
Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)
Cabinet Members (Children and Young People)

29 August 2013
15 October 2013

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member (Children, Learning and Young People) – Councillor Duggins
Deputy Cabinet Member (Children, Learning and Young People) – Councillor Innes

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Director of Children, Learning and Young People

Ward(s) affected:

None

Title:

Adoption Service Report 2012/13

Is this a key decision

No

Executive Summary:

Coventry City Council's Adoption Service formed part of The Fundamental Service Review in 2011/12. The Adoption Service was integrated with the Fostering Service and Family Finding in July 2012. They were joined by the Permanence Team, from the Looked After Children Service (LAC) in March 2013 to form the Integrated Family Placements Services, all centrally located under the portfolio of services under the Head of Service for LAC.

The Service Manager of the newly formed Integrated Family Placements Service is also the Nominated Manager of the Coventry City Council's Registered Adoption Service and Fostering Service both of which are Regulated Services now provided within the integrated model.

The rationale for the integrated model is to provide a service for children that is designed around the child's timeline. A service which aims to secure a timely outcome of permanency for the wide range of children for whom this is needed at the earliest possible stage, whether this is via Adoption, Special Guardianship Orders or Long Term Fostering.

Located within the Integrated Family Placement Service the aim of the Adoption Service is to provide a comprehensive Adoption and Post-Adoption Service, including the provision of Adoption Support Services, to all parties affected by the adoption process that is consistent with Best Practice, National Standards, Guidance and Regulatory Requirements.

The Council is committed to achieving the greatest number of adoptions with the best outcomes for the children concerned and supports the recruitment of prospective adopters. In the period 2012-13, 40 Coventry children were adopted and 28 new prospective adopters were approved.

The Regulations require that a Statement of Purpose (SOP) is compiled and kept under regular review. The National Minimum Standards specify that that the SOP should be reviewed at least annually.

Recommendations:

The Education and Children’s Services Scrutiny Board (2) is recommended to:

1. Note the contents of the Adoption Service Report 2012/13.
2. Forward any recommendations to the Cabinet Member (Children and Young People).

The Cabinet Member (Children and Young People) is recommended to:

- 1) Consider any recommendations made by the Education and Children’s Services Scrutiny Board (2).
- 2) Accept the Adoption Service Report 2012/13.
- 3) Approve the updated Statement of Purpose.
- 4) Approve that the Council remains committed to the new model in achieving the greatest number of adoptions compatible with achieving the best outcomes for the children concerned.

List of Appendices included:

Appendix 1 – Statement of Purpose (updated June, July and August 2013)

Other useful background papers:

