



Adoption Agency Report 2017-18

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 2017 to 31 March 2018.

1.3 Children in Care Council Summary

24 children were adopted last year including 3 groups of brothers and sisters. 20 new families were approved to adopt. There were 40 children where it was agreed adoption was the right thing for them.

Last year 23 children were matched with new families. This included 2 groups of brothers and sisters who went to live with their new families together.

On 31 March 2018 there were 22 children who were living with their new families but the court had not yet made the adoption order. There were 8 children where we thought we had found the right family but this had not yet been agreed through adoption panel. There were 12 children where the court was still deciding what was best for them and 15 children where we were still looking for the right family.

There are important changes to the way we organise adoption services coming in next year. The government has said that we should work more closely with other councils to make sure we find families for more children and that we do this more quickly. Derby City Council is working with councils nearby to become a regional adoption agency.

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 There were 24 adoptions of children from care in the year.

| Age at adoption (years) | Children adopted in 2017-18 |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Under 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 7 |
| 2 | 5 |
| 3 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 |
| 5 | 1 |
| 6 | 1 |
| 7 | 4 |
| 8 | 1 |
| Grand Total | 24 |
| | |
| Gender | Children adopted in 2017-18 |
| Male | 11 |
| Female | 13 |
| Grand Total | 24 |
| | |

| Ethnicity | Children adopted in 2017-18 |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| WBRI - White British | 21 |
| WOTH - Any other White background | 2 |
| MWBA - Mixed White & Black African | 1 |
| Grand Total | 24 |

The figures above included a sibling group of 3 and 2 sibling pairs.

- 4.3 The average number of days between entering care and being placed for adoption was 474 days. The average number of days between receiving authority to place and a match to a family was 272 days.

This performance shows an improvement on the previous year but that year there were 47 adoptions which included a number of legacy cases that impacted on the average. The average performance over the previous three years, the measure used in the adoption score cards, is detailed below. This shows that, although there has been an improvement, the timescales for 2017-8 are above the government threshold. The pilot Child Adoption and Permanence Team (CAPT) was set up in July 2017 with the aim of reducing delay for children in the adoption process. Any resulting improvement in performance will not be evident until the children involved are legally adopted.

| | <i>2017-18 (24 adoptions)</i> | <i>2014-17 3 year average from adoption score card</i> | <i>Govt threshold</i> |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| <i>Average days entering care and being placed for adoption</i> | 474 | 653 | 426 |
| <i>Average days between authority to place and match</i> | 272 | 364 | 121 |

- 4.4 There were 20 adopter household approvals in the year compared to 22 in the previous year. 3 approved adopter households withdrew from the process during the year. At the end of March 2018 there were 9 approved adopter households waiting and available, 9 with potential matches being explored plus there were 2 approved adopter households on hold.
- 4.5 The adoption panel has met 14 times in the year and has considered 23 applications to adopt and the matches of 23 children. There were no cases where an application to adopt was unsuccessful, nor were there any matches which were not agreed. However, some cases were deferred for further work or information and were therefore heard twice.
- 4.6 There were 40 new plans for adoption made in the year. The characteristics of children are shown below.

| Age (Last birthday) at date plan agreed (or FFA/Concurrent agreed) | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Age (Years) | Children with new plans |
| Under 1 | 12 |
| 1 | 5 |
| 2 | 4 |
| 3 | 5 |
| 4 | 4 |
| 5 | 3 |
| 6 | 4 |

| | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 7 | 2 |
| 8 | 1 |
| Grand Total | 40 |
| | |
| Gender | Children with new plans |
| Male | 22 |
| Female | 18 |
| Grand Total | 40 |
| | |
| Ethnicity | Children with new plans |
| WBRI - White British | 30 |
| WOTH - Any other White background | 1 |
| MWAS - Mixed White & Asian | 3 |
| MOTH - Any other Mixed background | 2 |
| BCRB - Black Caribbean | 3 |
| OOH - Any other ethnic group | 1 |
| Grand Total | 40 |
| | |
| Disability | Children with new plans |
| No | 40 |
| Yes | 0 |
| Grand Total | 40 |
| | |

The annual variation in new plans made is illustrated below.

| Year | New plans |
|---------|-----------|
| 2013-14 | 26 |
| 2014-15 | 42 |
| 2015-16 | 35 |
| 2016-17 | 26 |
| 2017-18 | 40 |

4.7 There were 8 children where the plan of adoption was reversed in the year. These may have been plans made in previous years. In 3 cases, the court did not make a placement order. In 3 the child's needs changed subsequent to the decision and in 2, prospective adopters could not be found despite extensive home finding activity.

