

Summary Sheet

Corporate Parenting Panel – 19th July 2016

Title:

Rotherham Adoption Service Performance Report 2015-2016

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Ian Thomas, Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services

Report Author(s)

Helen Mangham (Team Manager – Adoption)

Jill Stanley (Team Manager – Adoption)

Ward(s) Affected:

All

Summary

This report is an annual report to brief on the business and activity within the Council's Adoption Service in 2015/16. The report provides performance and activity data on the service, reports on the activity and functioning of the Adoption Panel and details service developments that have occurred in the year and those that are planned moving through 2016/17.

Recommendations

That the Corporate Parenting Panel receives this report and considers and comments on any issues arising

List of Appendices Included:

None

Background Papers:

None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required:

No

Exempt from the Press and Public:

No

Title: Annual Adoption Service Report 2015/16

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Corporate Parenting Panel receives this report and considers and comments on any issues arising.

2. Background

- 2.1 This report is an annual report to brief on the business and activity within the Council's Adoption Service in 2015/16.
- 2.2 The report provides performance and activity data on the service, reports on the activity and functioning of the Adoption Panel, and details service developments that have occurred in the year and those that are planned moving through 2016/17.

3. Key Issues

- 3.1 Rotherham Borough Council Adoption Service operates within the regulatory framework of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (as amended); Adoption Agency Regulations; the associated Statutory Guidance 2014 and the National Minimum Standards 2014.
- 3.2 Prior to September 2013, Adoption Agencies were inspected separately by Ofsted. Since then, inspection of adoption work is incorporated into the Single Inspection Framework which includes a graded judgement on adoption.
- 3.3 The Adoption Service in Rotherham is made up of two teams, the recruitment team and the assessment team. The Adoption Service undertakes the recruitment, assessment and approval of applicant adopters, family finds and matches children and approved adoptive parents, supports and supervises adoption placements and provides post adoption support services.
- 3.4 In line with the Regulations, the service has an Adoption Panel chaired by a skilled and experienced independent social work professional. The panel considers and makes 'recommendations' about the suitability of adopters and on the matching of children requiring adoption with approved adopters.
- 3.5 The Assistant Strategic Director for Children's Social Care performs the role of Agency Decision Maker for the Adoption Service. The Agency Decision Maker considers and makes 'decisions' on whether or not children should be placed for adoption, and following consideration and recommendation by the Adoption Panel, on the suitability of applicant adopters and the suitability of a match between a specific child and approved adopters, having considered the Adoption Panel's recommendation in each case.

4. Activity in the Adoption Service in 2015/16

4.1 Should be placed for Adoption Decisions

4.1.1 The decision by a Local Authority that a looked after child 'should be placed for adoption' (referred to as the SHOBPA decision) is a decision made by the Local Authority's Agency Decision Maker for Adoption based on the social worker's report, known as the 'Child's Permanence Report', legal and medical advice and any other relevant supporting evidence.

4.1.2 In 2015/16 SHOBPA decisions were made in respect of 46 children, 9 required supplementary work for the ADM to make the recommendation, but none were declined. In 2014/15, 49 SHOBPA decisions made.

4.2 Placement Orders

4.2.1 A Placement Order is an Order made by the Court which endorses a child's plan for adoption (following the SHOBPA decision made by the Local Authority) and allows for the child to be legally placed with approved adoptive parents.

4.2.2 In 2015/16 Placement Orders were made in respect of 41 children compared with 39 Placement Orders made in 2014/15. Of the 46 children who had SHOBPA decision made (reported in 4.1.2), five of these were revoked following further assessment. These children comprised of two sets of siblings, and one other child. Three of the children were assessed as having their permanency needs best met in long term fostering, whilst for the other sibling group, the plan changed to rehabilitation home following a further parenting assessment.

4.3 Adopter Approvals

4.3.1 Individuals or couples who wish to adopt a looked after child must first be 'approved' as 'suitable' to do so. Applicant adopters are assessed by the adoption assessment team and the Adoption Panel makes recommendations on the applicant's suitability, with the Agency Decision Maker making the final decision on suitability.

