



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY JOINT SUB COMMISSION 27 APRIL 2005

Report of the Director of Social Services

Adoption Agency Report

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the Adoption Agency continues to provide Agency Reports from period 1 April to 31 March and reviews the Statement of Purpose as required in the Adoption Minimum Standards.
- 1.2 A monthly highlights report is produced to track key indicators of performance.
- 1.3 The agency continues to develop adoption support services in line with the National Adoption Standards.
- 1.4 To note the work and developments of the Adoption Agency as outlined in this report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 **Background**
This report informs the Corporate Parenting Joint Overview & Scrutiny sub-commission, acting as the Social Services Committee, of the activity of the Derby City Adoption Agency. A report is required annually and this document covers the period from 1 April 2004 to 31 March 2005. It is the expectation of guidance from the Department for Education and Skills that the report will be placed before Members.
- 2.2 The Adoption Act 1976, the Adoption Agency Regulations (1983) and the Adoption and Children Act 2002 placed duties and responsibilities on Local Authorities to provide, or arrange to provide an Adoption Service.
- 2.3 Derby City Adoption Agency has continued to develop services to meet the needs of children for whom adoption is in their best interest. The Agency also continues to provide services to meet the needs of adults including adoptive parents, birth families and adopted adults.
- 2.4 The Adoption Panel met a total of 12 times between 1 April 2004 and 31 March 2005. There have been a number of changes to the Panel since the last report. The Adoption Agency Regulations also impose a 3-year tenure per term. Panel members can service two consecutive terms. There has been an extension of 2 years for existing panel members. The Guidance and Regulations for Arranging Adoption Panels and Assessing Adopters proposes two consecutive terms of five years.

2.5 The Panel Membership is as follows:

Sue Richards	Derby Social Services	Chair of Panel
Sue Rhead	Psychology Department, Derbyshire Children's Hospital	Vice Chair
Dr Jasmin Alykhan	South Derbyshire Community Health Service Trust	Medical Advisor
Clr Roy Webb	Derby Councillor	Councillor
Clr Robin Turner	Derby Councillor	Councillor
Sheila Moss	Derby Social Services	Social Worker
Steve Crean	Derby Social Services	Social Worker
Jacqui Dakin		Lay Member
Steve Garside	Derby Social Services	Service Manager

In addition, Anna Pollard and Hannah Hogg from the Derby Social Services Legal Department act as legal advisors. Mohamed Jakhara, Project Manager, Policy and Planning, acts as the panel advisor. These are non-voting members.

The Agency Decision Maker is Sarah Davies, Assistant Director Planning and Quality, Derby Social Services.

2.6 Placements made April 2004 to March 2005

30 Children have been placed for adoption. Last year 41 placements were made.

Gender

Male: 11
Female: 19

Age:

- 8 under 2 years
- 4 aged 2 years
- 5 aged 3 years
- 4 aged 4 years
- 2 aged 5 years
- 2 aged 6 years
- 2 aged 7 years
- 1 aged 8 years
- 2 aged 9 years

Heritage

- 2 Dual heritage
- 28 White British

Special needs 0

Waiting Times for Children Placed

Under 6 months	7
6 – 12 months	10
1 – 2 years	13
over 2 years	0

Types of placement

Local authorities	4
LA's in consortium	4
Voluntary Agencies	13
Derby City Adopters	9

2.7 Children Waiting Placement

- There are currently 35 children waiting for adoptive placements.
- The significant drop in numbers of children waiting is due to 2 audits of looked after children which decided that adoption was no longer a realistic plan for the children. The children now waiting placement are all being actively promoted as needing adoptive families.
- Of the 35 children:
 - 16 are male
 - 19 are female

This breaks down into:

5 sibling groups of 2 children
2 sibling groups of 3 children
19 singletons
Special needs – 7 children
Dual heritage – 8
White/British – 27

Children where there has been a change of Care Plan

29 children had a change of Care Plan following the audits in November 2004 and March 2005.

23 children now have Care Plans of long term fostering. Many are remaining with their current foster carers.

6 children have or are to return home.

