

EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION



REPORT OF: Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education

LEAD OFFICERS: Director of Children's Services & Education

DATE: Thursday 11th June 2020

PORTFOLIO(S) AFFECTED: Children, Young People and Education

WARD/S AFFECTED: (All Wards);

KEY DECISION: N

SUBJECT:

Adoption Bi-Annual Report April to September 2019

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Adoption Now (Regional Adoption Agency) has compiled this Report with additional local information included by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Service Lead for Placements. The Report details a summary of the period April to September 2019 with analysis, data and patterns that may support service development.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board notes the Adoption Six Monthly Report alongside Appendix 1.

3. BACKGROUND

Adoption Now is a Regional Adoption Agency providing Adoption Services on behalf of a consortium agreement with six Local Authorities; Blackburn with Darwen, Bolton, Bury, Rochdale, Oldham and Tameside.

Data remains local data relating to Blackburn with Darwen children, with Post Adoption Support, Recruitment and Assessment data including regional data.

This is the six monthly Report produced by the Head of Service from the RAA, with additional information and oversight from Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Service Lead for Placements. Local Authority employees remain seconded to the RAA to date. There is a regular Adoption case-tracking meeting held to enable the Local Authority to have continued shared information and updates about the progress of children with Adoption Care Plans in the Borough. This also allows financial oversight and monitoring.

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

- During the first 6 months of 2019/20 from April to September 2019, 18 children were subject to a Local Authority decision that they should be placed for adoption
- On 30th September 2019, there were 25 children with a plan for Adoption (subject to a Placement Order) who were awaiting placement. This number included 2 children where Foster Carers were being assessed as Adopters, with three children in a Fostering for Adoption placement. There were 2 children who had experienced a disruption. Children are predominantly from the white British community.
- On 31st March 2019, the National Adoption Register ceased to operate. Prior to this it has been a requirement for all children waiting for families for three months or more to be added to that Register along with Adopters who are waiting. There are some likely alternative proposals, however none are imminent. A small number of links for children have been made via the Register but the Link Maker

has been a much more useful family finding tool for Blackburn with Darwen children so we are not expecting there to be a significant impact.

- There have been 11 children placed with Adopters this year and 14 children matched. The numbers of matched and placed children may differ due to early permanence placements and children matched just before the end of the half year but not yet placed. Of the 14 matches presented to Panels between April and September 2019, there were 6 Fostering for Adoption or Concurrency Placements matched, with 1 sibling group of 2 and 1 sibling group of 3 placed.
- There has been one Adoption disruption within this six month period, and learning has been taken from the disruption meeting which followed to assist with future planning and matching.
- In the first six months of this year (2019/20), 35 families have been approved, and 1 family has been to the Panel and is awaiting Agency Decision Making. One family withdrew post the Panel.
- Since the 1st April, 40 RAA children have already been matched with 36 RAA families. Four of these have been sibling groups of two children. Three of these have been Fostering for Adoption placements. 2 RAA families are currently being matched with children external to Adoption Now. The RAA anticipates that 91 families will be approved by the end of Quarter 4 2020.
- The function of the letterbox co-ordinators remains an area for review and is currently in discussion with the RAA Board.
- Adoption Now office premises at Howell Croft in Bolton have been sold and a planned move to alternative premises still to be identified will take place in the coming months.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no Policy implications.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

In accordance with the agreed financial model, the operational budget for Adoption was combined with five other North West Authorities when the RAA was formed in 2017. As outlined in Appendix 1, the costs of placing children with Adopters outside of Adoption Now this year is predicted to be £472,000 against a budget of £266,700. These fees have resulted from placing 2 sibling groups of 3, 3 sibling groups of 2 and 8 single children some of whom were 'hard to place' due to their age or complex needs. The first option is to source Adopters within the Adoption Now pool.

Discussions are ongoing with the RAA Board about the financial implication of bringing the letterbox function into the RAA which is quoted at approximately £12,000 per annum per Local Authority.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

This Report is required to meet statutory requirements set out in 'The National Minimum Standards for Adoption.'

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

None identified.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below.

Option 1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision.

Option 3 In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision.

10. CONSULTATIONS

None.

11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

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DATE:	25/02/2020
BACKGROUND PAPER:	Appendix 1 attached.