4.3.2 Performance on recruiting prospective adopters who wish to adopt a looked after child has been maintained this year with a calendar of recruitment events throughout the year. The number of enquiries to the agency in 2015/16 was 97, compared to 100 enquires in the previous year. Once further information has been shared at an information event or visit the number of 'Registration of Interests' received has decreased from 51 in 2014/15 to 30 in 2015/16.

- 4.3.3 The Agency is ensuring that whilst prospective adopters enquiring are being given a positive welcome, the messages being shared about adoption and the children available for adoption is realistic. The agency is clear about the qualities and skills needed by prospective adopters in order to successfully parent children who have experienced separation, loss and early childhood trauma.
- 4.3.4 In addition, the number of adopters the agency has approved has reduced. In 2015/16 15 adopters were approved as compared to 32 in 2014/15. This is consistent with the national trend, but in addition to this the previous year had been a record year for RMBC Adoption Team.
- 4.3.5 Rotherham Adoption Team remains committed to increasing the number of adopters approved. In achieving this, there has been a refreshed recruitment campaign utilising social media to recruit adopters for individual children and sibling groups of all ages with an adoption plan and an increase in adoption recruitment activity around Rotherham, and this is still ongoing throughout 2016/17.

4.4 Timeliness of assessment of prospective adopters

- 4.4.1 The average time between 'Registration of Interest' and 'Agency Decision' was 239 days. Since the introduction of the two stage process the timeliness for adopter assessments has continued to decline. The main delay is in Stage 1, due to delays in the returns of DBS checks. In addition adopters report that they are unable to obtain a timely appointment with their GP for the adoption medical. As Stage 1 is adopter led, the agency has less control over this stage. A number of adopters also choose to take a break between Stages 1 and 2 which impacts on the overall timeliness.
- 4.4.2 Timeliness for adopter approval has decreased nationally since the introduction of the two stage process. This has been mirrored in Rotherham Adoption Services with 46.6 % of adopter assessments being completed within the six month timescale in 2015/16.

4.5 Matches Approved

- 4.5.1 Rotherham Adoption Service has two Family Finders who seek to identify the most suitable approved adopters for each child needing adoption. Before a child can be placed with approved adopters the suitability of the match must be considered at the Adoption Panel, with the final decision resting with the Agency Decision Maker.
- 4.5.2 In 2015/16 the service matched 39 children with adoptive families. This compares with 35 matches in 2014/15.

4.6 Children Placed for Adoption

- 4.6.1 Once a match between a child and approved adopters has been approved, the service may proceed to legally place that child with those adopters. In 2015/16, the number of children who were placed for adoption was 36. In 2014/15, the number placed was 32 children.

4.7 Children Adopted

- 4.7.1 Once a child is placed for adoption, the adopters must wait a minimum ten week period before they can apply to the Court for an Adoption Order to legally adopt the child. Once an Adoption Order is granted the adopters obtain full parental responsibility for the child.
- 4.7.2 In 2015/16 there were 43 looked after children adopted. Similarly, 43 were adopted in 2014/15.

4.8 The Percentage of Children Leaving Care via Adoption

- 4.8.1 22.4% of children left care via adoption in Rotherham in 2015/16. The service is achieving adoption for a high number and percentage of looked after children. In 2016, Rotherham Adoption Team introduced monthly children's tracker meetings to measure performance of children with an adoption plan, to prevent drift and delay. This information is shared in fortnightly performance meetings, and has had a positive impact in forward planning for children whose plan is adoption. It is likely that the number of children adopted will reduce with the introduction of the edge of care 'offer' outlined in Rotherham's sufficiency strategy 2016/17.
- 4.8.2 The table below demonstrates the number and percentage of children adopted from care in 2015/16 as compared to statistics from previous dataset year. The table also examines the adoption of 'difficult to place' children.
- 4.8.3 Of the 43 children adopted, 16 were female and 27 were male. 38 children were of white British origin and 5 children were dual heritage. 9 children were sibling groups of 2 (18 children) and 5 of the children had disabilities. 7 children were aged 5 or over. 4 of the children of dual heritage were matched with families of appropriate culture, one child had complex health needs, and when matching was linked to a family, who did not share the child's heritage, but was skilled and experienced to meet the child's health and development needs.

