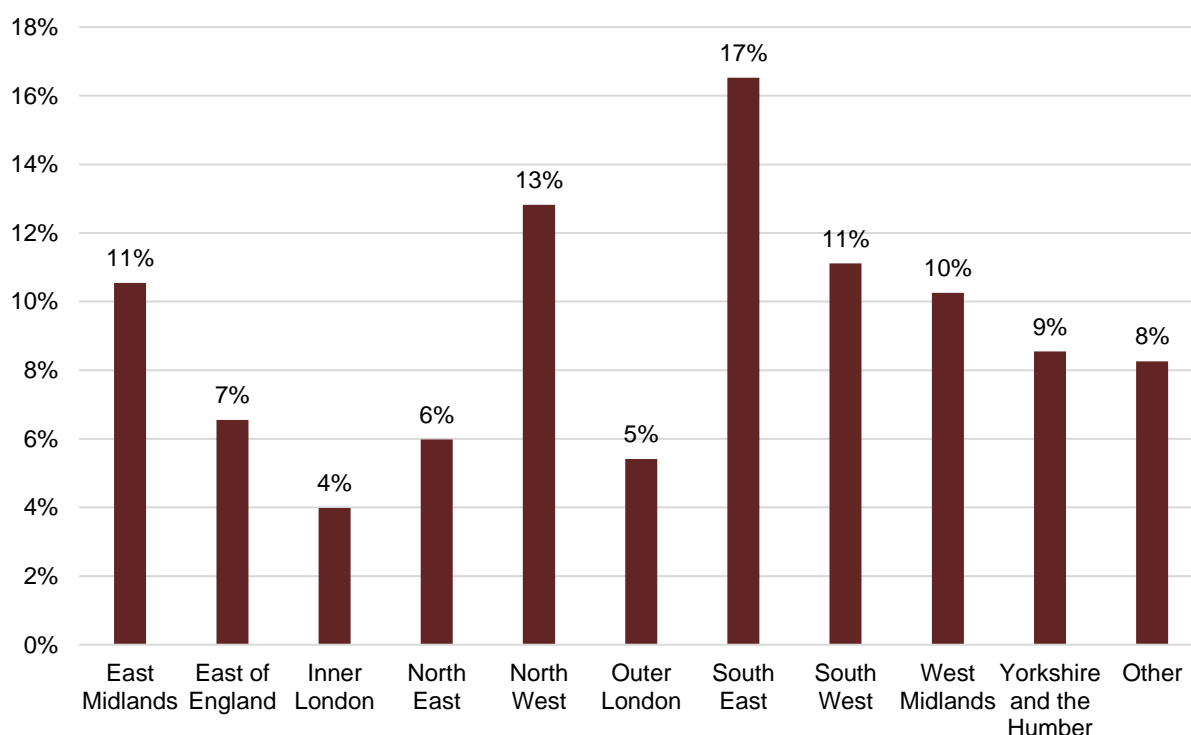
Survey findings

Sample

Most prospective adopters or adopters who responded to the survey, and left details about their gender and ethnicity, were female (90% or 322 out of 359 respondents) and white British (also 90% or 323 out of 358). The largest proportion of respondents were aged 35 to 44 (38% or 136 out of 357) followed by the age group 45 to 54 (29% or 103 respondents). Seventy-seven per cent (266 out of 347) were married or in a civil partnership. For the detailed breakdown of the respondents' demographics see Appendix 2.

All English regions were represented in the survey (see Figure 1). The least represented area was Inner London – only 4% of respondents (14 out of 351) lived in this area. The largest proportion of respondents were from the South East – 58 people or 17%. This was followed by the North West of England – 45 respondents were from this area. The “other” category included 11 respondents from Wales, five from Scotland, four from Northern Ireland and three who lived overseas.

Figure 1: Regions survey respondents lived

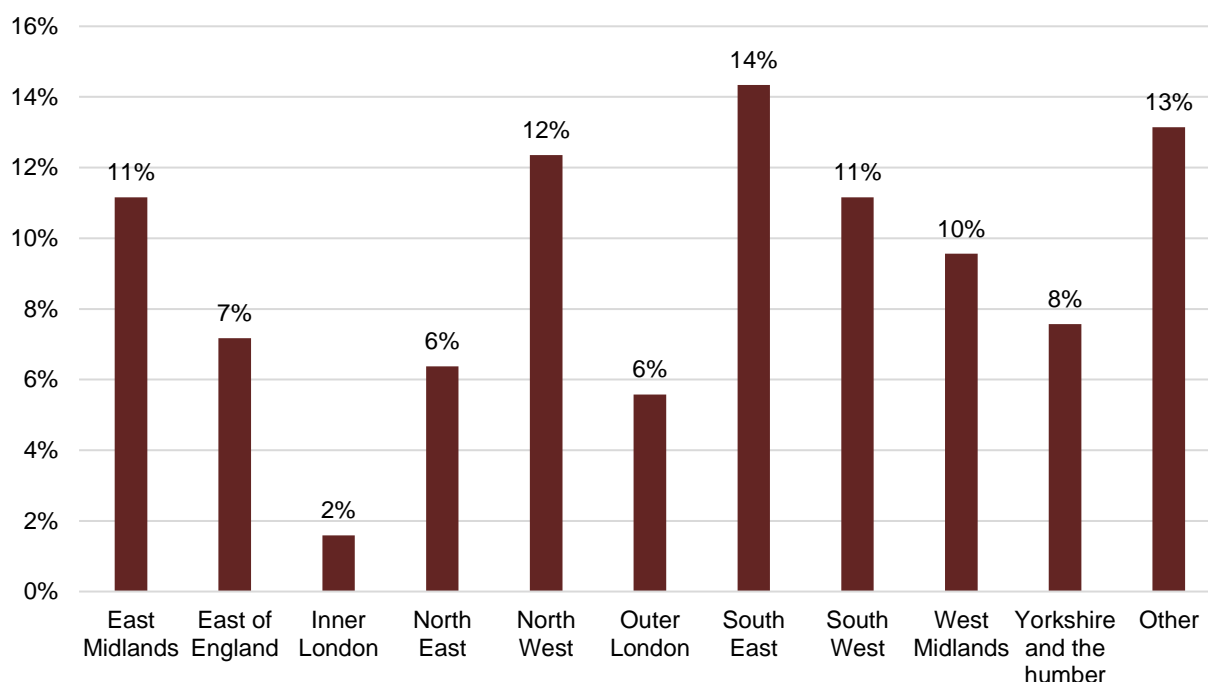


(N=351)

The regions in which adopters had adopted their children reflected the areas where they lived. Of the 251 respondents who stated the region where they adopted their child, the

largest proportion had adopted in the South East (14% or 36 respondents) and the smallest proportion adopted in Inner London (2% or 4 respondents) – see Figure 2.

