



CORPORATE PARENTING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY JOINT SUB COMMISSION 9th December 2008

Report of the Director of Children & Young People's 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.

Background

- 2.1 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 2007 to 31 March 2008. Data given in brackets is for the first 2 quarters 2008/09. 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 Children Act 1989, the Adoption Agency Regulations (2005) 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 Panels met a total of 22 times between 1st April 2007 and 31st March 2008. Since January 2007 there have been 2 panels considering adoption matters. Membership has changed and the details are given below.

- 2.5 The implementation of further sections of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 on 31st December 2005 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 exchange senior managers to act as independent chair of panels.

The Panel Membership as at 9th December 2008

Panel 1

2.6

Pat Harty	Nottinghamshire County Council	Independent Chair
Ann Walter	Psychology Department, Derbyshire Children's Hospital	Independent Member
Dr Marrudkar	South Derbyshire Community Health Service Trust	Medical Adviser
Cllr Derrick Tuplin	Derby Councillor	Councillor
Linda Towle	Derby City Council	(Vice Chair) Service Manager
Judy Ponsford	Derby City Council	Social Worker
Johanna Collins	Derby City Council	Social Worker
Theresa Peltier		Independent Member
Steve Garside	Derby City Council	Service Manager
Amanda George		Independent Member

Panel 2 Membership

Meg Staples	Nottinghamshire County Council	Independent Chair
Sue Rhead	Clinical Psychologist	Independent Member
Dr Kapoor	South Derbyshire Community Health Service Trust	Medical Adviser
Cllr Philip Ingall	Derby City Council	Councillor
Amanda George		Independent Member
Janet Foulds	Derby City Council	Service Manager
Mohammed Riaz	Derby City Council	Social Worker
Audrey Adamson	Derby City Council	Social Worker
Vena Wesson		Independent Member

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

Carol Gilbert is Professional Adviser to both Adoption Panels and is non voting.

The Agency Decision Maker is Keith Woodthorpe Assistant Director Specialist Services Derby City Council.

2.7 Panel Business April 2007 to March 2008 (April 2008 to October 2008)

41 children were recommended for adoption	(25)
26 children were matched with adopters	(26)
20 adopters were approved	(5)
2 Disruptions	(1)

2.8 Placements made April 2007 to March 2008 (April 2008 to October 2008)

26 (23) Children have been placed for adoption. In the previous year 35 placements were made.

Gender

Male:	16	(14)
Female:	22	(9)

Heritage

8 Dual heritage	(3)
17 White British	(18)
1 Asian	(2)
0 Afro Caribbean	(0)

Types of placement

Current Foster Carers	2	(0)
Local authorities	6	(6)
LA's in consortium	8	(4)
Voluntary Agencies	4	(5)
Derby City Adopters	5	(8)

2.9 Children Waiting Placement as at October 2008

There are currently 58 children waiting for adoptive placements of whom 12 have potential matches identified.

2.10 Adoption Orders Made:

26 orders were made. An increase of 2 on the previous year. 12 Special Guardianship Orders were made. An increase of 7 on the previous year (to Oct 2008, 14 Adoption and 4 Special Guardianship Orders have been made.)

2.11 Approval of Adopters

Panel has considered 22 applications from families wishing to be approved as adopters. 2 were not approved.

2.12 Developments

- The Adoption Service has not been inspected since November 2006. The inspection report has been received and detailed in a previous report to this committee. The action plan has been completed
- 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 1
- The Adoption Support Service continues to evolve. It is staffed by a Service Manager, two social workers and a family support worker. Regular newsletters are sent to all adopters approved by Derby. The adopters Support Group has started. A help line for adopters continues 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 in the East Midlands Adoption Consortium have led to increased co-operation amongst the eight 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. In 2007/8 19 children were successfully exchanged in the region.
- We have slightly increased the number of adopters approved (by 2 in 2007/08). We have not used them so exclusively for our own children. In 2007/08 we sold 5

placements to other authorities, thus generating income. To date this year we have sold 3 placements.

- Although the teams are fully staffed, one member of the Adoption Support team is on long term sickness absence.
- The implementation in April 2008 of the Public Law Outline caused a slight hiatus in court proceedings and planning for children. We have continued to perform strongly and currently have 10.3% of our looked after children placed for adoption
- The Departments strong performance against PAF Indicator C23 has been maintained at band 5.
- We are now taking all our initial enquiries from potential adopters via Derby Direct and this is proving a positive working arrangement.
- Collaboration amongst the East Midlands Agencies has led to recruitment of adopters via 'Placement Days' etc and successful placement of some children as a result.

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 was 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**.