

Adoption Agency Report

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the Adoption Agency continues to provide Agency Reports from period of the last report in December 2008 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 9 December 2009 to December 2009. 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 December 2008 and December 2009. There are 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 31 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.

2.6 The Panel Membership as at December 2009

Panel 1

Pat Carty	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
Gersh Subhra	Derby City Council	Independent Member
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 (Independent)
Carolynne Benjamin	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 January 2009 to December 2009 (January 2008 to December 2008)

47 children were recommended for adoption (49)
41 children were matched with adopters (37)
21 adoptive families were approved (15)
0 Disruptions (6 children – 3 placements)

2.8 Placements made January 2009 to December 2009 (January 2008 to December 2008)

35 Children have been placed for adoption. In the previous year 36 placements were made.

Gender

Male: 22 (19)
Female: 13 (16)

Heritage

4 Dual heritage (2)
28 White British (30)
2 Asian (2)
1 Afro Caribbean (1)

Types of placement

Current Foster Carers	0 (2)
Local authorities	6 (7)
LA's in consortium	9 (8)
Voluntary Agencies	9 (11)
Derby City Adopters	11 (9)

2.9 Children Waiting Placement as at December 2009

There are currently 66 children waiting for adoptive placements of whom 17 have potential matches identified.

2.10 Adoption Orders Made:

44 orders were made. (23)

2.11 Approval of Adopters

Panel has considered 21 applications from families wishing to be approved as Adopters and all have been approved. 7 have had Derby City Children placed with them

2.12 Developments

1. The Adoption Service was inspected by Ofsted from 7 – 10 December 2009. It was found to be good in all '5 outcomes' with 'enjoy and achieve' element having outstanding elements. The inspectors received very positive comments from the service users they met about the quality of service they received and the professionalism of the staff they met. The full written report has not yet been received but will be circulated when available. The overall tone of the report should be very positive with only a few minor inadequacies.
2. The Statement of Purpose has been approved previously. The Adoption Minimum Standards require that it is reviewed and updated at least annually and presented to this committee. Our policies and procedures were reviewed and updated in October 2009 and our Statement of Purpose has been amended accordingly.
3. Derby City continues to provide a comprehensive post adoption service offering a range of services to adopted adults, birth family members and adoptive families. In the last year we have begun a service level agreement with Adoption UK a recognised national organisation for adopters to provide support groups to adoptive families in the area.
4. The Adoption team has continued to place a high number of children for adoption. We currently have 6.7% of our looked after children placed for adoption, of whom 36 were placed in the last 12 months. We have achieved 44 adoption orders which contributes to 11.8% of our looked after children achieving permanence in the last 12 months. Our performance on the new national indicator (NI61) at 60% is weaker and currently under review. This new indicator monitors the time from when the authority's Adoption Panel recommends adoption to when the child is placed against a timescale of 12 months. We have approved 21 new adoptive families in the last 12 months, an increase of 6 on the previous period. We continue to report a low level; of disruptions (none in the period).
5. The staffing complement has been maintained but there has been a full time vacancy in the Post Adoption service and a 3 day post in the Adoption team which we have been unable to fill.
6. Our continued membership of the East Midlands Adoption Consortium has brought benefits in local exchanges of adoption placements and staff training opportunities. Attendance at regional and national 'Placement Days' has resulted in successful homefinding for some of our 'hard to place' children.

**For more information
contact:**

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None

Background papers:

List of appendices:

Appendix 1: Implications

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
- 1.2 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.
- 2.2 The final section of 2002 Adoption and Children Act was implemented at the end of 2005.

Personnel

3. The Adoption Team consists of a full time Service Manager, 6.5 Social Workers who carry out the full range of adoption activities. The Post Adoption team consists of a Service Manager, 2 Post Adoption 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.
- 4.2 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. This furthers the Council's Objectives of **supporting everyone in learning and achieving** and **helping us all to be active healthy and independent.**