

7 April 2015

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member (Children and Young People) - Councillor E. Ruane

Director Approving Submission of the report

Executive Director of People Directorate

Ward(s) affected:

None

Title:

Adoption Score Card Report

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

This report updates the Cabinet Member (Children and Young People) on the progress made in respect of the Council's performance in relation to the adoption score card as at February 2015 and the recruitment of adopters.

A key priority for the Council is to improve the timeliness of the decision making for children who require adoption as well as the recruitment and approval of adopters for Coventry children.

The recruitment and approval of adoptive families will be targeted at those who are able to meet the needs of older children and siblings from April 2015.

There has been an increase in the number of children adopted and since April 2013, there has been a significant narrowing of the gap between Coventry's performance with an average of 529 days and the national target (547 days) in achieving adoption for children.

Recommendations:

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

- To note the improvement made in the timeliness of decision making for children requiring adoption and matching and placing of children with their adoptive families.
- Consider the recommendation made by the Scrutiny Board 2 on March 26th 2015 to target recruitment of adopters who are who are able to meet the needs of older children and siblings.

- To prioritise the recruitment and approval of adoptive families that are able to meet the needs of older children and siblings.
- A review of the adoption allowances
- Further work within the service to address the fall out of the adoption grant.

List of Appendices included:

None

Other useful background papers:

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

Yes at the meeting of Scrutiny Board 2 held on March 26th 2015

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 Score Card

1. Context

1.1 The Adoption Scorecard allows local authorities and other adoption agencies to monitor their own performance and compare it with that of others. Scorecards were introduced as part of a new approach to address delays in the adoption system. This approach was set out in by Central Government in March 2012 Action Plan Tackling Delay in Adoption.

1.2 The following table details the number of children adopted since 2010/11

2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
23	25	40	52	69

1.3 To date 69 children have been adopted as at the end of March 2015 and this exceeds the number of children adopted in all previous years. Projections for 2015/16 suggest that as a result of judicial challenges that this figure is unlikely to be exceeded in 2015/16.

1.4 Significant progress has been made in reducing delays to achieving permanency, in particular the time taken for decision making in respect of placement of children.

1.5 The Coventry current year average outcomes are now more in line with published data from other West Midland local authorities. The West Midlands figures are marked in an * in table below.

1.6 However this work on timelines will need to continue if we are to be more in line with our statistical neighbours. The latest figures available are marked with ** in the table below. As they are three year average they do not include the improved performance in 2014/15.

1.7 Coventry is not, however, meeting the Department for Education target set for 2012/15 but is now closer to the all England averages of 2011/13.

Adoption Scorecard February 2015	1 year average			3 year average				
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15 YTD	2010/13	2011/14	2012/15 YTD	All England Average	DfE Target 2012/15
A1 - Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted (days)	821	610	529 *564	884	733 **633	635 *593	628	487
A2 - Average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family (days)	402	193	174 *196	332	269 **233	241 *184	217	121

A3 - Children who wait less than 20 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family and this changed to 18 months in 2014/15. (no. & %)	63 (46%)	124 (73.4%)	79 (60.3%)	75 (41%)	100 (43%) **49% -	218 (50%)	51%	No Target Specified
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The West Midlands figures are marked with an *

The Statistical Neighbours latest figures are marked with **

A1 – The one year average projected time between these children coming into care and being placed for adoption (A1) is **529** days and this has improved by an average of 81 days since March 2014, but falls short of the Department of Education target of **487** by 72 days.

A2 - The one year average projected time between a child becoming subject to a placement order and being matched with their adopters (A2) is currently **174** days and falls short of the DfE target by 53 days.

This is due to some court legacy cases as well as adoptions of 3 hard to place children aged between 6 -10 years who have taken between 848 days and 1245 days to be placed with their adopted parents.

