

## Part A - General Information

### Organisation

Adoptionplus

### Organisation Type/Structure

Charitable Company (Limited by Guarantee)

### Theme/Nature of Project

Children, Youth Development and Families

### Charity Registration Number (if applicable)

1204419

### Company/CIC Registration Number (if applicable)

06900397

### Project Name (if same as Organisation Name, please leave this blank)

relational health measure - teenagers views

### Name of Lead Contact

Joanne Alper

### Email

[joanne@adoptionplus.co.uk](mailto:joanne@adoptionplus.co.uk)

### How did you find out about the Awards?

Recommended by a Friend/Colleague or Other Person

### Website

<https://www.adoptionplus.co.uk/>

### Social Media Handles (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram etc):

Adoptionplus  
Training with us  
Joanne Alper

## Part B - Project Proposal

### Project Mission: A snapshot of the project's intention (50 words max)

To develop a new validated measure to assess relational health for teenagers with a relational trauma history. Relational health is a key building block to adult mental health. We currently have a measure that obtains parents perspectives, and now believe it's important to create a measure that obtains teenagers perspectives

### Situation (250 words)

We need to improve the emotional health and wellbeing of approx. 15,000 teenagers, abused within their birth families, now living with adoptive families. The current children's mental health system focuses on the individual, not the child's relationship with their new parents. Teenagers are often blamed and shamed for their behaviour, without understanding the impact of past relational trauma, or the need for good relational health, which is essential for children's later mental health and wellbeing. For adopted children this is even more important, due to the impact of past abuse within birth family relationships.

STEP (TAYC-R) parent reported data identified that teenagers' relational health scores deteriorate year on year, with every year they age throughout adolescence. The Adoption UK Barometer parent reported data also backed up this concern, showing that 46% of families with adopted teenagers in the UK were at crisis point.

We need to change the narrative and create a system shift with a greater focus on relational health. We will do this by creating the first validated measure for teenagers with a relational trauma history. What we measure is what we focus on, so providing the system with this new tool, will help in the development of relationship-based therapies for adoptive teenagers and their families.

We have a measure for parents to complete, and if we want to address this problem we now need to develop and validate one for adopted teenagers.

### Complication (250 words)

Not having effective measurement tools stops us finding solutions to improve adopted adolescence relational health with their parents. Adoptionplus have developed STEP (TAYC-R), the first ever validated relational health measure for adoptive parents to complete, and we now need one for adopted teenagers, to understand adolescent relational health from both perspectives.

Solving this needs the leading minds in therapeutic intervention, academic research, working with families and parents, and young people themselves, to all work together. We have that team ready to act.

Leading experts Professor Julie Selwyn and Dr Kim Golding support this proposal and have given their time for free in developing the proposal to this point, as they feel strongly that this new measure has the potential to be hugely beneficial to teenagers who have had the most difficult start in life.

Professor Selwyn believes there's a gap, nationally and internationally, for this, and Dr Golding states: "measuring the quality of the parent-teen relationship is needed to guide interventions and ensure the families get the support they need."

In 2022 we were commissioned by 8 Local Authorities to use STEP (TAYC-R) to help improve their adoption support services. The first STEP data highlighted significant relational health deterioration for adopted teenagers. This data has been shared nationally and sector professionals are asking why and what they can do about it. We now have an opportunity to develop this additional measure for teenagers that helps complete the picture to better understand adolescent relational health and how it can be improved.

### Solution (250 words)

- Co design, with adopted and fostered teenagers, the first ever validated relational health measure to be completed by young people with a relational trauma history.
- We have built a unique and specialist team to deliver this including, internationally respected clinical psychologists and the Rees Centre at Oxford University,
- This tool will be used by clinicians and researchers both nationally and internationally.
- The tool will increase our knowledge and understanding of what therapeutic interventions and approaches are most helpful to improve the relational health of adopted teenagers and their parents.
- This tool will enable a strategic system shift in focus, away from therapy with the individual young person alone, toward more relational focused therapeutic approaches.
- Recent data within the sector has highlighted the need for this tool and experts and adopted teenagers believe it could be incredibly helpful.
- Adoptionplus has already successfully developed a relational health measuring tool STEP (TAYC-R) for adopted parents to complete. There is much interest in this data and as a result we have been invited to share the data with some Directors of Social Services, managers in the Department of Education, civil servants within the Scottish government, the Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the Executive Heads from all the Regional Adoption Agencies in England. Following our second data collection point this autumn, we plan to publish our findings with the Rees Centre at Oxford University.

## Part C - Wider Support

### How would the Stephen Lloyd Award network of partners' support be beneficial to your project? (250 words max)

- We are very keen to work with a number of Partners and benefit from their skills and knowledge to help us utilise this opportunity to benefit as many young people and their families as possible, both in the UK and further afield.
- Our proposal could benefit from Partners with scaling technology experience, like Price Waterhouse Cooper. Alongside scaling, both in the UK and internationally, we also have data protection needs. As the information we are collecting is of a sensitive nature, support with data systems security and testing would also be very important for us
- Additionally, GAS studio have communication designers that could assist in ensuring the design of the digital interface of the teenagers measure is as engaging for young people as possible.
- Bates Wells and other Partners with legal experience would be very helpful in ensuring we have all the established licencing and agreements in place.
- Once the measure is validated, as well as making it available to therapists, local authorities, NHS and universities, we also plan to embed it into our STEP web based app. In order to do this we will require additional funding, so would really benefit from working with Partners with expertise in the social investment sector, like Can Invest and John Kingston

## Part D - Financial Justification

### How do you propose to spend the winning funds of £25,000 (50 words max). Please provide a general idea.

- co-design relational health questions with adopted teenagers
- work with consultant clinical psychologists to develop the questions and create a scoring system
- digitalise these questions
- share these questions with 400 young people for them to complete the measure
- work with Oxford university to use this data to validate the measure
- longer term we plan to embed this measure into STEP web based app

## Part E - Supporting Information

**Governing Documents: Where relevant, please upload any recent charity accounts and governing documents as attachments.**

- [Accounts-with-cover-sheet.pdf](#)

**Team: We would like to learn a little more about the individual or team invested into the project. What are your individual credentials? Is there a story behind how you or your team all came together to support the project? (75 words max)**

- Having worked together on the validation of TAYC-R/STEP, we saw the need for this teenager's relational health measure.
- Joanne Alper – Founding Director of Adoptionplus, author 9 books, NICE Special advisor on Attachment
- Dr Kim Golding – Leading International Expert; Consultant Clinical Psychologist, author 15 books
- Professor Julie Selwyn – Leading UK Social Work Professor. Professor of Education and Adoption leading the Hadley programme of research within the Rees Centre Oxford University
- Hertfordshire adopted teenagers

### YouTube Video

video being emailed by WeTransfer

**Additional References: You are welcome to provide a list of up to 5 links with any relevant supporting material or visuals, as further reference**

I will email an information flyer that we previously circulated to Local Authorities and Regional Adoption Agencies about STEP, to help the panel have more information about the successful and ground breaking measuring tool we have already designed and produced.