

30 June 2015

**Name of Cabinet Member:**

Children and Young People – Councillor Ed Ruane

**Director Approving Submission of the report:**

Executive Director of People

**Ward(s) affected:**

None

**Title:**

Adoption Service Annual Report 2014/15

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**Is this a key decision?**

No

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**Executive Summary:**

This report considers the activity and key performance data for Coventry Adoption Service during 2014 /15 and the updated statement of purpose for 2015.

Coventry Adoption service aims to provide a comprehensive adoption service including post order support which is consistent with best practice and national minimum standards.

In 2014/15, 70 children were adopted and 38 adopters approved.

Overall, the City Council paid support allowances for 132 children from 73 adoptive families

**The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People is recommended to :-**

- 1. Accept the Adoption Service Annual report for 2014/15**
- 2. Approve the updated Statement of Purpose is approved as appended to this report**

**List of Appendices included:**

Appendix 1 Statement of Purpose

**Other useful background papers:**

None

**Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?**

*No*

**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 Annual Report 2014/15**

**1. Context (or background)**

1.1 The Adoption Service is responsible for the recruitment, assessment approval, training, preparation of adopters and matching of children and provision of support to adopters

1.2 Overall Performance for 2014/15

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Number of enquiries	163	128	136
Applications received	40	49	37
Adopters approved	28	47	38
Number of children adopted	40	52	70
Number of children placed with prospective adopters	25	68	53
Number of children awaiting match	25	38	6
Number of disruptions	1	1	3 (4 children)

1.3 Consistent with the national picture there is mismatch of adopters approval category where adopters are approved for either a single child or under the age of 2, and the profile of children awaiting adoption who are aged between the ages of 3 and 6 years or children with either 1 or 2 siblings. Adopters are advised of the time that may be taken for a child to be matched if they are approved for a child/ren less than 2 year of age.

1.4 The marketing campaign “Adopt and Foster for Coventry” has been refocused to recruit adopters who are able to meet the needs of older children and sibling groups. In the last 2 years the conversion rate has ranged from 36% to 27% compared with low performance in 2012/13 of 17%.

1.5 In addition to local recruitment, Coventry actively engages in a range of adopter led matching events which include National Adoption Exchange Days, local exchange meetings, West Midlands adoption events for children where there are no in house matches or the children have specific needs. In 2014/15 nine children were placed with 7 adopters approved by other local authorities and agencies.

1.5 All adoption agencies are required to ensure adopters are placed on the National Register if it is unlikely that they will be matched with a child from Coventry. Where carers cannot be not be matched with a child within three months of approval their details are routinely forwarded to the register.

1.6 In January 2015 Coventry subscribed to Adoption Link which is a web based search engine. Unlike the national register, Adoption Link allows adopters and social workers to search across the country for a child or adopters. This has revolutionised family finding and provided a highly effective tool for linking children with adopters. In addition, monthly exchange meetings have been organised within the Service to expedite the linking of children who are about to have a plan for adoption with adopters who are either approved or about to be approved. However on occasions there are no suitable adopters from within the awaiting adopters.

## 1.7 Timeliness of Decision making for Children

The 2014/15 adoption score card confirmed the significant improvements in both the timeliness and of decision making on children entering care and being matched and placed with their prospective adopter. This improvement has been achieved through case progression discipline in court, the pre-allocation of permanency worker for all children with possible plan of adoption and senior management oversight. As a result although the average time is higher than the national average, they are not yet meeting the floor targets set by the Department for Education. Coventry's performance is now more in line with our statistical neighbours and other West Midlands authorities. The service is in the best position to meet the targets in 2015/16.

Adoption Scorecard	1 year average			3 year average				
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2010/13	2011/14	2012/15	All England Average	DfE Target 2012/15
A1	821	610	<b>525</b>	884	733	652	628	487
A2	402	193	<b>170</b>	332	269	255	217	121
A3	63 (46%)	124 (73.4%)	<b>95</b> <b>(79%)</b>	75 (41%)	100 (43%)	282 (66%)	51%	No Target Specified

A1 - Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted (days)

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)

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. & %)

- 1.8 There has been 4 disruption of children placed with prospective adopters this year. One of the 4 children has since been placed with other adopters and the other three now have a plan for permanence in fostering and are placed with their foster carers.

