



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 2015 to 31 March 2016.

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 Between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016 27 children were adopted including 5 sibling pairs. There were 14 boys and 13 girls adopted. The age profile of the children was as follows:

Age at adoption	Number
Under 1	2
1	11
2	1
3	7
4	1
5	0
6	0
7	1
8	1
9	1
10	2
Total	27

The average time between entering care and adoptive placement for those children adopted in the year in question was 639 days. This is within the target of 655 days.

76.9% of the children had waited less than 20 months between entering care and moving in with the adoptive family. This is above the target of 57% .

The average time between court authority to place and matching was 389 days. This is outside the target timescale of 300 days.

Six of the children adopted in the year had waited an exceptionally long time to be adopted. Four of these were foster care adoptions. A more detailed analysis of these “legacy” cases has been completed and has been used in the commentary on performance figures and in readiness for an inspection.

- 4.3 Information on children with an adoption plan on 31 March 2016 is taken from the adoption service home finding records. These indicate that there were 8 children subject to active family finding plus 3 with identified links about to go to panel for a match. There were also 4 children where family finding was on hold. Three of these had experienced a placement disruption and one was awaiting a further assessment of need. There were another four children with a plan of adoption but where the placement order had not yet been granted. In addition there were 26 children subject to placement orders whose plans have changed from adoption. A plan is in place to take the discharge of these placement orders back to court. There were 34 children placed with adopters awaiting adoption.
- 4.4 23 adoptive families were approved during the year compared to 32 in 2014-15. On 31 March 2016 there were 18 Derby adopters with children in placement awaiting an adoption order. There were 17 approved families waiting, including 1 family who were on hold. 7 of these families had waited over 12 months since approval.

4.5 In 2015-16 there were two adoption panels. Each had an independent chair and a vice chair. Adoption panel met 19 times in the year. Panel one 10 times and panel two 9 times. The panels approved 23 families and recommended matches for 57 children and a plan of adoption for one relinquished child.

4.6 During 2015-16 35 children had plans for adoption agreed by the agency decision maker. The characteristics of the children are:

- 14 girls and 21 boys with adoption plans
- 22 of the children are White British, 4 children are White European, 5 children are Asian Muslim or Asian Muslim mix and 4 are of dual heritage.
- There were 3 sibling groups with plans made for adoption. The ages of the children at the point of agency decision was:

Under 1	19
1	6
2	4
3	1
4	3
5	1
6	0
7	1
total	35

The table below compares the number of children with an agency decision that they should be placed for adoption over a three year period.

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Children with agency decision that adoption is in their best interests	26	42	35

4.7 During 2015 to 2016, 57 children were matched with an adoptive family including 14 sibling pairs and a sibling group of 3.

4.8 The table shows the number of children placed with via inter agency placements

Inter-agency placements 2015-6	Number of families	Number of children
Placements made with voluntary adoption agencies 5 children were technically placed on an interagency basis but with their foster carers as another agency completed the adoption assessment.	11 (12)	16 (21)
Placements made with families approved by other local authorities	6	9
Children from other local authorities placed with Derby City approved adopters during 2015-16	2	2
Children from other local authorities in placement as at 31 March 2015. Includes children placed in previous year.	5	8

- 4.9 From July 2015 the Local Authority was able to reclaim the interagency fee for children who met certain hard to place criteria. The interagency budget for the year was £567,794.69, grant income from reclaimed inter-agency fees was £550,000. Income from other local authorities was £67,500.
- 4.10 In 2015-16 3 children have been placed with potential adopters on a fostering basis while legal proceedings were progressed. 2 of these, siblings have been adopted and 1 child remains in placement with the fostering for adoption family and has subsequently been matched through adoption panel. Some fostering for adoption arrangements have raised complex issues and the service will continue to learn lessons and develop best practice.
- 4.11 There have been 2 disruptions of placement pre-order in the last year. Disruption meetings have been held with independent chairs. One full report has been received and we are awaiting the independent chair's analysis on the second. The learning from these cases plus a further disruption which occurred in the previous year will be shared across the children and young people's service and with panels.

In June 2015 the Department for Education issued a policy paper "Regionalising Adoption". All adoption agencies are expected to move to the regional adoption agency model by 2020. Derby City is a member of the East Midland's Adoption Consortium (EMAC). EMAC submitted an expression of interest in becoming a regional agency and the DfE has confirmed the proposal is eligible for funding. A project governance board has been established, a scoping exercise is underway and workstreams are being developed. This is a major development in adoption and will have considerable implications for the local service. There will be continued development of the project in 2016-17 and beyond.

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)	Hazel Lymbery; Director of Specialist Services, 01332 642669 hazel.lymbery@derby.gov.uk
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 Appendix 2 – Derby City Council Adoption Service Statement of Purpose

IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

- 1.1 The cost of providing the Adoption Service is contained within fixed cost-centre budgets.
- 1.2 In the event of an appeal to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) the cost falls on the adoption service provider. The fee is around £2500 for each case. There have been no cases referred to the IRM.

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 is managed by the Head of Service for Fostering and Adoption. The adoption team has a full time team manager, 6.3 full time equivalent social workers, a full time case support officer and the consortium clerk .7 FTE. The adoption adviser is a .6 FTE post. The Adoption Support service is managed by the team manager therapeutic service to looked after children and adopted children and comprises 2 FTE social work posts, a .5 assistant social work post, a full time independent support worker to birth families and has a full time business support post to support the letter box scheme.

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- 4.1 None arising from this report.

Equalities Impact

- 5.1 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

- 6.1 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

7.1 None arising from this report

Property and Asset Management

8.1 The adoption service relocated to the Council House on 16 December 2014.

Risk Management

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

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

10.1 The adoption service supports the Councils priorities of

- protecting vulnerable children and adults
- enabling individuals and communities
- promoting health and well being
- raising achievement and skills
- delivering services differently