No

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny

Yes, the Education and Children’s Services Scrutiny Board (2) on 29.8.13

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body

No

Will this report go to Council

No

Report title: Adoption Service Report 2012/13

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 In line with the Government reform of Adoption services the Adoption Service is now located within the new Integrated Family Placement Service to facilitate the work of different teams who all have a role in preparing and supporting both children and adults on their adoption journey to ensure that this progresses in a timely manner without undue delay.
- 1.2 The Permanence Team are responsible for children who have been identified as needing adoption. The Social Workers in the team work with birth families and adopters and with the children to prepare and support them up until they have been adopted by their new family and the Family Finders in the Team identify suitable matches for children with families and families with children. Permanence Social Workers and Family Finders work closely with the Neighbourhood Social Workers, Assessment and Support Social Workers to identify needs, make and sustain adoption placements.
- 1.3 The Assessment Team recruits, prepares and assesses prospective adopters, taking them up to Adoption Panel for consideration of their suitability to adopt. The Support Team then supports the adopters and their children post approval, through matching, introductions and placement through the rest of the adoption process and beyond. Support Social Workers also provide support for post adoption contact arrangements with birth family and adopted adults.
- 1.4 The development of the dedicated Family Finders within the Permanency Team means that the information about children needing adoptive placements will be available to the service at a much earlier point in a child's journey which will lead to the identification of suitable matches at a more timely stage whether these are in house or via external agencies.
- 1.5 The Adoption Panel is responsible for recommending and reviewing adoption plans for children whose parents have given consent for them to be adopted, recommending; the approval of prospective adopters, terminating the approval of adopters and matching children to adopters. It also considers learning points from any disruptions in adoption placements.
- 1.6 The Agency Decision Maker (ADM) is responsible for making a formal decision that children Should be Placed for Adoption where there are children who are the subject of an adoption plan within Care Proceedings in the court process, have an adoption plan and for children being considered and recommended by the Adoption Panel where the parents have given their agreement to their child being adopted. The ADM is also responsible for deciding on approval and termination of approval of adopters and the approval of adoption placements.
- 1.7 The Agency Adoption Panel Advisor and Adoption Support Services Advisor is a formal role and it is a regulatory requirement for this to be undertaken by a suitability qualified social worker with sufficient specialist experience in adoption.
- 1.8 In bringing the services together it is anticipated that there is greater scope for processing assessments of Adopters more quickly so a stretch timescale of 6 months for adoption assessments from enquiry to approval has been agreed.
- 1.9 With regard to children, the Children, Learning and Young People Service as a whole has revised all its twin track and parallel planning processes to ensure that children who can be placed for adoption are placed as soon as possible.

- 1.10 Prospective Adopters have been approached to consider dual approval as Adopters and Foster Carers for very young children, so that in a small number of cases children have been placed before their Placement Order was made, under Foster Care Regulations, and while their permanence plan remains unresolved.
- 1.11 Over the past two years there have been several children adopted by their Foster Carers in Coventry which has led the service to review the decision not to recruit adopters from Coventry and to once again offer Adoption Assessments to those who live locally. Whilst it is anticipated that this change will assist with recruitment of Adopters it is acknowledged that this will have an impact on reducing numbers of fostering placements for children. The benefits and outcomes for the individual children in securing permanency, however, and subsequently exiting them from care are significant.
- 1.12 The Service has also reviewed and updated the Adoption web site and has improved the standard of information that is sent to initial enquirers, implementing the new 2 Stage Process for Prospective Adopters that became mandatory on 1st July 2013. Response times and other practices have also been reviewed in order to streamline the service and to bring Adopters through the process in a more timely way.

Adopters

- 1.13 The following table sets out the performance of the Adoption Service with regard to activity in respect of Adopters and those interested in Adopting.

Key performance indicators	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11
Adoption enquiries received by Recruitment Team	162	221	224
Number of enquirers sent information packs	Packs are routinely sent but this info has not recorded for this year *	88	93
Initial visits made	46*	31	41
Applications received	39*	22	25
Numbers of Adopters Approved	28	33	26
Number of Adopters awaiting matching with children	31	22	23
Number of Coventry Adopters matched with children	19	Not collected	Not collected
Number of Coventry Adopters with Children Placed	20	Not collected	Not collected
Number of Coventry Adopters with Adoption Order	20	Not collected	Not collected

**Method of recording these figures changed 1st Aug 12 and do not include figs 1.4.12 – 31.7.12*

Referrals/Enquiries to the Adoption Service

- 1.14 162 general adoption enquiries in total were received by the Assessment Team in 2012/3.
- 1.15 Of the 162 prospective adopters who wished to take their interest further, 112 of either chose not to pursue their application with us, or not to pursue at that time or were counselled out. The reasons were not recorded this year and are currently not recorded but a system for recording these reasons is being considered.
- 1.16 There were 95 initial enquiries from 1st August 12 to 31st March 13 and during the same period we undertook 46 initial visits. Of these visits there were 39 assessments that were started during this period, which is excellent conversion rate and demonstrates the assessing social workers skills in identifying strong candidates to take forward.