Figure 2: Regions survey respondents adopted in



(N=251)

Sixty-one per cent of the respondents (219), who stated their stage in their adoption journey, had their child placed with them and 167 of these were post Adoption Order (see Table 1). Thirty-eight per cent (136) were prospective adopters who had either not started the process yet, were in Stage 1 or 2, were approved and waiting or were matched with a child. Six people listed their stage in the adoption journey as “other” – two commented that they were foster carers, one was a grandparent and three answers were not clear. The responses from the foster carers have been analysed separately from the responses from adopters and reported in a standalone section of the report.

Table 1: Survey respondents' stage in adoption journey

Stage in the adoption journey	n	%
Prospective adopter - not yet started the process	91	25%
Prospective adopter - in Stage 1 or Stage 2	26	7%
Prospective adopter - approved and waiting	7	2%
Prospective adopter - matched with a child	12	3%
Adopter - child placed with you	52	14%
Adopter - post Adoption Order	167	46%
Other	6	2%
TOTAL	361	100%

Prospective adopters

Overview

Over half (57% or 80 out of 140³) of the prospective adopters in the survey said that they were considering adopting children in a sibling group. Fifty-eight per cent (46) of these had not yet started the adoption process and a quarter (20) were in Stage 1 or 2⁴. Thirty-nine prospective adopters were still undecided as to whether they would consider adopting children in a sibling group and the majority of these (34) had not yet started the adoption process⁵. Twenty-one prospective adopters said that they were not considering adopting siblings - half (11) of these had not yet started the adoption process, five were in Stage 1 or Stage 2 of the process, and two were approved and waiting for a match with a child waiting for adoption⁶.

Those that answered “yes” and those who answered “no” or “not sure” were routed to two different sets of questions.

Prospective adopters considering adopting siblings

Eighty prospective adopters were considering adopting siblings. Most of these prospective adopters held the perception that adopting children in a sibling group would be more challenging than adopting a single child. Seventy-three per cent (54 out of 74, six answers missing) “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that it would be more challenging compared with 11% who disagreed (16% neither agreed nor disagreed). One respondent who agreed commented:

“As a new prospective adopter, going from no children to two or more would be a big adjustment, and both children would likely have lots of individual needs, as well as a relationship between them that may need support.” (Prospective adopter, North East)

Another respondent, who did not think siblings would be more challenging, said:

“Siblings help keep each other entertained and stimulated, this is much easier than being the sole stimulation for an only child.” (Prospective adopter, region not specified)

The prospective adopters were asked about their reasons for choosing to adopt children in a sibling group and the factors that were important in this decision. All prospective adopters

³ Base size increases from 136 to 140 here as those that responded that they were in “other” stage were also directed to the prospective adopter questions.

⁴ Ten prospective adopters were “matched with a child”, three were “approved and waiting” and one was in a stage listed as “other”.

⁵ Two prospective adopters were “approved and waiting”, one was in Stage 1 or Stage 2 of the process, one was “matched with a child and one was in a stage “other”.

⁶ Two prospective adopters were in stage “other” and one was “matched with a child”.

(73 responses) held the belief that sibling groups should remain together and listed this as an important reason for their decision.

Ninety-one per cent of prospective adopters (58 out of 64 respondents) said that grew up with siblings themselves and listed this as a crucial factor. Only a third of adopters (11 out of 33⁷ said that encouragement from social care professionals was an important factor in their decision to adopt siblings (see Table 2).

Table 2: Prospective adopters considering siblings - reasons for decision

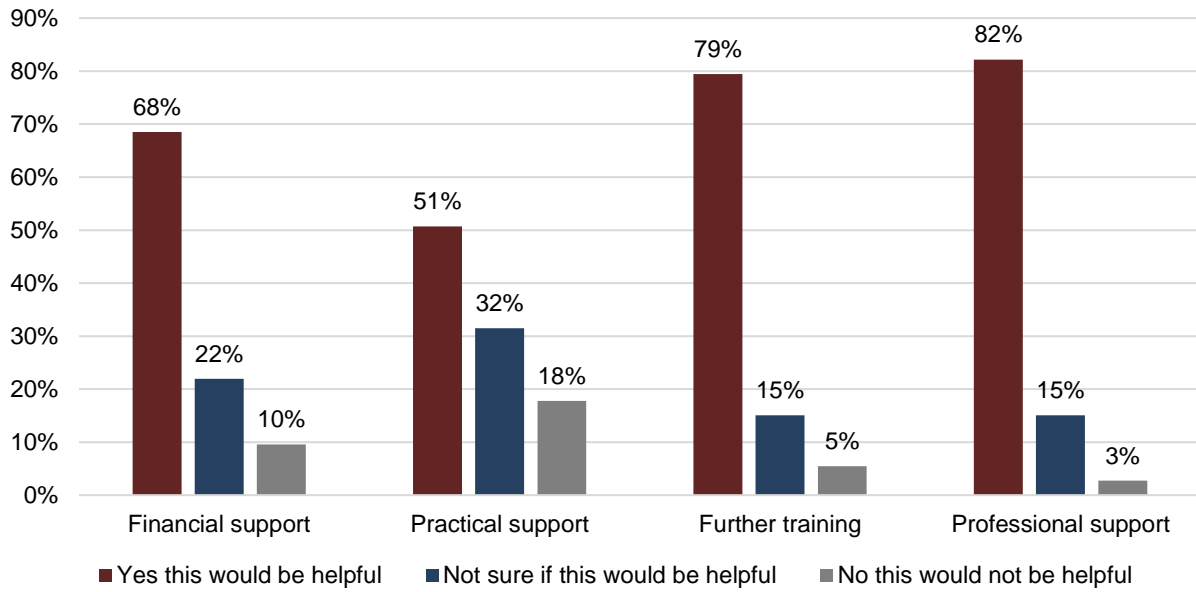
	Encouraged by professionals e.g. social workers (N=33)	Grew up with siblings (N=64)	Believe siblings should stay together (N=73)	Want a larger family (N=66)
Important factors	33%	91%	100%	68%
Neutral	30%	3%	0%	18%
Not important factors	36%	6%	0%	14%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

As Figure 3 below highlights, the support that this group of prospective adopters would like to see in place was professional – 82% (60 out of 73 respondents) said this would be helpful. This was closely followed by 79% of prospective adopters (58) who would welcome additional training on parenting children in sibling groups. Sixty-eight per cent (50) would like more financial support and half (37) felt practical support would be helpful.

“My biggest concern would be how to build individual relationships with the children. Time to do this before the adoption would be good.” (Prospective adopter, South West)

⁷ This category had a smaller sample size as 35 respondents listed this as “not applicable”.

Figure 3: Prospective adopters who were considering siblings - views on what additional support would be helpful



(N=73)

These prospective adopters were also asked if anything would discourage them from adopting siblings. The factor that was most frequently stated was practical issues such as finances or space at home. Table 3 below provides details.

