

More funding to boost adoption support

Thousands more children in care are set to benefit from stable, loving families following a £45 million boost to adoption services that offer music activities, play therapy and family support sessions.

The new multi-million pound package to pay for an additional year of the government's landmark Adoption Support Fund is announced today by Education Secretary Gavin Williamson – making clear this new Government's continued commitment to get more children out of the care system and into adoption.

The funding will reduce the number of children waiting for a permanent home and strengthen relationships with their adoptive parents, underlining the government's manifesto pledge to prioritise adoption and give vulnerable children in the care system the best opportunity to thrive in adult life.

Since its launch in 2015, the Adoption Support Fund has grown every year and so far almost 50,000 families have benefitted from its services. Its expansion for an additional year follows the publication of data showing there are far more children waiting for a stable, loving home than there are adopters – a trend the Education Secretary has pledged to reverse.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Most of us are lucky enough to be able to spend time with a loving family over Christmas – but not everyone is that fortunate. It is a heartbreaking fact that there are far too many children still waiting for a stable home and the love and support they need.

One of the most generous gifts anyone can give is that of a loving home, which is why I have nothing but admiration for those who foster or adopt a child and help them develop and flourish into happy and successful adults.

We've been working hard to reverse the falling numbers of adoptions but the problem we have is that there are simply not enough foster or adoptive parents. That's why I'm announcing this new package of support for adoptive families and am determined to help find new ones.

Alongside this, more than £1 million will be provided for Regional Adoption Agencies, working with voluntary organisations around the country, to run recruitment campaigns in 2020 aimed at finding adoptive families for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) children. The latest data shows that of the 2,700 children waiting for adoption, almost 40 per cent have waited over 18 months – of these, 24% were from BAME backgrounds. The regional recruitment drives will have a particular focus on finding families for these children, as well as groups that the system has not previously prioritised, including siblings and older children, helping make sure there are enough adopters

around the country and helping reverse the trend in data swiftly.

Many adopted children experience difficult and traumatic experiences before being adopted, which can prevent them from settling into their new home. The Adoption Support Fund will provide cognitive therapy, family support sessions and activities such as play and music to help children recover from earlier traumas, help enhance the attachment they feel to their new families and adjust to their new lives.

Total investment will reach nearly £200 million since 2015. The £45 million available for next year is more than double the original investment of £18 million, underlining the government's determination to support adopters who are changing and transforming lives.

Sue Armstrong-Brown, Chief Executive of Adoption UK:

This is such a welcome vote of support for adoptive families in England. Most adopted children are living with the legacy of traumatic early childhoods, and have very complex needs. The Adoption Support Fund already has a fantastic track record of helping hold families in crisis together. This extra funding boost will allow more families to get the expert therapeutic support they need and deserve.

We're looking forward to working with the new government to support adopters from the day their child arrives home, so that fewer families ever have to reach crisis point.

Andrew Christie, Chair of the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board:

I am delighted that the new Government is going to give adoption more priority. Adoption can transform the lives of vulnerable children giving them new loving homes. The sector-led leadership board will prioritise the recruitment of sufficient adopters for the children waiting and ensure that adopted families get the support they need. The additional Government funding for recruitment and the Adoption Support Fund is really welcome and will make a huge difference to the lives of thousands of families.

Maggie Jones, Chief Executive of the Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies, said:

The additional £45m for adoption support announced today is excellent news. The Adoption Support Fund provides a life line for families at all stages of their adoption journey, supporting children and families to overcome the challenges of difficult early experiences and build a resilient happy future.

This wonderful extra funding will enable Voluntary Adoption Agencies and other adoption support providers to increase the help they provide and reduce the time families have to wait to receive vital support. VAAs are united with the adoptive families in welcoming this evidence of the Government's ongoing commitment to the Adoption Support Fund and to providing the support needed to enable adoptive families to thrive.