Number of children adopted in Rotherham in 2014/15	43
Number of children adopted in Rotherham in 2015/16	43
Percentage of children leaving care via adoption in Rotherham in 2014/15	27%
Percentage of children leaving care via adoption in Rotherham in 2015/16	22.4%
Percentage of children from ethnic minority backgrounds leaving care via adoption in Rotherham in 2015/16	4%
Percentage of children aged 5 or over leaving care via adoption in Rotherham in 2015/16	18%

5. Timeliness of Adoption

- 5.1.1 The service has been striving to achieve adoption for children for whom it is in their best interests, in a timely manner. Children should be supported through their journey through care and to their 'forever' adoptive family as quickly as possible so they can benefit from being placed with their adoptive parents at as young an age as possible, enabling the bonding and attachment process to begin as soon as possible.
- 5.1.2 The Government recognises the need for timeliness in adoption and has been measuring Local Authority performance on timeliness with their 'Adoption Scorecard' measures for several years now.

5.2 Adoption Scorecard Measure 1

- 5.2.1 Adoption Scorecard Measure 1, measures the number of days on average that it takes for children who have been adopted to move from first coming into care to being placed for adoption with adoptive families. The Government target on this measure is 426 days.
- 5.2.2 Rotherham's performance in 2015/16 for children adopted was 296 days, a continued improvement in timeliness. 83.72% of the children adopted met the 426 day target. (36 children) compared to 67.44% in 2014/15.

5.3 Adoption Scorecard Measure 2

- 5.3.1 Adoption Scorecard Measure 2, measures the number of days on average it takes for adopted children to move from being made subject to a Placement Order to them having a match with adopted parents agreed by the Agency Decision Maker. The Government target on this measure is 121 days.
- 5.3.2 Rotherham's performance in 2015/16 for children adopted was 136 days. There has been continued improvement in timeliness for this measure. However, this remains short of the threshold of

121 days by 15 days. 72.09% of children adopted 2015/16 met the A2 measure of 121 days compared to 37.21% in 2014/15.

6. Family Finding

- 6.1 The service has two family finding social workers as previously mentioned. There are also three adoption support workers; one whose role is family finder assistant, one whose role is letter box co-ordinator and one whose role is supporting the adopter through the process of adoption. The family finders' main role is to identify approved adoptive families that can best meet children's need for adoption.
- 6.2 The service strives to provide as many adoption placements as possible from its own recruited adoptive families but where there is a shortfall of in-house adopters or a child's needs cannot be met by RMBC recruited families, the team will strive to find a suitable family in the region and across the whole country through families approved by other Local Authorities and by Voluntary Agencies.
- 6.3 Rotherham is now a member of the Adoption Link and uses this to support family finding for harder to place children in Rotherham through 2016/2017. Rotherham are also working with Barnardos but this project is in its early stages.
- 6.4 The family finders also utilise the National Adoption Register and Coram BAAF events, such as exchange days and activity days to enhance family finding for children. In this adoption year, the service has been successful in achieving adoption for a wide range of children who are considered 'harder to place' due to age, disability, ethnicity or part of a sibling group. Nine sibling groups; eight children over the age of 5 years; two children from BME background and four children with additional health needs/disabilities were adopted in 2015/16.
- 6.5 When placing a child with adopters approved by another Local Authority or a voluntary adoption agency we are required to pay a fee of £27,000 for one child, £43,000 for a sibling group of two, and £54,000 for a sibling group of three children. If another local authority places a child with one of our adoptive families they are required to pay us that fee. In 2014/15, Rotherham Adoption Services recruited a high level of adopters, as previously described which led to the agency being in a position to provide recruited adopters for other Authorities. In 2015/16, one adoptive family were recruited by Rotherham Adoption Services for one other local authority equating to a payment into the service of £27,000.
- 6.6 The family finding social workers use a variety of measures to match children to adopters including using the Adoption Register, and undertaking innovative activity such as attending exchange days, 'bump into' events and activity days.

