



Adoption East Midlands, annual Report, 2020, Executive summary.

The aims of the Regional Adoption Agency, as recorded in the business case.

The East Midlands RAA (EMRAA) project governance board envisages regional adoption services which:

- Provides all children with an adoptive family that meets their needs.
- Ensures that those affected by adoption receive the information, support and advice that they need to understand their adoption journey.
- Ensures that RAA families are well prepared, enabled and supported to care for the children with plans for adoption.
- Delivers improved outcomes for children for whom adoption is the preferred plan for permanence.
- Delivers the new service at no additional cost to the partner local authorities.

The RAA has been operational since April 2019.

The RAA has been homefinding for 170 children at its busiest and has matched 134 children in the first year of operation. A further 146 children became subject to placement orders in the year, the total in homefinding fell as low as 104 early in 2020.

The number of adopters approved in the first year was 82.

These figures denote sufficiency, to place the children who have been waiting, and children newly subject to Placement Order.

Due to not always having enough placements of the right match available interagency placements are used. The business plan target was 20% of all placements, and the first year of operation has shown a net of approx. 23% when offset with those we place from other Local Authorities, outside the partnership. Children are matched with families who can meet their needs, there are a few children whose plan will be changed from adoption, as the right family is not found.

AEM has a dedicated area of website which all adopters can access for current information, and support. The aim of our preparation of adopters is to make strong links, such that adopters will always re visit AEM as the first point of contact for ongoing support. There is a developing comprehensive support offer, and a growing cohesion in service delivery, such that all social workers are able to deliver support, and are knowledgeable regarding potential future need.

In addition, services are available for all adopters in the geography, and for those living in the geography affected by adoption.

The preparation of adopters is thorough and is always evolving. There is much information online, and preparation includes the opportunity to discuss with experienced adopters, and to make links with others who will be mutually supportive. The preparation falls in stage one of the process, with the aim of enabling prospective adopters to make informed decisions about next steps, we are refining the support offer in early placement, to embed thinking that support is seamless, and expected.

The RAA has close working relationships with placing authorities, and thereby works closely to deliver the placements needed, refining the recruitment strategy accordingly. Additional thought is given to preparing adopters to take siblings, and to offer early permanence placements. In this first year there have been 22 matches of siblings, and 22 early permanence placements, children are now having life story books for use in their preparation for adoption, and adopters are accessing additional tools such as virtual reality experiences, to truly understand Childrens lived experience.

Some children are being matched rapidly- the shortest wait, 13 days from Placement Order, others have waited a long time, but are being placed- the longest 1355. Whilst the wait was long, the outcome of permanency is achieved.

We have also seen a high number of foster carer adoptions, which means continuity for these children involved.

The first year of operation has shown a budget underspend, with some of this going into reserves as agreed in the inter authority agreement, and some, in year underspend, being a saving to the partners.

The RAA has supported approx. 600 families after adoption order, across the region. This includes a mixture of facilitating adoption support fund applications and therapies, direct work with families, attendance at support groups, children's events, link workers for children, and attachment groups, plus services for adults requesting birth information.

The RAA has recruited, 82 adopters, and at any one time has approx. 400 households at any stage of the journey pre order.

The RAA had operated 5 adoption panels per months, which have dealt with 206 matters.

Comparing data 2018-19, for the year before AEM became operational, and the data of the first year of operation,

The number of adopter approvals has fallen slightly, from 87 to 82. However, the number of people starting the adoption process, and assessment has reduced, indicating a higher rate of approval for those in the process.

For all four local authorities, the total number of adoption plans made (best interest decisions) has risen from 166 to 178.

The number of placement orders obtained has fallen from 154 to 146. These changes are marginal numbers, so not indicating any concerns or trend. The number of children placed, and becoming subject to adoption order have also fallen, very minimally.

The level of disruption has fallen 61% from 13 to 5.

Each Local Authority individually has numbers which are higher or lower, in some areas, indicating no overall trend between the Local Authorities, and no consistency. There must be some caution exercised when taking figures regarding adoption, for a financial year, we see that it takes on average

8 months from becoming looked after, to having an adoption plan

3 and a half months, from that plan, to placement order

7 and a half months from that order, to being placed with an adoptive family

And a further 8 and a half months to adoption order,

This over four Local Authorities, is an average journey from becoming looked after to being adopted of 2 years 3 months, so measuring any cohort, over one year, is a snapshot, along the journey.

We have placed children who have waited many months this year, and this will hopefully lead to the total average time reducing in the future.

The number of children needing adoption placements has ranged from 104 to 179 during the year, and for each Local Authority the numbers have varied by 100% during the year.