Table 3: Prospective adopters considering siblings - factors that would discourage them from adopting siblings

	Conflict between siblings (N=71)	Lack of professional support (N=72)	Lack of training (N=72)	Attitudes / advice of professionals (N=72)	Practical issues (N=71)
This would definitely or probably discourage me	31%	46%	46%	46%	62%
Would not affect decision	69%	54%	54%	54%	38%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

One prospective adopter reported:

“I am presently being dissuaded from adopting more than two in a sibling group.”
(Prospective adopter, region not specified)

Prospective adopters not considering siblings

Sixty prospective adopters (43%) who answered the survey said that they were not or were not sure if they were going to adopt siblings.

As with the prospective adopters who were considering siblings, most of this group held the perception that adopting children in a sibling group would be more challenging than adopting a single child, however a smaller proportion thought it would be more challenging than those adopters considering siblings.

Sixty per cent (24 out of 40) “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that it would be more challenging compared with a greater proportion (73%) in the prospective adopters considering siblings group. Eighteen per cent disagreed that it would be more challenging (23% neither agreed nor disagreed). One respondent agreed it would be more challenging because:

“It is likely the children will be older and so may have already experienced situations which will challenge their ability to attach to prospective adopters. Their formative months/years will already have been processed.” (Prospective adopter, Outer London)

Another adopter, who held a neutral view about whether siblings would be challenging could see how it could be both more and less challenging:

“More children are always harder than less but I think they stand a better chance of settling with their siblings.” (Prospective adopter, South West)

Prospective adopters who were not considering adopting siblings were asked what factors were important in this decision they had made⁸. Over half reported that a lack of understanding of the specific needs of adopted children in sibling groups and concerns about the impact on other children in their household were important factors in their decision. The lowest proportion of adopters said their decision was influenced by lack of professional support or the opinions of professionals, for example from social workers (see Table 4).

⁸ Adopters could answer “not applicable” to the question meaning the number of responses for each reason varies from N=13 to N=38.

Table 4: Prospective adopters not considering siblings - factors that affected their decision

	Important factors	Neutral	Not important factors	TOTAL
Understanding specific needs (N=32)	53%	22%	25%	100%
Impact on other children (N=19)	53%	5%	42%	100%
Financial implication (N=36)	47%	22%	31%	100%
Confidence (N=34)	38%	29%	32%	100%
Parenting skills (N=34)	38%	21%	41%	100%
Support networks (N=32)	34%	22%	44%	100%
Lack of professional support (N=26)	27%	31%	42%	100%
Adopter would be dissuaded by professionals (N=13)	15%	15%	69%	100%

One prospective adopter, who was not considering adopting children in a sibling group, remarked:

“I think that sometimes too much emphasis is put on keeping siblings together when there is so much evidence that they cannot heal from their trauma together. There are lots siblings who clearly should be kept together but the apart or together assessments are just the opinion of the child social worker.” (Prospective adopter, Yorkshire and the Humber)

Prospective adopters who were not considering adopting siblings were asked if there was anything that would encourage them to change their decision. Under a third of adopters said that support from professionals, additional training, clearer guidance and more support from family and friends would encourage them. Forty-two per cent said that better financial support would encourage them to adopt siblings. See Table 5 for details.

Table 5: Prospective adopters not considering siblings - factors that would encourage them to adopt siblings

	More support from professionals (N=37)	Additional training (N=37)	Better financial support (N=38)	Clearer guidance about needs of siblings (N=38)	More support from family and friends (N=35)
Yes this would have encouraged me	30%	27%	42%	24%	20%
This may have encouraged me	30%	32%	32%	37%	23%
No this would not have encouraged me	16%	16%	11%	21%	26%
Not applicable to me	24%	24%	16%	18%	31%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Adopters

Most of the adopters (those who had one or more children placed with them, pre or post Adoption Order) that responded to the survey had adopted through a local authority adoption service (77% or 168 out of 219). Twenty-two per cent (48) adopted through a voluntary adoption agency and three people used another type of agency.

The majority of these adopters had adopted children in sibling groups. Ninety-one per cent (200 respondents out of 219) had adopted siblings compared with 19 who had not.

Adopters who had adopted siblings

Two hundred adopters, who had adopted siblings, responded to the survey. Survey responses indicated that 163 adopters (82%) had adopted two children, 30 (15%) had three children and seven had four or more children. Of these, 84% (120 out of 143 respondents) believed that adopting children in a sibling group was more challenging than adopting a single child. Only 3% (five respondents) thought that it was less challenging and 18 people held a neutral view, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement.

There were 43 comments from adopters about the levels of challenge that they had experienced. The two adopters who disagreed that adopting siblings was more challenging, and left comments, talked about how the support that the siblings were able to offer each other made it easier for them:

“... we have felt that adopting three siblings simultaneously was less challenging. This is because they were able to support each other, and have a shared experience through the change from moving from foster care to their new home. They are also familiar to each other and can play together enabling me to occasionally get on with things!” (Adopter, North West)

“Our children settled more easily as they had the familiarity and support of each other.” (Adopter, Inner London)

Thirty-two adopters, who agreed that adopting siblings was more challenging, made comments about their experience. These adopters thought that siblings were more challenging because of a) the different behaviours and needs of the individual children which meant it was difficult to offer all siblings the right support, b) it was physically more work to do in terms of preparing and managing (some felt they were not prepared well for this), and c) the sibling dynamics and competition and conflict between siblings for their parents' attention.

a) Different behaviours and needs of the children:

“Differing needs require different approaches that don't always work together, and we are outnumbered.” (Adopter, South West)

“Even though all have same family, [they] have individual responses to trauma.” (Adopter, Yorkshire and the Humber)

b) Physically more work to take on and felt underprepared:

“We have found it extremely challenging, and in hindsight realise how underprepared we were for the extra challenges of adopting siblings. This wasn't really covered in our preparation.” (Adopter, South East)

“Prior to actually adopting them, I didn't think it would be any harder than adopting one. Since they were placed with us, I realised it would have been significantly easier having one at a time. However, I wouldn't change it. I'm so glad they have stayed together as they adore each other (even though they fight non-stop)!” (Adopter, North West)

c) Sibling dynamic, competition and conflict:

“While they look out for each other they also learn and copy and act together against us. They perceive a slight against the other the sibling comes first. They also compete for parents' attention.” (Adopter, South East)

“We had underestimated quite how difficult it would be having two children suffering from significant loss and trauma both continually competing for attention/attachment.” (Adopter, South East)

Seventy-one per cent (102 out of 143 respondents) who adopted siblings planned to do this at the start of their adoption journey. Twenty-three adopters did not plan to adopt children in a sibling group and 18 respondents said that they were not sure at the start.

Adopters were asked about the reason for their decision to adopt children in a sibling group. Most adopters who made a comment listed more than one reason for this choice. The reasons can be broadly grouped into the seven themes listed below.

1. Adopters wanted more than one child. This was the most frequently mentioned reason for deciding to adopt a sibling group (mentioned 47 times in 101 comments):

“Knew [I] wanted more than one child and felt it would be positive for siblings.” (Adopter, Inner London)

“Always wanted two children.” (Adopter, West Midlands)

“I wanted a family with more than one child and felt able to give enough love and attention to more than one child.” (Adopter, Outer London).

