

## WAF 2019 MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS

The survey was originally conducted between 17<sup>th</sup> July – 24<sup>th</sup> August 2019. An email link to the survey was distributed via WAF group administrators and the survey was created with Google Forms. Throughout Sept-Nov 2019, Hackney & Islington and Richmond sent the survey link to their groups having missed the initial notifications about the survey. The results below include these responses.

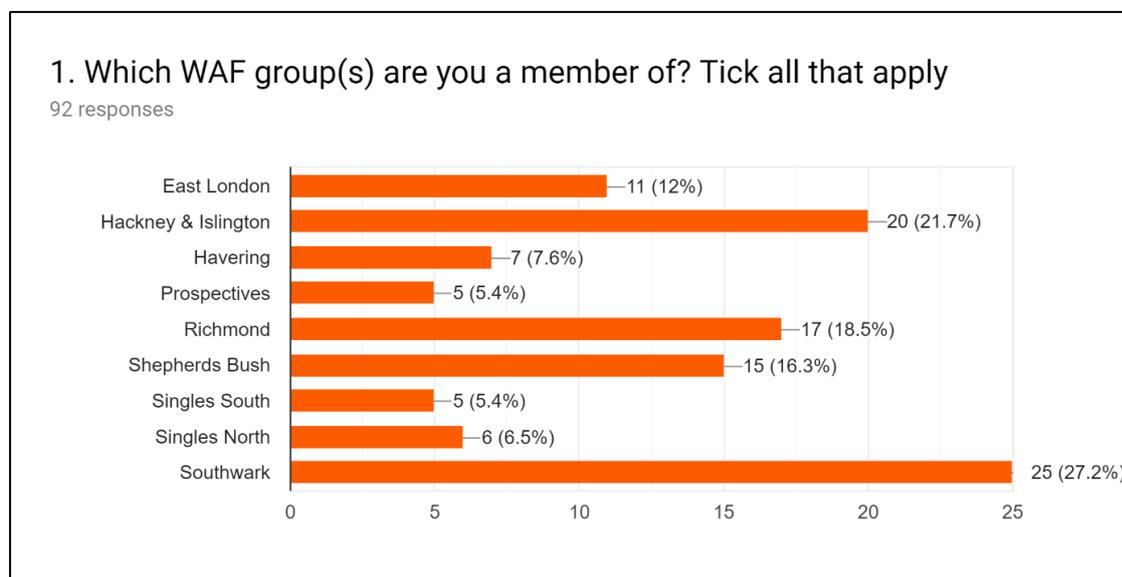
### 1) Headlines

- The response rate was 18.5% (see section 2: Response Rate))
- The survey successfully gathered qualitative and quantitative data from members with regards to their experience of WAF.
- The experience of WAF is overwhelming positive, with parents feeling they would be worse off without it. Meeting those with shared experience is the benefit most parents feel they have through WAF, along with making supportive friendships.
- There is evidence to suggest more work needs to be done to improve referral pathways to WAF as just 42% of adopters are coming through social workers.
- Responses support the general trends in attendance, with parent support groups and playgroups the most popular.
- Encouragingly 96% of respondents would, or already have, referred a friend to WAF.
- The data on service development is interesting but doesn't show an appetite for particularly new ideas, just for more of the same, or services we already know are in demand, such as child psychologists at playgroups.
- The survey gives a good indication of the extent to which members would be willing to be involved with fundraising efforts, and through which channels.

### 2) Response Rate

- The survey link was sent via the group Gmail mailing lists which contained a lot of historic data and as we were unable to tell who was still active, we have used the re-registered members number from the new database to determine the population size as this is more reliable.
- With a membership figure of 497 (as at Dec 2019), 92 responses equate to an 18.5% response rate.
- The respondent numbers from each group (figure 1) roughly reflect the relative size of each group within WAF so the survey can be interpreted as a fair sample from within WAF membership.

Figure 1



### 3) Survey Results and Analysis

#### Section 1: Being a part of WAF

Interestingly, only 42% of respondents (figure 2a-c) were referred to WAF through a social worker, which is evidence that there is work to be done to improve referral pathways and ensure that all parents are informed about WAF at the earliest stage in their adoption journey. It is encouraging to see that word of mouth, through other adopters, is the second largest referral source and reflects how positive WAF members are about the service and community. The website is the third biggest referrer of members.

