



Derby City Council

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

07 October 2014

ITEM 7

Report of the Strategic Director for Children and Young People

Adoption Agency Report

SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Children Act 1989, the Adoption Agency Regulations (2011), the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the Adoption National Minimum Standards 2014 placed duties and responsibilities on Local Authorities to provide, or arrange to provide an Adoption Service.
- 1.2 This report provides adoption performance information on the period 1st April 2013 to 31 March 2014 and for the first quarter 1 April 2014 to 30 June 2014.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To approve the Adoption Agency report.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 To comply with guidance and regulations and National Minimum Standards for Adoption Services.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 Derby City Adoption Agency has continued to develop services to meet the needs of children who should be placed for adoption. The Agency also continues to provide services to meet the needs of adults including adoptive parents, birth family members and adopted adults.

- 4.2 During 2013 to 2014, 53 children were adopted including 11 pairs of siblings; this was made up of 24 girls and 29 boys.

The age profile of the children was as follows:

Age at adoption	Number
Under 1	2
1	14
2	8
3	6
4	9
5	4
6	2
7	4
8	3
9	1

The length of time that the children waited for adoption was as follows:

Less than 1 year	2
1-2 years	21
2-3 years	15
3-4 years	10
4-5 years	2
5 years and over	3
Total	53

Between April 2014 and June 2014, 15 children have been adopted including one pair of siblings and two sibling groups of 3.

- 4.3 The children with an adoption plan on 31 March 2014 with first quarter update are as follows:

	31 March 2014		30 June 2014
Adoption Plan but Placement Order not yet Granted	17		11
Plan and placement Order but not yet matched	35		37
Matched but not yet placed	3		4 (includes 2 children where matched delayed by legal challenge from parent)
Placed but Adoption Order not yet granted	42		32
Total	97		84

18 of the 32 children placed but not yet adopted had waited over 12 months before being placed and in the first quarter of 2014-15 a large sibling group had been in the adoptive placement for over 4 years before being adopted. Although these are children who have been successfully placed and now adopted, the way in which performance is measured by the adoption score cards means these children will adversely affect the Agency's averages.

- 4.4 Twenty eight adopters were approved in 2013-14. One other application was considered but deferred for further work. In the first quarter of 2014 eleven adopters were approved.

On 31 March 2014 there were 11 approved families waiting to be matched, 1 family were matched but the placement had not yet commenced and 11 families had children placed but the adoption order had not yet been granted.

- 4.5 There are two adoption panels which each meet monthly. Each has an independent chair and a vice chair. Adoption panel met 22 times in the year 2013-2014 and 6 times between April and June 2014.

4.6 During 2013 to 2014 twenty six children had plans for adoption agreed by the agency decision maker. The characteristics of the children were:

- There were 16 girls and 10 boys with adoption plans
- 21 of the children were White British, 1 is described as Dual heritage other, 3 as Dual heritage white/Black Caribbean and 1 whose ethnicity is listed as unknown.
- There were 4 sibling pairs with plans for adoption. Three of these had plans for adoption together.

Between 1 April 2014 and 30 June 2014, 10 children have plans for adoption agreed. The characteristics of the children are:

- There are 5 boys and 5 girls with adoption plans
- 3 of the children are described as being of dual heritage “other” and 1 of “other” ethnicity
- There is one sibling pair with a plan for placement together and one with a plan for separate placements.
- The plan of adoption for one child was not agreed at court and she has subsequently been placed with a parent.

The year 2013-14 saw a significant fall in the number of children with plans for adoption from 50 in the year 2012-13 to 26. This is most likely to be the impact of changes in case law with a stricter test being applied before the court will grant a placement order and some cases had to be deferred for further work.

4.7 During 2013 to 2014, 47 children were matched with an adopter and this included 6 sibling pairs and a sibling group of 3.

11 children were matched in the first quarter of 2014. These included 1 sibling pair and one child whose parent made a legal challenge and the identified match did not proceed. This child is included in the figures of children still waiting.

4.8 The adoption service uses every family finding method available and is always willing to try innovative methods. For example Derby City was part of the pilot for adoption activity days and collaborated with television documentaries on adoption. More recently the service has taken advantage of a new family finding opportunity the “It’s all about me” project. This is a service for the hardest to place children and an initial 7 children have been identified for the scheme.

4.9	Inter-agency placements 2013-14	Number of families	Number of children
	Placements made with Derby City Council approved families	20	25
	Placements made with voluntary adoption agencies	8	8
	Placements made with families approved by other local authorities	11	14
	Children from other local authorities placed with Derby City approved adopters	4	4

- 4.10 The table shows the number of children placed with via inter agency placements. There are indications that the number of children with a plan for adoption is again increasing. Between April and June 2014 10 children had plans agreed by the agency decision maker and a further 15 are to be presented to the agency decision maker for consideration by the end of September 2014. There has been no significant increase in the number of children leaving care through the granting of special guardianship orders or residence orders during the same periods and further monitoring and analysis will be required to determine if there is a real reduction in the number of children needing adoptive families.
- 4.11 2 children were placed with potential adopters on a fostering basis under changes to the care planning regulations. This is an area of work which is being developed so that those children who are likely to have a plan for adoption and where there are no suitable family members identified can be placed directly with potential adopters on a fostering basis.
- 4.12 There is national interest in the true rate of post adoption order breakdowns. Derby City was one of the local authorities participating in research through Bristol University into post order breakdowns. The rate of disruption varies between local authorities with a range of 0% to 7.4%. Derby City's rate is approximately 4%. Bristol University fed back on the findings of the research to local authority staff and members of adoption panel. This will contribute to the development of adoption support services

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 Not applicable

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer Financial officer Human Resources officer Estates/Property officer Service Director(s) Other(s)	Alison Parkin Liz Moore Hazel Lymbery; Director of Specialist Services, 01332 642669 hazel.lymbery@derby.gov.uk Andrew Bunyan; Strategic Director for Children and Young People
For more information contact: Background papers: List of appendices:	Lyn Bugarski Professional Adviser to the Adoption Panel, 01332 643816, lyn.bugarski@derby.gov.uk None Appendix 1 – Implications

IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

- 1.1 The cost of providing the Adoption Service is contained within fixed cost-centre budgets.
In the event of an appeal to the IRM the cost falls on the adoption service provider.
The fee is around £2500 for each case.

Legal

- 2.1 The adoption function of the Council is regulated by the 1989 Children Act and the Associated Adoption Regulations, guidance and the minimum standards published in 2014.

Personnel

- 3.1 The service became managed by a Head of Children in Care, Regulated Services in February 2013 which brought the fostering, adoption and children homes services under the management of a single manager. A Deputy Head of Service, Fostering and Adoption, 1.5 whole time equivalent team managers and 10.4 whole time equivalent social workers carry out the full range of adoption activities.

Equalities Impact

- 4.1 The service continues to give due consideration to race, gender, culture, sexual orientation, religion, and disability in relation to children being placed and for adults who apply to become adopters.

Health and Safety

- 5.1 This is considered at all stages of the recruitment, assessment, training and support of adopters. All the managers in the service have completed mandatory Health and Safety training.

Environmental Sustainability

- 6.1 None arising from this report

Property and Asset Management

7.1 To note the planned office move from Perth Street to the Council House.

Risk Management

8.1 Risk is managed at all stages of the adoption process.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 9.1 The adoption service supports the Councils priorities of
- inspiring start in life
 - inspiring start in life by improving educational attainment
 - inspiring working life by improving skills and creating jobs