2. The second most cited reason for adopting siblings was because adopters believed that siblings should remain together. Adopters thought this was beneficial because siblings could support one another in the placement and that the shared history they had was important:

“Because we felt strongly about keeping a sibling group together.” (Adopter, East Midlands)

“To keep siblings together and they have the support of each other.” (Adopter, South West)

“I hoped they would share a special life long bond that they didn't have with any other birth family.” (Adopter, South East)

3. Thirty-four adopters commented that they decided to adopt siblings because they did not want to go through the adoption process more than once:

“My husband and I wanted two children and decided it would be easier to go through the process once.” (Adopter, Outer London)

“We always knew that we wanted to adopt more than one child and felt if we adopted a sibling group we would only have to go through the process once.” (Adopter, East of England).

4. Fourteen adopters mentioned in the comments that they wanted to adopt a sibling group because of their own personal experience of having brothers and sisters:

“I am a twin and one of three children myself, so saw a lot of value in them having siblings, someone else with shared history.” (Adopter, South West)

5. Eleven adopters were aware that children who were in sibling groups were harder to place and wanted to give something back by adopting this group of children:

“We knew that it is harder for siblings to be adopted and felt that we could offer a home to a family of children.” (Adopter, North East)

“Someone had to take on big groups, why not us?” (Adopter, Outer London)

6. Seven adopters felt they had the personal qualities or the right circumstances to take on more than one child:

“We had the ability to provide financially and emotionally for a sibling group.”
(Adopter, East Midlands)

“We always intended to have 2 children and had the time and space to give to more than one child.” (Adopter, South West)

7. Finally, six adopters mentioned that they decided to adopt children in a sibling group because they believed it would give them a better chance of successfully adopting:

“... as older adopters we felt we had more chance of being placed with siblings than a single child.” (Adopter, East Midlands)

“We also thought that we were a more attractive as adopters if we were willing to take a sibling group.” (Adopter, South West)

Thirty-five of the 41 adopters who were undecided, or had decided that that did not want to adopt siblings at the beginning of their adoption journey but had then changed their mind, identified the stage in their adoption journey when this took place. A third of these adopters (12) changed their mind in Stage 2 of the process and another third changed their mind when they were waiting for a match with a child. Only four adopters changed their mind in Stage 1 of the process. Seven adopters changed their mind at another stage.

Support received

Adopters who had sibling groups placed with them were asked what help they received during the process of adopting. Sixty-two per cent of adopters (88 out of 143) said they had attended preparation group training, 47% (66 out of 140) had received therapeutic support and 28% (39 out of 141) had been on additional parenting training. Most of the adopters who had received these forms of support had found them helpful (see Table 6).

Table 6: Adopters who adopted siblings - support received

	Preparation group training - Stage 2 (N=88)	Additional parenting training (N=39)	Therapeutic support (N=66)
Very helpful or helpful	73%	78%	76%
Neutral	22%	18%	15%
Unhelpful or very unhelpful	6%	5%	9%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%

Transition

Adopters generally had a positive experience of the transition of their adopted children from foster care to their care. Seventy-six per cent (107 out of 140 respondents) thought that the transition was handled “very well” or “quite well”.

Many comments, for those adopters who had a good and bad experience of transition, related to the experience and support of the foster carers and the social workers:

“[The transition] went very well, in the main due to the expertise of the very experienced foster carer the children had been with for the preceding 12 months. She prepared them wonderfully! This included us face timing the children in the week before 'physical' introductions began. We felt this was helpful for all of us, as it took the pressure off the first meeting, making everything more relaxed.” (Adopter, North West)

“Foster carers helped make the introductions process as smooth as possible.” (Adopter, South West)

Where the transition did not go well:

“Foster carer didn't follow rules, intro plans were change last minute and foster carer still didn't follow the plan.” (Adopter, West Midlands)

“The children's social worker argued with the foster carers about lots of things, so the introductions plan kept changing, which was confusing for the children.” (Adopter, East of England)

One hundred and two comments were left by adopters about what was helpful about transition. Half of the comments (51) related to the support that was provided from the child's foster carers. Adopters reported that the transition went well when they formed a good relationship with the carers and when the carers had prepared the child for the move:

“Foster carers supported the children to transfer their attachment from them to us and were constantly encouraging the children that this was right for them.” (Adopter, South East)

“Introductions worked well and the foster carers put the children's needs first.” (Adopter, East Midlands)

Twenty-three adopters commented that the transition went well due to well thought out planning. Adopters mentioned that the length of time that the introductions took was important:

“Saw the children for a few weeks which built up over time and this worked well.”
(Adopter, South East)

Other adopters appreciated that the introduction process was a fast process:

“Fairly quick, foster carer stepped back and allowed us to take over pretty much from the beginning including taking the children on our own all day.” (Adopter, Inner London)

A few adopters commented that the process was planned and structured as well as allowing enough flexibility to adapt to the child’s needs, which worked well.

Fifteen adopters said that the support they received from their social worker was key in making the transition a success:

“Children’s social worker knew the children very well and was very supportive. Great relationship between her and our own social worker.” (Adopter, North West)

“Support from our adoption social worker, spoke daily on phone during introductions and first two weeks of placement.” (Adopter, North West)

Finally, ten adopters spoke about tools, training and practical strategies that they had in place which helped with the move:

“Very good handover books including foods [the child] liked / disliked.” (Adopter, Yorkshire and the Humber)

“Photos and short videos exchanged before first meeting.” (Adopter, South West)