Figure 2a

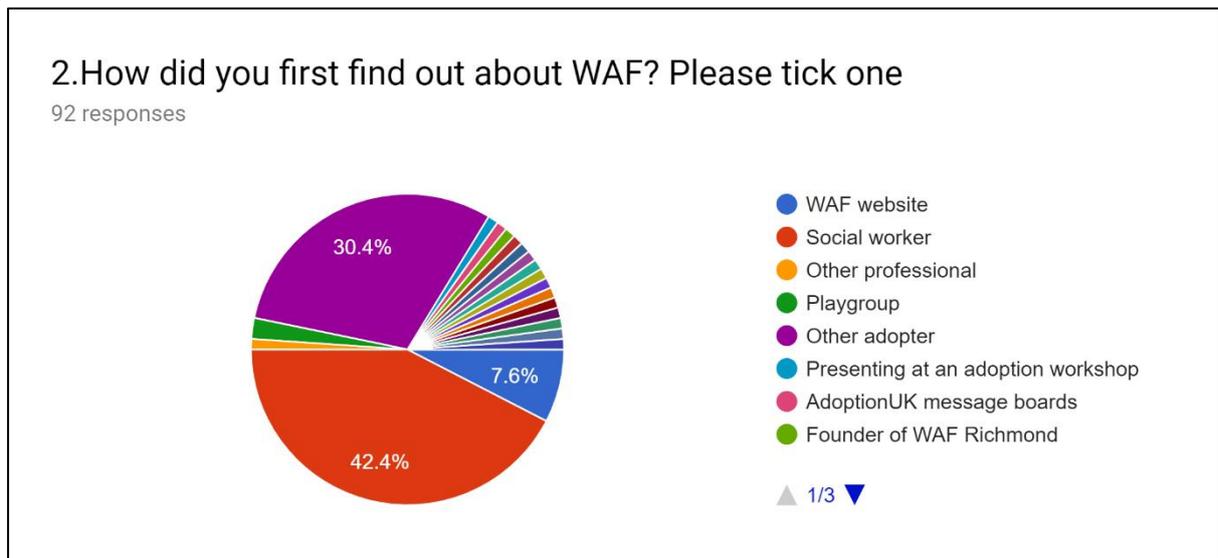


Figure 2b

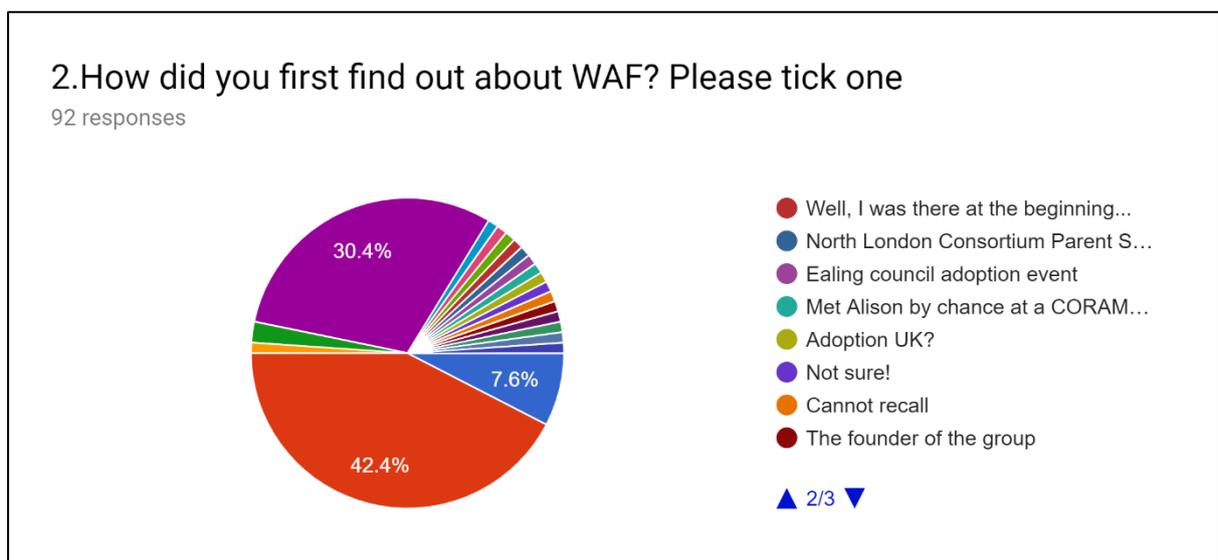
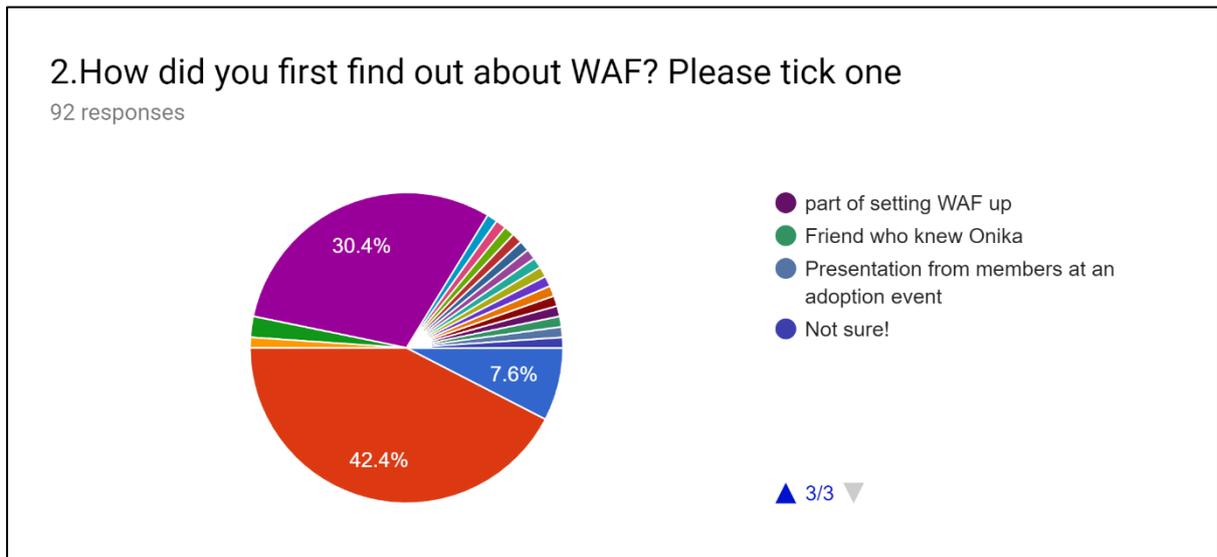
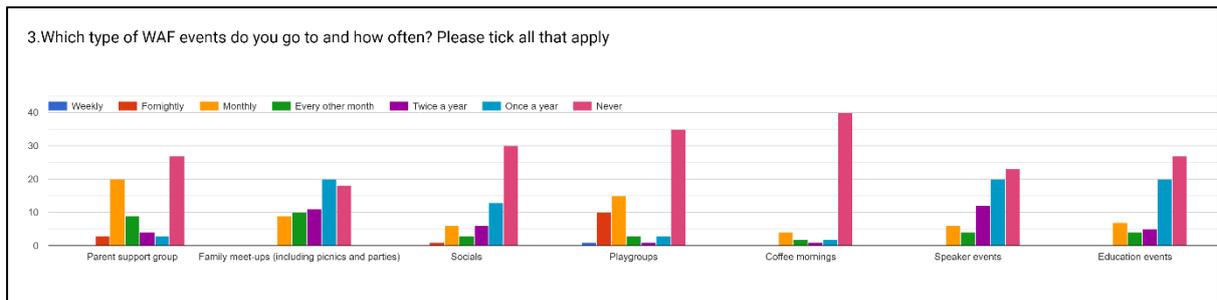