Recruitment

- 1.17 Since August 2012 the new process for recruiting and assessing Prospective Adopters has become fully embedded. Adopters are now actively recruited from Coventry as well as surrounding areas. Specific assessments of Foster Carers or other Prospective Adopters for specific children are undertaken where ever possible. All assessments now have a target timescale of 6 months from enquiry to approval. The Government's new 2 Stage Adoption Process has required little change to implement from 1st July 2013.
- 1.18 The Integrated Family Placement Service has refreshed the Recruitment and Retention Group and an "Adopt for Coventry Campaign" has been launched across the city. Activities for the recruitment campaign include: Banners, posters and flags have been delivered in prominent areas of the City promoting adoption, 'Adopt for Coventry' leaflets and beer mats distributed to all local family pubs in Coventry and surrounding areas and bright pink tee-shirts have been worn by leaflet distributors, the Chief Executive, Senior Managers, Foster Carers and staff at local City half marathon event with lots of press coverage. An Adopt for Coventry advert has been established on the IT Helpline for the city council and radio interviews and press interviews took place by adopters and a care leaver promoting adoption in November 2012 as part of Adoption week.

Preparation Groups

- 1.19 Training and Preparation Groups, run by the service are offered to all Prospective Adopters including approved foster carers and 2nd time adopters where appropriate. Groups were run in April, July, October 2012 and January 2013. The groups take place over 4 days, and include presentations and exercises for applicants on issues to consider when adopting a child from the care system.
- 1.20 There were, in total, 36 households who attended these groups in the period 2012/3. Of these households there were 6 who withdrew prior to approval (1 was due to medical reasons but the other reasons are not recorded) 8 households are still being assessed.
- 1.21 Of these who attended the groups there were 22 households who went on to be approved (although of those 22; 1 household experienced, a disruption and 1 experienced a foster placement breakdown and 3 simply decided to withdraw) thus there were 17 households who were approved following their preparation training. All 17 are either being considered for match, are at the linking stage or have children already placed.

Approval and Matching of Adopters

- 1.22 Adoption Panel approved 28 Adopters during the reporting period of which 25 were general Adopters and 3 were approvals with specific children in mind. This is 5 less than 2011/12 and 2 more than 2010/11.
- 1.23 The Service seeks to recruit a pool of Adopters to meet the needs of a wide range of children. However, throughout the country there are numerous Prospective Adopters who are childless and generally seeking younger and single children and there have traditionally been fewer couples or single adopters who are prepared to consider older children and sibling groups.
- 1.24 Factors that militate against matching include; children often needing to be placed out of city for their welfare, a number of Adopters that are not able to take older children, sibling groups or children with complex needs. Often there is a mismatch between the aspirations of Adopters, their capacity to care for children with complex needs and the needs of children awaiting a family.
- 1.25 There were 31 Adopters waiting for a match at the end of March 2013 compared to 22 in 2011/12.

Children

- 1.26 The following table sets out the performance of the Adoption Service with regard to activity in respect of Children

Key performance indicators	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11
No of children with a Plan for Adoption (ADM decision that child should be placed for adoption ShoBPA) end of March 2013 (*no of decisions in period 2012/3)	96 (*73)	50	56
No of Children with a Placement Order	71	48	41
No Children Placed for Adoption in year	25	48	27
No of Children adopted during year	40	25	23
Disruptions of placement	1	1	1

Children with a Plan for Adoption

- 1.27 There has been almost a 50% increase in children with an agency decision that supported the Plan of Adoption compared to 2011/12. It must be noted, however not all of these children will necessarily go on to an adoption placement. Adoption is often one of a range of options for the child including, rehabilitation where safe to do so, placement with family or other connected persons subject to a Residence or Special Guardianship Order. This does reflect the increased activity generally within children's services.
- 1.28 There were 71 children Subject of a Placement Order by the end of March 2013. Of those children: 29 children were placed with their adoptive family with 25 of these children being placed during the period. There were 5 children who had been matched but not yet placed by the end of March 2013. There were 11 children for whom their plan of adoption had changed and were to have their Placement Orders revoked. There were 31 children who were not yet matched with a family by end March 2013.