Behaviour of adopted children

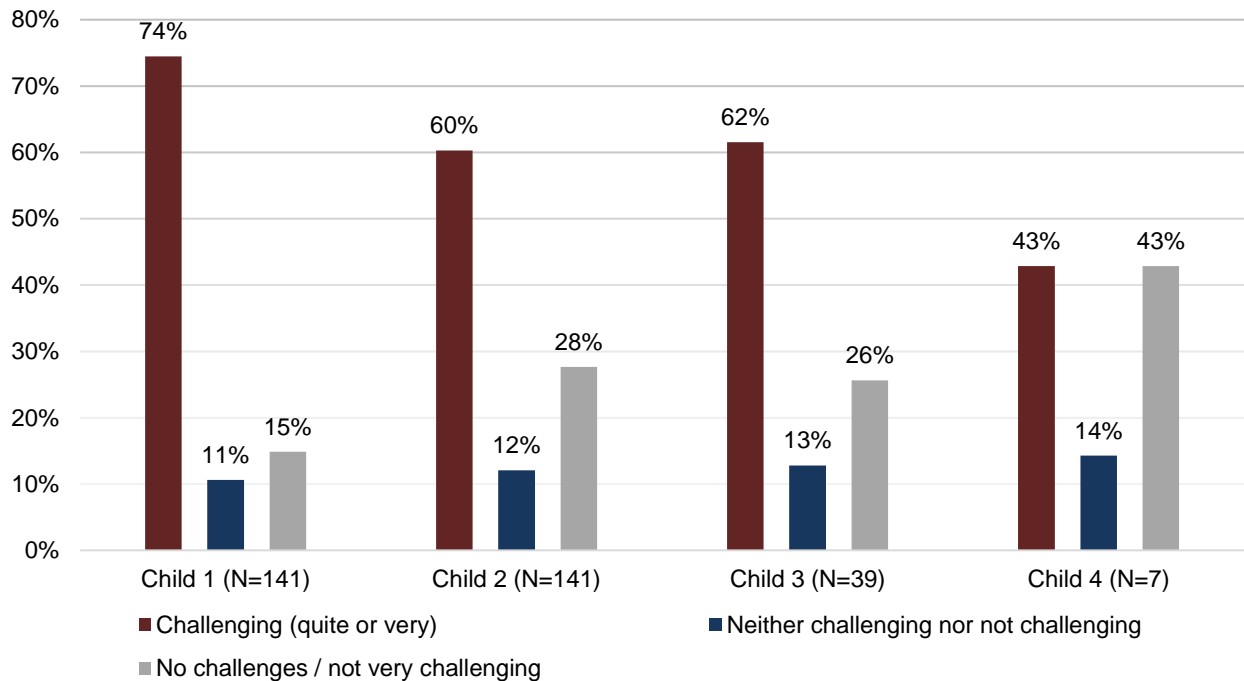
Adopters with siblings reported about the behaviour of 328 adopted children. Of the responses about the behaviour of adopted children, 141 adopters reported about two children, 32 reported about three children and seven reported about four children⁹.

As presented in Figure 4, 74% of adopters (105 out of 141) reported that “Adopted Child 1”’s behaviour was “very” or “quite” challenging. A lower proportion of these adopters found their second adopted child (which is likely to be the sibling of “Adopted Child 1”) challenging – 60% (85 out of 141) felt that their behaviour was challenging and 28% (39) experienced no challenging behaviour or very little. There were 39 reports about an adopted third child and a similar proportion of adopters, 62% (24), found their behaviour challenging with 26% finding

⁹ Some adopters may have adopted more than four children, however, the survey only allowed for a response about behaviour of up to four children.

a small amount of or no challenges (10). Seven adopters reported the behaviour of a fourth adopted child. Three adopters were finding the behaviour of this child challenging and three were not finding it challenging.

Figure 4: Adopters with siblings - reported behaviour of adopted children



Placement stability

The majority of adopters with siblings (86% or 121 out of 140 respondents) felt that their adoptive placement was stable and were confident that it would last into the future. Placement stability was compared with the number of children adopted to ascertain whether this had any effect on stability levels. It was found that there was no correlation between the number of children adopted and the stability of the placement. In fact, only one adopter with four or more adopted children felt that their placement was “not very stable”, all other adopters reported that their placements were stable (see Table 7).

Table 7: Adopters with siblings - stability of placement and number of children adopted

	Two adopted children (N=104)	Three adopted children (N=29)	Four adopted children (N=7)
Not at all stable - I do not feel at all confident that this placement will last into the future	4% (4)	3% (1)	0% (0)
Not very stable - I do not feel very confident that this placement will last into the future	9% (9)	14% (4)	14% (1)
Stable - I usually feel confident that this placement will last into the future	29% (30)	24% (7)	29% (2)
Very stable - I feel confident that this placement will last into the future	59% (61)	59% (17)	57% (4)
TOTAL	100% (104)	100% (29)	100% (7)

Forty-one adopters, who were confident about the stability of their placement, commented about this. Twelve of these adopters said that, although their placement was stable, there were still behavioural issues present:

“Lots of issues with eldest... attachment disorder - therefore behavioural issues... always against me.” (Adopter, Yorkshire and the Humber)

“We have wonderful children who we adore, but our elder daughter has mental health issues as a result of her early life experiences which can make her difficult to parent, however she is also an inspiration and a joy.” (Adopter, East Midlands)

Eight adopters discussed that regardless of the challenges they faced with their adopted children, they would never allow the placement to disrupt:

“We are totally committed our son, regardless of whatever behaviour he displays. His challenges have no impact on our commitment to him. That’s why we are confident in the stability of the placement.” (Adopter, North West)

Nine adopters commented that they were able to cope with the challenges their children presented because of the good adoption support that they had in place:

“Without the excellent post adoption support we have consistently received from our social worker and team, we would definitely be telling a different story. Our children have presented with far more challenging behaviours and traumas than were ever identified before living with us.... If this support hadn’t been so consistently outstanding we wouldn’t have coped at all.” (Adopter, “other” region)

Sixteen adopters who viewed their placements as unstable made comments. Seven of these discussed temporary or permanent disruptions that had occurred with one or all of their adoptive children:

“Child 2 went into Foster Care aged 15 years. Child 1 left home aged 19 years.”
(Adopter, South West)

“Well, one has moved back into care. It's stable for the other two, but I'm not entirely confident that it will remain the same for another of the children.” (Adopter, South West)

Three adopters felt their placement stability was fragile due to concerns about safety due to physical violence from one of their adopted children:

“Constant child on parent violence...” (Adopter, “other” region)

“We are having to consider whether we can support both children working through their trauma, whilst keeping ourselves and both children safe.” (Adopter, North East)

Two adopters described receiving no post adoption support and two adopters felt that they had a lack of support, or that support came too late:

“Unfortunately help has taken too long, and although we went on training, NVR (non violent resistance) excellent course, too late, to make the right impact.” (Adopter, South West)

Two adopters were very concerned about how they would cope in the future. One of these adopters had decided to remove their children from mainstream education:

“I worry for the future of our eldest the most and the impact she has on the rest of the family. Currently things have calmed down because we have removed all the children from school and are home educating.” (Adopter, West Midlands)

Contact

Eighty-five per cent of adopters who had adopted siblings (121 out of 143 respondents) reported that their adopted children had siblings that did not live with them.

Forty-nine per cent of these adopters (59 out of 121) said that their children had contact with some or all of these siblings that do not live with them (19 said that their children had contact with all their siblings and 40 said that they had contact with some of their siblings).

There was a fairly even spread of how easy adopters found managing this contact. The largest proportion (42% or 25 out of 59) found it “very easy” or “easy”. Table 8 provides details.

Table 8: Adopters with siblings - ease of contact with siblings that do not live at home

	n	%
Very easy or easy	25	42%
Neither easy nor difficult	19	32%
Difficult or very difficult	15	25%
TOTAL	59	100%

Of those adopters whose children did not have contact with their siblings, and left a comment on the survey (8 respondents), seven would have liked more support with, communication about and choice around contact arrangements. One adopter stated “I wish they could meet once a year” (Adopter, West Midlands) and another said “I think they should have contact but it was never even suggested” (Adopter, North West). Only one adopter indicated that it was their preference that no contact was in place.

