



Derby City Council

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE
19 October 2020

ITEM 11

Report sponsor: Suanne Lim, Service Director
Report author: Judy Levitt, Team Manager

Adoption Agency Report 2019-20

Purpose

- 1.1 The Children Act 1989, the Adoption Agency Regulations (2011), the Adoption and Children Act 2002, the Education and Adoption Act 2016 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 for the period 1st April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

1.3 Children in Care Council Summary

19 children were adopted last year including 2 groups of brothers and sisters. One child was adopted via a non-agency route.

There were 37 children where it was agreed adoption was the right thing for them.

Last year 21 children were matched with new families. This included 2 groups of brothers and sisters who went to live with their new families together.

On 31 March 2020 there were 15 children who were living with their new families but the court had not yet made the adoption order. There were 26 children where we thought we had found the right family but this had not yet been agreed through adoption panel. Of these 26 children, 14 were already living with their foster carers and the foster carers were going through the process of being approved to be the children's adopters. There were 9 children where the court was still deciding what was best for them and 14 children where we were still looking for the right family.

In April 2020, the adoption team from Derby City Council became part of the newly formed Regional Adoption Agency, Adoption East Midlands (AEM.) The Local Authorities making up AEM were Derby City, Derbyshire, Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire. All adoption recruitment, assessment, home finding and support after adoption services transferred over to AEM.

For details of this adopter data, this report should be read in conjunction with the annual AEM report.

The responsibility for children with adoption plans remains with Derby City Council and is undertaken by the Children's Adoption permanence team. This team was formed as part of a pilot in July 2017 but became permanent in April 2020. This team consists of a half time team manager, 4 adoption social workers and a part time Independent worker for birth families.

Recommendation

2.1 To approve the Adoption Agency report.

Reason

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

Supporting information

4.1 Derby City Children's Permanence team has continued to develop services to meet the needs of children who should be placed for adoption. The role of the Adoption Agency which provides services to meet the needs of adults, including adoptive parents, birth family members and adopted adults, has transferred to the Regional Adoption Agency, AEM, from 1.4.2020.

4.2 There were 19 adoptions of children from care in the year, one of these was a non-agency adoption.

Age at adoption (years)	Children adopted in 2019-20
Under 1	1
1	11
2	3
3	2
4	1
5	0
6	0
7	0
8	0
9	1
Grand Total	19

Gender	Children adopted in 2019-20
Male	11
Female	8
Grand Total	19

Ethnicity	Children adopted in 2019-20
WBRI - White British	16
WOTH - Any other White background	1
MWBA - Mixed White & Black African	1
Black British	1
Grand Total	19

The figures above included 2 sibling groups of 2.

4.3 Adoption Scorecard Measures A10 and A2

The latest values, for 2019-20, as calculated by Derby City Council, and based on 2019-20 adoptions are :

- **Measure A10:** Average number of days, adjusted for foster carer adoptions, between child entering care and moving in with adoptive family = 267 days.
- **Measure A2:** Average time between receiving court authority to place a child and it deciding on a match to an adoptive family = 227 days.

The table at the end of this section provides more detail about these measures. The values above should be viewed as provisional. Final 2019-20 values for A10 and A2 will be published in approximately one years' time by DfE. They may differ to the values above based upon any subsequent revisions to the data.

Comparison of the 2019-20 provisional data with the latest data released by DfE, in late-August 2020, and covering years up to 2018-19, shows that both measures have improved over the longer-term :

- **For Measure A10:** Year-on-year (annual) figures for Derby have improved on 5 occasions out of the 7 total occasions between 2011-12 and 2018-19. This becomes 6 out of 8 occasions if the provisional 2019-20 value is also included.
- **For Measure A2:** Year-on-year (annual) figures for Derby have improved or stayed exactly the same on 5 occasions out of the 7 total occasions, between 2011-12 and 2018-19. Whilst the provisional 2019-20 value, of 227 days, is worse (i.e. higher) than the published 2018-19 value (171 days), it is better than the published annual value for all of the years between 2011-12 and 2017-18 inclusive.

This indicates that the recently implemented Child Adoption and Permanence Team (CAPT), initially set-up in July 2017, is contributing towards improving outcomes for children, in terms of helping to improve some key adoption timescales.

	1 - year averages			3 - year average
	2017-18 (DfE)	2018-19 (DfE)	2019-20 (Derby files)	2016-19 (DfE)
<i>Measure A10: Average number of days, adjusted for foster carer adoptions, between child entering care and moving in with adoptive family, for children adopted</i> ^{Note 1}	385	458	267 ^{(P) Note 2}	416
<i>Measure A2: Average time between an LA receiving court authority to place a child and the LA deciding on a match to an adoptive family, for children adopted</i>	256	171	227 ^{(P) Note 2}	300

Notes

1. Scorecard Measure A10 has superseded previous measure A1, which has not been published for 2016-19. The difference is that A10 uses the number of days between entering care and moving into a foster placement with their foster carers, if those foster carers are the adoptive parents. For all other adoptions, as for A1, the timescale between entering care and being placed for adoption is used. As a comparison, the latest 3-year period (2015-18) for which A1 and A10 have both been published by DfE, shows figures for Derby of A1 = 648 days and A10 = 403 days.

2. Figures for 2019-20 should be regarded as provisional, as they have not yet been published by DfE. The figure shown (267) uses data from 19 adoptions, including any children in care who subsequently left care due to private adoption(s).

