

## **CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD – MAY 2018**

<b>Title of paper:</b>	Adoption and Permanency	
<b>Director(s)/ Corporate Director(s):</b>	Helen Blackman - Director, Children's Integrated Services	<b>Wards affected:</b> All
<b>Report author(s) and contact details:</b>	Audrey Taylor – Service Manager, Fostering and Adoption <a href="mailto:Audrey.taylor@nottinghamcity.gov.uk">Audrey.taylor@nottinghamcity.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Other colleagues who have provided input:</b>	Sharon Clarke – Service Manager, Children in Care	
<b>Date of consultation with Portfolio Holder(s) (if relevant)</b>	Insert date the report was approved by the Portfolio Holder	
<b>Relevant Council Plan Key Theme:</b>		
Strategic Regeneration and Development		<input type="checkbox"/>
Schools		<input type="checkbox"/>
Planning and Housing		<input type="checkbox"/>
Community Services		<input type="checkbox"/>
Energy, Sustainability and Customer		<input type="checkbox"/>
Jobs, Growth and Transport		<input type="checkbox"/>
Adults, Health and Community Sector		<input type="checkbox"/>
Children, Early Intervention and Early Years		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Leisure and Culture		<input type="checkbox"/>
Resources and Neighbourhood Regeneration		<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Summary of issues (including benefits to citizens/service users):</b>		
<p>The report provides an overview of the permanency performance of the Local Authority, and the number of adoptions. The report will primarily focus on adoption activity, as this continues to be the plan for a significant number of the Authority's children in care; however brief reference is made to Special Guardianship Order figures.</p> <p>The report highlights actions that are being taken to address delays.</p>		
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>		
<b>1</b>	To note the performance to date in relation to permanency planning for children in care, which can be in the form of Adoption, Permanent Fostering or Special Guardianship.	
<b>2</b>	To present the Adoption and Permanency report to the Corporate Parenting Board annually. The report will enable the Adoption Leadership Board data to be considered for the previous year, and our performance in this area to be reviewed.	

### **1 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1.1 It is important that members of the Corporate Parenting Board remain informed of the activities being undertaken, to achieve permanency for children that the Local Authority has corporate parental responsibility for.

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

- 2.1 Nottingham City continues to make adoption plans for a significant number of children in our care. Many of these children have complex medical conditions, belong to a sibling group, have a range of 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 then a permanency option should be considered.
- 2.2 The Adoption Scorecard (introduced in 2012) allows Local Authorities and other adoption agencies to monitor their performance, and compare it with that of others at critical points in the child’s journey towards adoption. Successfully placing children that are more complex can negatively affect our timelines, which impacts on our performance in some of the scorecard measures.
- 2.3 The Adoption Leadership Board (ALB) is a monitoring process that was bought in by the Government for Local Authorities for adoption of both children, and adults going through the adoption process to ensure the timescales are met. The data is collated and submitted on a quarterly basis to ensure no drift or delay.
- 2.4 The Service Manager for Fostering and Adoption continues to hold regular Adoption Tracking Meetings with Team Managers to progress every child’s adoption plan and minimise delays.
- 2.5 The department continues to make good use of adoption as a permanency outcome for children in care:

In Nottingham City currently there are

- 98 children with adoption plans
  - 37 children are currently matched with adopters
  - 316 children are being supported by means of a Special Guardianship Allowance.
- 2.6 There were 34 children adopted in the last financial year. This is less than the previous year where we had 42 children adopted. The increase in Special Guardianship Order (SGO) placements from 11 the previous year to 25 last year could be a contributing factor. Neighbouring Local Authorities are also reporting a reduction in adoptions for the last financial year.
- 2.7 The authority is currently home-finding for 22 children. Data relating to this activity is as follows:

### **Gender**

- 12 of these children are male
- 10 of these children are female

### **Age**

- Under 1 – 6 children
- 1 – 3 children
- 2 – 2 children
- 3 – 4 child
- 4 – 1 child
- 5 – 2 children
- 6 – 2 children

- 8 – 2 children

### **Ethnicity**

- White British - 12 children
- White British/Black Caribbean - 7 children
- Black African - 3 children

### **Sibling Groups**

- 4 sets of sibling groups, each with 2 siblings in.

- 2.8 We make strenuous efforts to home-find for children; we do change plans if this will not be achieved within a set timescale. 28 children currently have plans for their adoption plans to be rescinded. This is for children for whom we have exhausted all possibilities to find an adoptive home. Many of these children will remain cared for by their foster carer in a permanency arrangement.
- 2.9 For children who we are unable to place with our own adopters, we use Interagency Adopters. For the last financial year, the cost of purchasing these placements outside of the Local Authority was £410,099. In terms of our approved Adopters who have adopted from other Local Authorities, we have received £108,000 in payment. This gives an aggregate cost of £302,099 for the year.

### **2.10 Recruitment**

We have 19 prospective adopters who are being assessed, and 28 approved households waiting to be matched. 5 of these prospective adopters are foster carers, and therefore child specific. We are currently accepting applications from adopters who only want a single child under the age of 2, as we do not have sufficient adopters for this cohort. We are currently updating our Facebook and Web pages, and holding information evenings.