- 6.7 Of the thirty-nine children matched for adoption in 2015/16:
- 24 were matched with in-house approved adopters
 - 8 were matched with voluntary adoption agency adopters
 - 7 were matched with other Local Authority adopters
- 6.8 As of 31st March 2016 there were 15 children with an adoption plan where family finding was ongoing. The child waiting the longest has had an adoption plan for 17 months. He has complex needs and it is likely that his plan will change to permanency through fostering and will remain with current foster carers on a long term basis. The average time for children currently where family finding is ongoing is 5 months, the longest being 17 months and the shortest 1 week.

7. Early Permanence Placements (Fostering to Adopt Placements)

- 7.1 Early Permanence Placements, also referred to as Fostering to Adopt was a Government initiative introduced in 2013, to enable children to be placed with their adoptive parents at as early a stage as possible. This initiative allows approved adopters to be also approved as foster carers for a specific child and to care for a child who they will go on to adopt, before the Court has agreed the plan of adoption through the granting of a Placement Order. This means in some instances, it is possible to place new-born babies with approved adopters at the very start of Court proceedings that may last another six months, under fostering to adopt fostering arrangements. Once the proceedings have finished and the Placement Order is granted, the child can be legally placed for adoption with those adopters.

Essentially, the legal status of the placement changes from a fostering placement to a placement for adoption but with no move or impact on the child, other than the positive effect of having been placed with his/her forever parents right from birth.

- 7.2 There is some risk for the 'fostering to adopt' families in this process, as it can never be known for definite what decision a Court will make and if the Court decides against a plan of adoption, the adopters will experience the distress of the child leaving their care.
- 7.3 The service has worked hard in 2015/16 to promote Early Permanence Placements, including training for adopters and staff and seeking to identify children for whom Early Permanence is most appropriate. Eight Early Permanence Placements were made in 2015/16; five children with RMBC adopters and three children placements with inter-agency families, (Kirklees and Calderdale). This has been very positive for the children and families involved and has contributed to RMBC Adoption Service's improved performance on timeliness.
- 7.4 Rotherham Adoption Service were innovative in appointing a dedicated early permanence champion in the team who works closely with the Adoption Team Managers and LAC Permanence Manager to identify and promote early permanence planning and embed this as part of Rotherham's practice when considering a Plan for Adoption. Rotherham's pro-active approach to EPP has resulted in RMBC being a leader in this area within the Region.

8. The Adoption Panel

8.1 Panel Member Training

8.1.1 It is a legislative requirement that there is at least one training day annually for Panel members. Panel member training in 2015/16 included:

- Dealing with disruptions (1 day course)
- Making good assessments (1day course)
- Early permanence – (1 day refresher course, including the fostering to adopt legal context)

8.2 Panel Business

8.2.1 During 2015/2016 the Adoption Panel considered and recommended approved adopters for 39 children and 14 prospective adopters.

8.3 Quality Assurance of Reports to Panel

8.3.1 The Adoption Panel plays a key quality assurance role for the service, providing feedback on the quality of reports it is asked to consider. In assessing and feeding back on the quality of the Child Permanence Reports and Prospective Adopter Reports it receives.

8.3.2 During 2015/16 there were two adoption disruptions in Rotherham; a sibling group of two, and a single older child. A disruption review has been concluded following the sibling groups placement disruption and a decision made that the prospective adopters are no longer suitable to adopt. A disruption review is ongoing for the older single child. Lessons learned from disruptions are shared with the adoption team, adoption panel and the Court and Permanence Team. In terms of the permanency for the sibling group following disruption, whilst this is outside this OFSTED reporting year, Family Finding did continue for these children. A potential family was identified and this was presented to matching panel on 12th May 2016. The children have been placed and are doing well. With regards to the older child, the plan has changed to permanency through foster care, and an application has been made to the court to revoke the Care Order. In the last 3 years, 3 adoption placements disrupted involving 4 children. 2 of the disruptions were last year and one in 2014. This child has been rehabilitated to the care of his grandmother.