- 1.29 The number, profile and age of the children (including sibling groups) waiting for an adoptive placement and length of time they have been waiting has an impact on the Adoption Scorecard. This is in relation to the timeliness of the number of days between a child becoming Looked After and being placed with their adoptive family. Regular reports on the Adoption Scorecard are provided to the Leadership Team and Elected Members.
- 1.30 Of the children on a Placement Order and not placed as at end March 2013 there were 6 sibling groups of 3 and 6 sibling groups of 2. Of those sibling groups 1 sibling group of 3 and 2 sibling groups of 2 are to have their Placement Orders revoked and all have an alternative plan of Long Term Foster Care with their current carers. There are 3 sibling groups of 3 and 2 sibling groups of 2 for whom their current Foster Carers are being assessed to adopt or take an SGO (Special Guardianship Order). There are 1 sibling group of 3 and 1 sibling group of 2 who have since been placed with their adoptive family in June and July 2013 respectively. There is 1 sibling group of 3 and 2 sibling groups of 2 who are still waiting for an adoptive family. There is 1 sibling group of 2 who have been separated and their respective Foster Carers are in the process of being assessed to adopt them.
- 1.31 Of the single children remaining 6 were placed by July 2013. There are 3 single children for whom their foster carers plan to adopt or pursue an SGO. There is 1 single child whose Placement Order is being revoked and she will remain in long term foster care with her present carer and there is 1 single child still waiting for her permanent family.

Family Finding and Matching

- 1.32 Family Finders are integrated as part of the Permanency Team and, together with the Children's Social Workers, are linked in to Neighbourhood Teams. They have begun to work proactively together to identify at an early stage children who may require adoptive placements and are starting to achieve success in identifying families for these children sooner so that matching and placements can be progressed immediately after the Placement Order is achieved.
- 1.33 Family Finding Evenings have been held on a quarterly basis and are attended by Prospective Adopters undergoing assessments, Approved Adopters, Children's Social Workers, Family Finders and Children's Foster Carers. The evening affords an opportunity to present and promote the profiles of children over 5 and siblings groups who are waiting for a family. A professional film maker has been commissioned to make DVD's and web profiles for those children for whom we need to recruit families.

Children Adopted During the Year

- 1.34 There were 40 children adopted during 2012/3 and of those 29 children were placed with Coventry's own Adopters. There were 5 sibling groups who were placed comprising of 11 children of the total children placed.
- 1.35 There was 1 Disruption of a Placement for Adoption 8 weeks after placement. The Disrupted case was that of an older child with complex needs aged 6years, placed with Coventry adopters but living in Leicestershire. The child returned to the care of his previous foster carers with whom he had lived since 2008 and will remain there with a plan of long term fostering.
- 1.36 There were a number of factors contributing to the Disruption that could not have been anticipated however there were also learning experiences for Adoption Panel and the Adoption Service with regard to this placement.

- 1.37 Factors such as the age of child upon placement for adoption and capacity to attach as a result of early life experiences are risk factors in making placements for adoption. These were taken into account together with the child's complex health needs and the match appeared to be good and well informed. The Adoption Service is committed to careful matching, avoidance of drift and has excellent adoption support services for all placements for adoption but an issue in this case was the absence of information for the adopters about the support services available in their own authority.
- 1.38 There were other factors in the case that have contributed to and informed the learning and development of future practice of the Adoption Service with regard to practice. In summary these were in relation to assessing prospective adopters and the timing of the split between assessment and support functions of the service to adopters, the timing of placement moves and the clarity of information and planning particularly concerning future support and contact arrangements.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 The proposed option is for members to receive the Adoption Report 2012/13 together with the update to the Statement of Purpose for the Adoption Services provided by Coventry City Council.
- 2.2 The implications of this are that this will ensure that the National Minimum Standards are met in that the Executive side of the Local Authority, receive a written report on the management, outcomes and financial state of the agency for 2012/3 and in so doing are able to monitor the management and outcomes of the services provided.
- 2.3 The proposal is that in so doing Members are able to satisfy themselves that the agency is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children, prospective adopters, adopters and other service users affected by Adoption.
- 2.4 In receiving the report and the updated Statement of Purpose for the Adoption Services provided by Coventry City Council Members are able to satisfy themselves that the agency is complying with the conditions of registration.
- 2.5 The alternative option would be to do nothing. The consequence of doing this would be that National Minimum Standards would not be met. On that basis, this option is not recommended.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 Although there has not been any specific consultation on this matter, continual review is undertaken through monitoring of the Council's Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure.
- 3.2 There were **8** complaints received during the reporting period April 2012 – March 2013. Of these **2** concerned the lack of support for building works, **3** were in relation to delayed life story work, **1** was about the poor standard of work from their social worker, **1** was about the lack of support given in respect of adopting another agency child and **1** was with regard to their assessment being postponed for 2 years.
- 3.3 15 compliments were received during the reporting period April 2012 – March 2013. 14 were commenting on the quality of the support and work of individual staff in the Adoption/Support/Permanence Team and 1 was in relation the work of the birth records social worker.