### **2.11 Adoption Support Fund**

The Adoption Support Fund commenced in April 2015. This is a central government initiative, aimed at offering support to adoptive families by enabling them to access bespoke therapeutic support for their child and the adopters. This financial year we have made 51 applications to the Adoption Support Fund totalling £140,839.69 of which we have received £132,530.69. There are 6 applications submitted which are pending approval totalling £14,313.00 This is an increase in 14 more applications to the fund compared to the previous financial year. The department has not had any match funding requests in this financial year.

### **2.12 Regionalisation of Adoption / Permanence Team**

In line with the government agenda for the regionalisation of adoption, plans are underway to establish an East Midlands Regional Adoption Agency by 2020. We are one of 9 Local Authorities and 3 Local Voluntary Agencies who will be members of the East Midlands Regional Adoption Agency, the aim of which is to bring adoption resources together across the region leading to improvements in adoption planning for children.

Nottingham City are working with Derbyshire County, Derby City and Nottinghamshire County (D2N2) and voluntary agencies. As part of this process, we have implemented a Permanence Team in Nottingham City. The Team comprises a Team Manager, Senior Practitioner and 4 Social Workers. The Team work with those

children who have a plan of adoption to ensure plans are progressed in a timely way. The team also support field social work teams in completing the Child Permanency Record for the child to prevent delay in the adoption process. The Team work closely with D2N2 partners, to ensure consistency across the region. Feedback from Adoption Panel and other professionals is that the Permanence Team are making a significant difference in progressing plans in a more timely way with Reports to Panel being rated generally as 'Outstanding'.

### **2.13 Permanency Panel**

Nottingham City Council is committed to permanency planning for children. This can be in the form of Adoption, Permanent Fostering or Special Guardianship Orders. A Permanency Panel has been established in order to ensure proposals made regarding planning meet the needs of children / young people. Proposals for a Special Guardianship Order should be presented to the Permanency Panel for scrutiny and approval, before it is confirmed at a Review or submitted to Court. Those children whose plans are to be permanently fostered are agreed at the child's reviews, prior to being presented to Panel. Those children with a plan of Adoption continue to be subject to Adoption guidance, regulations and processes. Proposals are quality assured with safeguarding responsibilities in mind, and the Panel also provides an additional forum to monitor the Local Authority's financial commitments. The Panel ensures compliance in respect of relevant legislation and statutory guidance.

- 2.14 Under Care Planning regulations, the consideration of permanence for a child should begin if not before, then immediately after a child is accommodated. As such, Social Workers immediately start to care-plan the best route for permanence. The objectives are laid out and viabilities explored, prior to a child's Looked After Review at 20 days.
- 2.15 The Permanency Panel is comprised of Service Managers from Neighbourhood Fieldwork Teams, Children in Care, Fostering and Adoption as well as an Independent Reviewing Officer. Legal advice is also available if required. The Panel reflects upon the proposed plans and ensures that the presented match between the prospective carer and child is viable and appropriate. The Panel considers this information, and measures it against the objective for each child as defined in the Regulations; 'permanence is the long-term plan for the child's upbringing ensure having a secure, stable and loving family to support them through childhood and beyond to give them a sense of security, continuity, commitment, identity and belonging' (Planning Page 20 Regulations, Vol.2, 2015).
- 2.16 The Panel makes recommendations which are ratified by the Nominated Senior Manager (Head of Service, Children in Care) and the Director of Children's Integrated Services, both in respect of the plan and the financial expenditure it will incur.
- 2.17 The Panel may not agree to the proposals made, and may either recommend further work or suggest alternative options. It has to be clearly demonstrated that the placement clearly meets the best interests of the child, now and in the future.
- 2.18 Inevitably, some plans for permanence will require a package of support. When a package has been agreed and scrutinised by the Service Manager (Fostering and Adoption) it will then be reviewed within one year. Packages of support can include a range of options such as therapeutic support and or financial commitment.

**3 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 None.

**4 FINANCE COMMENTS (INCLUDING IMPLICATIONS AND VALUE FOR MONEY/VAT)**

4.1 None.

**5 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT COMMENTS (INCLUDING RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES, AND LEGAL, CRIME AND DISORDER ACT AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS)**

5.1 None.

**6 STRATEGIC ASSETS & PROPERTY COMMENTS (FOR DECISION RELATING TO ALL PROPERTY ASSETS AND ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE) (AREA COMMITTEE REPORTS ONLY)**

6.1 None.

**7 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

7.1 Has the equality impact of the proposals in this report been assessed?

No



An EIA is not required because the report does not contain proposals or financial decisions.

Yes



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

8.1 None.

**9 PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT**

9.1 Amended Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (2010), Care Planning and Fostering Regulations (2015), Working Together (2015), Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (Vol.2, 2015). Planning Regulations, Vol.2, 2015 Adoption Minimu