8.3.3 The adoption team and panel members have received training from Coram BAAF on making good adoption assessments.

8.3.4 Monthly Action Learning Sets are taking place to provide team reflection and supervision on assessments. An assessment toolbox has also been developed including the use of Adult Attachment Interviews and monthly consultation with Clinical Psychologist, Dr Sara Whittaker of RMBC Therapeutic Team. In addition, a Quality Assurance

Framework for assessments and PAR's has been implemented to drive up quality of reports.

8.3.5 The Adoption Panel are also committed to learning and development, and have requested training on disruption, learning from national and local messages. This was provided to panel members and the adoption team in June 2016, which was well attended and well received.

8.3.6 It has been recognised by the team managers; with support from senior managers that a more robust approach is needed to be taken with regards to acceptance of 'Registration of Interest' and progression to Stage 2 and this was implemented in September 2015.

8.4 Quality of permanence planning, Child Permanence Report preparation of Children and Post Adoption Support Plans

8.4.1 The new Child Permanence Report which is also the application to Court for a Placement Order has been used now for 12 months. Prior to the implementation, training was offered to social workers on writing CPR's which now has four functions; to enable permanence planning and decision making via the ADM, application to the Court for Placement Order, to provide information to enable family finding and for the child in the future in terms of the story of their journey from birth family to adoptive family.

8.4.2 The quality of CPR's is variable and this was raised by Ofsted. Following Re B and Re BS, the need to evidence that adoption is the only option for a child "when nothing else will do" identified that the approach to identifying all viable options for a child as part of the permanence planning needed to be strengthened. There has also been discrepancy in the quality of direct work completed with children around their Care Plan including life story work and preparation for adoption. However ongoing training continues by the adoption team and legal services to support the development and expertise in permanence planning and in particular adoption. The aim of this is to improve the quality of assessments, CPR's and matching paperwork including the post adoption support plans and preparation of children. In addition CPR's are quality assured by the adoption team managers and the quality of reports presented to panel is commented upon with advice on improvement if this is necessary. This is now minuted.

8.4.3 In 2016, Rotherham Borough Council introduced the Court and Permanence Team and the aim of this team is to develop an expertise in permanency planning and to improve quality of CPR's, life story work and preparation for adoption. The Adoption Team Managers work closely with the manager of this team to develop and improve practice and social workers in the team consult with the adoption family finders to commence family finding, once a child is referred for a SHOBPA decision. This ensures earliest opportunity to identify potential matches for the child and promotes timeliness. However, this is still a recent innovative way of working that will be tracked with regards to improvement of service through 2016 – 2017.

8.4.4 The Adoption Support Fund has been introduced by the Government to improve access to therapeutic support services for adoptive families. This has enabled twenty-eight therapeutic support packages to be provided for adopted children pre/post adoption order in 2015/16. In March 2016, this was extended to include funding for therapeutic packages for children up to the age of 21. Applications to the fund are made following an assessment of the child's therapeutic needs which is reviewed by Rotherham's Therapeutic Team.

8.4.5 The Managers involved in permanency planning and post adoption support are working together to improve the quality of proposed adoption support plans. In order to develop the post adoption support available, an application to the ASF is being submitted to fund ongoing therapeutic groups such as Theraplay and Therapeutic parenting. This would provide access to additional therapeutic support for an increased number of children in their adoptive families.

9. Staffing

9.1 The Adoption Service is made up of two teams; 'Adoption Recruitment' and 'Assessment Team and Family Finders'. The Recruitment and Assessment Team each have a Team Manager and 10 full time equivalent social work posts, comprising 12 part-time/ full-time social workers. In addition, there are 3 full time support workers, who cover family finding support, adoption support and letter-box co-ordination.

9.2 The two team managers' report to the Service Manager for Adoption who reports to the Head of Service for Children in Care.

10. Adoption Support Services

10.1 The service has a dedicated Adoption Support Social Worker based within Rotherham's Therapeutic Team, who undertakes adoption support assessments and co-ordinates, receives and processes requests from adopters for therapeutic intervention funded by the Government's Adoption Support Fund, (ASF). To date, since the ASF was introduced, 42 bids for adoption support in total have been made to the fund, which has culminated in funding of £312,505.45 being granted in total providing 28 therapeutic support packages in 2015/16.

