

Multidisciplinary approaches to adoption assessment and support processes

By [Adoption England](#)

Adoption England, funded by the [Department for Education](#), launched a **two-year programme to develop multidisciplinary and multiagency approaches to improve adoption assessment and support services**. This initiative aimed to enhance the experiences of adopted children and their families by fostering collaboration between local authorities, Integrated Care Boards, and other key stakeholders.

Adopted children often face complex challenges stemming from early adversity and trauma, including experiences of abuse, neglect, domestic violence, and instability. These factors can result in multifaceted support needs that traditional children's mental health

services, designed around diagnosable conditions, may struggle to meet.

Findings from the [evaluation of Adoption Support Fund \(2022\)](#) highlighted the extent of these needs:

- Mental health and wellbeing challenges among adopted children aged 5 to 15 were significantly greater than those of their peers (measured by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire).
- Clinical or borderline needs were identified in 80% of children aged 1.5–5 years and 90% of those aged 6 to 18 years (measured by the Child Behaviour Checklist).

Addressing these needs requires the expertise of multiple disciplines and services to create a holistic and tailored support framework.

Adoption England has supported the development of seven regional projects designed to create collaborative models for adoption support.

These projects aim to:

- Provide timely specialist assessments and care pathways within the NHS.
- Build partnerships with Virtual Schools to improve adopted children's educational experiences.
- Create regional multiagency models to support larger groups of adopted children and families.
- Address the mental and physical health needs of adopted children through integrated services.
- Share expertise across sectors to better support adoptive families.

Each project explores innovative ways to deliver multidisciplinary and multiagency models, with the goal of creating lasting partnerships between health, education, and adoption services. The programme is being independently evaluated to share learning across the sector.

Regional Projects

North East

A collaboration between Adopt North East, Adoption Tees Valley, Adopt Coast to Coast, and the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board. The project established a multidisciplinary team to support children aged 4–11 with neurodiversity, attachment, or trauma-related behaviours. The focus was on improving education, peer relationships, and home life outcomes.

Adopt South

Partnering with Southampton University, Adopt South created a multidisciplinary service to provide holistic and timely support for families. The initiative included reflective supervision spaces, staff workshops, and a library of resources such as podcasts and films to share knowledge across teams working with pre- and post-order families.

North West

A collaboration between Adoption Counts, Adoption Now, Together for Adoption, Adoption in Merseyside, and Adoption Lancashire & Blackpool. This project developed a regional multiagency model offering assessment, therapeutic CAMHS services, and occupational therapy for children with sensory processing needs. The programme also included educational psychology services for families.

Adoption East Midlands

In partnership with Virtual Schools, Educational Psychology Services, and Nottinghamshire Youth Services, this project created a regional multidisciplinary team to assess and support families with complex needs, those at risk of family breakdown, and young people on the edge of care.

Adoption Partnership South East

This initiative expanded an existing

in-house therapeutic service across the region. By strengthening partnerships between social care, health, and education, the project improved understanding and service delivery for adopted children with complex needs.

One Adoption South Yorkshire

Partnering with the local Integrated Care Board, this project developed support for children affected by foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD), including practical advice for parents and schools. A specialist protocol for assessments and education plans was introduced with the support of educational psychologists.

Adopt Thames Valley

In collaboration with Oxfordshire County Council ATTACH Team and Virtual Schools, this project created a multidisciplinary therapeutic team to support children with complex needs, including educational, psychological, and sensory integration challenges.

The programme is being evaluated by the [The Institute of Public Care \(IPC\) at Oxford Brookes University](#), in partnership with [Cardiff University](#) and the [University of East Anglia](#). The mixed-methods evaluation aims to assess the impact, benefits, and challenges of multidisciplinary approaches.

The evaluation will explore:

- The effectiveness of multidisciplinary models in meeting the needs of adopted children and families.
- The experiences of children and families receiving these services.
- The enablers and barriers to setting up integrated support services.

- The cost-benefit implications for organisations and the broader system of health, education, and family support.

Activities include longitudinal surveys of parents, interviews with staff and stakeholders, and secondary analysis of project data.