

## CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

<b>Title of paper:</b>	<b>Adoption &amp; Permanency April 2015 – March 2016</b>	
<b>Director(s)/ Corporate Director(s):</b>	<b>Helen Blackman – Director of Children’s Social Care</b>	<b>Wards affected: ALL</b>
<b>Report author(s) and contact details:</b>	<b>Sonia Cain, Service Manager Fostering &amp; Adoption, <a href="mailto:Sonia.cain@nottinghamcity.gov.uk">Sonia.cain@nottinghamcity.gov.uk</a>  <b>Kwesi Williams (Project Officer – Children in Care), 0115 8762684, <a href="mailto:kwesi.williams@nottinghamcity.gov.uk">kwesi.williams@nottinghamcity.gov.uk</a></b></b>	
<b>Other colleagues who have provided input:</b>	<b>Adoption Service</b>	
<b>Date of consultation with Portfolio Holder(s) (if relevant)</b>		
<b>Relevant Council Plan Strategic Priority:</b>		
Cutting unemployment by a quarter		<input type="checkbox"/>
Cut crime and anti-social behaviour		<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure more school leavers get a job, training or further education than any other City		<input type="checkbox"/>
Your neighbourhood as clean as the City Centre		<input type="checkbox"/>
Help keep your energy bills down		<input type="checkbox"/>
Good access to public transport		<input type="checkbox"/>
Nottingham has a good mix of housing		<input type="checkbox"/>
Nottingham is a good place to do business, invest and create jobs		<input type="checkbox"/>
Nottingham offers a wide range of leisure activities, parks and sporting events		<input type="checkbox"/>
Support early intervention activities		<input type="checkbox"/>
Deliver effective, value for money services to our citizens		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Summary of issues (including benefits to citizens/service users):</b>		
<p>The report provides an overview of the child permanency performance of the Local Authority and the number of children placed for Adoption and Special Guardianship. We continue to be challenged by the impact of Re:BS judgement and the judicial scrutiny of adoption plans in the Courts.</p> <p>There has been a significant reduction in the numbers of children nationally being placed for adoption and a corresponding increase in Special Guardianship Orders. The City however went against the trend and in the year 2014–2015 - 70 children were adopted, and 2015–2016 - 47 children were adopted.</p> <p>The national review of Special Guardianship Orders was concluded earlier this year and came into effect on the 29 February 2016. As a result there is now a clear expectation that the assessment of prospective special guardians is thorough and demonstrates the carer’s ability to parent the child not only in the present, but also into adulthood.</p> <p>The Government have directed that Local Authorities and Voluntary Agencies nationally, should come together and form Regional Adoption Agencies: by 2020 there should be RAA in operation. Work has commenced within the East Midlands to establish the East Midlands Regional Adoption</p>		

Agency. We are one of 9 Local Authorities and 3 Voluntary Adoption Agencies that have commenced working to form the EMRAA. It is expected that collaboratively working together as a region in the area of Adopter Recruitment, Training, Home finding and Post Order Support will improve the recruitment timescale of Adopters. It will also improve outcomes for children and minimise adoption delays.

**Recommendation(s):**

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|-----------|---|
| <b>1</b>  | It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board notes the performance to date in Adoption and Special Guardianship and the activities being undertaken to minimise delays.   |
| <b>2.</b> | It is recommended that the Adoption and Permanency Report is presented to the Corporate Parenting Board in May in future as this will enable the Adoption Leadership Board data to be considered for the previous year and provide accurate data for the year end to be collated. |

**1. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1.1 It is important that members of the Corporate Parenting Board are kept informed of the activities being undertaken to achieve permanency for those who the Board have corporate parental responsibility for. It is also imperative that the Board is given the opportunity to comment on current activity.
- 1.2 The report also makes reference to the actions relating to Strategic Priority Statement (SPS) two of the 'Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy 2014 – 2016: Valuing the future of our Children in Care and Care Leavers' and provides a brief update on progress made against these actions – see section 2.19.

**2. BACKGROUND (INCLUDING OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION)**

- 2.1 Nottingham City continues to make adoption plans for a significant number of children in its care. Many of these children have complex medical conditions, a number of the children are part of sibling groups or children with disabilities, or have birth parents with complex histories. Adoption plans are made knowing that many of these children are considered 'hard to place' but with a strong belief that if children cannot live with their birth family, adoption will provide the permanency and the security they need to achieve positive outcomes.
- 2.2 The Adoption Scorecard (introduced in 2012) allows local authorities and other adoption agencies to monitor their own performance and compare it with that of others at critical points in the child's journey towards adoption.
- 2.3 The government continue to incrementally reduce the timescale by which children should be adopted year on year.
- 2.4 Successfully placing more complex children can negatively affect our timeliness as the complexity of these cases brings more days to our scorecard pro-rata.

