

Summary Sheet

Council Report

Corporate Parenting Panel – 25th April 2017

Title: Rotherham Adoption Service Performance Report 2016-2017

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan? No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Mel Meggs (Deputy Strategic Director CYPS)

Report Author(s)

Helen Mangham (Team Manager – Adoption)

Ward(s) Affected All

Summary

- 1.1 This report is an annual report to brief on the business and activity within the Council's Adoption Service in 2016/17.
- 1.2 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 2017/18.

Recommendations

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

List of Appendices Included: N/A

Background Papers: None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Corporate Parenting Panel

Council Approval Required: No

Exempt from the Press and Public: No

Title: Annual Adoption Service Report 2016/17

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 2016/17.
- 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 2017/18.

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. In October 2014, Ofsted undertook an inspection within the Single Inspection Framework and the Children's Services overall rating was 'Inadequate' with adoption performance rated as 'Requires improvement'.
- 3.3 The Adoption Service undertakes the recruitment, assessment and approval of prospective adopters, family finding and matching 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. The panel also considers the SHOBPA decision for children relinquished by their birth parents.

- 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 2016/17

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 2016/17 53 SHOBPA decisions were made. This is a slight increase in the number of children having an adoption plan compared 2015/16 when 46 children received a SHOBPA decision.

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 2016/17 Placement Orders were made in respect of 31 children compared with 41 Placement Orders made in 2015/16. Reasons for reduction in Placement Orders include 4 children where the Court did not grant a Placement Order and ordered that the children were placed with family members and a sibling group of 3 children where the Court ordered rehabilitation home to parents. Following further sibling

assessment, one child's Placement Order was not granted and was placed in Long Term Foster care with his brother. Of the 53 children who had SHOBPA decisions made 2016/17 (reported in 4.1.2), 16 children are still in proceedings and therefore Placement Orders have not yet been granted, a sibling group of 3 had a Court decision of rehabilitation home and 3 children had a Court decision to be placed with family members.

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 adopt. Applicant adopters are assessed by the adoption team and the Adoption Panel makes recommendations on the applicant's suitability and provides advice to the agency on matching criteria. The Agency Decision Maker makes 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 2016/17 was 151 compared to 97 in 2015/16. A refreshed recruitment campaign, a press article on the number of babies with an adoption plan and regular publicised monthly drop in sessions have all contributed to the increase in adopter enquiries. However once further information has been shared at an information event or visit the number of 'Registration of Interests' received has decreased from 30 in 2015/16 to 25 in 2016/17.

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 and use this knowledge and experience to counsel out prospective adopters at the earliest stage.

4.3.4 The number of adopters the agency has approved in 2016/17 is 18 compared to 14 approved in 2015/16. This is a slight increase however the agency recognises that there is a need to recruit and approve more

adopters but is mindful these need to be able to meet the needs of children with an adoption plan. National trends are not yet available for 2016/17, however information from the other 3 Local Authorities in the South Yorkshire Regional Adoption Agency, Doncaster, Sheffield and Barnsley indicates that similar numbers of adopters have been recruited and approved. Sheffield is a larger authority, has recruited and assessed 21 adopters. Total number of adopter approvals across the South region is 62.

4.3.5 In addition Stage 2 assessments have commenced or been completed for 5 other prospective adoptive families which have not resulted in approval. The rigorous assessment and approval process resulted in 4 of the families withdrawing prior to Panel and 1 family withdrawing following Panel deferment. Whilst this may appear a loss to the service, and a strain on resource in terms of social worker assessment time, the aim of this assessment process is to ensure that the adoption service is confident that adopters approved are resilient to care for Rotherham children throughout their childhood and into adulthood. At the same time, potential adopters are guided through this process in a thorough but empathic way to enable them to come to the decision, in partnership with the service that adoption at this time is not right for them.

4.3.6 Rotherham Adoption Team remains committed to increasing the number of adopters approved. To achieve 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 ongoing throughout 2017/18.