- 4.4 Since April 2019, adoption panels have become the responsibility of AEM. (See AEM annual report for details.) The role of the Agency Decision Maker remains the responsibility of Derby City Council for all matches of Derby City children.
- 4.5 There were 37 new plans for adoption made in the year.

The annual variation in new plans made is illustrated below.

Year	New plans
2013-14	26
2014-15	42
2015-16	35
2016-17	26
2017-18	40
2018-19	43
2019-20	37

- 4.6 There were 7 children where the plan of adoption was reversed in the year.
- 4.7 There were 21 matches made during 2019-20, 8 boys and 13 girls. This included 2 sibling pairs placed together. The ages of the children matched was as follows:

Age at match	Number
Under 1	13
1	2
2	3
3	1
4	0
5	1
6	0
7	1

- 4.8 17 of the children matched were placed with adopters approved by Adoption East Midlands, 4 were inter-agency adopters; one with another regional adoption agency and 3 with voluntary adoption agencies. Of the children who could not be placed within Adoption East Midlands, two were BAME children and the other placement was a sibling group of two. Adoption East Midlands have identified the need to recruit more adopters from BAME communities and also adopters who can adopt sibling groups and older children.
- 4.9 At the end of March 2020 there were 15 children placed with adoptive families awaiting an adoption order. There is a minimum of ten weeks from placement before an adoption application can be lodged with the courts but in some cases adoptive families wait longer. There are also some cases delayed in the legal process when the adoption application is contested. During March 2020, Covid 19 restrictions meant that court hearings were postponed and this has had a major impact on the numbers of children in their adoptive placements and waiting for adoption orders to be made. There were 26 children with a match/link identified but not yet presented to panel. It should be noted that within these figures there were 14 children who were placed with their foster carers and the carers were in the process of being approved as adopters. Of these 14 children there was a family group of 5 children and two family groups of 3 children. There were 9 children with an adoption plan but not subject to active family finding, generally because they were still subject to legal proceedings. 14

children were subject to active family finding. These include 3 sibling pairs. The majority of children subject to active family finding had plans made/placement orders granted within the last year. There were 3 children who were in the process of having their plans of adoption reversed. For one of these children an adoptive family had not been able to be identified, and it was decided that their foster carer could offer the child long term permanence, and for the other 2 children who were a sibling group, their foster carer is now being approved to be the children's special guardians.

- 4.10 In April 2020, Derby City Council's adoption team was tuped over to Adoption East Midlands, Regional Adoption Agency.

This report should be read in conjunction with the annual AEM report.

Public/Stakeholder engagement

- 5.1 N/A

Other options

- 6.1 None.

Financial and value for money issues

- 7.1 The cost of providing the Adoption Service is contained within fixed cost-centre budgets.
- 7.2 The agency has to pay a fee for inter-agency placements and receives a fee from other local authorities who place children with adopters approved by the agency. In the financial year 2017-18 the expenditure on interagency fees was: £384,790.40 compared to an income of £393,997.00.
- 7.3 In the event of an appeal to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) the cost falls on the adoption service provider. The fee is £2591 for each case. There have been no cases referred to the IRM.

Legal implications

- 8.1 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. The development of a Regional Adoption Agency is a requirement of the Education and Adoption Act (2016).

Climate implications

- 9.1 N/A

Other significant implications

10.1 Personnel

The operational service is managed by the Head of Service for Fostering and Adoption. The adoption team has a full time team manager, 7.3 full time equivalent social workers, a case support officer and the East Midlands Adoption Consortium clerk . This latter post is hosted by Derby City on behalf of the Consortium. The adoption adviser is a .6 FTE post. The Adoption Support Service is managed by the team manager Adoption Support 0.5FTE and comprises 2.6 FTE social work posts and a 0.5 independent support worker to birth families and has a full time business support post to support the letter box exchange scheme. The Fostering and Adoption Recruitment Officer post covers both services and supports the collation of essential data relating to performance information relating to the recruitment of adopters.

In June 2017 a Child Adoption and Permanence Team (CAPT) was created. This is staffed by 4 FTE social workers, 2 seconded from within the adoption team and 2 from the children in care service. The adoption team manager manages the pilot team and responsibility for line management falls to the Head of Service for Fostering and Adoption.

There is a Human Resources technical work stream supporting the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) Project.

10.2 IT

The service is supported by the Council IT service and there is an ITC technical work stream supporting the RAA Project.

10.3 Equalities

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.

10.4 Health and Safety

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.

10.5 Property and Asset Management

The adoption service relocated to the Council House on 16 December 2014. There are no plans for staff to relocate as a result of the establishment of a regional adoption agency.

10.6 Risk Management and safeguarding

Risk is managed at all stages of the adoption process. Children are safeguarded by stringent vetting of potential adopters from the point of enquiry and throughout the assessment and preparation process. Adoption reports for panel are quality assured and the professional adviser for adoption offers advice to panel and the agency decision maker. Any allegations made against approved adopters would be dealt with through the Looked After Designated Officer (LADO) process. In the event of an adoption disruption, disruption meetings are held to identify issues, learn lessons and improve future practice.

This report has been approved by the following people:

Role	Name	Date of sign-off
Legal		
Finance		
Service Director(s)	Suanne Lim, Service Director, Children's Integrated Services People Services Directorate	15.10.20
Report sponsor	Suanne Lim, Service Director, Children's Integrated Services People Services Directorate	15.10.20
Other(s)		
Background papers:	Adoption East Midlands Executive Summary	
List of appendices:	None	