10.2 In addition, Rotherham Borough Council has an innovative, dedicated therapeutic team to work with foster carers, adoptive families and looked after children, and provides consultation to involved professionals. With regards to adoption, the team offers a repertoire of services to adoptive parents, which includes:

- Assessment of children with complex needs,
- Attachment training
- Training around transitions and moving on
- Training, consultation and advice on sibling assessments
- Training on life story work

- Direct work regarding narrative
- Direct work with families
- Therapeutic parenting course

10.3 The adoption team also run a range of support groups, which is coordinated and supported by the adoption support worker who sits within the team. These include 'Tiny Tuesdays,' which is a group for new adoptive families with children under the age of 5 years, and 'Big Apples,' which targets adoptive families of 5 – 11 year old children. Teenager events are also held, and in July 2016, a group of teenage adoptive children enjoyed a summer camp, hosted by After Adoption, which was funded through the ASF. RMBC Adoption Services also commission PAC-UK to provide adoption support to "anyone who is involved in adoption", especially birth parents, people who have been adopted and adopters and Yorkshire Adoption Agency, to undertake inter-country adoption assessments when requested to do so.

11. The Regional Adoption Agency

11.1 In May 2015, the Government announced changes to the delivery of adoption services. By 2020, all adoption services would need to be delivered on a regional basis. The Government advised that where Local Authority services did not form or become part of a regional adoption agency by 2020, it would legislate to force them to do so. The rationale from the Government for this was a belief that a smaller number of larger regional agencies would be better placed to deliver an increase in the number of children adopted, to reduce the length of time children wait to be adopted, and to improve post adoption support services to families who have adopted.

11.2 Shortly after the Government initiative, Rotherham Adoption Service linked with two other Local Authority Adoption Services, a Trust, and one local Voluntary Adoption Agency to plan the development of a new regional Adoption Agency. The agencies coming together in this development are as follows:

- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Adoption Service
- Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council Adoption Service
- Sheffield Metropolitan Borough Council Adoption Service
- Doncaster Children's Trust
- Alliance of Voluntary Agencies

11.3 Staff and managers from the areas identified above have continued to meet to develop the service and ensure a 'best practice' model is in place to operate fully as one service by April 2017.

12. Summary

12.1 It has been a busy year for the Adoption Service in Rotherham. The service is achieving adoption for a high number and percentage of looked after children, with 22.4% of children leaving care via adoption in Rotherham in 2015/16. The introduction of monthly children's tracker meetings has ensured a timely response to adoption and has largely militated against drift and delay and has had a positive impact in forward planning for children whose plan is adoption.

- 12.2 In this adoption year, the service has been successful in achieving adoption for a wide range of children who are considered 'harder to place' due to age, disability, ethnicity or part of a sibling group. Nine sibling groups; eight children over the age of 5 years; two children from BME background and four children with additional health needs/disabilities were adopted in 2015/16.
- 12.3 Rotherham Adoption Team has continued to promote early permanence planning for children, with eight Early Permanence Placements (EPP) being made in 2015/16. Rotherham's pro-active approach to EPP has resulted in RMBC being a leader in this area within the Region.
- 12.4 Most importantly in the year, the service achieved adoption for 43 children, and on the two key Adoption Scorecard measurements, Rotherham's performance in 2015/16 for children adopted has indicated a continued improvement in timeliness.
- 12.5 Rotherham Adoption Service has successfully supported adoptive families by accessing the Adoption Support Fund, with 28 therapeutic support packages being granted in 2015/16.
- 12.6 Rotherham Adoption Services acknowledges that there were two adoption disruptions for three children in 2015/16 and as a direct response undertook a thorough audit of practice and lessons learned. In doing so a quality assurance framework has been implemented to improve practice further.
- 12.7 The Panel has operated successfully, getting through the necessary business and playing a key quality assurance role. Rotherham strives to improve the quality of Child Permanence Reports presented for SHOBPA decisions and to Adoption Panel and to ensure consistent quality for all Prospective Adopter Reports. In achieving this, additional training has been rolled out to panel members, with ongoing learning sets to reinforce best practice.
- 12.8 2016/17 will see the adoption service being delivered on a regional basis, and in reaching this goal, will continue to operate an effective service that keeps children at the heart of its functioning.