Figure 2c



Question 3 (figure 3) asked members to report which WAF events they go to and how often. Figure 3 shows that among the survey respondents, playgroups (28 members attending at least every other month) and parent support groups (32 members attending at least every other month) are the most regularly attended services.

Figure 3



## Section 2: What difference WAF has made to you...

Question 4 asked about the benefits members feel they have received through membership of WAF. From the offered options, 74% of respondents felt they could talk to people who understand the challenges of adoptive parenting and 63% said they had made supportive friendships. There many responses to this question in the 'Other' box, which are shown below in figure 5.

Figure 4

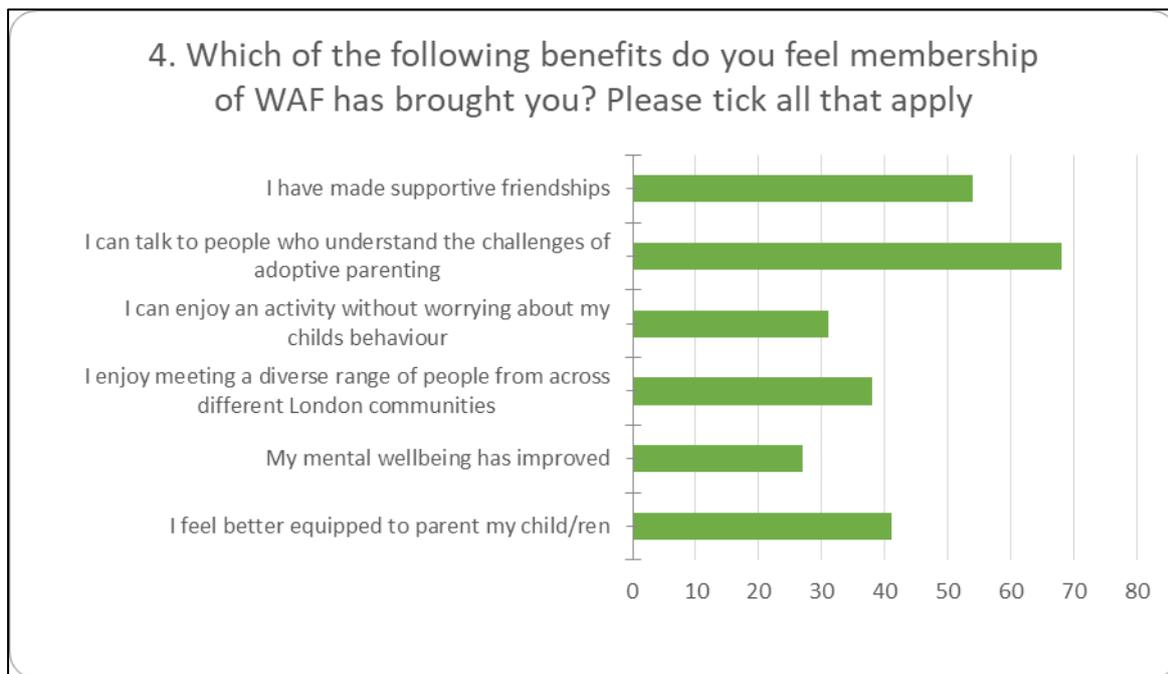


Figure 5

### 'Other' answers to '4. Which of the following benefits do you feel membership of WAF has brought you? Please tick all that apply'

- 1 Education on adoption
- 2 Access to information events and speakers
- 3 Knowing there is support even if not used it
- 4 Have not been able to attend any meetings but I do read all The blogs that have been posted and this has helped me a lot.
- 5 I am so busy I never get time to attend events, however I like knowing WAF is there.
- 6 I love the normalisation of adoption in WAF
- 7 My child gets to make friends with other adoptees
- 8 I have not yet made it to WAF events - we've only had our daughter for 3 months and inevitably dates have clashed which is a shame. But i find the blogs, the emails really informative and am so delighted WAF exists for us.
- 9 It's really educational hearing how other people deal with their children when challenged
- 10 Reassurance
- 11 I have found useful information via the regular emails.
- 12 I used to attend before my son went to school and had time to travel but there is no WAF near me now
- 13 My children made really strong connections to other children and their parents which boosted confidence and is a beautiful thing.
- 14 The information sent through was helpful
- 15 I use the resources and enjoy the newsletters - I am rarely free to attend but I like the idea the group is there if I am!
- 16 The blogs are great

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 17 | Benefit from other's experience   |
| 18 | Nothing yet as we're waiting to be matched and we haven't attended any events                 |
| 19 | Meeting other single adopters in a similar situation.   |
| 20 | None  |
| 21 | Used to attend the Enfield group- it was good to find other local adoptive families           |
| 22 | Enjoy reading the articles  |
| 23 | I feel less alone/isolated with the challenges of my everyday life                            |
| 24 | The information supplied is great.  |
| 25 | I want to come to events in Shepherds Bush now that I'm more settled with my adopted daughter |