## 1.9 Post Order Support and Allowances

There were 14 families in receipt of support in 2014/15 prior to an adoption order and a further 4 adoptive families were in receipt of post order allowances. Overall, there were 132 children from 73 adoptive households in receipt of an allowance. Of the 73 adoptive households, 21 adoptive households received a bespoke allowance, 49 received an assessed allowance and 3 adoptive households received both.

In 2013/14 37% of the 52 children adopted received allowance, and this had dropped to 25% of the 70 children adopted this past year

**Age groups of the children receiving financial support are:**

23 children aged 0 to 4 years  
47 children aged 5 to 10 years  
40 children aged 11 to 15 years  
17 children aged 16 to 18 years  
5 children who are over 18 and are in full time education.

- 1.10 Adoption allowances are subject to an assessment for support services in line with the Adoption Support Services Regulations (2005) and a financial assessment is carried out where the Authority considers that financial support may be required for a child who is currently looked after. In addition, adopters may be provided other financial support for therapeutic interventions or practically, in terms of costs towards purchasing a car where large sibling groups are adopted.

The key change proposed to the scheme is to reimburse adopters for any mileage undertaken at £0.45p per mile as opposed to £0.20p. In particular this change is being proposed following complaints received from adopters who are aware that foster carers receive a higher rate.

- 1.12 The key priorities for the service in 2015/16 are as follows:

1. Complete implementation of new Adoption requirements (Children and Family Act 2014)
2. Continued improvement of the Adoption Scorecard performance to reach Department of Education targets
3. Continued focus on small number of children who are hard to place
4. Continued focus on improving quality of practice and support
5. Completion Life Story work in a timely manner
6. Continuous Improvement of Post Adoption Support with access to the Adoption Support Fund

## **2. Options considered and recommended proposal**

- 2.1 It is a regulatory requirement that the executive receives reviews and approves the Statement of Purpose on an annual basis.

1. The Adoption Service Annual report for 2014/15 is accepted
2. That the updated Statement of Purpose is approved.

## **3. Results of consultation undertaken**

None

## **4. Timetable for implementing this decision**

- 4.1 Changes to financial changes will be effective from 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2015.

## **5. Comments from Executive Director of Resources**

## 5.1 Financial Implications

- 5.1.1 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 was fully utilised to ensure appropriate resources were 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. ***We will not receive this grant in 2015-16, although the service will be able to secure funds for post adoption order therapeutic support from the national Adoption Support Fund from May 2015.***
- 5.1.2 Adoption Support Budget 2014/15 – financial support for adopters  
There was a total spend of £969K against a budget of £721K giving an overspend of £248K. This overspend is due to an increase in activity and unit cost.
- 5.1.3 Inter-Agency Budget 2014/15 – Purchase and sale of adoption placements      Spend on the budget to fund adoption placements from other providers or local authorities to meet the specific needs of the children was £276K, giving an overspend against budget of £7K. Most children were placed with Coventry approved adopters. The service has also generated income from the placement of children by other local authorities with Coventry adopters of £136K.
- 5.1.4 Transport costs – reimbursement for adopters. Increasing the current transport reimbursement of 20p per mile to 45p per mile will cost an additional £4k. This will have to be met by equivalent cost reductions.

## 5.2 Legal Implications

- 5.2.1 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.
- 5.2.2 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, as an effective means of giving them the best life chances possible.

### 6.2 How is risk being managed?

The timeliness of adoption and securing permanence in a timely fashion is being managed through robust case tracking for children in proceedings and for those with an adoption plan. The service reports progress on Adoption Performance to the Improvement Board, Corporate parenting Board, Cabinet Member, Scrutiny Board and the People Directorate Management team.

**6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?**

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

**6.4 Equalities / EIA**

Equalities / EIA: An Equality Impact Needs Assessment has been undertaken by the service in 2012 as part of the fundamental service review undertaken at that time.

**6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment**

None

**6.6 Implications for partner organisations?**

Social workers work extensively across key partner agencies to support the interests of looked after children and ensure a coherent multi-agency approach. On-going partnerships will be required to ensure services are focused on meeting the Council's continuing statutory duties and priorities for looked after children to achieve permanence.

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Appendix 1 – Statement of Purpose