13. Improvement and Development for 2016/17 onwards

- 13.1 We will continue to strive to improve and develop our service over 2016/17. Adoption has a key role to play within our overall Looked after Children and Care Leavers Strategy. Key improvement actions include:
- Recruit more adopters who are able to meet the needs of Rotherham children.
 - Increase number of Early Permanence Placements.
 - Improve the timeliness of the adoption journey for both children and applicant adopters through robust tracking.
 - Improve the quality of assessments
 - Continued access to Adoption Support Fund to ensure that adoption therapeutic support needs are best met.
 - Use training, supervision, tracking meetings, legal gateway meetings and promotion of adoption and good practice to ensure that social workers

appropriately plan for children coming into care and achieving permanence via adoption

14. Options considered and recommended proposal:

Not applicable

15. Consultation

Not applicable

16. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

Not applicable

17. Financial and Procurement Implications

17.1 There are no direct financial implications to this report. The Adoption Team, in conjunction with Service Manager and Head of Service continues to monitor the Adoption Team spend in line with RMBC finance team. Rotherham Adoption Team's current projected spend is within budget, but there may be overspend on the interagency budget. The mitigating factor here is that Rotherham are committed to making timely placements to ensure that there is no drift for children in care when the plan is adoption.

18. Legal Implications

18.1 There are no direct legal implications to this report, save to say that the Adoption Team operate within appropriate legislation, such as the Children Act 1989, Adoption and Children Act 2002, Adoption Regulations, Statutory Guidance and RMBC policy and procedures.

19. Human Resources Implications

19.1 There are no direct human resource implications to this report.

20. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

20.1 The Adoption Team Performance Report 2015 – 2016 relates to services for looked after children where the plan has been adoption, the recruitment and assessment of adopters, matching and placing adoptive children and securing permanency for children with their adoptive families.

21. Equalities and Human Rights Implications

21.1 There are no direct implications within this report, other than to say that the Adoption Team are compliant with the Human Rights Act and Equal Opportunities Policy.

22. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

22.1 Not applicable.

23. Risks and Mitigation

23.1 Inability and lack of engagement in performance and management arrangements by managers and staff could lead to drift and delay for looked after children where the plan is adoption. There needs to be continued ongoing good managerial oversight and quality assurance, for example in terms of legal processes, the Child's Care Planning arrangements and the Child's Permanence Report to alleviate this risk. In addition, there needs to be good management oversight regarding the recruitment and assessment of adopters to ensure smooth running of the adoption process. Rotherham Adoption Scorecard and scorecard tracking meetings enables clear planning for children where the plan is adoption. Strong managerial oversight by Directorship Leadership Team along with fortnightly Performance Management Meetings mitigates risks by holding managers and workers to account for practice and enabling a climate for managers to check and challenge practice across services.

23.2 The impact of regionalisation has raised a level of uncertainty within the Adoption Service and with workers in general. This has been mitigated by reassurance from the RMBC HR Team that due processes will be followed. Monthly regionalisation meetings are taking place and two Universities, University of East Anglia, (UEA) and Leeds Beckett are involved in this process to ensure the smooth running of this process, in particular with regards to ensuring a good quality service during this period of change, and with regards to change management for staff. There is also oversight on a Directorship Leadership level across the region.

24. Accountable Officer(s)

Mel Meggs, Deputy Strategic Director CYPS
Ian Walker Interim Head of Services, Children in Care

Approvals Obtained from:-

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services:- N/A

Assistant Director of Legal Services:- N/A

Head of Procurement (if appropriate):-N/A

Name and Job Title.

Helen Mangham Team Manager, Adoption

Jill Stanley Team Manager, Adoption

Anne-Marie Banks Service Manager, Adoption, Fostering and Therapeutic Team

Ian Walker Interim Head of Services, Children in Care

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