



EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION

REPORT OF: Executive Member for Children's Services Young People & Education

LEAD OFFICERS: Director of Children's Services

DATE: 10th January 2019

PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED: Children, Young People & Education

WARD/S AFFECTED: All

KEY DECISION: YES NO

SUBJECT: Adoption Service 6 Monthly Report

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To provide information on the management and performance of the Local Authority's Adoption Service.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board:

Notes this six monthly report.

3. BACKGROUND

This is the six monthly report of the Blackburn with Darwen Adoption Service, which is part of the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), Adoption NoW. This is a consortium arrangement entered into by 6 local authorities in order to deliver more efficient and effective adoption services in line with the central government agenda for adoption.

Following the making of a Placement Order, all aspects of adoption in Blackburn with Darwen are now the responsibility of Adoption NoW. This includes the recruitment, assessment and approval of adopters, family finding and matching children with adopters and adoption support. Children remain looked after until the Adoption Order is made. Case holding for looked after children subject to a Placement Order is held by Adoption NoW; however, the social workers are based in Blackburn in order to maintain a close working relationship with other Children's Services professionals.

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

- The number of children referred for a 'Should be Placed for Adoption' decision is broadly similar to 12 months ago. 11 children all under the age of 5 years were referred in the first half of the year with 4 of the children being matched and placed, and 2 have had matches identified by the end of

the period.

- On 30th September, 15 children were waiting to be placed, similar to the previous six month period. Included in the 15 children are 6 older boys, 2 sets of sibling pairs, a child with complex health needs waiting for their foster carer to be assessed and a child with developmental delay. 4 of the children waiting have experienced disruption and one of the children has now been re-matched. Children waiting are predominantly White British. There is a national shortage of adopters currently, and a consequence is that older children, siblings and children with additional needs are much harder to place. Adoption NoW has approved 67 sets of adopters since its inception in November 2017 with 30 adopters available at the end of September. 16 adopters have waited over six months predominantly because they want to adopt babies or very young children. The children waiting will be profiled at Exchange Days and Activity Days, both of which are now delivered in-house. Linkmaker and the Adoption register are also used to family find for these children.
- In the first half of the year, 7 children were placed for adoption, this is a lower number than usual; however, another 5 children were due to be matched and placed at the end of the time period under review. 6 out of the 7 children were placed with in house, Adoption Now adopters. This means that interagency fees are not payable for these children. 15 children were presented to Adoption NoW panels during the timeframe with 4 of these children either in concurrent foster placements or in Fostering For Adoption placements. A1 timescales (average time taken to place a child following their entry into the care system) were met in 60% of cases and A2 timescales (average time taken to match a child with an adoptive family once the Placement Order has been granted) were met in 47% of cases.
- Adoption Support is wholly delivered by Adoption NoW and is very busy with 401 open cases. Adoption NoW applied for £347,743 of Post Adoption Support Fund, with 23 Blackburn with Darwen children in receipt of this funding at the end of September 2018.

3. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

No policy implications identified

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

As per the agreed financial model, there will be a gradual transition of resources from local authorities to the RAA over a two and a half year period. Based on the estimated current levels of operational expenditure to be combined initially, with Blackburn with Darwen contributing £103,958.41 towards non-staffing related operational expenditure, Blackburn with Darwen's share of any surplus/deficit generated within the RAA would be in the region of 19% of the RAA total from 18/19 onwards.

Under the current model of Adoption, a system of interagency fees exists, which are payable between local authorities when placing a child with an adopter from another local authority. In the medium term, it is expected that increased efficiency in the recruitment of adopters within Adoption NoW will generate cost savings on interagency fees for participant local authorities.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

This report is required to meet statutory requirements as set out in the 'National Minimum Standards for Adoption.'

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

No resource implications identified.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

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. *(insert EIA link here)*

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. *(insert EIA attachment)*

10. CONSULTATIONS

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.

VERSION:	1.0
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CONTACT OFFICER:	Alyson Hanson
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DATE:	11 th December 2018
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BACKGROUND PAPER:	Adoption 6 Month report
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