

Corporate Parenting Panel

25 October 2019

Report on the Adoption Service 2018/19



Report of John Pearce, Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services, Durham County Council

Electoral division(s) affected

None

Purpose of the Report

- 1 Annual review of the Permanence and Adoption Service for 2018/19 including the identification of service priorities for 2019/20.

Executive summary

- 2 In 2018/19 there was an increase in the number of children placed for adoption by Durham County Council (from 35 in 2017/18 to **49** in 2018/19). There is consistency in the number of placement orders granted to Durham County Council by the Courts; (in 2017/18 54 Placement Orders were granted and 2018/19 **55** Placement Orders were granted). Durham successfully made 10 Foster to Adopt placements in 2018/19, leading to good outcomes for these children.
- 3 The service continues to provide a wide range of high quality support to prospective adopters and routinely receives good feedback from them.
- 4 In 2018/19 Durham County Council Adoption Service used a number of inter-agency placements (other LA's and Voluntary Adoption Agency's) due to the lack of available in-house adopters. This continues to significantly impact upon the expenditure of the Adoption service. Invoices to the value of £863,386 (**an overspend of £629,015**) were paid in 2018/19 for inter-agency placements – with future year commitments for final payment to Providers of £189,333 resulting from the same placements.
- 5 In February 2019 the County Council awarded the service an additional £1.4 million growth to address the identified budget pressure in connection with interagency adoptions.
- 6 There are a number of service priorities for 2019/20 including the need to recruit a diverse and increased number of adopters including foster to

adopt (F2A), to meet the need and demand of children with a plan of adoption.

- 7 In addition, Durham Adoption Service will become part of a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) by March 2020. Durham County Council Adoption Service are already working alongside RAA partners (including; Sunderland City Council: Together for Children and Cumbria County Council).

Recommendation

- 8 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are required to:
 - (a) note the contents of the report and proposed priorities.

Background

- 9 Nationally the number of children becoming looked after continues to rise.
- 10 Nationally Local Authorities continue to struggle to recruit the number of adopters to meet the need and demand of children with a plan of adoption.
- 11 Research indicated that early permanence is the least disruptive for children. To date Durham have placed 10 children in foster to adopt (F2A) placements.
- 12 The creation of the RAA was in part the Government's response to the high number of inter-agency fees.

Data Accuracy

- 13 The data has been taken from current spreadsheets held by the local authority in respect of children with a plan of adoption and the adoption service activities.
- 14 Due to the timing of this report and the migration to Liquid Logic it has not been possible to obtain this information from Liquid Logic due to the backlog of data migration. The practice will need to be monitored closely on Liquid Logic moving forward to ensure the adoption information is recorded accurately to inform future reporting and the transition to a RAA.
- 15 In addition, there is need for greater scrutiny of inter-agency placements, including the impact of placing a child out local area and the impact this has on the child/ren and their adopters /adopters in accessing after adoption support.

Achievements in 2018/19

- 16 There continues to be a good quality adoption service support from Dr Joyce Powell Consultant Clinical Psychologist and the Full Circle Therapeutic team
- 17 Children placed for adoption have enjoyed a stable and secure placement with their permanent families and there have been no adoption disruptions in this period.
- 18 Children with plans of adoption have been matched in a timely way and placed at the earliest opportunity and where necessary if in-house carers cannot be identified local, regional and national searches have been utilised.
- 19 Activities days held, in partnership with Sunderland City Council Together for Children and Cumbria County Council adoption services, where children with a plan of adoption have been featured has continued to prove a positive way of identifying and securing matches for children and adopters.
- 20 To date Durham has made 10 Fostering to Adopt placements

Key Priorities: The key priority areas to continue in the new financial year remain:

- 21 The adoption service to make and sustain stable adoptions placements and ensure lifelong needs of those affected by adoption are met
- 22 The adoption service continues to have a clear focus on recruitment in the current competitive market and that there is a priority in recruiting adopters to match the needs of children who have a plan of adoption.
- 23 Adoption recruitment to focus on increasing in-house adopters who live locally and within the region so that children can live as closely to their birth communities as possible.
- 24 Every child will have an allocated family finder at the point of adoption referral, allowing the greatest opportunity for their needs to be matched when placed with their new families.
- 25 Family finding to be proactive and provide placement choice, avoiding any delays for the placement of children with their new families as soon as possible.
- 26 A continued focus on the implementation of the Regionalise Adoption Agency.

27 A continued commitment to embedding the early permanency strategy to ensure that children's plans are progressed in a timely way so that those with plans of adoption are placed at the earliest opportunity.

Other useful documents

- Marketing and Recruitment Strategy

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Section 3 Adoption and Children Act 2002 places a duty on each local authority to maintain within their area an adoption service designed to meet the needs of:

- (a) children who may be adopted, their parents and guardians,
- (b) persons wishing to adopt a child, and
- (c) adopted persons, their adoptive parents and natural parents

By making arrangements for the adoption of children and for the provision of adoption support services. The Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 contain detailed requirements which local authorities must comply with in order to comply with this duty.

Finance

There has been investment in CYPS to support the ongoing work within the adoption service.

Consultation

None.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None.

Climate Change

None.

Human Rights

None

Crime and Disorder

None.

Staffing

None.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

None.

Procurement

None.