Question 5 asked 'what difference has being a member of WAF made to your life?'. The majority of the 80 responses were overwhelmingly positive. Some of the responses were:

*"I have made friends who understand the difficulties of early placement. These friendships have helped me through difficult times"*

*"I've grown in confidence, as a parent and as an adoption/education advocate. Also through WAF links we've managed to get real change and training going at our school"*

*"Oh.. erm... where to start...? It's given me deep and lasting friendship, a sense of belonging, a place to go. All of the above and more. I don't know where I would be without it"*

*"massive relief and feeling of support to find adoptive parents facing similar issues, sharing ideas/tips and not telling me "all children do that"*

*"I felt very alone dealing with the challenges of adopting children that experienced so much trauma, meeting experienced adopters gave me more confidence and helped me feel I was not a rubbish parent. The support provided by other adopters was inspiring"*

*"A big difference. No other group has helped me as much as this one. Our social worker is not about any more so it's a life line"*

*"I have made brilliant friends who have been on a similar journey, and who I can talk with about specific challenges of adoptive parenting. I have gained excellent insights from the child psychologist that wouldn't have been accessible to me any other way"*

*"Knowing there is an organisation in the background that understands: the blogs keep me going at times!"*

*"Still waiting for a match but feels good to have a sense of connection to WAF already and definitely planning to make use of meet-ups, playgroup and socials"*

Some referred to a positive impact but difficulty in attending activities and events:

*"I have not attended any WAF events although I will try to come to the socials if possible. I enjoy the blogs and information about education sessions. I like knowing that it is there if things feel like they are not going well. I did meet a few other parents with pre-schoolers but then our children all started school..."*

*"I keep in touch via email and it is useful"*

*"Informational. It is hard to get to the events however as a single adopter without a large network of support"*

*"...I can't attend evening events very often because I'm single, disabled, on benefits and I can't afford a babysitter! I can only rarely attend events at the weekend as, for some very bizarre reason, they always seem to be scheduled at busy times eg half-term, Valentines Day, St Patrick's Day etc"*

A few respondents did not feel it had made a difference or had more negative experiences:

*"I have found them to be very uncomfortable and not geared to those with very young children. Also the organisers are quite passive aggressive asking me to volunteer on my first meeting while trying to run after a crawling one year old who wanted toys the organisers refused to put out"*

*"none"*

*"Not a great amount"*

Question 6 asked "What, if anything, do you think would be different for you/your family if WAF did not exist?". The 71 respondents to this question were again overwhelmingly of the opinion that they would be worse off without WAF:

*"I would have much less confidence in my own parenting abilities".*

*"Would feel isolated within our area"*

*"I would feel much much more lonely. And that is not a good thing"*

*"I'd be more stressed, less well informed re: parenting children with trauma and would feel more isolated"*

*"there is nothing to compare with WAF. Apart from conversations with other adopters you know. but individually, this doesn't offer the same depth of shared experience & advice"*

*"I was lucky that I found WAF early into our placement, my husband & I were struggling a great deal with the challenges with no family or support close by and being part of WAF changed that. I don't believe we would have the relationship with our children that we have now if it were not for the help, support and understanding that other WAF members gave to me"*

*"Isolation, not knowing what steps to take (our social services lurch from admin/resource crisis to crisis so tough to get direction / support there) reassurance signposting"*

*"We would have been so isolated and unsupported, dread to think of what might've happened"*

*"My support network know a lot about raising children and want to help but they don't truly understand the worries we have had and the potential issues we will face. We would keep things to ourselves and potentially increase our stress levels"*

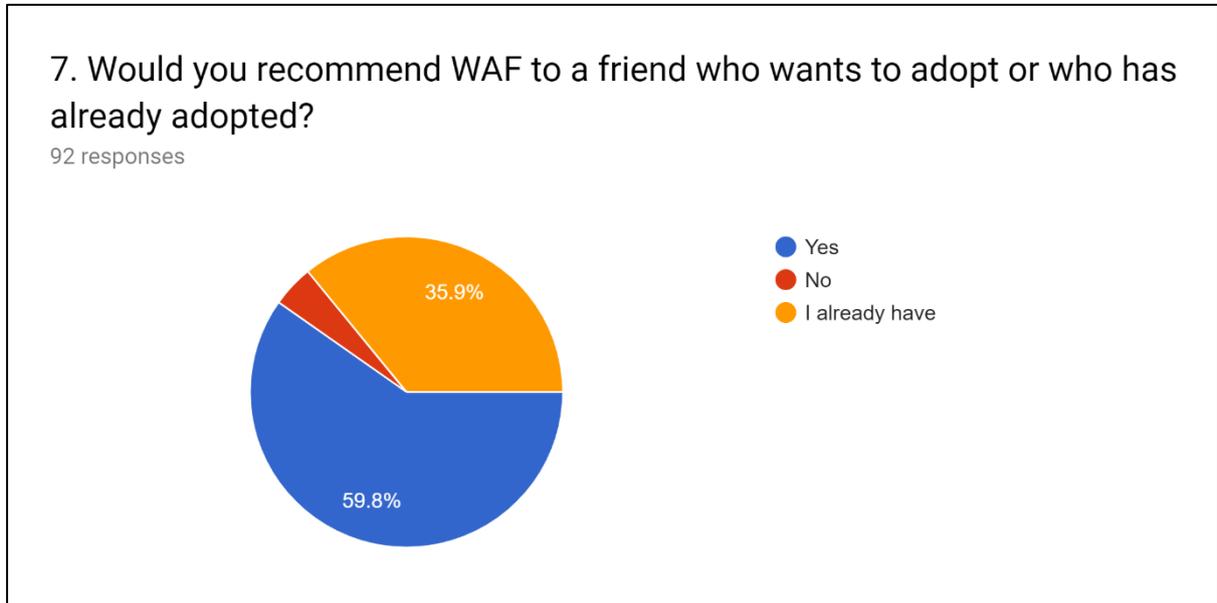
*"As the co-ordinator of a WAF playgroup, I find it hugely rewarding running the group, ensuring it meets regularly so adopters and their children have a supportive welcoming environment where they can meet up, relax and support each other. I am retired a professional and adoptive parent of 2 teenagers who*

*are now at college, I feel it's vital to do what I can to serve the community and I have the time to do so"*

Just 5 of the respondents felt there would be little, or no difference is WAF did not exist.