Improvements to contact arrangements

Forty comments were left by adopters with siblings about improvements that could be made regarding contact (eight from those whose siblings had no contact). The improvement most often mentioned was in relation to support and guidance around contact. Adopters wanted to see more support in place and more contact with professionals:

“More information and involvement from social services.” (Adopter, East of England)

“I feel it needs mediating/supervising for several years post placement where siblings have been split due to extreme trauma.” (Adopter, South East)

Nine adopters commented that they wanted to see improvements around the type of contact that was in place for their adopted children. This ranged from wanting no contact for their children to wanting direct face to face contact:

“Where siblings are in care - there needs to be some halfway house between yearly letterbox and direct contact.” (Adopter, South West)

“We had wanted direct letterbox and even face to face but other adoption agency disapproved and made contact complicated.” (Adopter, Yorkshire and the Humber)

Four adopters thought that contact could be improved with clearer communication and expectations in place:

“Adoptive parents should be kept up to date with developments in birth family such as birth of additional children to keep the life story 'live'. This communication has been hopeless.” (Adopter, “other” region)

“Clearer expectations from all parties involved from the start as to what contact is needed.” (Adopter, East of England)

For the 11 adopters who found contact challenging, four wanted more support:

“The other siblings that we have contact with are also adopted into other families, however, contact is dependent on the other families being willing. More support to set up initial contact would help.” (Adopter, East Midlands)

Four discussed that the children’s needs were not sufficiently considered in the contact arrangements or that the children’s behaviour presented challenges in managing contact:

“There are complications relating to trauma and siblings.” (Adopter, North East)

“More consideration of long term options- their half-brother has gone off the rails and is now in prison and we are having to deal with the fall out.” (Adopter, East Midlands)

Contact arrangements – what worked well

Thirty-one comments were made about what worked well with contact. Ten of these related to the type of contact that had been arranged for their children and how this had been effective:

“My children see their siblings once a month and this has worked very well for them. They were able to maintain and develop their sibling bond. Their sense of identity has benefitted greatly from this.” (Adopter, West Midlands)

“The post box [letterbox] service is well set up.” (Adopter, Inner London)

Five adopters mentioned practical arrangements that had worked well in contact meetings such as the location of the meeting and the activities:

“Informal meetings on play barns or at each others' houses.” (Adopter, North West)

“We have them to stay for sleep overs 2/3 times a year and the relaxed family time is fantastic.” (Adopter, North West)

Four adopters felt that contact worked well when they had flexibility and choice over how the contact was managed:

“Adopters arranging contact between them to suit the children's needs.” (Adopter, South West)

“Flexibility to work it out with initial guidance from social worker.” (Adopter, South East)

Finally, three adopters discussed how they had a good relationship with the adopters of their children’s siblings and how this worked well:

“Three separate placements for five siblings but all adopters were open to contact and make it work.” (Adopter, “other” region)

Adopters with who had not adopted siblings were also asked what worked well and what could be improved about contact. Only a few comments were left and these were limited. Two adopters mentioned that contact could be improved through additional support. Two adopters said the following about when contact had worked well:

“Better once left to sort ourselves, less pressure without social workers present and more natural.” (Adopter, North East)

“We have developed a good relationship with our son’s aunt and uncle, who are special guardians of two half-sisters. We were supported by social workers at first and over the years this has gradually tailed off. We now see them most half terms and holidays and it seems very normal.” (Adopter, Inner London)

Adopters with no siblings

Nineteen adopters who did not adopt children in a sibling group answered the survey. Most of these adopters held the view that adopting a siblings would be more challenging than adopting a single child – 73% “strongly agreed” or “agreed” it would be more challenging (11 out of 15) and only two adopters disagreed. One adopter who agreed with this statement commented:

“Our son is one of a large sibling group. He has complex needs, as do several of his siblings. Had we adopted more than one of them, I feel certain the placement would have broken down.” (Adopter, Inner London)

Reasons for not adopting siblings

Six out of the 15 that responded said that they could have been persuaded to adopt siblings. Four of these said that they would consider adopting siblings if they had more support and training.

Contact

Fourteen out of fifteen adopters who responded said that their child had siblings (one was not sure) and nine adopters said that their adopted child had contact with all or some of

these siblings. Four adopters found managing this contact easy, three found it “neither easy nor difficult” and two adopters found it difficult.

Foster carers

Two foster carers answered the survey. The responses from these carers were analysed separately. The answers left by these foster carers were limited – one foster carer responded to very few questions. The other foster carer (a long term foster carer looking after a sibling group of three) agreed that adopting siblings was more challenging than adopting a single child. This foster carer left some comments about their experience, mainly relating to contact:

“If adopters take on some of a sibling group there should be a legal obligation for them to maintain contact with other siblings who are left in the care system. I deal with three children who think their siblings are dead because adopters have not honoured letter box contact.

Adopters have the less damaged children and we have the more traumatised children long term and we have to deal with the fall out which is unnecessary. They already feel bad because they weren't put up for adoption.” (Foster carer about contact)

Due to the very small sample these comments are not representative of the foster carer population.

Limitations of the research

The survey received 414 responses from both prospective adopters and adopters. In the financial year 2015 to 2016, 2,550 adoptive families had children placed with them. It can be estimated that there are around 44,000 adoptive families in England with children aged under 17¹⁰. Therefore the sample represents a very small proportion of the adoption population (estimated 0.9%). This means that the findings should be treated with some caution and should not be treated as representative of adopters across England.

The survey may have suffered from sample bias as it was advertised to adopters through Coram, First4Adoption and Adoption UK. The adopters that are using these services may be those that are more engaged. The survey may not have reached those adopters who are harder to reach and may have attracted responses from prospective adopters and adopters who had an interest in children in sibling groups.

Survey respondents were predominantly female and white British which also may have created a bias in the sample. The research would have benefitted from responses from a higher proportion of male adopters and adopters from black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds.

Nineteen adopters who did not adopt siblings responded to the survey; the least represented group in the survey. The project may benefit from further research looking at this group's views to understand the reasons as to why they did not adopt children in sibling groups.

¹⁰ This has been estimated by multiplying 2,550 by 17.

Discussion for national policy and practice

This national survey of prospective adopters and adopters raises some important learning about prospective adopter and adopter attitudes towards adopting children in a sibling group and the processes around this. This section discusses these reflections and considers some recommendations that could be useful for future practice.

Over half (80 out of 140) of the prospective adopters reported that they were considering adopting children in a sibling group and were mostly in the early stages of the adoption journey (although the survey may have attracted responses from those adopters with an interest in siblings). It is interesting to reflect on how this willingness translates into sibling adoption, in terms of approval and placement, as it is known that siblings are a group of children that experience delays in being placed with adopters and are subsequently deemed “hard to place”.

Furthermore, based on discussions with practitioners on the Think Siblings project, it is the view that this finding from the survey does not translate into numbers of adopters who have siblings placed with them on a local level either.

The factors that influence this trend are not known but are may be multi-faceted. It is therefore recommended that a “whole systems” approach is required in understanding the journey of adopters in relation to sibling placement to best find a way to create a shift in this area.