3.4 Once an application has been accepted an Adopter now has the opportunity to access either the Council's Complaints and Representation Procedure– or the Independent Reviewing Mechanism (IRM) if they are not recommended to adopt. There were no requests made to either service during 2012/3

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

4.1 There are prescribed National Timescales for progressing plans for; Adoption for Children, Approving Prospective Adopters and Placing Children for Adoption. The following table indicates how Coventry City Council's Adoption Service is meeting these timescales.

PROGRESSING PLANS FOR ADOPTION FOR CHILDREN			
Statutory Guidance	Measure	Baseline	Performance
"Children's adoption plans are presented to the ADM or Adoption Panel within 2 months of the review recommending adoption"	2 months	73 children were subject to an adoption decision in 2012/3	<p>Declined</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% of children (24 out of 48) met the criteria in 2011/12 • 34% of children (25 out of 73) met the criteria in 2012/13 <p>2012/13 story 17 plans went to panel/ADM between two and three months from the review recommendation,</p> <p>20 plans went to panel/ADM between four and six months of the review recommendation</p> <p>9 plans went to panel/ADM between six months and one year of the review recommendation</p> <p>2 children went to panel/ADM between 12 and 13 months of panel.</p>
"National Minimum Standards (Standard 13) Timescale between agency decision for the plan for adoption to the date of placement – Standard is 12 months "	12 months	27 children placed with adopters	<p>Improved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 56.3% of children (27 out of 48) met the criteria in 2011/12 • 70.3% of children (19 out of 27) met the criteria in 2012/13 <p>2012/13 Story 19 children were placed within 12 months of the decision for adoption</p> <p>8 children were not placed within 12 months of the decision for adoption. Of these not placed there were 3 single children of those single children 1 was placed for adoption with her foster carer, 1 experienced a disruption and was successfully placed with his previous foster carer for adoption and 1 other was placed within 14months. The others not placed comprised of 1 sibling group of 2 children and 1 sibling group of 3.</p>

<p>"Notification to Birth Parents of a Plan for Adoption, Linking with Adopters – orally within 48 hours of Decision and in writing within a further 5 days (7 days)"</p>		<p>73 children had a plan for adoption decision in 2012/3</p> <p>23 children had a match with adopters decision approved in 2012/3</p>	<p>This data was not collected in 2011/12</p> <p>In 2012/13 the Story 47 letters notifying of the plan for adoption were sent to the child's parent/s within 7 days Of the 26 parent/s who were not sent a letter, there were 3 x parent/s addresses that were NK and there were 19 for whom it was decided not to send a letter where no reason was recorded. There were 4 parents for whom letters were simply not sent</p> <p>Of the 6 letters notifying parents of the match only 3 of these were within the timescales.</p> <p><i>Note. Birth Parents should be notified of these important decisions in respect of their children and the practice has been for social workers to orally tell the birth parents on or within 2 days of the decision. The system for recording notifying birth parents orally and in writing of the decision to place and match has been reviewed and a new system has been implemented from July 2013 to record performance in this area. The expectation is that this should improve feedback on performance in 2013/14.</i></p>
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RECRUITMENT