Time Waiting

0-6 months	11
6-12 months	8
1-2 years	9
Over 2 years	7

2.8 Adoption Orders Made: 21

2.9 Sources of Adopters with whom orders made

5 from voluntary agencies
8 from other Local Authorities
2 from L.A. in the Consortium
7 were approved by Derby

2.10 Approval of Adopters

Panel has considered 18 applications from families wishing to be approved as adopters. 18 have been approved.

2.11 Data from comparator authorities is provided in Appendix 3

2.12 Developments

- The Adoption Service was inspected in March 2004. The report has been received and was positive.
- The Statement of Purpose has been approved previously but the Adoption Minimum Standards require that it is reviewed, updated and modified at least annually. See Appendix 2.
- The Adoption Support Service is now operating. It is staffed by a Service Manager and a social worker. Regular newsletters are being sent to all adopters approved by Derby. The Adopters Support Group has started. A help-line for adopters started in April 2004.
- The Adoption and Children Act is now being implemented. Derby is meeting the minimum requirements for adoption support.
- The Letterbox system is robust and birth relatives now have the opportunity to get advice and support in writing appropriate letters.
- The Service is not fully meeting the targets for LPSA
- Significant staff vacancies during the year in the Children's Teams and the adoption support affected teams have performance in recruiting adopters and progressing children's plans for adoption.
- A new Head of Service for Fostering and Adoption came into post in June 2004. A new Service Manager Adoption was appointed in December 2004.
- Regular LAC audits are now informing the prioritisation of adoption applicants and attempting to match need to resource development.
- Regular match planning meetings have been introduced to monitor and co-ordinate adoption links.

- Developments in the East Midlands Adoption Consortium have led to the co-ordinator post being placed in Derby City Council.

**For more information
contact:**

Keith Woodthorpe 01332 256704 e-mail keith.woodthorpe@derby.gov.uk
None

Background papers:

Appendix 1: Implications

List of appendices:

Appendix 2: Statement of Purpose

Appendix 3: Comparator Information

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

- 1.1 Adoption support financial arrangements are currently being reviewed and a new policy and practice document drafted in light of the Adoption Support regulations.

Interagency fees are paid when children are placed with adopters from other local authorities and voluntary agencies.

Legal

- 2.1 The function of the Adoption Agency is regulated by the Adoption Act 1976, the Adoption and Children Act 2002; the Adoption Agency Regulations (1983) and the Adoption Support Regulations 2005.

The New Adoption and Children Act is being phased in. The full Act will be implemented by the end of 2005.

Personnel

- 3.1 The Adoption Team now consists of a full time Service Manager, 4.5 Social Workers who carry out the full range of adoption activities, 1.5 Social workers for assessments, an Adoption Support Service Manager and 2 Adoption Support Workers.

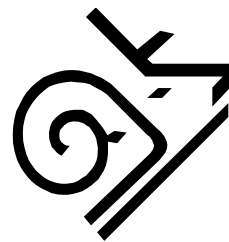
Equalities Impact

- 4.1 The Agency continues to give due consideration to race, gender, culture, religious and disability issues in relation to children being placed for adoption and adults who apply to become adopters.

The Adoption Panel must reflect in its membership, a gender balance as well as racial and cultural diversity.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

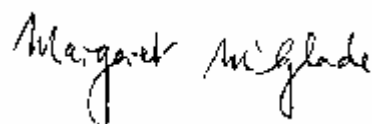
- 5.1 This furthers the Council's Objectives of **healthy, safe and independent communities** and supports the priorities of **modernising social care**.



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

Derby City Council Adoption Agency Policy: Statement of Purpose

Derby City Council Adoption Agency places children and their needs at the centre of its activity. The welfare and safety of children is of paramount concern when making decisions.



Director Social Services

Statement of Purpose

Aims and Objectives

Derby City Council is a Statutory Adoption Agency.

The Agency provides a comprehensive range of adoption services to meet the needs of children, birth families, adopters, adopted adults and the courts. The functions of the Agency include:

- Agency Adoption
- Inter-country Adoption
- Non Agency Adoption, including stepparent adoptions
- Section 51 Birth Records Counselling
- Adoption Support
- Family finding for children

Similar values and quality standards are applied to all the functions of the Agency.

The Agency maintains an adoption panel that operates within Adoption Agency Regulations in order to meet the Agency's obligations to children and adopters.

We actively seek to work in partnership with other relevant agencies including Health, Education and other statutory and voluntary adoption agencies.