The response to question 7 (figure 6) shows that people either already have, or would, recommend WAF to another adopter or prospective adopter (96%).

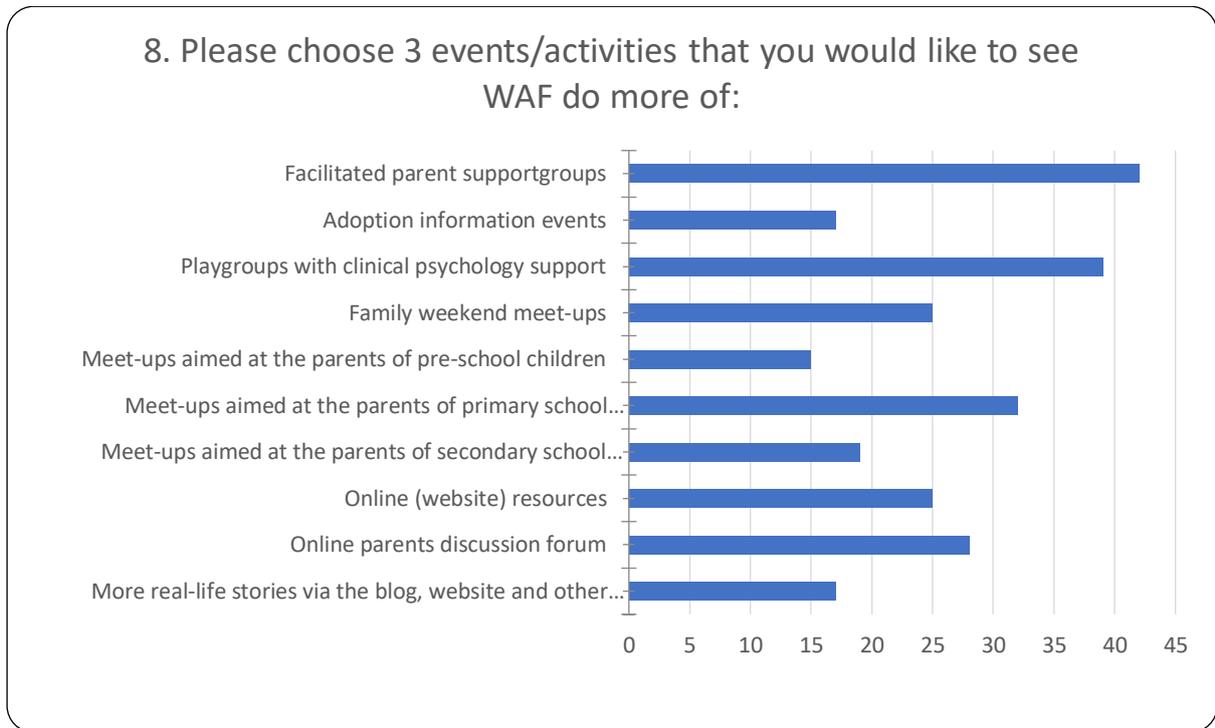
Figure 6



### Section 3: Developing WAF...

Question 8 asked respondents to choose 3 events/activities that they would like to see WAF do more of, from a selection of 10 ideas.

Figure 7



The 4 most popular areas for future service development were:

*Facilitated parent support groups (46%)*

*Playgroups with clinical psychology support (42%)*

*Meet-ups aimed at the parents of primary school children (32%)*

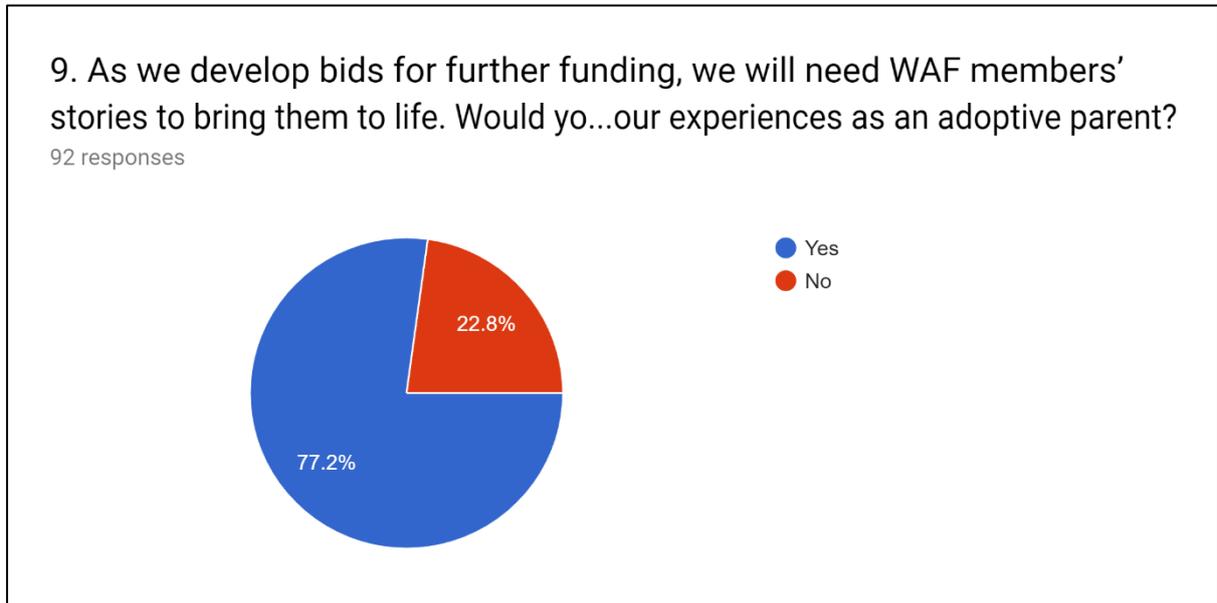
*Online parents' discussion forum (30%)*