National Timescales

AEM Average Timescales

Within 4 months

8 months

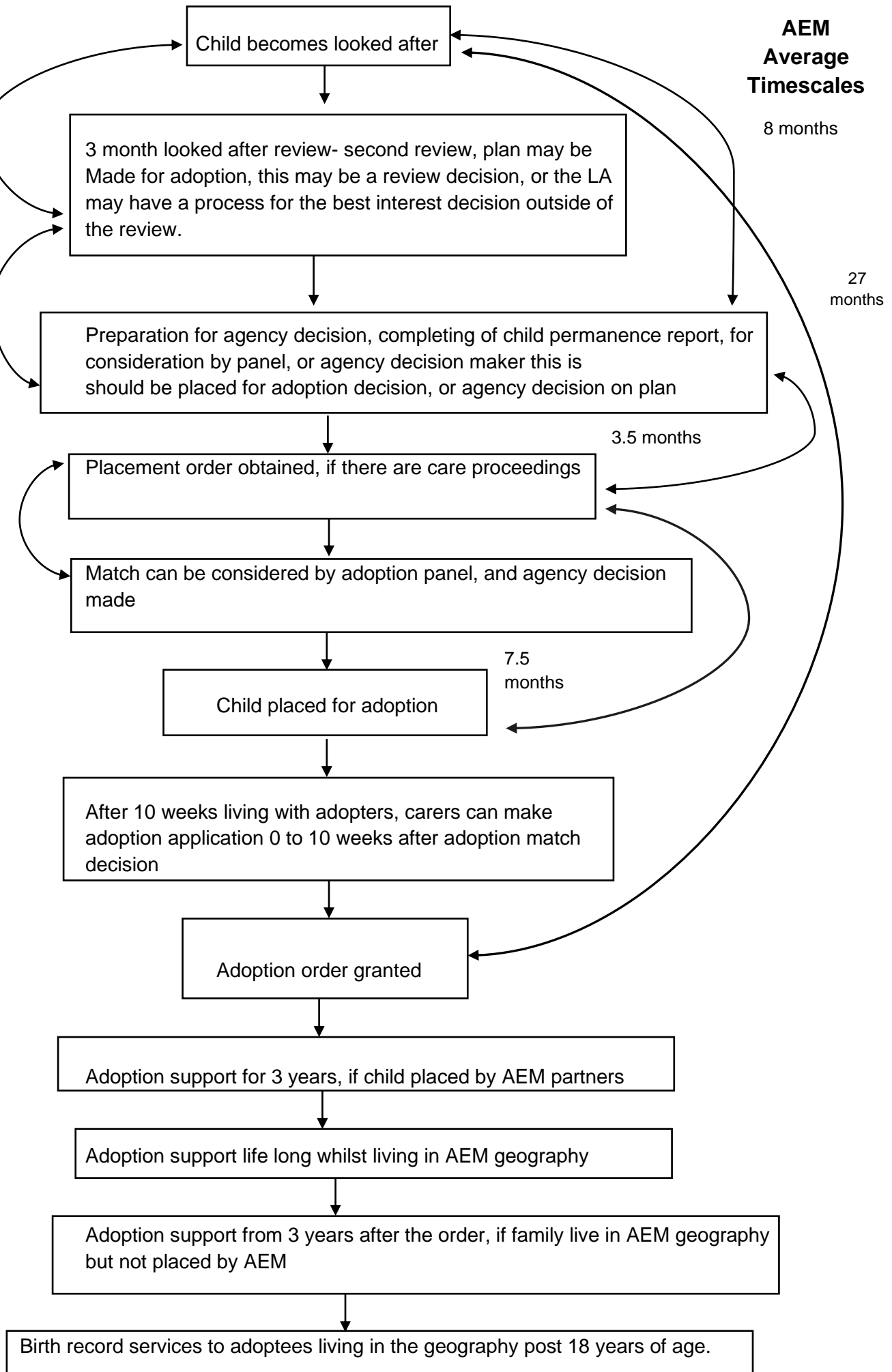
Within 8 weeks

27 months

Within 121 days

3.5 months

7.5 months



Derby.

Of the 134 children matched 22 are Derby children with the number in homefinding ranging from 19 to 42, and 47 children becoming subject to Placement Order this year.

Four of the 22 children matched became subject to placement order in 2018 or before, indicating some delay, the longest time from placement order to match was 1355 days, the shortest 32 days. The wait for adoption of over 3 years, will significantly impact on average time reporting, however, is an excellent outcome finally for the children concerned.

Two sibling groups were matched.

In this year there has been a reduction in Best Interest decisions for children, - 42 to 36 however a significant increase in placement orders, from 24 to 47. the number of children placed has remained static at 21, and adoption orders has reduced from 29 to 18

This means the total number of children needing adoption placements has risen, the recruitment levels of AEM should meet this need.

Children placed have been less than a year old to seven years old.

For the children placed the time from becoming looked after to adoption plan has fallen by 9 months, the days between plan and placement order has risen by two and a half months, from placement order to match has fallen by a week and placed to adoption order reduced by 2 months, an overall fall by approx. 9 months, on the total journey.

There have been no disruptions this year.

The number of families supported by the service after adoption order, is approx. 100.