The Agency works in line with the values of the National Adoption Standards and relevant pieces legislation. Where timescales are not met the Agency will ensure that any delay is minimised and that reasons for any delay are recorded accurately.

The Agency tracks the progress of every child looked after where adoption is the plan for permanence until the child is adopted or placed in some other form of permanent care.

Children, birth parents, adopters and adopted adults will be informed of their right to make complaints or representations if they feel they have been unfairly treated. Those wishing to complain will be informed of the Derby City Council Complaints Procedure.

The Agency will produce regular agency reports and inform the Council's elected members in their role of corporate parents; of the management and outcomes of the service.

If at any stage of any process any child protection issues arise the Agency will follow its child protection procedures and ensure the safety of the child.

The Adoption Agency is currently based at:

Derby Social Services
Perth Street
Chaddesden
Derby
DE21 6XX

Telephone: 01332 717787
Fax: 01332 717747

The Head of Service is Katie Harris
Telephone: 01332 717702

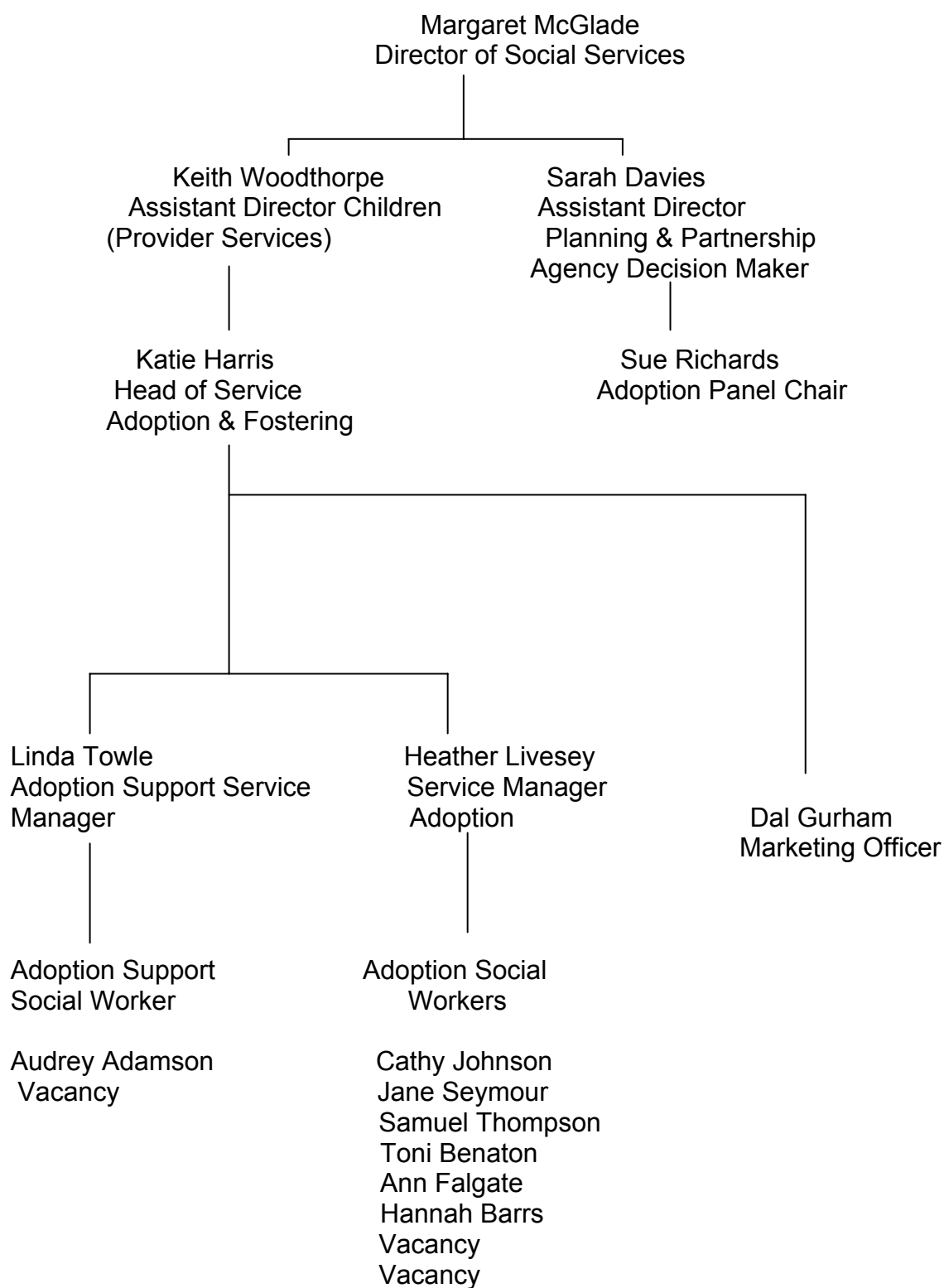
The Adoption Service consists of an Adoption Service Manager and 6 Social Workers;
Adoption Support Manager and 2 Social Workers.

