



Report to CYP & FS Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee 11 December 2017

Report of: Carly Speechley – Director of Children and Families

Subject: Adoption Service

Author of Report: Suzanne Whiteley, Adoption Service Manager,
Tel: 35155

Summary:

An update on key performance improvement and an explanation of how performance is measured across the adoption journey as requested from July 2017 scrutiny

Type of item: The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	x
Other	

The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:

Note the report and its contents

Background Papers:

List any background documents (e.g. research studies, reports) used to write the report.

- July 2017 Annual Scrutiny report
- Accompanied by a presentation

Category of Report: OPEN

Report of the Director Carly Speechley Director Children and Families

1. Introduction/Context

- 1.1 At the Children and Young People's Scrutiny board in July 2017 the scrutiny committee received a report on the annual position of the Sheffield Adoption Services. Scrutiny asked for an update on key performance improvement and an explanation of how performance is measured across the Adoption journey. This information is presented below and accompanied by a presentation to be received by the board.

2. Content

- 2.1 The main indicators relating to adoption performance subject to national reporting are:-

A1: average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted. The target for the last full three year period (2013 to 2016) is 426 days (average).

A2: average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family. The target for the last full three year period (2013 to 2016) is 121 days (average).

In setting the targets in relation to each stage of the adoption process and specifically in relation to A1 and A2 above, the adoption service sets a minimum threshold for the areas that are essential in monitoring performance; this minimum threshold is the best that could be anticipated in each area in the optimum case.

The adoption process is broken down into the following stages

- Decision of adoption
- Adoption pack returned
- Should be placed for adoption (SHOBPA) decision
- Placement order
- Linking memo received
- Matching panel
- Agency Decision Maker (ADM) decision
- Placed for adoption
- Adoption order application
- Adoption Order

Following a recent review of the milestones form and process the following areas have been amended and/or added

- Adoption pack sent to social worker
- Breakdown of family finding stage

- 2.2 In considering the initial setting of targets the service aimed to identify where best it was able to reduce the overall number of cases that were significantly over the national threshold. We therefore took an approach that allowed us to set targets in individual cases, so for example in the case of a child with no identified additional needs there is an expectation that the adoption process could be achieved in a timely manner and so the minimum targets are set. In doing this the overall reduction in days enabled more complex cases to exceed the threshold where this was required in line with the needs of the child and taking into account any relevant external factors. This approach enables Sheffield to achieve a good overall performance and move towards achieving the national minimum threshold, both in respect of the in-year and 3 year target. The minimum timescale that the adoption process could be achieved in the circumstances is A1 278 days and A2 82 days.
- 2.3 We have seen exceptions to the above in cases where early permanence placements have been utilised (where a child is placed with an approved adopter with temporary approval as a foster carer whilst the court process is undertaken), this has allowed Sheffield to achieve A1 in 135 days and A2 in 49 days.
- 2.4 The attached charts (**Appendix 1**) give a breakdown of the performance for 2015/16, 2016/17 and the current year to date (2017/18).
- 2.5 The tables attached (**Appendix 2**) show the areas where improvements have been made, namely the point at which adoption is considered as the plan for a child, the linking memo being received by the adoption service (the end point of family finding and a match being agreed and put forward to the adoption panel) and the final papers being submitted for an adoption order.
- 2.6 The key areas being focussed on for improvement remain the adoption pack information being returned to the service, the linking memo being received and matching panel taking place.
- 2.7 The initial priority in improving adoption performance against the national scorecard indicators was A1, this focus is now moving to achieving improvements in A2 whilst maintaining a below threshold A1 indicator.
- 2.8 There are often difficulties with securing relevant consents from birth parents when adoption is being considered and the adoption service is working together with fieldwork social work services to ensure timely information is sent to enable the adoption process to start while continuing to work with birth parents.
- 2.9 We have made a significant amount of changes in the family finding process to ensure there are minimal delays. Specifically there is now more focus on areas of this section such as direct family finding, prospective adopter reports being received by the adoption service, decisions around visiting possible matches and the time from decision to proceed by the child's social worker and manager. This continued focus on the stages of the process enable us to review and consider how to address areas where there are often significant challenges e.g. finding

adoption placements for harder to place children, such as older children, sibling groups and children with additional needs.

- 2.10 Sheffield compares well against its South Yorkshire neighbours and we know that we outperform Rotherham, Barnsley and Doncaster in the areas of a child entering care to Agency Decision Making (ADM), ADM to placement order and placement order to matching and then placed to adoption order. The area we continue to focus on to improve is therefore matching to placement.
- 2.11 We have reviewed our approach of transitions to adoption taking into account recent research and work undertaken with the Multi-Agency Psychological Services and continue to ensure that the transition are made at a pace determined by the child's needs.
- 2.12 Our current projection for the end of year performance is A1 356 days and A2 153 days.