4.4 Timeliness of assessment of prospective adopters

4.4.1 The average time between Registration of Interest and Agency Decision in 2016/17 was 192 days, an improvement on the previous year's average of 239 days. Since the introduction of the two stage process the timeliness for adopter assessments has declined although this year's figures show a slight improvement in timeliness. The main delay continues to be in Stage 1, where the agency has no control over the

timeliness of medicals, DBS or availability of referees. The timeliness of Stage 1 is adopter led and includes an opportunity for adopters to take a break of up to 6 months between Stage 1 and Stage 2 which impacts on the overall timeliness. In 2016/17 one family took a break between Stage 1 and Stage 2.

4.4.2 56% of adopter assessments were completed within the 6 month timescale in 2016/17 compared to 46.6% in 2015/16, which is an improvement in performance.

4.5 Matches Approved

4.5.1 Rotherham Adoption Service has two Family Finders who work in partnership with the child's social worker to identify the most suitable approved adopters for each child needing adoption in a timely manner. 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 2016/17 the service matched 30 children with adoptive families. This compares with 39 matches in 2015/16. Fewer matches were made as fewer children were granted a Placement Order.

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 2016/17, the number of children who were placed for adoption was 31. In 2015/16, the number placed was 36 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 2016/17 there were 31 looked after children adopted in comparison to 43 in the previous year. This reflects the reducing trend of Placement Orders being granted and therefore fewer children being placed.

4.8 The Percentage of Children Leaving Care via Adoption

4.8.1 As of the 27th March 15% of children left care via adoption in Rotherham in 2016/17. The service is achieving adoption for a high number and percentage of looked after children. The children's tracker meetings continue to be held 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 2016/17 as compared to statistics from previous dataset year. The table also examines the adoption of 'difficult to place' children.

4.8.3 Of the 31 children adopted, 13 were female and 18 were male. 28 children were of white British origin and 3 children were of BME backgrounds. 5 sibling groups of 2 (10 children) and 4 of the children had disabilities. 11 children were aged 5 or over. 2 of the children of BME backgrounds were matched with families which reflected their ethnicity, the third and older child adopted of BME background was placed with an adopter who could promote his ethnicity and could meet his emotional and behavioural needs.

Number of children adopted in Rotherham in 2015/16	43
Number of children adopted in Rotherham 2016/17	31
Percentage of children leaving care via adoption in Rotherham in 2015/16	22.4%
As of 27th March 2017 The percentage of children leaving care via adoption in Rotherham in 2016/17	15%
Percentage of children from the 31 adoption orders who were 'harder to place'	52%

5.1 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 adoptive family without delay 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.
- 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 2016/17 was 379 days. In 2015/16 for children adopted it was 296 days. The increase in the number of days is due to Rotherham having a high percentage of children being adopted in 2016/17 (52%) who are harder to place. Due to the complex needs of these children, 31% met the A1 measure with the average days between becoming looked after and placed for adoption being 556 days. Of the remaining 48% of children, 80% met the A1 measure with the average number of days between becoming looked after and placed being 241.

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 2016/17 for children adopted was 232 days. As with scorecard measure 1 this is a drop in timeliness due to the additional needs of the 52% children adopted. Of the harder to place children only 6% met the A2 measure with the average time between

Placement Order and Match Agency Decision being 356 days. Of the remaining 48% of children adopted 73% met the A2 measure and the average number of days for these children was 99, which is 22 days better than the DfE target of 121 days.

- 5.3.3 One child in particular has impacted on Rotherham's scorecard measure 2 this year. This child has complex health and developmental needs which resulted in a number of families not wishing to proceed to a match. His A2 measure was 1623 days. However, this child has now been adopted by his foster carer who has cared for him since birth, providing him with an extremely positive outcome.

6. Family Finding

- 6.1 The service has two family finding social workers who are supported by a family finding co-ordinator.
- 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, this is identified prior to the SHOBPA decision so that regional and national family finding can commence. 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 utilises all resources available to secure adoptive placements for children where this is their plan. This includes Adoption Match (previously known as the National Adoption Register), Link Maker, Children Who Wait, Exchange days, Activity days and arranges profiling events.
- 6.4 In this adoption year, the service has been successful in achieving adoption for a wide range of children including older children, children with disabilities, sibling groups and BME children. Five sibling groups; eleven children over the age of 5 years; three children from BME background and three children with additional health needs/disabilities were adopted in 2016/17.
- 6.5 When placing a child with adopters approved by another Local Authority or a Voluntary Adoption Agency we are required to pay an inter-agency

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 2016/17 Rotherham Adoption Service had no adopters where children were placed from other Local Authorities. Potential inter-agency matches are being explored for 2 RMBC approved adoptive families which will be reported on in 2017/18.