Name	Role	Qualifications	Experience	Work
Katie Harris	Head of Service	LLB MA in Social Work. Diploma in Management Studies	Katie has been Managing the Fostering and Adoption service since June 2004	Full time
Linda Towle	Adoption Support Service Manager	CQSW. B.A.Hons Social Administration M.A Social Work	Linda has worked in fostering and adoption for 12 years, 7 of which she has specialised in adoption work.	Full time
Audrey Adamson	Social Worker Adoption Support	CQSW	Audrey has worked with children and families since 1981. She has experience of working with families where adoption has been the plan. Audrey Joined the team in August 2003	Full time
Vacancy				
Heather Livesey	Service Manager	NNEB Diploma in Multi-disciplinary Approaches to Families and Young Children CQSW	Heatherhas worked in the field of fostering and adoption since 1992. He has managed the team since December 2004.	Full time
Cathy Johnson	Social Worker	CQSW MA Social Work	Cathy worked for 7 years with “looked after children”. For 18 months she worked a specialist	22.5 hours

APPENDIX 2

Name	Role	Qualifications	Experience	Work
			worker with women experiencing postnatal depression. Has worked in the fostering and adoption area since '97.	
Hannah Barrs	Social Worker Assessment	BSc * (Hons) Psychology MA/Diploma Social Work PQI Childcare Award	Hannah has worked as a childcare social worker since 1999. She has worked in the Adoption Team since Dec 2004	Full time
Jane Seymour	Social Worker Assessment	CQSW MA Social Work	Jane worked as a social worker in children and families for 9 years. She has worked in the adoption team since July 2002.	18.5 hours
Anne Falgate	Social Worker	CQSW	Ann has worked in the Adoption Team for 10 months as a social worker, she has specialist knowledge of disabilities and worked in Social Services since 1984	Part time
Samuel Thompson	Social Worker	CQSW Post Graduate Diploma M.A	Samuel works full time. He has worked for Derby since 1988. Samuel has worked in the field of fostering and adoption since he came to Derby.	Part time
Toni Benaton	Social Worker		Toni Joined the Adoption Team in November 2003. Before that she was a child care social worker working with children where adoption was the plan.	Part time
Vacancy	Social Worker			Full time
Vacancy	Social Worker			Full time

Organisational Structure of Derby City Adoption Agency



Recruitment, Preparation, Assessment, Approval and Support of Prospective Adopters

As well as responding to enquiries from prospective adopters, the Agency actively recruits adoptive families. The Agency employs a specialised marketing officer who is responsible for generating enquiries using all relevant forms of media. This includes local and national press, television, the internet, radio, leafleting and working within the community to generate enquiries.

The Agency will accept applications from prospective adopters within a 50-mile radius of Derby City. If a suitable prospective family living at a considerable distance from Derby City apply to be assessed for a specific child, Derby City will negotiate with an Adoption Agency local to the family to assess and support them. Applicants living a considerable distance from Derby who are making general enquiries are referred to their local Adoption Agency.

Prospective adopters living within a 50-mile radius of Derby are invited to an information session. These are run every 2 months. In certain circumstances, a social worker will visit a family if it is not practicable for the family to attend an information session.

Where prospective adopters decide to apply to Derby, a social worker will visit them as soon as practicable to discuss their application. If the Agency accepts the application, their case is allocated to a social worker to carry out the assessment (details are provided in the Derby City Adoptive Applicants' Policy). The agency strives to carry out assessments with the timescales of the National Adoption Standards.