In the survey those considering adopting siblings and those who were not considering siblings both reported that training, and understanding the specific needs of adopted children in sibling groups would be beneficial (for example 79% of prospective adopters would welcome additional training on parenting children in sibling groups). Adopters who had adopted siblings reported that sibling adoption was more challenging because of the different behaviours and needs of the individual children, the fact it was physically more work to do in terms of preparing and managing, and the sibling dynamic, competition and conflict between siblings for the parents’ attention was a major influence. Therefore, a recommendation is the need for adopter preparation and ongoing training to include parenting siblings. This could be targeted at the areas of:

- understanding specific needs of adopted children in sibling groups
- understanding the needs of the individual children and how behaviours interact
- understanding sibling conflict, dynamics and competition in placement
- practical advice and support in managing time and resources within the family.

It may be advantageous, in terms of offering practical advice and support, to include adopters’ experiences in specific training. Having the opportunity to hear from adopters of siblings may be as, or more, influential than information shared by professionals. This aligns

with the finding that prospective adopters in the cohort that were not considering siblings felt they were least influenced by the opinions of professionals (69% reported that this as not an important factor in their decision).

There were seven overarching reasons that the adopters in the survey had decided to adopt children in a sibling group:

1. They wanted more than one child
2. They believed that siblings should remain together
3. They did not want to go through the adoption process more than once
4. They had personal experience of growing up with brothers and sisters
5. Adopters felt that children in sibling groups were harder to place and therefore wanted to help these children
6. They felt they had the right personal qualities or circumstances to adopt children in a sibling group
7. They felt that if they said they would adopt children in a sibling group it would give them a better chance at successfully being matched and adopting.

A recommendation may be that these key areas of motivation could be used to inform policy addressed at recruiting adopters for siblings, and utilised in website and published information about adoption. It may also be beneficial to embed other positive messages from the survey about siblings in recruitment and training materials, for example:

- referring to the benefits and rewards of adopting siblings that the adopters have reported, both for the children and the adopters
- the fact that adopters generally had a positive experience of the transition of their adopted children from foster care to their care (76% reported that it was handled well)
- the majority of adopters with siblings (86%) considered their adoptive placement was stable and would last into the future.

Finally, there is more to learn from adopters who did not adopt siblings, and a recommendation for this project would be to seek further qualitative information from this group to inform the project outputs.

Conclusion

The survey has revealed some useful findings for policy and practice and for the development of the CCA Think Siblings programme.

We have learned from the survey that most prospective adopters were open to the idea of adopting children in a sibling group and that they seemed to be realistic about the challenges that this may present, and were therefore not entering the journey naively. It was also clear that those who were considering siblings have a strong value base about children waiting for adoption in sibling groups believing that they should remain together. Personal experience also seemed to play a part in this decision, with 91% of these prospective adopters stating that they grew up with brothers and sisters and felt this was important.

A smaller proportion of prospective adopters who were not considering adopting siblings thought that adopting siblings would be more challenging than adopting a single child. It may be the case that due to their decision these adopters have not investigated any literature or information about siblings and are therefore less knowledgeable about these children.

The largest proportion of responses came from those adopters who had adopted siblings. Most of these held the view that adopting siblings was more challenging than adopting a single child due to the different needs and behaviours of siblings, the additional physical demands and the potential conflict between siblings. Most of these adopters made the decision to adopt siblings at the start of their adoption journey. Reasons for their decision included wanting more than one child, believing siblings should remain together and not wishing to go through the adoption process more than once.

Generally these adopters with siblings had a positive experience of the support they had received, the transition of their child from care to their care and managing contact. Many adopters were managing contact arrangements with siblings that did not live with them.

Most of the 19 adopters who had not adopted siblings agreed that it would be more challenging to adopt children in a sibling group. Six of these adopters said that they could have been persuaded to adopt children in a sibling group. These adopters were also managing contact – 14 said that their adopted child had siblings that did not live with them and nine of these said their adopted child had contact with some or all of these siblings.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey questions

About you

2. Are you

Male

Female

Other

Prefer not to say

3. What is your age group?

18 - 24

25 - 34

35 - 44

45 - 54

55 - 64

65+

Prefer not to say

4. What group best describes your ethnicity?

White British

Other white

Mixed (any background)

Asian or Asian British

Black or black British

Chinese

Prefer not to say

Other (please specify)

5. What region do you live in?

North East

North West

Yorkshire and the Humber

East Midlands

West Midlands

East of England

Inner London

Outer London

South East

South West

Prefer not to say

Other (please specify)

6. What region did you adopt your child(ren) in?

North East

North West

Yorkshire and the Humber

East Midlands

West Midlands

East of England

Inner London

Outer London

South East

South West

Prefer not to say

Other (please specify)

7. Are you

a single adopter?

In a partnership (but not married or in a civil partnership)?

married or in a civil partnership?

Prefer not to say

Other (please specify)

8. What best describes your current stage in the * adoption journey?

A prospective adopter - not yet started the process

A prospective adopter - in the Stage 1 or Stage 2 process

A prospective adopter - approved and waiting

A prospective adopter - matched with a child

An adopter - child placed with you

An adopter - post Adoption Order

Other (please specify)

Prospective adopters

9. Are you considering adopting children in a sibling group (i.e. brothers and/or * sisters together)?

Yes

No

Not sure

Adopters

10. Did you adopt through a

Local authority adoption service?

Voluntary Adoption Agency (VAA)?

Other?

11. Have you adopted children in a sibling group (i.e. brothers and/or sisters together)?

Yes

No

Questions for prospective adopters considering siblings

12. Please tell us about your perception of adopting children in a sibling group. How much do you agree with the following:

“Adopting children in a sibling group will be more challenging than adopting a single child.”

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

13. Please tell us about your reasons for considering adopting children in a sibling group:

I was encouraged to consider adopting a sibling group by my social worker / the adoption panel

I grew up with brothers and/or sisters and feel this is important

I feel that children waiting for adoption who are in sibling groups should remain together

I want a larger family than just one adopted child

- Very important to me
- Quite important to me
- Neither not important nor important to me
- Not very important to me
- Not at all important to me

14. What support would you like to see in place to help you proceed with adopting children in a sibling group?

Financial support

Practical support e.g. help with looking after the children

Further training about how to parent children in a sibling group

Professional support e.g. from social workers, health teams

- Yes this would be helpful
- Not sure if this would be helpful
- No this would not be helpful

15. Are there any of the following factors that would discourage you from considering adopting children in a sibling group?