END
November 2017

Appendix 1

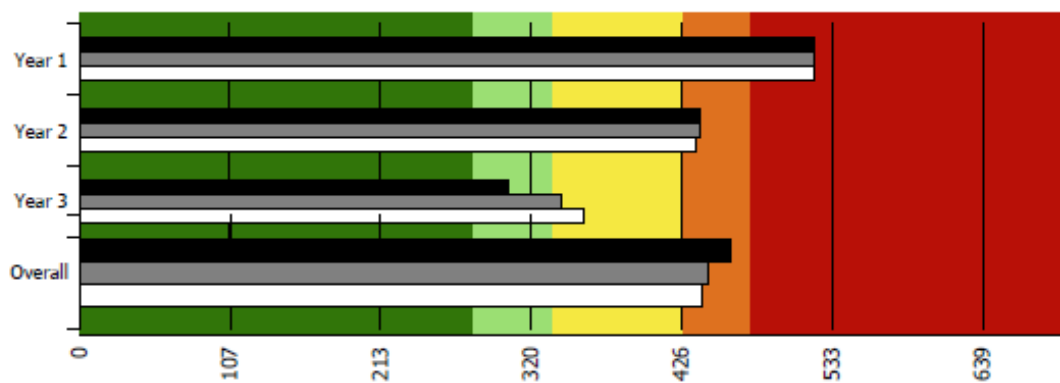
Last refreshed: 23/10/2017

Summarised Performance For Indicators A1 and A2

- Assured - Child adopted during the year therefore A1 / A2 is known
- Achieved - Child is not adopted but A1 / A2 can be calculated based on actual information and child should be adopted in year
- Expected - Child is not adopted but A1 / A2 can be calculated using target dates and child is expected to be adopted in year

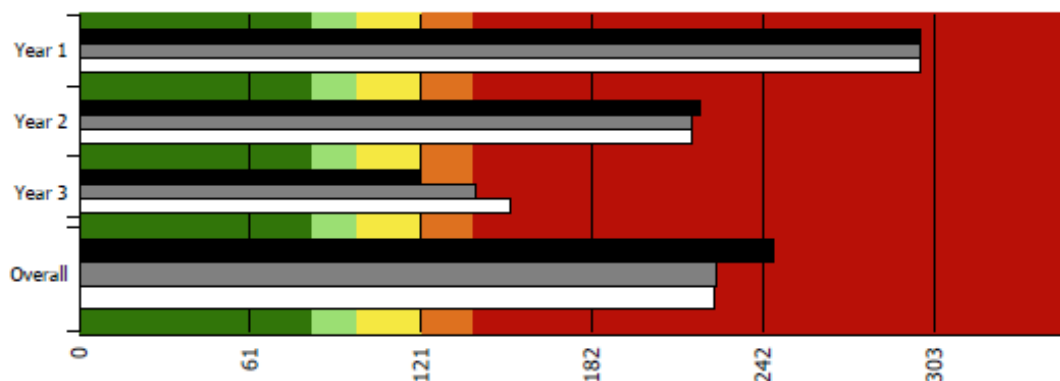
A1. Average time (in days) between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted

	Assured		Achieved		Expected	
	Children	A1	Children	A1	Children	A1
Year 1 : 01/04/2015 - 31/03/2016	75	520	75	520	75	520
Year 2 : 01/04/2016 - 31/03/2017	51	438	51	438	52	436
Year 3 : 01/04/2017 - 31/03/2018	21	303	51	341	68	356
Overall	147	460	177	445	195	440



A2. Average time (in days) between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family

	Assured		Achieved		Expected	
	Children	A2	Children	A2	Children	A2
Year 1 : 01/04/2015 - 31/03/2016	71	298	71	298	71	298
Year 2 : 01/04/2016 - 31/03/2017	51	220	52	217	52	217
Year 3 : 01/04/2017 - 31/03/2018	19	121	55	140	66	153
Overall	141	246	178	225	189	225



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Appendix 2

	Entered Care	Consider Adoption As Plan	Adoption Pack Returned	SHOBPA (Stage/Overall)		Placemen t Order	Linking Memo	Matching Panel	ADM	Placed For Adoption	Final Papers Lodged	Adoption Order
Average durations for each stage		39	69	98	170	23	81	72	11	24	110	61
A1	303										Assured	
A2							121				Assured	

The table above shows the current performance for 2017/18 with 21 children adopted

	Entered Care	Consider Adoption As Plan	Adoption Pack Returned	SHOBPA (Stage/Overall)		Placemen t Order	Linking Memo	Matching Panel	ADM	Placed For Adoption	Final Papers Lodged	Adoption Order
Average durations for each stage		65	43	97	166	27	147	64	10	26	165	70
A1	438										Assured	
A2							220				Assured	

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The above table shows the performance for 2016/17 with 51 children adopted

	Entered Care	Consider Adoption As Plan	Adoption Pack Returned	SHOBPA (Stage/Overall)		Placemen t Order	Linking Memo	Matching Panel	ADM	Placed For Adoption	Final Papers Lodged	Adoption Order
Average durations for each stage		102	62	69	186	32	168	77	9	18	179	64
A1	520										Assured	
A2							298				Assured	

The above table shows the performance for 2015/16 with 75 children adopted

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