Interestingly the recent WAF experience has been that in some areas, demand for facilitated groups seems to be dropping. Meet ups for parents with primary school age children are what most WAF events are anyway. We already know about the demand for child psychologist attended groups.

## Section 4: Fundraising

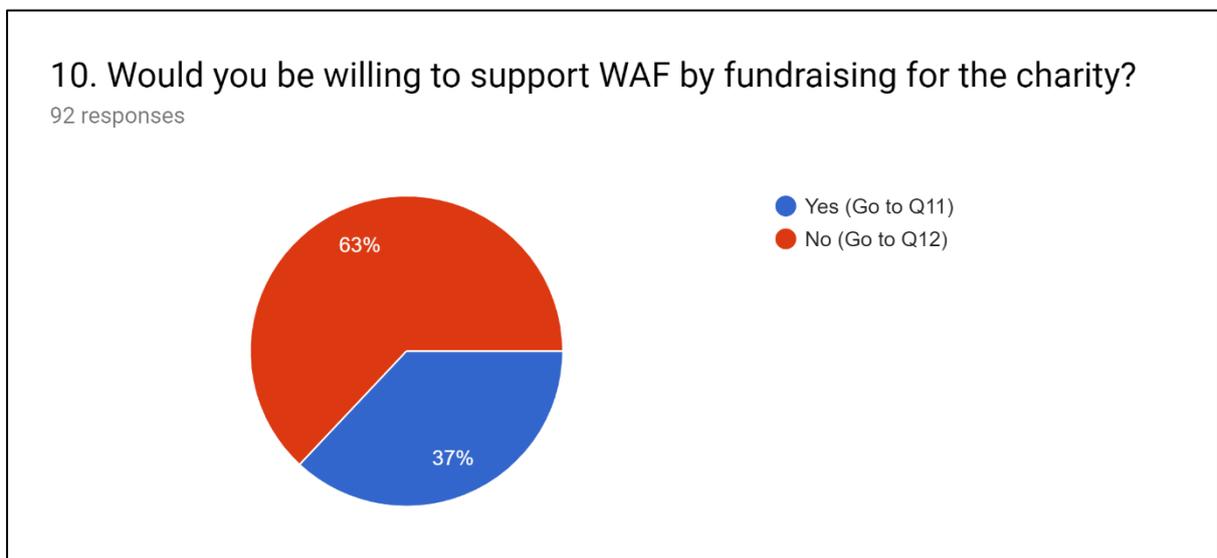
This section of the survey aimed to discover the appetite for fundraising for WAF amongst the members and what they might be willing to get involved with. Figure 8 shows that 77% of respondents would be willing to share their experiences of adoption in more detail to assist in the development of fundraising bids.

Figure 8



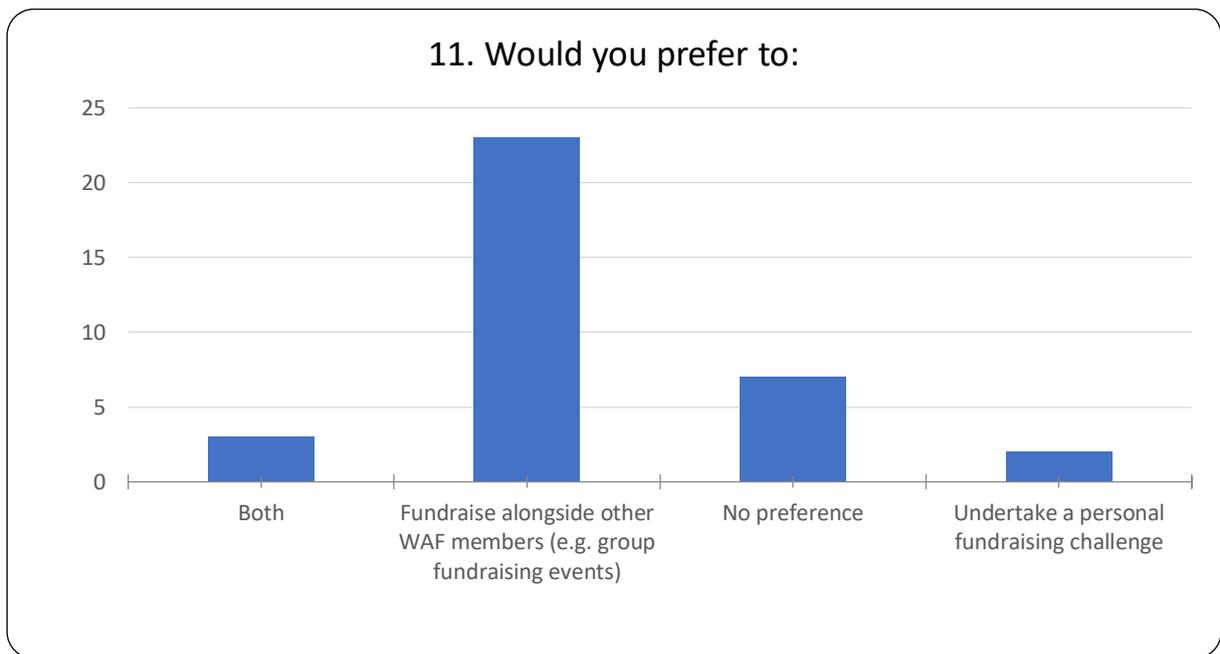
37% of respondents stated that they would be happy to support WAF through fundraising activity (figure 9)

Figure 9



Of those who said they would support WAF with fundraising activities, figure 10 shows the majority would prefer to fundraise alongside other members.

