

EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION



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

LEAD OFFICERS: Director of Children's Services & Education

DATE: Thursday 10th September 2020

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

WARD/S AFFECTED: (All Wards);

KEY DECISION: N

SUBJECT:

Adoption Now End of Year Report for 2019/20

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 2019/20 with particular focus upon October 2019 to March 2020 with analysis, data and patterns that may support service development.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board notes the Adoption Now Annual 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 annual end of year 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 second half of the year, 10 children were subject to a decision that they should be placed for adoption (SHOBPA). The total number over the full year is 28 and the children were primarily of white British origin. In terms of the age of those children in the first half of the year 55% were aged 0 - 2, 33% were aged 3 or 4 and 12% were over 5.
- In the second half of the year 60% were aged 0 – 2, 20% were 3 or 4 and 20% were over 5.
- On 31st March 2020, there were 16 children with a plan for adoption (subject to a placement order) awaiting placement and not yet matched. This number included 3 sibling groups of 2, all of whom have links being explored, a child with Huntington Disease in the family background who may also

now have a link, a child with significant developmental delay where a link is being explored, and 3 young children due to be matched at panel.

- There have been 28 Blackburn with Darwen children matched with adopters this year 2019/20, and 20 Adoption Orders made.
- With an annual target of 100 adopters to be recruited set by the Board, a total of 90 were approved which is an achievement. Recruitment and Marketing continues to be innovative and varied, focusing upon potential adopters from various backgrounds, ethnicities, and from the LGBT community.
- There have been 3 adoption disruptions over the year, with meetings held to learn from this and identify where possible the contributing factors. The likely impact of lockdown on this cohort of families at the end of March 2020 was still unknown. Inevitably, it was recognised that newly formed families would be isolated from their personal and professional support networks.
- 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 is still to be identified will take place in the coming months although this is likely to be delayed due to the impact of Covid-19.

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 in 2019/20 was £320,200 against a budget of £266,700, an overspend of £53,500. The first option is to source Adopters within the Adoption Now pool.

The Adoption Service as a whole returned an overspend of £139,100.

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. This has been agreed by the Board that this function needs to transfer to Adoption Now as opposed to individual Authorities.

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:	16/08/20
BACKGROUND PAPER:	Appendix 1 Report attached.