

Corporate Parenting Panel

19 July 2022

Annual Report on the Adoption Service 2021/2022



Report of Helen Fergusson, Head of Children's Social Care, Durham County Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

None.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 Annual review of the Adoption Service for 2021/22 including the identification of service priorities for 2022/23.

Executive summary

- 2 In 2021/22, the Adoption Service received 217 enquiries, completed 62 initial visits, and 40 prospective adopters were approved.
- 3 At the 31 March 2022, there were 20 prospective adopters in Stage 2 and 22 prospective adopters in Stage 1; this is potentially 42 families who will complete their adoption journey in 2021/22.
- 4 65 children have been matched at Panel. 34 matches were within the RAA, 27 with DCC approved adopters and 7 with our partner spokes. 31 children were placed with adopters approved by voluntary agencies. This is comparable with the previous year's figure of 35 and maintains the continued improvement from previous years.
- 5 6 children have been placed within this reporting period under Fostering for Adoption regulations.
- 6 22 Adoption Orders have been granted within this period This has been negatively impacted by the Somerset judgement.
- 7 5 new panel members have been successfully recruited in this period. 1 panel member resigned due to personal circumstances and the 2 panel medical advisors remain on to provide medical information but have resigned as full panel members due to work commitments and availability.

- 8 219 birth parents have been supported in writing their post box contact letters. 23 birth parents have requested and received support regarding their children's adoption
- 9 115 children have been supported through successful assessments of need completed by Social Workers within the adoption team. This is a total funding agreed by the ASF of £373000.00
- 10 48 adopted adults have sought support to access their adoption records in this period.
- 11 72 Non -Agency adoption enquiries have been received, a significant increase from the previous year of 42.

Recommendation

- 12 Corporate Parenting Panel is requested to:
 - (a) Note the contents and agree the proposed priorities.

Background

- 13 This annual report sets out the previous performance and the direction of travel for the Adoption Service as a spoke in the Regional Adoption Agency, Adopt Coast to Coast.
- 14 The activity of the Adoption Service detailed in this report was in a continued period of Covid lockdown. The service re-evaluated its procedures throughout to ensure guidance was followed, whilst ensuring a safe service was being delivered to provide well assessed permanence for children.

Data Accuracy

- 15 Liquid Logic is almost fully embedded in the Adoption Team for performance reports to be directly produced from the Liquid Logic system. The Adoption Dashboard is being constructed and reporting areas have been requested to support data collection moving forwards.

Main Implications

- 16 Key priority areas for 2022/23:
 - (a) To work collaboratively with our partners in Adopt Coast to Coast to recruit, assess and approve adopters in a timely manner.
 - (b) To ensure children's plans of permanence via adoption are progressed without delay
 - (c) Fostering for adoption placements and matches are to be identified at the earliest possible stage in children's planning to prevent delay and ensure minimal moves for children.
 - (d) To recruit new panel members to the central list. This will ensure quoracy and prevent the possible need to stand a panel down due to lack of available panel members.
 - (e) To continue to embed signs of safety into practice and panel processes in line with the Durham model of social work practice.
 - (f) To increase relationship-based practice with trauma informed service developments, particularly in the development and support of post adoption contact.
 - (g) To identify potential plans of adoption for children as early as possible. This will allow for targeted adopter recruitment at the earliest possible point. Where there is a need for an adopter able to take sibling groups, older children or children with more

complex health or disability needs, thus preventing delay or the need to purchase adopters at a high cost from external providers.

Conclusion

- 17 Please note the contents of the Adoption Service's Annual Report which highlights practice achieved in 2021/22 and sets the direction of travel for the remainder of this financial year.

Author

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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

Expenditure on inter agency adoption payments demonstrated a significant decrease in 2020/2021, reversing the trend experienced over the previous three years as the service continues to maximise placements with adopters recruited by the authority directly. While interagency fees are an additional material expense, they are one off payments and cost significantly less than a child in a long-term fostering placement.

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