4.8 There were 23 matches made during 2017-8, 13 boys and 10 girls. This included 2 sibling pairs placed together. The ages of the children matched was as follows:

| Age at match | number |
|--------------|--------|
| Under 1 | 6 |
| 1 | 6 |
| 2 | 1 |
| 3 | 3 |
| 4 | 3 |
| 5 | 3 |
| 6 | 0 |
| 7 | 0 |
| 8 | 1 |

- 4.9 11 of the children matched were placed with adopters approved by Derby City Council, 8 with adopters approved by other local authorities and 4 with adopters approved by voluntary adoption agencies. 11 children from other local authorities were placed in 8 families approved by Derby City Council. There is an interagency fee payable when using adopters approved by another agency and a fee is claimed when children from other local authorities are placed in families approved by Derby City Council.
- 4.10 At the end of March 2018 there were 22 children placed with adoptive families awaiting an adoption order. There is a minimum of ten weeks from placement before an adoption application can be lodged with the courts but in some cases adoptive families wait longer. There are also some cases delayed in the legal process when the adoption application is contested. There were 8 children with a match/link identified but not yet presented to panel. There were 12 children with an adoption plan but not subject to active family finding, generally because they were still subject to legal proceedings. 15 children were subject to active family finding. These include 3 sibling pairs and one sibling group of 3. The majority of children subject to active family finding had plans made/ placement orders granted within the last year. There were 2 unrelated children aged 10 and 5 who had had adoption plans made in 2015 but where there had not yet been a family identified. It is possible that the adoption plans for these children will be reversed.
- 4.11 In June 2017 Derby City Council cabinet gave agreement in principle to a proposal to work with Derbyshire County Council, Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Council to pursue the development of a regional adoption agency (RAA).
The 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.

| |
|---------------------------------|
| OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED |
|---------------------------------|

5.1 None.

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 HoS Sally Penrose |
|--|---------------------------------|

| | |
|---|--|
| For more information contact: Background papers: List of appendices: | Lyn Bugarski 01332 642641 Lyn.bugarski@derby.gov.uk None Appendix 1 – Implications |
|---|--|

| |
|---------------------|
| 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 financial year 2017-18 the expenditure on interagency fees was: £384,790.40 compared to an income of £393,997.00.

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 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. In June 2017 a child adoption and permanence team (CAPT) was created. This is staffed by 4 FTE social workers, 2 seconded from within the adoption team and 2 from the children in care service. The adoption team manager manages the pilot team and responsibility for line management falls to the Head of Service for Fostering and Adoption.

There is a Human Resources technical work stream supporting the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) Project.

IT

- 4.1 The service is supported by the Council IT service and there is an ITC technical work stream supporting the RAA Project.

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. There are no plans for staff to relocate as a result of the establishment of a regional adoption agency.

Risk Management and safeguarding.

- 9.1 Risk is managed at all stages of the adoption process. Children are safeguarded by stringent vetting of potential adopters from the point of enquiry and throughout the assessment and preparation process. Adoption reports for panel are quality assured and the professional adviser for adoption offers advice to panel and the agency decision maker. Any allegations made against approved adopters would be dealt with through the Looked After Designated Officer (LADO) process. In the event of an adoption disruption, disruption meetings are held to identify issues, learn lessons and improve future practice.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 10.1 The adoption service supports the corporate objectives and priority outcomes.
- Identify and meet needs to deliver improved outcomes
 - Learning from and improving practice
 - Sustain capacity and build capability across the city.