Figure 10



5 respondents said their employers offer match funding schemes for charities (figure 11) and 11 said their employers have charity partnerships or fundraising schemes (figure 12) which is likely to be worth exploring.

Figure 11

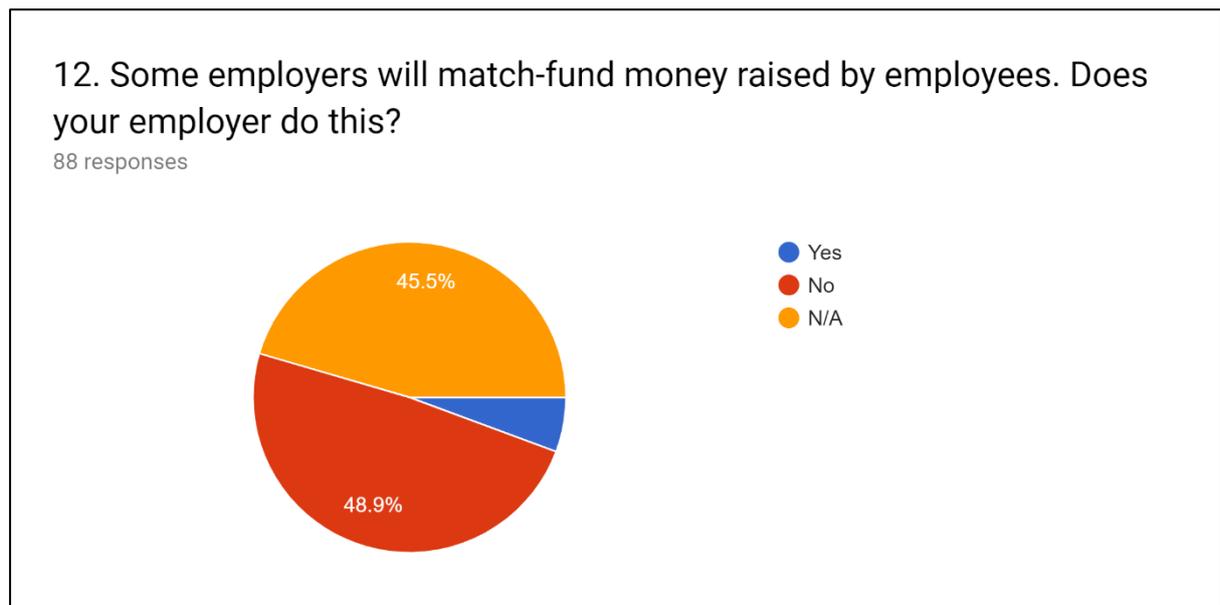
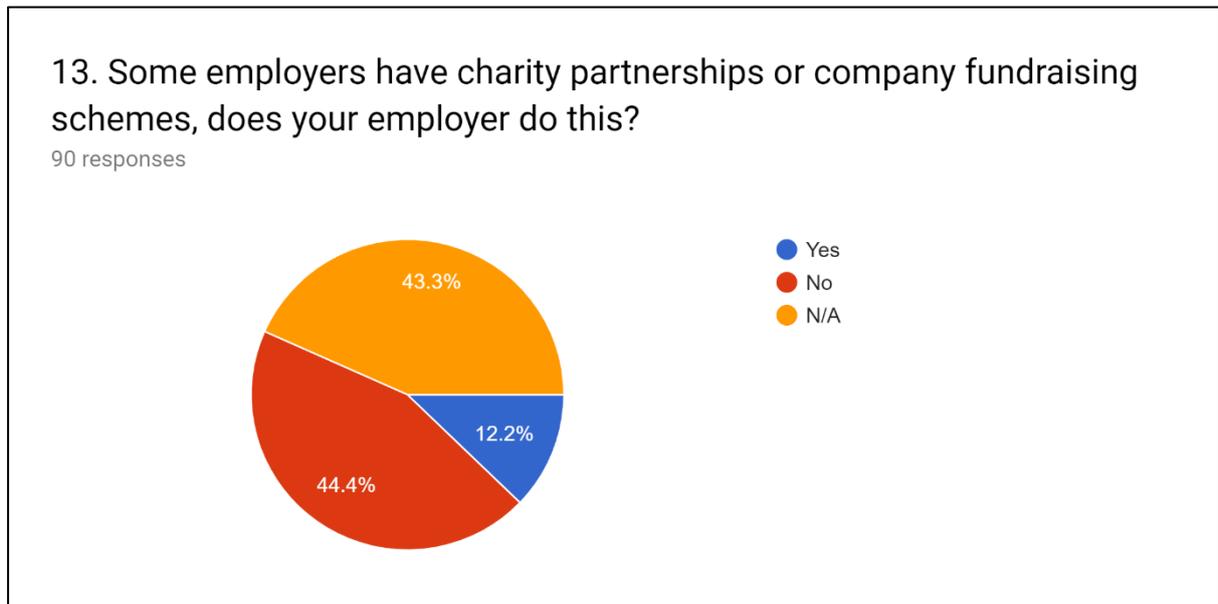
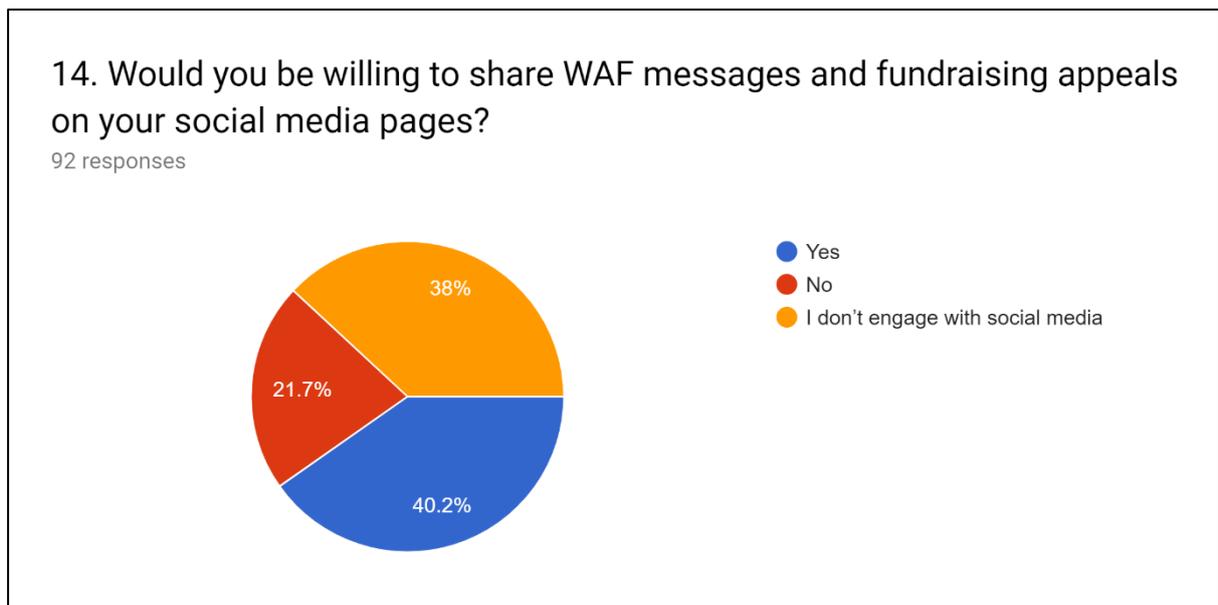