Statutory Guidance	Measure	Baseline	Performance
<p>"Written information about the adoption process should be sent within 5 working days to the prospective adopter in response to their enquiry"</p>	<p>5 working days</p>	<p>162 general adoption enquiries were received in 2012/3</p>	<p>2011/12 88 packs were sent out on the same day as the enquiry</p> <p>2012/13 Generally where it has been agreed that a pack is required these have been sent out on the same or next working day</p>
<p>"The prospective adopter should be invited to an adoption information evening meeting within 2 months of their enquiry or are visited to share information".</p> <p>The service has set a Coventry timescale whereby Prospective adopters will be offered an initial visit within 5 days (national timescale is 10 days)</p>	<p>2 months from initial enquiry</p>	<p>46 families received an initial visit (since 1.8.12/13)</p>	<p>Not collected in 2011/12</p> <p>2012/13 The Story Of the 46 families receiving an initial visit 20 were visited within 5 days 33 were visited within 10 days 44 were visited within 2 months of their enquiry. Just 2 families were visited outside of the 2 month timescale due to the availability of the enquiry and the other were too recently finished a course of IVF treatment</p>
<p>"From receipt of the application – to be allocated within 5 days".</p>	<p>5 days</p>	<p>The service operates a duty system in that the worker who takes the initial enquiry is allocated the case for an initial visit unless their case load dictates otherwise.</p>	<p>Not collected in 2011/2 Or 2012/13</p> <p>Figures have not been kept on this performance indicator for this year. It is anticipated that Protocol (Electronic case management system) will capture this data going forward.</p>

APPROVAL OF ADOPTERS			
Statutory Guidance	Measure	Baseline	Performance
Adopters must be approved, 8 months from application to recommendation by Adoption Panel	8 months	28 adopters were approved to adopt in 2012/3	<p>Improved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40% of approvals (13 out of 32) met the standard in 2011/2 68% of approvals (19 out of 28) met the standard in 2012/13 <p>2012/13 Story 19 were completed within 8 months</p> <p>4 completed between 9-11 months</p> <p>5 took over 12 months</p>
6 weeks from completion of Adopters Report to Adoption Panel	6 weeks	28	<p>Not collected in 2011/12</p> <p>100% Timescale was achieved in 2012/13</p>
<p>Notifying Adopters of Decision for Approval, within 24 hours of the Panel recommendation (National standards)</p> <p>Statutory Guidance = 48 hours Coventry – all adopters are notified of the Panel's recommendations within 24 hours of attending panel by Social Worker & Panel Chair, and receive letter</p>	24 hours	28 letters of notification	<p>Improved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40.1% of letters (13 out of 32) were sent within 1 day in 2011/12 42.8% of letters (12 out of 28) were sent within 1 day in 2012/13 <p>2012/13 Story Only 12 were sent letters same day or within 1 day</p> <p>The remaining 16 were sent within 2-7 working days All adopters were notified verbally the same day or the day after the decision by the social worker.</p>

5. Comments from Director of Finance and Legal Services

5.1 Financial implications

5.1.1 The following Table shows the budget and expenditure for financial support for adopters. This includes the actual number of children being supported throughout the financial year.

Financial Year	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Adoption Support Budget	£644,319	£690,427	£707,688	£707,688	£707,688	£720,387
Adoption Support Actual Spends	£690,858	£821,418	£806,400	£757,119	£722,313	£723,679
Variation (Under) /Overspend	£46,539	£130,991	£98,712	£49,431	£14,625	£3,292
Number of Children	123	124	123	113	118	123

5.1.2 As part of the FSR proposals, it was expected that part of the forecast reduction in LAC would be as a result of increasing permanence, some of which would be children adopted. We need to review the support policy for post adoption (including financial) in the light of the Government's Action Plan for Adoption of April 2012 and their subsequent review of this in relation to the support provided to adopters published in 2013. We anticipate that this review will be completed by the end of October 2013. Any financial and other implications will need to form part of a further cabinet member report.

