

More adopters needed to help brothers and sisters stay together

GROUPS of brothers and sisters face being split up unless more prospective adopters come forward, a leading adoption charity has warned.

The British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) has warned that a general reluctance to adopt groups of brothers and sisters who need to stay together, is meaning that these children may miss out on permanent homes.

The research, released to



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CONCERN AFTER PLACEMENTS WITH FAMILIES SHOW A FALL

mark British Adoption Week, was conducted amongst local authorities and voluntary adoption agencies, and has raised fears that siblings, alongside chil-

dren aged over five, and children with disabilities, may not find a long-term home without an increase in the number of adopters.

Wendy Keidan, director of BAAF Cymru, said: "In the past five years we have seen a 20% increase in the numbers of children looked after in Wales, with more than 80% of children living in foster families.

"Inevitably, a proportion of these children will need to be adopted.

"However there has been significant decrease in the number of potential adopters coming forward for those children who typically wait the longest - including sibling groups, children aged over five, and children with disabilities.

Ms Keidan added that although the numbers of adoption orders had increased in the past year by 10%, actual placements of children with a family have dropped.

She added: "The placement is that all-important day when a child first goes to live with their forever family, and we are concerned that potentially less people are coming forward to adopt.

"There are 75 sibling groups across England and Wales on the Adoption Register who are waiting and need to be adopted together.

"We desperately need prospective adopters to consider taking on brothers and sisters

who need to stay together, or those children may never find a forever family.

"We want to encourage anyone who is thinking about adopting to come forward and make an initial inquiry," she said.

"Adoption is a fantastic way to create, extend or complete a family, as well as changing a child's life forever."

Every adoption agency surveyed by the BAAF reported a shortage of families willing to adopt sibling groups.

Half of all adoption agencies in Wales admitted that it has become harder to find families for sibling groups within the last 10 years.

An agency that seems to be bucking the trend and successfully placing sibling groups with loving families is the St David's Children Society, Wales' longest serving adoption agency.

Approximately 40% of the children they place for adoption each year are part of a sibling group.

Chief executive Gerry Cooney said: "What is critically important for families who adopt sibling groups is the training, preparation and post placement support they receive.

"These families need to know that they are not on their own and that organisations like St David's provide whatever support is required, for as long as it takes.

"These are children who are very loveable and whose only wish is to be part of a loving family."

■ **For more information about National Adoption Week, from October 31 to November 6, visit www.nationaladoptionweek.org.uk**



■ National Adoption Week says every child deserves a family

BROTHERS COMPLETED A FAMILY

WAKE and Julie from Monmouthshire have just celebrated two years of having brothers Harry and Roy as part of their family.

Julie said: "They are both brilliant and doing really well and love going to school. They have lots of friends and love football, and being out and covered in mud!

"They are typical boys really."

Julie said the two boys came to the family with a background of neglect and were aged three and five when they were placed two years ago.

"We knew it would be a

positive thing to do, and we knew there was a massive need for people to adopt older sibling groups.

"We talked long and hard about what we wanted to do. And now we've got such a nice family.

"I'm a great believer in looking at every single case on its own merit and the relationship that the siblings have. If Harry and Roy had been separated then it would have destroyed them both as they have such a strong bond. We had the support of St David's and a lot of information about the boys."

'WE GAVE A HOME TO SIBLINGS'

KARL, 52, from Cardiff, adopted a brother and sister with his wife, three years ago, after unsuccessfully trying IVF treatment.

He said: "We decided to go into the adoption process about 20 months prior to the children moving in with us.

"It wasn't the easiest process, but it wasn't as invasive as many people fear. It's as invasive as it has to be, because they have the children's welfare to protect."

Karl and his wife knew from the beginning that they wanted to take on a sibling group, whereas other parents going through the process at the same time were aiming to adopt just one.

He added: "Both my wife and I come from large families and we'd seen that those with just one child, those children became more insular, spoilt.

"So adopting siblings seemed more appropriate,

and we were capable of taking on two rather than one.

"Maybe other adoptive parents are nervous about taking a double hit."

But the couple experienced, contrary to the BAAF report, that adoption agencies in Wales, could not help them fulfil their dream to adopt two siblings and had to wait for six months before they finally took on the brother and sister.

Now they have a happy seven and eight year old, who are thriving both academically and socially thanks to their dedicated adoptive parents.

"People who adopt children have to really, really want children, it's a real desire," said Karl.

"We probably put a lot more effort into our children because they are adopted, nothing is taken for granted."

■ Names changed to protect identity