

Corporate Parenting Board
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

4 January 2024
15 January 2024

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People - Cllr P Seaman

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Director of Children's Services

Ward(s) affected:

None

Title:

Coventry City Council Annual Adoption Report

Is this a key decision?

No - although the proposals affect more than two electoral wards, the impact is not expected to be significant.

Executive Summary:

The Annual Adoption Report is required by National Minimum Standards, which are applicable to the provision of adoption services. The National Minimum Standards form the basis of the regulatory framework under the **Care Standards Act 2000** in relation to the conduct of adoption agencies and adoption support services. It is crucial that the adoption performance in Coventry is examined on an annual basis to ensure children who are adopted get the best possible outcomes.

Recommendations:

Cabinet Member is requested to:

- 1) Analyse and endorse the work completed in this area of work.

List of Appendices included:

Coventry City Council Annual Adoption Report
ACE Annual Report
Annual Adoption Panel Chair Report.

Background papers:

None

Other useful documents

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?

Yes. Corporate Parenting Board, 4 January 2024

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: Coventry City Council Annual Adoption Report

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 Each local authority in England is obliged by National Minimum Standards to formally approve the statement of purpose and children's guides, and to review these at least annually. This Annual Report is provided to meet this obligation. Coventry City Council is currently in a partnership arrangement with a Regional Adoption Agency. This is Adoption Central England (ACE). This is a shared services arrangement hosted by Warwickshire County Council. ACE is responsible for recruiting and assessing adoptive families. It is also involved in matching children with adopters in partnership with the child's social worker. ACE is also responsible for administering the Adoption Panel. Therefore, the annual report consists of a report from Coventry City Council regarding children, a report from ACE regarding adopters and a report from ACE written by the Adoption Panel Chair.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 Cabinet Member is requested to:

Analyse and endorse the work completed in this area of work.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 Consultation occurs on several levels with children and adopters. This work is documented within the body of the appendices where appropriate.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 This is an annual report and work will continue in this area over the next 12 months.

5. Comments from Chief Operating Officer (Section 151 Officer) and Chief Legal Officer

5.1 Financial implications

- 5.1.1 Costs relating to the children are held within Coventry City Council's budgets, in the LAC and Permanence teams. These are managed through the usual internal budgetary control process and there are no specific financial implications arising from this report.
- 5.1.2 Costs relating to the services provided by ACE are governed via the legal host agreement between Coventry City Council and ACE which includes comprehensive funding arrangements. Any changes to these arrangements must be agreed by the Executive Board, of which Coventry is a member.
- 5.1.3 Coventry City Council's contribution to ACE in 2022/23 was £1,216,708. This was an overspend of £240,201 against the approved budget, and was partly funded by ringfenced reserves from previous years' underspends on the ACE budget. The overspend is a mix of inflationary pressures and increased cost of interagency placements.

5.1.4 The ongoing budgetary position of ACE is managed by Warwickshire County Council, as the host authority.

5.2 Legal implications

5.2.1 The National Minimum Standards (NMS), provided by the Department for Education, as of July 2014, set out the standards of service to be provided. The NMS are issued by the Secretary of State, pursuant to ss 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, and are issued for use by Ofsted, which are then taken into account for the purpose of inspections. The relevant provisions, as set out in Standard 18 of the NMS are:

5.2.2 The adoption agency and adoption support agency has a clear statement of purpose which is available to and understood by staff, volunteers, children, birth parents and guardians, prospective adopters and adopters, and is reflected in any policies, procedures and guidance.

5.2.3 The aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose should be outcome focussed and, for adoption agencies, show how the service will meet outcomes for children.

5.2.4 The adoption agency /registered person of the adoption support agency formally approves the statement of purpose and children's guides and reviews them at least annually.

5.2.5 The agency's policies, procedures and any written guidance to staff and volunteers accurately reflect the statement of purpose.

5.2.6 Additionally, Standard 25.6 of the NMS provides that the executive side of the local authority, the voluntary adoption agency's/Adoption Support Agency's provider/trustees, board members or management committee members are to:

- receive written reports on the management, outcomes and financial state of the agency every six months,
- to 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, and
- to satisfy themselves that the agency is complying with the conditions of registration.

The reports contained at Appendices are provided in compliance with the NMS.

6. Other implications

6.1 How will this contribute to the Council Plan (www.coventry.gov.uk/councilplan/)?

The service contributes the Council Plan in the following ways:

- 6.1.1 Locally committed- adoption contributes to keeping children safe from harm, particularly in the light of early permanence. It gives children a family where they get the best start in life
- 6.1.2 Delivering our priorities with fewer resources- children are at the heart of the customer journey. Sharing services gives a more cost-effective service. Working with partners in ACE across the sub- region makes sure that good practice is shared and enhances problem solving. This in turn improves outcomes for children
- 6.1.3 Managing performance and measuring progress- the Annual

Adoption Report documents performance and progress of the service.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

Risks are monitored in real time. This includes care planning for children and an Executive Board that oversees the running of ACE. Ameliorative action is promptly taken in the light of any issues identified.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

This is crucial to the Council's Corporate Parenting responsibilities. This report is also reviewed by the Corporate Parenting Board.

6.4 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Equality of opportunity is a key part of adoption work. This is considered in the organisations' reports documented in the appendices.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment

None.

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

None.

Report author(s):

Name and job title: Matt Clayton
Strategic Lead - Looked After Children (Practice)

Directorate: Children's Services

Tel & email contact: 02476 787808
matt.clayton2@coventry.gov.uk

Enquiries should be directed to the above person.

<i>Contributor/ approver name</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Service Area</i>	<i>Date doc sent out</i>	<i>Date response received or approved</i>
Contributors:				
Helen Rennocks	Operational Lead – Looked After Children & Permanency	Looked After Children		
Usha Patel	Governance Services Officer	Law and Governance	05/01/2024	05/01/2024
Names of approvers for submission: (officers and members)				
Finance: Nicola David	Lead Accountant	Finance	03/01/2024	03/01/2024
Finance: Sarah Kinsell	Finance Manager	Finance		05/01/2024
Legal: Safda Mahmood	Team Leader and Solicitor	Law and Governance		05/01/2024
Director: Neil Macdonald	Interim Director of Children's Services	Children's Services		13/11/2023
Members: Cllr P Seaman	Cabinet Member	Children and Young People		13/12/2023

This report is published on the council's website:
www.coventry.gov.uk/councilmeetings

Appendices