5.1.3 Coventry is a member of the West Midlands Adoption Consortium through which Local Authorities may exchange resources when there is no suitable match for a child. This has previously given a more competitive rate for placements between members than those placements provided by the independent sector and other local authority agencies.

5.1.4 The table below provides details of budget and spend over time.

Accounting Year	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Inter-Agency Budget	£213,077	£213,077	£389,644*
Inter-Agency Actual Spend	£158,669	£257,330	£177,002
Income Received from Other Agencies	(£139,952)	(£104,373)	(£21,897)
Variation(under)/overspend	(£194,360)	(£60,120)	(£234,539)

* Additional 111k budget to support the Adoption Plan– this was 1-off resource allocated through the FSR in relation to a backlog of children

5.1.5 As part of the FSR proposals, the 2012/13 budget was increased for one-year only by £111k to enable the purchase of additional adoption places. The budget was due to be utilised in the main for hard to place children, however, it was not fully spent, and this contributes to the resulting underspend of £235k.

5.1.6 Due to changes in key personnel within the service it has not been possible to ascertain why this was not fully utilised given the number of children awaiting placements in 2012/13. Since June 2013 new processes have been put in place to ensure that the budget is fully utilised to secure timely placements for children in line with the Adoption Score Card expectations; to ensure that appropriate placements are provided as and when children require them.

5.1.7 Financial assistance through the Pathways to Care scheme. Additional financial assistance is also available for adopters through the Pathways to Care funding. This is provided for building alterations & extensions, and the purchase of a more suitable property or vehicle. Pathways funding has successfully enabled a number of children to be adopted who would otherwise not have been placed.

5.1.8 In 2012/13 there was an overall spend of £103K. There was a contribution of £10K towards the cost of a vehicle for foster carers adopting 3 children, and a contribution of £93K to carry out adaptations to accommodate 2 children with extensive health needs. See table below of spend since 2007/8.

	2007 - 08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Amount of grant	£82,495	£155,800	£56,896	Nil	£5,000	£102,600
Number of children assisted	8	13	3	-	2	5

5.2 Legal implications - National Minimum Standards stipulate that the executive side of the local authority, receive written reports on the management, outcomes and financial state of the agency every 6 months; Monitor the management and outcomes of the services in order to satisfy themselves that the agency is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or service users; satisfy themselves that the agency is complying with the conditions of registration.

Regulations require that each local authority compiles a Statement of Purpose that must be kept under review. National minimum standards stipulate that the review must be at least undertaken annually.

6. Other implications

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy):

The Adoption Service contributes to the wellbeing of children through arranging for a permanent placement for a child whose own family is unable to provide care. It supports a key element of Corporate Parenting – that of securing appropriate family placements for 'Looked After Children' (LAC), as an effective means of giving them the best life chances possible.

6.2 How is risk being managed

Failure to provide an effective and timely Adoption Service would lead to Coventry's Looked After Children staying in care longer, and/or potentially being placed further away from the city in costly other agency placements.

This risk is being managed through the delivery of the Fundamental Service Review of Fostering and Adoption, which is examining how to increase the number of children adopted each year effectively.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation

The Adoption Service contributes to Children's Social Care Services performance (within the Directorate of Children, Learning and Young People) against key Indicators that are closely scrutinised both internally and externally on an ongoing basis.

6.4 Equalities / EIA

An Equality Impact Needs Assessment has been undertaken by the service.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None

6.6 Implications for partner organisations

None

Report author(s):**Name and Job Title**

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Names of approvers: (officers and members)				
Colin Green	Director	Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate	19.8.13	21.8.13
Rachel Sugars	Finance Manager	Finance & Legal Services Directorate	9.8.13	19.8.13
Julie Newman	Solicitor	Finance & Legal Services Directorate	21.8.13	23.8.13
Councillor Jayne Innes	Deputy Cabinet Member	Children and Young People	26.8.13	26.8.13

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