Figure 12



37 respondents would be happy to share WAF fundraising appeals on social media (figure 13).

Figure 13



## Section 5: Any other comments

Question 15 asked members if they had anything they would like to add. Responses included the following:

“Would love to help and attend more but my children are still very young but feel very supported and champion the parents who run WAF and would help in any way for fund raising to help all the families”

“Let's be careful not to bite off more than we can chew! And be careful to properly support the group heads - think about what takes pressure and workload off them. I worry that development of procedures etc sometimes just leads to more demands on time to read things, or a feeling of pressure/expectation to be doing it 'right' and 'properly'. I think as we get paid staff then group heads need to kept up to speed regularly with what they're doing, how they're supporting the volunteers as I suspect there's a slight danger of volunteers starting to feel pissed off about all the work they do for free if someone somewhere else is getting paid for stuff.....”

“I've mostly stopped using WAF services as I'm struggling to access them. I went to Islington parent group but as my daughter's needs increased it became harder to get to that, especially as I didn't live that close and I was constantly tired in the evenings. I went to the playgroup but my daughter struggled with the noise in the venue so we stopped going to that. I have been to some of the socials, but every time it was a different group of people and I found it hard to keep up connections and the constant meeting of new people who I may never see again just started to feel a burden. The only WAF group I'm in touch with now is in Essex (the Havering group??) who have a Whats App chat, which they invited me to join. That has made me feel far more connected than the other groups, especially as getting out the house can be such a huge challenge. They seem to meet quite frequently - and a lot of that stuff feels like it would be quite accessible to my daughter because it's outdoors - but unfortunately they are too far away for me as I don't have a car. So I'm a supporter of WAF in principal but nothing you are currently doing quite works for me. I live in Walthamstow which is in-between but not that close to any group. We seem to be in a black hole for adoption support groups for some reason”

“I think the service is very valuable. It's good to see it grow. It would be nice to do some kind of PR to normalise adoptive families”

“I'd be willing to make ad hoc donations to WAF - perhaps voluntary annual donation ? Could this be something all members asked annually and a page on website to donate (link that could be shared)”

“I don't really understand why you are going this route, or what the demand for it is. It seems to bring about a lot of admin and rules. Being able to meet and socialise with local adopters / prospective adopters and being volunteer led was really sufficient! I don't see the need for facilitated groups either, just chatting over a pint or glass of wine in the pub is enough. Sorry...”

“I currently do help with WAF organising behind the scenes but am limited with practical support/assistance that I can provide due to living far away from the main events in Peckham area (for Southwark group) and having limited childcare options as a single mother for evening events. We could do with more local events - we're in Bexley borough. Thanks.”

“Only that the more engaging the activities for children are, the more purposeful the meet ups are for parents. If there are scant resources/activities, you spend the whole time entertaining your children”

“Would be willing to pay an optional membership fee. Willing to help with group, parent support events, social meet ups. Particular interest in educational issues”

“Need more groups in London. Travelling puts people off!”

“Some events feel a bit clique/closed and I didn't feel welcome as a new person. This should change if becoming more professional and not just a group of friends”

“I do not really understand why WAF needs to spend time and money on fundraising. I appreciate that some things cost money e.g. the website and database - but this charity is about supporting adoptive families through connection and activities which cost little to nothing and is run largely by volunteers. I am not sure how more money would help this charity to do the things it already does well”

“I am interested in fundraising as I have some experience in this area”