2.5 The service continues to function from have a stable base and is moving forward to establish standards and provide a robust service to both children and adopters. Three separate teams have been established within the Fostering and Adoption Services, these are;

- Fostering
- Adoption
- Post Order

### **Adoption Data from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016**

2.6 In Nottingham City currently there are 91 children with adoptions plans:-

- 62 Children's Best Interests Decision for adoption have been made
- 47 Children with Placement Orders
- 43 children Matched with adopters
- Nottingham City is supporting 288 children by means of a Special Guardianship Allowance's and this is going to increase over time.

2.7 There have been 47 children adopted during the last financial year. This is a decrease on our performance in 2014/15 where we achieved 70 adoptions for the whole year, but a number of these adoptions were made in the first quarter, the children having been placed during the previous reporting year and the Orders being granted in 2014/15. The reduction in projected numbers of children being placed for adoption reflects a national trend, whereby the increasing use of Special Guardianship Orders and Court decision making has had a negative impact on the plans for adoption.

2.8 There are 47 children with placement orders:-

- 4 matched waiting for ADM
- 10 booked into Panel for their match
- 2 children placed with foster to adopt carers
- 5 Placement Orders granted in the last 3 months.
- A sibling group of 2 children have been waiting over 11 months

2.9 There are 11 children whose plans for adoption are to be rescinded which are currently underway through the Courts.

2.10 The Authority is currently home finding for 25 children. Data relating to this activity are presented as followed;

## **Gender**

14 of these children are male

11 of these children are female

## **Age**

Under 1 x 2

Aged 1 x 5

Aged 2 x 4

Aged 3 x 1

Aged 5 x 3

Aged 6 x 4

Aged 7 x 4

Aged 8 x 2

## **Ethnicity**

White British x 9

Black African x 2

White British/Black Caribbean x 12

Serbian x 1

Gypsy/Roma x 1

## **Sibling Groups**

Single children x 12

Sibling group of 2 x 5

Sibling group of 3 x 1

For children who we are unable to place with our internal adopters, we make use of our Interagency Adoption budget, however a year ago the Government announced that they are providing funding for hard to place children, sibling groups, children with disabilities and BME so that Nottingham can reclaim any inter-agency fees paid this year to place children with other agency adopters.

## **2.12 Recruitment**

We currently have 36 adopters who are in the process of being assessed, but the challenge which we share with a number of local authorities is to recruit enough adopters to match the complexity of the children with whom we would wish to place. We have close links with neighbouring authorities as a member of the East Midlands Adoption Consortium and regularly share profiles in relation to adopters who are waiting and children with adoption plans. Along with other Adoption Agencies we are finding that adopters are waiting longer for placements as the number of children with a plan for adoption dwindles. We have therefore refreshed the Adoption Recruitment Strategy to

target our recruitment activity to older and hard to place children and as a result we are aligning ourselves with other local authority neighbours, by not accepting applications from those interested solely in a child under the age of 2 years.

**2.13 Adoption Support Fund**

The Adoption Support Fund (ASF) was established and went live in April 2015 for an initial one year period. The adoption support fund is a government initiative aimed at offering support to adoptive families by enabling them to access bespoke therapeutic support for the adoptive child and their family. In January of this year the government announced that funding for the ASF would continue, for the next 4 years. From April 2015 to March 2016 Nottingham City have made 19 successful applications, which equates to a total fund of £172,346. More importantly it has been welcomed by adoptive families who are now able to access the correct type of support as and when needed. The success of the fund prompted the government to state that the ASF would be extended to support children from the point of being placed for adoption.

Additionally, the fund has been extended to support children being cared for under Special Guardianship Orders.

**3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 None

**4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING VALUE FOR MONEY/VAT)**

4.1 As stated earlier Special Guardianship Orders are increasingly being applied for and it is clear that this will have significant impact on the service, as they do attract additional cost in the form of allowances, which we are obligated to pay until the child reaches adulthood (18). There is potential that statutory responsibilities are likely to impact the Post Order service as the role out of the Support Fund to Special Guardianship will undoubtedly require resourcing.

**5. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES (INCLUDING LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND CRIME AND DISORDER ACT IMPLICATIONS)**

5.1 None

**6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

**7. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT INFORMATION**

7.1 None

8. **PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT**

8.

Up dated 05.05.2016