

Adoption Scorecard

SUMMARY

- 1.1 The scorecard considers adoption performance across a number of parameters, including timeliness over a 3 year period. The current scorecard measures from 2009-2012.
- 1.2 The scorecard works "backwards" in that it looks at all of the children adopted within a given year and measures the performance of the case up until the time of the adoption.
- 1.3 Other measures include "softer" information, eg related to the ethnicity of children placed for adoption, the number of children who leave care through adoption and the age at which children are adopted.
- 1.4 The scorecard will also gather information on the assessment of adopters. This data will not be available until 2013.
- 1.5 The score card does not consider matters relating to the needs of children.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To note the current performance in relation to children who are adopted within Derby City

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 A request from the Corporate Parenting Board.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 The scorecard indicates that the 3 year performance of adoption within Derby relating to timeliness has gone down.
- 4.2 The numbers of children in care in Derby City is higher than our comparators. The reasons for this are unclear. 472 total as at 8th Oct 2012
- 4.3 Derby continues to try and give a wide range of children the opportunity to live within an adoptive family. As such the numbers of children who have a plan for adoption are quite high, standing at 88 which is 18% of the children who are in care

- 4.4 Factors which affect the timeliness of adoptions are as follows:
- The needs of the children – many of the children we seek to place have had very neglectful and damaging experiences within the birth family. These experiences often include exposure to domestic violence both before and after birth; drugs; alcohol; sexual harm.
 - Whether children are to be placed with siblings or as singletons – in many situations court care plans specify that we have to family find for a defined period of time for sibling groups where the plan is that they are placed for adoption together. Due to the needs of the children it is often extremely difficult to find families who can take sibling groups and meet their individual needs. In many situations we are unable to place the children together and we then have to family find for the children separately. This adds to the time that it can take to find families for children. Court guardians often state that we should try and place children together regardless of the needs of the individual children.
 - Contact arrangements - there are situations where we are required to find adopters who will agree to high levels of contact with birth siblings placed elsewhere. This can cause delay as there are limited adopters who will agree to high levels of delay.
 - Availability of adopters - the number of children requiring an adoptive family has increased and there are not enough adoptive families who can care for these children.
- 4.5 Capacity within the social care teams, including localities, children and care and adoption teams is an ongoing issue which is being partly addressed. In order to be suitably qualified to do adoption work a social worker must have been qualified for 3 years and worked within children's social care and have direct experience of adoption. Derby has struggled to recruit social workers who have this level of experience which puts pressure on those who are suitably qualified and managers. The Children in Care team has recruited new social workers to deal with the issues of capacity and workload but none of the new recruits meet the requirements to be suitably qualified in adoption.
- 4.6 Although Derby's timeliness remains an issue it must be noted that we place a high proportion of our children who leave care in adoptive families, one of the highest proportions in the country, 25% in Derby compared to 12% nationally. There is therefore a tension between timeliness and numbers placed for adoption.
- 4.7 We also place a higher number of children (58%) in adoptive families within 21 months of them coming into care. This is a higher percentage than the England 3 year average (56%).
- 4.8 We place a significantly higher number of BME children (19%) than the national average which is only 6%. Derby remains consistently high in this measurement compared to the national average.
- 4.9 Care proceedings in Derby are completed quickly, much faster than the national average.
- 5.0 Timeliness for 2012/13 is much improved. However there are a number of children who have been in adoptive families for some years which is likely to affect the final out turn.
- 5.1 We have continued to be involved in Adoption Activity Days as a way of identifying families for children. We have now taken part in 4 activity days and placed a number of children as a result. Martin Nairey, the Government's adoption Tzar, attended the last day that was run in October 2012.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 None

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer	N/A
Financial officer	N/A
Human Resources officer	N/A
Service Director(s)	N/A
Other(s)	Diane Grist – Deputy Head of Service, Children in Care

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Background papers:	None
List of appendices:	Appendix 1 – Implications

IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

- 1.1 These are monitored by Service Directors and will be monitored separately.

Legal

- 2.1 None

Personnel

- 3.1 None

Equalities Impact

- 4.1 The numbers of children in care within Derby City Council is high and measures are being taken to reduce the numbers through early intervention and exit from care.

Health and Safety

- 5.1 None

Environmental Sustainability

- 6.1 None

Asset Management

- 7.1 None

Risk Management

- 8.1 None

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 9.1 Achieving learning potential
Good health and well being
Being safe and feeling safe