Training groups are run at least twice a year as preparation for adoptive families. The preparation groups cover; child development, attachment and behavioural difficulties.

Applicants are expected to attend the Adoption Panel for the approval process. Applicants are told verbally of the recommendations of the Panel within 24 hours of the panel. They are informed of the formal decision in writing within 7 days of the Panel.

If an applicant is not satisfied with the process, they have the right to appeal directly to the Agency Decision Maker. They also have the right to make a complaint using the Derby City complaints procedure. They are also informed of the availability of the Independent Review Mechanism.

All approved adopters are allocated a social worker to support them to the point of adoption order. This is usually the worker that has carried out the assessment.

Adoption Support – once a child is placed the adoption social worker will continue to visit the family to at least the minimum required visits.

All Derby City adopters will be given the opportunity to meet a child psychologist within the first three months of the placement. In the event that the child needs individual direct work or therapy that will be negotiated with CAMS or the Clinical Psychology service.

The Adoption Support Team offer monthly groups for adopters to attend and a regular newsletter giving information of other support systems.

All adopters are offered access to training post approval via our newly appointed training officer for foster carers and adopters.

The Adoption Support team also offer individual casework and needs assessments according to the requirements of the Adoption Support regulations.

Monitoring and Evaluation

As well as the regular supervision of all staff (4 weekly minimum), services provided are tracked electronically by the Authority's SWIFT computer system. The Information Section provides regular reports to the Head of Service and the Service Manager.

Planning and Partnerships Section send regular questionnaires to adoptive applicants to find out their views on the service.

Applicants attending information sessions and training are asked to complete feedback forms. Members of staff involved in information evenings and initial visits meet to discuss required changes and trainers discuss feedback and decide what to include.

Both Departmental Management Team and Children's Services Managers Group consider adoption performance indicators routinely once a month.

Comments, Compliments and Complaints

We want people to be happy with the standard of service we provide. We value comments, compliments or complaints. This helps us to know what we are doing well and areas we need to improve or develop. If anyone receiving a service wishes to have an informal discussion, the Adoption Team or Adoption Support will be happy to talk to them. Written comments are also welcome.

A copy of Derby City Council Social Services Guide to Comments, Compliments and Complaints is available for information.

Addresses

Social Services Directorate

Derby City Council
2nd Floor Norman House
Friargate
DERBY
DE1 1NU
Tel. 01332 256700

The Adoption Agency

Derby Social Services
Perth Street
Chaddesden
DERBY
DE21 6XX
Tel. 01332 717711

Commission for Social Care Inspection

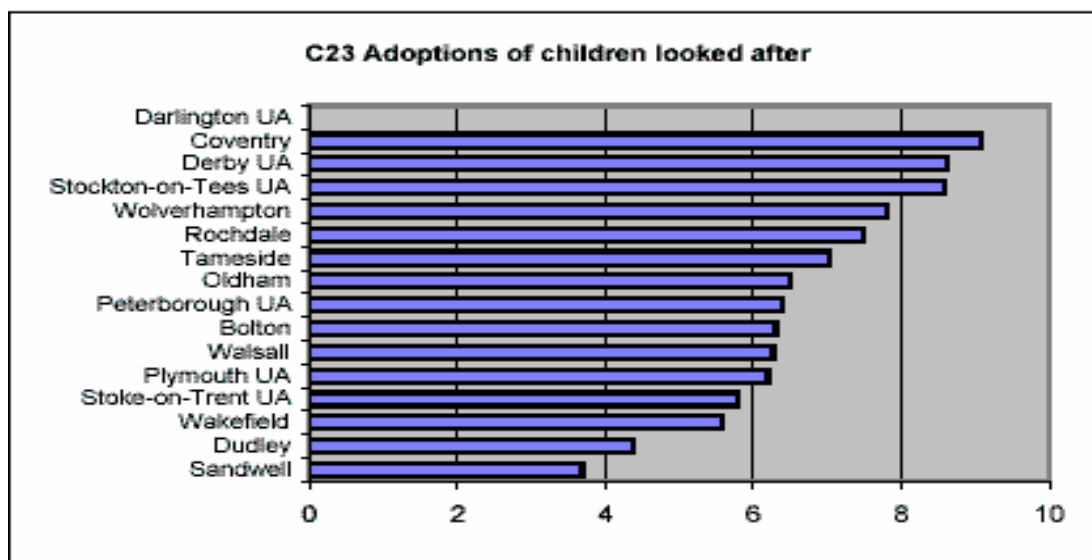
Derbyshire Office
South Point
Cardinal Square
Nottingham Road
DERBY
DE1 3QT
Tel. 01332 851800

Comparator Information

PAF details from Comparator authorities and also the East Mid lands region. Currently data from other authorities is only available for 2003/4.