Concerns that about conflict / challenges between the siblings

Lack of professional support to adopt more than one child at once

Lack of training to understand the needs and how to parent adopted children in a sibling group

Attitudes / advice of professionals e.g. social workers

Practical issues such as finances or space at home

- Yes this would definitely discourage me

-
- Yes this would probably discourage me
 - This would not affect my decision
 - No this would probably not discourage me
 - Not this would definitely not discourage me

16. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about adoption in relation to sibling groups? [OPEN ENDED]

Questions for prospective adopters not considering siblings

17. Please tell us about your perception of adopting children in a sibling group. How much do you agree with the following:

“Adopting children in a sibling group will be more challenging than adopting a single child”

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

18. Please tell us about your reasons for not or perhaps not considering adopting children in a sibling group:

I am concerned about the financial implications of adopting children in a sibling group

I was dissuaded from considering adopting a sibling group by my social worker or the adoption panel (or a similar professional)

I do not feel confident to parent children in a sibling group

I do not feel I have the parenting skills/techniques to adopt children in a sibling group

I do not have the support network e.g. family, friends around me to adopt children in a sibling group

I do not have a good understanding of the specific needs of adopted children in sibling groups

I am concerned about the impact of adopting more than one child on my other children (birth or adopted)

I do not feel I will have the professional support e.g. from adoption social workers to adopt a children in a sibling group

Other (please specify)

- Very important to me
- Quite important to me
- Neither not important nor important to me
- Not very important to me
- Not at all important to me
- Not applicable

19. Is there anything that would make you more likely to consider adopting children in a sibling group?

Yes

No
Not sure

20. Would any of the following encourage you to adopt children in a sibling group?

More support from my social worker and/or other professionals
Additional training about the specific needs of children in sibling groups
Better financial support
Clearer guidance about the needs of children in sibling groups
More support from family and friends
Other (please specify)

- Yes this would have encouraged me
- This may have encouraged me
- No this would not have encouraged me
- Not applicable to me

21. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about adoption in relation to sibling groups? [OPEN ENDED]

Questions for adopters with siblings

22. Please tell us about your perception of adopting children in a sibling group. How much do you agree with the following:

“Adopting children in a sibling group is more challenging than adopting a single child”.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

23. Did you plan to adopt children in a sibling group at the start of your adoption journey i.e. when you started the process to adopt?

Yes
No
Was undecided at the start

24. What was your reason for this decision at the start of your adoption journey? [OPEN ENDED]

25. If you changed your mind about adopting children in a sibling group, at what stage did this happen?

In stage 1

In stage 2

When waiting for a match

Other (please specify)

26. Please tell us a bit more about your change of mind? What triggered this?

27. As a parent of adopted children in a sibling group, what support have you received and how helpful was this in preparing to adopt and parent children in a sibling group?

Did you receive this service/support?

How helpful was this?

Preparation group training (stage 2)

Additional parenting training e.g.

Enhancing Adoptive Parenting

Therapeutic support

- Yes I received this
- Not sure if I received this
- No I did not receive this

- Very helpful
- Helpful
- Neither unhelpful nor helpful
- Unhelpful
- Very unhelpful

28. How well do you feel your child's transition from care to your * home was managed?

Very well

Quite well

Not very well

Not well at all

Not applicable

29. What was helpful at the transition from care to placement? Or what could be improved?

30. Please tell us about your adopted children's recent behaviour at the moment (i.e. the children you have adopted who are in a sibling group):

Adopted child 1

Adopted child 2

Adopted child 3

Adopted child 4

- Very challenging
- Quite challenging
- Neither challenging nor not challenging
- Not very challenging
- No challenges at all
- Not applicable

31. What statement best describes how stable you feel the 'placement' (i.e. your adopted child living with you) is at the moment?

Very stable - I feel confident that this placement will last into the future

Stable - I usually feel confident that this placement will last into the future
Not very stable - I do not feel very confident that this placement will last into the future
Not at all stable - I do not feel at all confident that this placement will last into the future
I do not wish to answer this question

Comments:

32. Does your adopted child have any other brothers and sisters that do not live with you?

Yes
No
Not sure

33. Does your adopted child have contact with their brothers and/or sisters that do not live with you?

Yes - with all of them
Yes - but only with some of them
No - they do not have contact
Not applicable - my child does not have brothers and/or sisters

34. How do you find managing this contact?

Very easy
Easy
Neither easy nor difficult
Difficult
Very difficult
Not applicable - there is no contact

35. Do you have any suggestions about how contact could be managed better? Or provide examples of where it has worked well? [OPEN ENDED]

36. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about adoption in relation to siblings? [OPEN ENDED]

Questions for adopters who did not adopt siblings

37. Please tell us about your perception of adopting children in a sibling group. How much do you agree with the following:

“Adopting children in a sibling group would have been more challenging than adopting a single child”.

Comments:

38. Please tell us about your reasons for not adopting children in a sibling group:

I was concerned about financial implications of adopting children in a sibling group
I was dissuaded from considering adopting a sibling group by my social worker or the adoption panel (or another similar professional)
I did not feel confident to parent children in a sibling group
I did not feel I had the parenting skills/techniques to adopt children in a sibling group
I did not have the support network e.g. family, friends around me to adopt children in a sibling group
I did not have a good understanding of the specific needs of adopted children in sibling groups

I was concerned about the impact of adopting more than one child on my other children (birth or adopted)

I did not feel I had the professional support e.g. from adoption social workers to adopt a children in a sibling group

Other (please specify)

- Very important to me
- Quite important to me
- Neither not important nor important to me
- Not very important to me
- Not at all important to me
- Not applicable

39. Is there anything that would have made you more likely to consider adopting children in a sibling group?

Yes

No

Not sure

Comments:

40. Does your adopted child have any brothers and sisters?

Yes

No

Not sure

41. Does your adopted child have contact with their brothers and/or sisters?

Yes - with all of them

Yes - but only with some of them

No - they do not have contact

Not applicable - my child does not have brothers and/or sisters

42. How do you find managing this contact?

Very easy

Easy

Neither easy nor difficult

Difficult

Very difficult

Not applicable - there is no contact

43. Do you have any suggestions about how contact could be managed better? Or provide examples of where it has worked well? [OPEN ENDED]

Appendix 2: Survey respondents' demographic details

Table 9: Gender of survey respondents

	n	%
Female	330	90%
Male	35	10%
Other	2	1%
MISSING	53	-
TOTAL	420	100%

Table 10: Ethnicity of survey respondents

	n	%
White British	330	90%
Other white	17	5%
Black or black British	1	0%
Asian or Asian British	4	1%
Mixed (any background)	10	3%
Other	4	1%
Prefer not to say	1	-
MISSING	53	-
TOTAL	420	100%

Table 11: Age range of survey respondents

	n	%
18 – 24	18	5%
25 – 34	82	22%
35 – 44	140	38%
45 – 54	106	29%
55 – 64	19	5%
65	1	0%
Prefer not to say	1	-
MISSING	53	-
TOTAL	420	100%

Table 12: Relationship status of survey respondents

	n	%
Married or CP	273	77%
In a partnership (but not married or CP)	38	11%
Single	37	10%
Other ¹¹	7	2%
Prefer not to say	9	-
MISSING	56	-
TOTAL	420	100%

¹¹ Two respondents were divorced, two were engaged, one was a grandparent, and two left no comment.