

Adoption Agency Report

SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Children Act 1989, the Adoption Agency Regulations (2011), the Adoption and Children Act 2002, the Education and Adoption Act 2016 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 for the period 1st April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

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 2016 and 31 March 2017 47 children were adopted including 9 sibling pairs and one group of 3. There were 28 boys and 19 girls adopted. 32 of the children were white British and 9 of the children were adopted by their foster carer. The age profile of the children was as follows:

Age at adoption	Number 16-17 data
Under 1	0
1	13
2	10
3	2
4	5
5	4
6	2
7	5
8	1
9	3
10	1
11	1
Total	47

- 4.3 The average time between entering care and adoptive placement for those children adopted in the year in question was 732 days. This compares to an England average for the years 2013-16, the most recent available, of 558 days.

44.7% of the children had waited less than 16 months between entering care and moving in with the adoptive family. This measure has now been changed to the percentage who wait under 14 months. Derby's three year average for 2013-16 was 35%.

The average time between court authority to place and matching was 405 days compared to an England average for 2013-16 of 226 days.

These performance figures are outside the target range but include nine "legacy" cases of children whose plans were made some years ago and where there were delays in achieving adoption. Six of these children were adopted by their foster carers. A more detailed analysis of these cases has been completed and has been used in the commentary on performance figures and in the self assessment for the recent inspection. The outcome of this inspection in March 2017 was that Derby City was rated "Good" and the sub-judgement for the adoption service was also "Good". It was acknowledged by Ofsted that the adoption service continued to persevere in securing adoption for harder to place children, these are children who are older, have high complex needs and may be part of a sibling group that need to be placed together. The fact that this impacts on our adoption scorecard does not deter the service from maximising all home-finding activity to avoid a change of care plan for this cohort of children.

Adoption score cards for the year 2016-17 are not yet available.

- 4.4 22 Adoptive families were approved in the year.

At the end of March 2017 there were 11 families approved and waiting.

7 families had waited over 12 months since approval although 3 of these were in the linking/matching process and 2 were on hold.

- 4.5 Adoption panel has met 15 times in the year and has considered matches for 23 children, a plan of adoption for 2 relinquished children, dealt with 24 applications from prospective adopters and one short report when the agency assessment was that an application should not proceed. 2 of the applications were deferred and subsequently re-presented to Panel. Panel is scheduled to meet monthly with additional panels being arranged as needed. There have been 2 panel training sessions held.

- 4.6 During 2016-17 26 children had plans for adoption agreed by the agency decision maker. The characteristics of the children are: 10 boys 16 girls 19 of the children are white British, 4 white other, 1 mixed other, 1 white black Caribbean 1 white African. There were 2 sibling groups of three and 1 sibling pair. 2 of the children were relinquished infants.

Under 1	10
1	3
2	3
3	3
4	4
5	1
6	0
7	2
total	26

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

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Children with agency decision that adoption is in their best interests	26	42	35	26

- 4.7 During 2016 to 2017, 23 children were matched with an adoptive family. This includes one sibling pair and a group of 3 placed together.

4.8	Inter-agency placements 2016-7	Number of families	Number of children
	Children placed with families approved by DCC	14	17
	Placements made with families approved by other local authorities	3	3
	Placements made with VAAs	3	3
	Children from other local authorities placed with Derby City approved adopters during 2016-17	7	9

The table above shows the number of Derby children placed via inter agency arrangements and the number of children from other local authorities placed with families approved by Derby.

- 4.9 At the end of March 2017 there were 11 children subject to active family finding. 4 of these had plans made in earlier financial years. One of those children has subsequently been matched and placed but the remaining 3 children are not yet linked. Six of the children had potential links identified.
- 4.10 Under the Education and Adoption Act 2016, all Local Authorities are required to work together to set up Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs) by 2020. The introduction of RAAs is designed to improve the life chances of children placed for adoption by:
- increasing the size of the pool of potential adopters
 - speeding up the matching process
 - improving adoption support

It will also enable Councils to achieve efficiencies of scale.

Derby City Council agreed to work with other East Midlands Councils and Voluntary Adoption Agencies to establish an East Midlands Regional Adoption Agency.

- 4.11 On 2 December 2016 the Lead members and Directors of Children's services across the region agreed a mandate to conduct a pilot as part of the development of a regional adoption agency within the East Midlands. The pilot is to run with two sub-regional areas, Derby City is part of the D2N2 regional sub-group alongside Derbyshire, Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire. Derby City began piloting a permanence team in July 2017. .

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)	Suanne Lim Service Director Children's Integrated Services, 01332 642641, suanne.lim@derby.gov.uk
For more information contact: Background papers: List of appendices:	Lyn Bugarski Professional Adviser Adoption, 01332 643816, lyn.bugarski@derby.gov.uk None Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – Derby City Council Adoption Agency 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.

The agency has to pay a fee for inter-agency placements and receives a fee from other local authorities who place children with adopters approved by the agency.

In the event of an appeal to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) the cost falls on the adoption service provider. The fee is £2591 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. The development of a Regional Adoption Agency is a requirement of the Education and Adoption Act 2016.

Personnel

3.1

The operational service is managed by the Head of Service for Fostering and Adoption. The adoption team has a full time team manager, 7.3 full time equivalent social workers, a .5 Independent support worker to birth families, a case support officer and the East Midlands Adoption Consortium clerk. This latter post is hosted by Derby City on behalf of the Consortium. The adoption adviser is a .6 FTE post. The Adoption Support Service is managed by the team manager Adoption Support 0.5FTE and comprises 2.6 FTE social work posts and a 0.5 independent support worker to birth families and has a full time business support post to support the letter box exchange scheme. The Fostering and Adoption Recruitment Officer post covers both services and supports the collation of essential data relating to performance information relating to the recruitment of adopters.

IT

4.1

As referenced in the report agreement has been reached to pilot a D2N2 Children's Adoption Permanence Team. IT requirements for a Regionalised Adoption Agency are therefore being considered within the overall developments of the regionalisation programme.

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 and Safeguarding

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