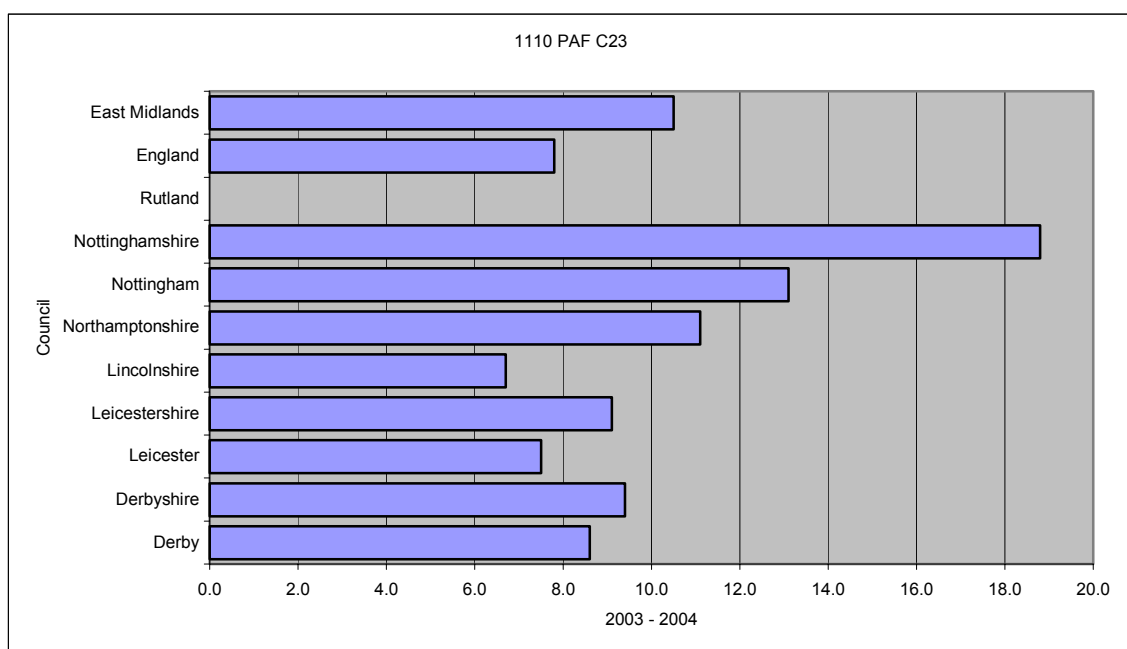
C23 Adoption of children looked after

Comparator authorities

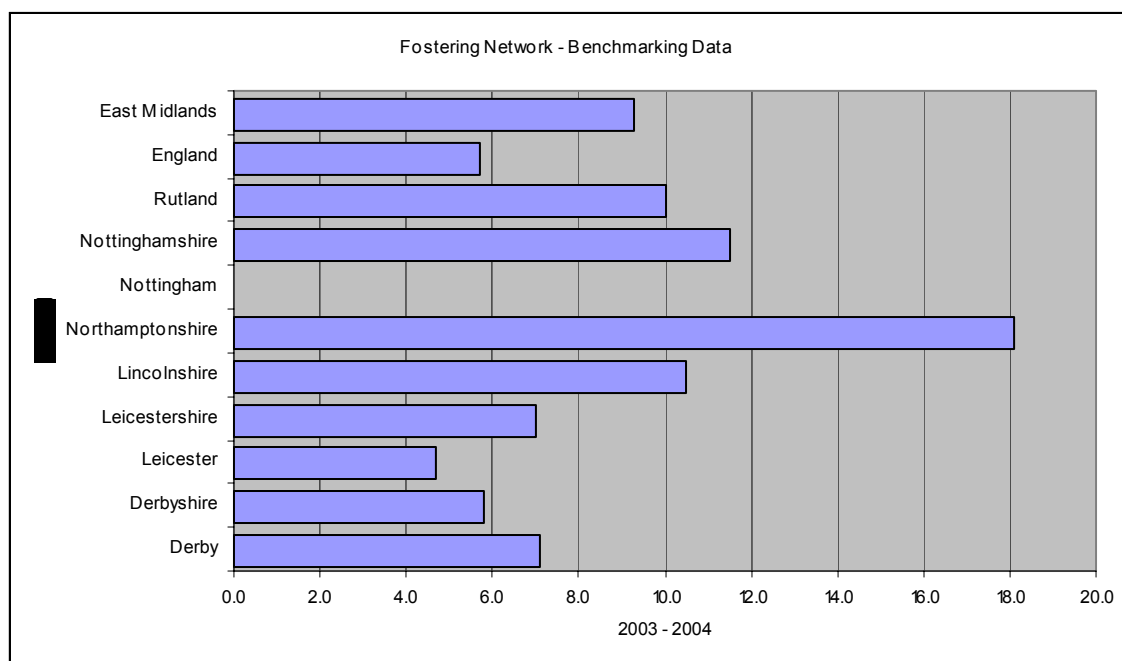


C23 Adoption of children looked after East Midlands region

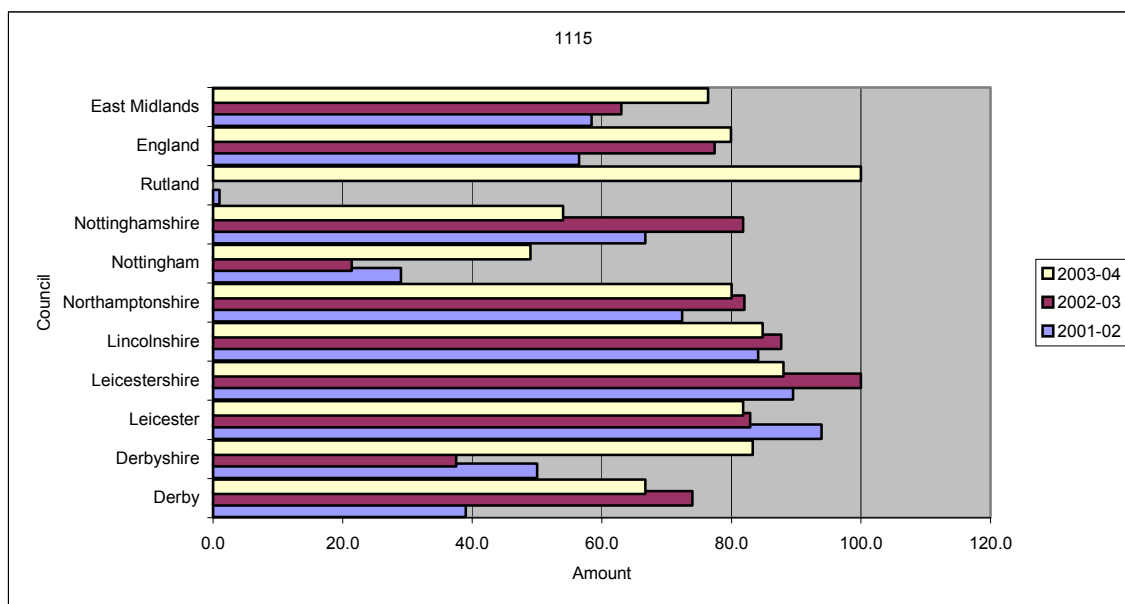
1110 PAF C23 The number of looked after children adopted during the year as a percentage of the number of children looked after at 31 March who had been looked for 6 months or more on that day (new definition)



Fostering Network – Benchmarking Data
1113 Percentage of looked after children placed for adoption in the year end 31 March 2004.



1115 for looked after children adopted during the year the percentage who were placed for adoption within 12 months of their best interest decision being made.



Fostering Network – Benchmarking Data
1109 PAF C23 The percentage of children looked after for 6 months or more who were adopted during the year (old definition)

