



## Report to CYPF Scrutiny Committee 27th September 2012

**Report of:** CYPF Provider Services

**Subject:** Adoption Service

**Author of Report:** CYPF Provider Services

**Summary:**

- Update on the Adoption Service following new regulations and guidance from the government

**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	√
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. Remember that by listing documents people could request a copy.

- Adoption Service Ofsted Inspection Report June 2011
- Adoption Service Dataset 2011/12
- An Action Plan for Adoption: tackling delay

**Category of Report:** OPEN

## **1. Introduction/Context**

- 1.1 Sheffield Adoption Service was subject to an Ofsted inspection in June 2011. In common with 805 of adoption agencies in England and Wales, the overall judgement was 'good' with some outstanding features.

## **2. Main body of report**

### **Government Adoption Action Plan**

- Government Action Plan published March 2012 introduced reforms to adoption to speed up process for Looked After Children (LAC) and Adopters and make it easier for foster carers to adopt. The aim of this was to reduce the time for children who wait to start their life with their adoptive family and for adopters who want to offer LAC a home.
- The Adoption Scorecard will be introduced to measure adoption agencies timeliness. For children who are adopted this will look at:
  - time from becoming a LAC to placement with the adoptive family
  - from time of LAC to decision about adoption as a plan for the child
  - time from decision about adoption to actual placement with their adoptive family.
- The time is measured in days and it is expected that targets for these will be progressively challenging over a 3 year period, for example, in 2008/11 the national average time from a child entering care to moving to an adoptive family was 625 days. In Sheffield it was 562. The threshold for 2010/13 has been set at 639 days as acceptable performance however will be expected to be set to improve to 426 days in 2013/16.
- In 2014 the government will publish targets about time lines for adopters in terms of time taken from people registering an interest in adoption to being approved as adopters and time taken from decision of suitability to adopt to matching with a child or children.

### **Sheffield Response**

- Sheffield has taken a number of actions to ensure that the agency will be able to meet the challenges ahead in improving timeliness. This has been balanced with continuing to ensure quality for each child, whilst maintain the current low level of placement disruption, high numbers of children placed for adoption, in particularly the more challenging to place. These being older children with additional needs and emotional and behavioural difficulties of sibling groups.
- Permanency tracking meetings and processes have been introduced and being embedded across the service
- Performance Clinic has been held.

- Whole system review undertaken recognising that adoption is the end process of safeguarding and that the whole system impacts on timelines for children who are adopted. This process begins from initial referral and assessment through the court processes, identifying the right adopters and finally the need for robust post adoption support to ensure continued stability for children.
- A series of workshops have taken place analysing 'what works' and what needs to develop and change. This was a multiagency event involving birth parents, adopters, foster carers, young people, social workers and their managers, senior managers, representatives from court and adoption panel, health, education & mental health services and other professionals who form the system that supports adoption for children.
- This culminated in a final event on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2012 involving elected members. A number of key themes have emerged from the workshops and these will form a continuing action plan. This will be subject to ongoing monitoring and review and be held to account by the proposed Adoption Reference Group.
- Regulations will and have changed to support some of the changes required some of which are in the process of being implemented.
- Panel Processes have been revised to comply with the new regulations with the new process implemented from the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2012. The primary change is that the Adoption Panel will no longer have a role in the agency's process of deciding whether a child should be placed for adoption.
- Post Adoption Support Services are being reviewed as are the recruitment, training and assessment processes for prospective adopters. A new Prospective Adopter Report is planned to be introduced. This will focus on the skills and experiences of the prospective adopter in a more task focused way that should speed up the assessment process. A training session will be delivered by BAAF in September.
- Links have been made with LA's in the region and across the country to share good practice and a regional workshop is planned for October 2012.
- Sheffield Hallam University are keen to work with the authority to evaluate the effectiveness of post adoption support in using Theraplay as a model to support families. The University have agreed to undertake an initial evaluation on whether Theraplay is having a positive impact on adopted children and families in Sheffield. This will inform decisions as to whether the LA should invest in this model that currently appears to be an effective model of support for a number of families that are receiving this intervention.
- A meeting was held in August 2012 with the Judges from Sheffield Family Courts with the LA's legal services and senior managers from CYPF. This was to update the Judges on the work the local authority

had been undertaking in regard to the workshops and the implementation of the forthcoming changes for the adoption process.

- Individual cases have been reviewed and have had adoption plans confirmed or alternative permanency plans progressed.
- PAS are working closely with Adoption Business Support. This is to streamline systems that will support social workers and provide quality performance and management information that will allow better tracking of the timelines of the child's journey to adoption.

## **Statistics**

1. Adopted & Placed for adoption within 12 months of Agency decision	<b>8</b>	<b>61.54%</b>
2. Adopted but not placed within 12 months of agency decision	<b>5</b>	<b>38.46%</b>
3. Placed for adoption within 12 months of agency decision	<b>21</b>	<b>65.63%</b>
4. Placed for adoption but not within 12 months of agency decision	<b>11</b>	<b>34.38%</b>
5. Not yet placed for adoption and over 12 months since agency decision	<b>22</b>	<b>28.21%</b>
6. Not yet placed for adoption but under 12 months since Agency Decision	<b>56</b>	<b>71.79%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	

Children made subject to a 'Should Be Placed for Adoption' (SHOBPA) Decision and outcomes

Year	Total no of children with a SHOBPA	Children linked/placed with adopters	No of SHOBPA recinds	No of children disrupted	No of children adopted
Current position as at quarter 1	110	39	2	0	13
2011/12	60	40	11	0	45
2010/11	55	37	7	2	45
2009/10	44	45	5	3	41
2008/09	48	41	9	0	55

NB children may have SHOBPA decision/link/adoption in different years the accounting is taken as at end of March each year and will fluctuate throughout the year as the plan for children may change from adoption for various reasons, for example, family rehab or SGO with extended family or foster carers, long term foster placement.

## **Adopters 2011/12**

Initial Enquiries	169
Attended an Information Evening	92
Expressed an Interest to Adopt	31
Adopter Assessments	23
Adopter Approvals	17

## **Adopters 01.04.12 – 31.08.12**

Initial Enquiries	69
Attended an Information Evening	48
Expressed an Interest to Adopt	13
Adopter Assessments	4
Adopter Approvals	20

### **3 What does this mean for the people of Sheffield?**

- 3.1 Children thrive in stable and loving families. Sometimes birth parents are unable to care for their children themselves. Getting the best possible care for those children is one of the LA's most important responsibilities.

Delays in the adoption system cause lasting harm for vulnerable children, and may rob them of their best chance of the love and stability of a new family.

This action plan sets out proposals for tackling the current delay in the adoption system and outlines plans to accelerate the whole adoption process so that more children benefit from adoption.

The LA has responded to the Government's Action Plan as outlined above in the main body of the report. The LA will continue to drive forward and implement the findings from the workshops to ensure that the child's journey is undertaken in a timely manner whilst ensuring the best outcome.

### **4. Recommendation**

- 4.1 The Committee are being asked to note the report and its contents.

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