1.8 This improvement has been achieved by:

- Prioritising pre-Proceedings case work
- Ensuring the 26 week court time table is achieved as far as possible in adoption cases, but bearing in mind that some delays are also attributable to the Courts.
- Monthly tracking of all pre-Proceedings and Court cases.
- Established escalation process for cases at risk of not meeting timescales.
- Learning identified and applied in respect to cases which have not complied with timescales.
- Embedded parallel planning processes.
- Use of concurrent planning and foster to adopt options.

1.9 Adopter Recruitment data – number of approvals

The following table shows the number of adopter approvals.

2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15 up until 13.03.15
27	33	28	50	37

1.10 Although there is fewer adopters approved in 2014/15 than in the previous year the service is confident that the number of approved adopters will meet the anticipated need for children requiring adoption.

1.11 However to ensure that approved adopters are not waiting over 6 months for a match the Service will need to focus its recruitment activities in securing adopters that can meet the needs of older children and sibling groups. These children are more likely to wait for a match.

- 1.12 Location of the adopters waiting has been considered carefully to ensure that recruiting adopters from within the City does not contribute to delays in matching children with adopters. There are 24 adopters who have been waiting for more than 3 months without a child matched and only one of these are resident in the City.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 To note the improvement made in the timeliness of decision making for children requiring adoption and matching and placing of children with their adoptive families.
- 2.2 To prioritise the recruitment and approval of adoptive families who are able to meet the needs of older children and siblings.
- 2.3 A review of the adoption allowances.
- 2.4 Further work within the service to address the fall out of the adoption grant.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

Adoption Leadership Board has requested Local Authorities to consider the measures to improve the timeliness of matching children to prospective adopters as there is a growing concern that nationally this time taken for this decision to be made has increased. However Coventry has followed this trend and in fact has recorded significant improvements.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

On going

5. Comments from Executive Director, Resources

5.1 Financial implications:

In 2014/15 there is a net budget of £2.5M for Adoption Services (this includes 50% of the Family Placement Team costs). The forecast at Quarter 3 across Adoption Services was just under £2.7M. The overspend was reported as part of the People Directorate's Quarter 3 position. Further detail on specific areas within Adoption Services is included below.

Adoption Improvement grant (AIG) 2014/15

Coventry received £321K for 2014/15 as part of the Government's drive to address the backlog of children awaiting adopters as well as supporting wider improvements in adoption support services. This grant has been utilised to ensure appropriate resources are available to meet the demand for adopters, developing new innovative ways of finding adoptive families improving support and reducing assessment times and developing capacity within the adoption teams. At Quarter 3 this was forecast to be fully utilised.

5.1.3 Adoption Support Budget 2014/15 – financial support for adopters

At Quarter 3, forecast spend is £870K against a budget of £721K. This overspend is due to an increase in number of adoptions, and an increase in the average cost of each allowance.

5.1.4 Inter-Agency budget

At Quarter 3 the forecast spend on the budget to fund adoption placements from other providers or local authorities to meet the specific needs of the children is £246K. This is approximately £20K underspent. Whilst most children have been placed with Coventry approved adopters.

There has been robust profiling of children through a range of medians including advertising where internal adopters are not available.

The service has also generated income from the placement of children by other local authorities with Coventry adopters. At Quarter 3 we were forecasting £148K of income from selling placements to other providers and local authorities.

5.2 Legal implications:

No implications identified

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)?

It supports a key role that the Local Authority plays as a Corporate Parent, of securing appropriate family placements for children, as an effective means of giving them the best life chances possible. Securing timely permanency for looked after children is key priority of the Local Authority and the Improvement Plan.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

The monitoring of timeliness of children requiring adoption is subject to close monthly tracking and oversight of dedicated case progression officer.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

The Service contributes to Children's Social Care's performance against adoption performance which is closely scrutinised both internally and externally on an on-going basis by the Department of Education and the Improvement Board.

6.4 Equalities / EIA

This is not a policy change

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

None

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