

EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION



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

LEAD OFFICERS: Director of Children's Services & Education

DATE: 14th
November 2019

PORTFOLIO(S) AFFECTED: Children's Services, Young People & Education

WARD/S AFFECTED: (All Wards);

KEY DECISION: N

SUBJECT:

Adoption Now Annual Report 1st April 2018- 31st March 2019 for Blackburn with Darwen.

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 Annual Report for 2018-19.

3. BACKGROUND

This is the Annual Report of the Blackburn with Darwen Adoption Service, which is part of the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) called Adoption NoW. This is a consortium arrangement of six Local Authorities to deliver a more effective and efficient Adoption Service in line with 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

1. There have been 24 children made subject to Adoption Orders, and 21 children matched. The current 'in year' figures are positive and would place Blackburn's timeliness in placing children for Adoption one of the best in the Country.
2. There have been two disruptions since April 2018 through to March 2019.
3. Nationally there is a shortage of Adopters, and with the number of children looked after continuing to increase, Adoption NoW have focused significantly upon their recruitment strategy and campaigns. The focus has been on building up a profile of adopters from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
4. A trend that is particularly prominent is the number of sibling groups of children awaiting placements; this is apparent for both fostering and adoption in the Borough and across the 6 Authorities that make up Adoption NoW. Currently 90 out of the 237 children tracked for

Adoption by the Service are under 1 year of age. Again this is consistent with data gathered by Blackburn with Darwen for those children entering the care system and the increase in babies and sibling groups being seen.

5. A total of £502,094 was spent on placing children with outside Agencies for the full year. Over the year, 83% of children matched have been with Adoption NoW adopters. These placements do not incur an interagency fee. It is procedure to search for a family within Adoption NoW in the first instance, then to look further afield to other Local Authorities, RAA's or Voluntary Agencies.
6. The target for the coming year is to approve 100 sets of Adopters within the RAA as a whole, to enhance sufficiency and respond to the demand for Adoptive families.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

No policy implications identified

6. 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.

7. 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 have been 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.

CONTACT OFFICER:	Pamela Price, Service Lead – Placement Services
DATE:	01/09/2019
BACKGROUND PAPER:	Adoption Service Annual Report for 2018/19