

ITEM 9



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY JOINT SUB COMMISSION 4th September 2007

Report of the Corporate Director for Children & Young People

Adoption Agency Annual 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 an authorised body of the Council, of the activity of the Derby City Adoption Agency. A report is required annually and this document covers the period from 1 April 2006 to 31 March 2007. Data given in brackets is for the 1st quarter 2007/08. It is the expectation of guidance from the Department for Children, Schools and Families 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 place 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 There have been a number of changes to the Panel since the last report. The Adoption Panel met on a total of 18 occasions between 1st April 2006 and March 2007. Because of the demand for panel slots it was decided that a second panel should be established. The new Panel commenced operation in January 2007.

- 2.5 The implementation of further sections of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 on 31st December 2005 has led to significant changes in the practice of the Agency and the Adoption Panel. From January 2006 we were required to have an independent panel chair. To achieve this we have entered into a service level agreement with Nottinghamshire County Council and our former Panel chair now chairs one of their panels and a Senior Manager from Nottinghamshire is our Panel chair.

Continuing with the existing reciprocal arrangements with Nottinghamshire County Council a second Independent Chair was appointed. Katie Harris, Head of service, Fostering & Adoption chairs a panel for Nottinghamshire.

2.6

The Panel Membership as at 1st April 2007 is as follows:

Panel 1

Alison Sheilds	Nottinghamshire County Council	Chair of Panel
Ann Walter	Psychology Department, Derbyshire Children's Hospital	Independent Adviser
Dr Yasmin Alikhan	South Derbyshire Community Health Service Trust	Medical Adviser
Clr Anne McDonald	Derby Councillor	Councillor
Linda Towle	Derby City Council	Vice Chair
Sheila Moss	Derby City Council	Social Worker
Steve Crean	Derby City Council	Social Worker
Theresa Peltier		Independent Member
Steve Garside	Derby City Council	Service Manager

Panel 2 Membership

Meg Staples	Nottinghamshire County Council	Independent Chair
Sue Rhead	Clinical Psychologist	Independent Member
Dr Yasmin Alikhan	South Derbyshire Community Health Service Trust	Medical Adviser
Cllr Philip Ingall	Derby City Council	Councillor
Amanda George		Independent Member
Helen Morton	Derby City Council	Service Manager
Jackie Mallett	Derby City Council	Social Worker
Audrey Adamson	Derby City Council	Social Worker
Vena Wesson		Independent Member

In addition, Anna Pollard and Hannah Hogg from the Derby City Legal Department act as legal advisors. These are non-voting members.

Carol Gilbert is now the Professional Adviser to both the Adoption Panels and is also none voting.

The Agency Decision Maker is Rachel Dickinson, Assistant Director Locality Services, Derby City Council for Panel 1 and Keith Woodthorpe Assistant Director Specialist Services Derby City Council fulfils this role for Panel 2.

2.7 Panel Business

51 children were recommended for adoption

29 children were matched with adopters

19 adopters were approved

2.8 Placements made April 2006 to March 2007 (to July 2007)

35 Children have been placed for adoption. In the previous year 21 placements were made. (In the current year 11 placements have been made up to July 2007)

Gender

Male: 13 (8)

Female: 22 (3)

Heritage

5 Dual heritage (8)

30 White British (3)

Special needs 0 (0)

Types of placement

Local Authorities 8 (4)

LA's in consortium 4 (2)

Voluntary Agencies 9 (2)

Derby City Adopters 14 (3)

2.8 Children Waiting Placement as at July 2007

- There are currently 57 children waiting for adoptive placements.

- Of the 57 children
 - 27 are male
 - 30 are female

This breaks down into:

17 sibling groups of 2 children (We have 3 sibling groups of 4 and 5 but they will not all be placed together)

23 singletons

4 Special needs

14 Dual Heritage

42 White/British

2.9 Adoption Orders Made: 24 orders were made a decrease of 10 on the previous year. 5 Special Guardianship Orders were made (to July 2007, 15 Adoption and Special Guardianship Orders have been made.)

2.10 Sources of Adopters with whom orders made

3 from voluntary agencies	+ 2
6 from other Local Authorities	+ 2
2 from L.A. in the Consortium	+ 3
13 were approved by Derby	+ 7

2.11 Approval of Adopters

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

2.12 Developments

The Adoption Service was inspected in November 2006. The report has been received and the details of this appear in a separate report to this committee. The report found a good service showing improvement since the inspection in March 2004.

	March 2004	November 2006
Scale 4		
Standard Exceeded	1	0
Scale 3		
No Shortfalls	15	21
Scale 2		
Minor Shortfalls	9	7
Scale 1		
Standards not met	3	0

There were 3 statutory requirements which needed attention and 15 good practice recommendations

2.13 Approval of Adopters

Panel has considered 19 applications from families wishing to be approved as adopters. 18 have been approved.

2.14 Developments

- 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 continues to develop. It is staffed by a Service Manager, two social workers and a family support 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. Children's Groups are now happening every school holiday and an

Independent Worker for birth families has been appointed.

- The Adoption and Children Act has now been implemented. Derby is meeting the requirements for Adoption support and compared with other authorities is developing a very comprehensive service.
- The Letterbox system is robust and birth relatives now have the opportunity to get advice and support in writing appropriate letters.
- The continued developments on the east Midlands Adoption Consortium have led to increased co-operation amongst the nine member adoption agencies and the increased placement of children in the region rather than needing to send children to other parts of the country to be adopted.
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- Although the team was fully staffed in 2006/7 2 full team members of staff were on maternity leave and have only just returned to work.
- The full implementation of the Adoption and Children in December 2005 caused a hiatus in court proceedings and planning for children. This led to a drop in placements in 2005/06 and in resultant adoption orders made. That adjustment has now been worked through.
- Despite the changes the Department's strong performance against PAF Indicator C23 has been maintained at band 5 and in the top quartile nationally.
- In 2006/7 for the first time we placed the same number of children with our own approved adopters as with purchased placements from other agencies

**For more information
contact:**

Background papers:

List of appendices:

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None

Appendix 1: Implications

Appendix 2: Statement of Purpose

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

- 1.1 Adoption support financial arrangements have been reviewed and a new policy and practice document drafted in light of the Adoption Support regulations and the Adoption and Children Act 2002. The development of Special Guardianship Orders are bringing a new financial challenge which as yet is difficult to predict

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 final section of 2002 Adoption and Children Act were implemented at the end of 2005.

Personnel

- 3.1 The Adoption Team now consists of a full time Service Manager, 6.0 Social Workers who carry out the full range of adoption activities, 2.0 Social workers for assessments, an Adoption Support Service Manager, 2 Adoption Support Social Workers, a .5 post children's support worker and an independent worker for Birth families.

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**.