

Corporate Parenting Panel

19 October 2018



Adoption Service and Adoption Panel Annual Report 2018/18

Report of Karen Robb, Strategic Manager, Looked After Children and Permanence

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report presents Corporate Parenting Panel with an executive summary of the Adoption Service and Adoption Panel Report 2017/18

Background

- 2 The Adoption and Children Act 2002 (the Act) is the principal piece of legislation governing adoption in England and Wales. It has been in force since 30 December 2005, and has been amended by other legislation since then. The Act provides the framework for implementing plans for adoption, with much of the detail set out in subsequent regulations and statutory guidance.
- 3 The Adoption Service has continued to focus on achieving the best outcomes for children and to prevent delay in achieving permanence for a child with a plan of adoption. The Adoption Service has aimed to make and sustain stable adoption placements and to ensure that the lifelong needs of those affected by adoption are met.
- 4 The Annual Report outlines the work of the Adoption Service during 2017/18, together with the activity of the Adoption Panels. It also outlines the future challenges and priorities of the service to meet the needs of the increased number of Looked After Children.

Key Achievements and Developments

- 5 There has been a reduction in the number of approved adopters both nationally and within Durham which has made it more difficult for the Adoption Services to find matched placements for children. This has also resulted in a higher number of children being placed with Adopters who are Out of County.
- 6 The Adoption Service have achieved the following in 2017/18:
 - (a) There has been a reduction in the interest in adoption over the last 12 months. Despite this reduction the Service has approved 24 adoptive families during 2017/18, which is a slightly reduced number from 28 in 2016/17. This has reflected a significant reduction in the number of

enquiries to be adopters during the year and the majority wishing to adopt children without complex needs in order to become parents.

- (b) Children's needs have been very well supported and assessed by the Full Circle Service, which is a therapeutic service that is offered to all children looked after. They also contribute to adoption training and will offer consultations and advice to all adopters on every child prior to matching panel at both linking and matching. This service was highlighted as a strength by Ofsted in the 2016 Inspection.
- (c) The Adoption Service reviewed its Recruitment and Marketing Strategy to focus on the need to recruit sufficient adopters to support the fostering to adopt approach (where adopters are also approved as Foster Carers prior to the Placement order). This is important development with the increase in numbers of looked after children and the large number of children under the age of 5.
- (d) The number of looked after children in Durham who were approved for adoption has remained relatively high this year (61 children) with the number of children placed for Adoption increasing from 42 in 2016/17 to 47 in 2017/18. This is reflective of the increase in the total number of looked after children during this period.
- (e) The Adoption Support Fund has been available to access funds for therapeutic support for adopted children and their families. During 2017-18, the Full Circle Service has claimed £98,776.38 (32 children/families) with a further £31,825.96 being claimed following assessment of the post adoption support needs of children from outside therapeutic organisation.
- (f) Post Adoption Support Services have been reviewed and re-designed to provide a more effective, efficient and responsive service and to underpin the Durham Adoption Support Passport which sets out the offer to those affected by Adoption.
- (g) A Range of family fun day events have been organised by the Adoption Service to provide adopted children and their parents the opportunity to meet with other children and families. Feedback from the events has been very positive.
- (h) A Governance Board was established with Partners to lead the Regionalisation of Adoption Services through to the establishment of the Service in Autumn 2019.

Priorities for 2018-19

- 7 The Adoption Service have set the following priorities for 2018-19:
- (a) To work with partners to develop the regionalised adoption services by Autumn 2019 with the aim of consolidating resources and reducing delay for children with a plan of adoption.
 - (b) To target recruitment and assessment of adopters so that in-house resources are available locally and within the region for children who need adoption placements.
 - (c) To embed Fostering to Adopt as an approach and to ensure that there is early care planning to ensure early permanence is achieved wherever possible
 - (d) To continue to deliver Family Finding Services through dedicated workers to provide placement choice and avoid unnecessary delays in placing children in new families.
 - (e) To provide timely, efficient and high quality post adoption support utilising the Adoption Support Fund to ensure that placement stability is maximised.

Recommendations

- 8 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are recommended to:
- (a) Note the content of this report;
 - (b) Receive the Annual Report of the Adoption Service and Adoption Panel Report 2017/18, attached as Appendix 2

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – Not applicable

Staffing – Not applicable

Risk – The number of Looked After Children remains at historically high levels and has increased significantly from 2015

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – The Annual Reports and Plans identify the actions to safeguard the needs of vulnerable children and young people

Accommodation – Not applicable

Crime and Disorder – Not applicable

Human Rights– Not applicable

Consultation – Not applicable

Procurement – Not applicable

Disability Issues – The services provided to children with a disability are a consideration within all of the annual report

Legal Implications – The Annual Report has been prepared in line with statutory requirements.