6.6 Of the thirty children matched for adoption in 2016/17:

- 14 were matched with in-house approved adopters
- 12 were matched with voluntary adoption agency adopters
- 4 were matched with other Local Authority adopters

6.7 As of 31st March 2017 there were 27 children with an adoption plan where family finding was ongoing. Of the 27 children 16 have a Placement Order. The child waiting the longest has had an adoption plan for 20 months. He is an older child with disabilities. A potential match has previously been identified however the family withdrew following a bump into meeting when the extent of his complex needs became a reality for them. Family finding continues for this child. For children with a Placement Order the average time waiting in days for a match is currently 233. This is due to the number of older children with disabilities and complex health needs and sibling groups of 3 children.

7. Early Permanence Placements (Fostering to Adopt Placements)

7.1 Rotherham Adoption Service continues to promote Early Permanence Planning and the use of Early Permanence placements. Early Permanence is extremely positive for the child and the Adoption Agency ensures that the adopters are comprehensively prepared and supported to manage the risks. The use of Early Permanence has contributed to overall performance in improving timeliness.

7.2 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.

7.3 There are currently 4 children in Early permanence placements. 3 of the children adopted in 2016/17 experienced early permanence placements. The average time from becoming looked after to being adopted for these children is 257 days, demonstrating the positive impact EPP has in securing permanence at the earliest opportunity.

8. 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 2016/17 included:

- Learning from Disruption
- Preparation Training for Adopters including Attachment

8.1.2 The Adoption Panel members are committed to their learning and development. Training offered is always well attended and well received.

8.2 Panel Business

8.2.1 During 2016/2017 the Adoption Panel considered and made recommendations in respect of matches for 30 children and 19 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. The reports include Child Permanence Reports, matching reports and post adoption support plans and Prospective Adopter Reports.

8.3.2 During 2016/17 there was one adoption disruption in Rotherham; a single child. A disruption review has been completed and the findings

shared with the Adoption Panel, the Adoption Team and the LAC Permanence team. The Adoption agency has reflected on the learning and a 'pause and reflect day' is now included in every transition plan.

8.3.3 The assessment toolbox including Adult Attachment Interviews continues to be utilised. Consultation is available with Clinical Psychologist, Dr Sara Whittaker.

8.3.4 A robust approach is taken with regards to Registration of Interests and progression to Stage 2 with clear managers decisions and areas identified where additional assessment is required.

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

8.4.1 The Child Permanence Report is the application to Court for a Placement Order. Regular training is offered to social workers on permanence planning and writing CPR's.

8.4.2 The quality of CPR's continues to be inconsistent. There has also been a discrepancy in the quality of direct work completed with children around their Care Plan including life story work and preparation for adoption. A Life Story work template has now been introduced. Advice and guidance is available from the Therapeutic Team including bespoke narratives and guidance on transition planning and preparation of children. The Court Permanence teams and Adoption team work closely together with the aim of improving quality of assessments, permanence planning, quality of reports and the preparation of children and their adoptive families.

8.4.3 In the last 12 months the number of CPR's being submitted to the adoption team to enable quality assurance by the adoption team managers has reduced. This has been due to staffing issues within the Court Permanence teams. As a result the Agency Decision Maker has had to request further information to enable a SHOBPA decision to be

made. The introduction of a second court permanence team and additional staff should improve this.

8.4.4 The Adoption Team Managers work closely with the managers of the court permanence teams to develop and improve practice around permanence planning. The family finders in the adoption team consult with the social workers in the permanence teams 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. Due to staffing issues within the Court Permanence team this early family finding has not always been possible. In February 2017 an additional court permanence team has been introduced in recognition of the high number of Care Proceedings for children with permanence plans. Adoption team manager and court permanence team managers are tracking progress of children and quality of work.

8.4.5 The Adoption Support Fund was 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. In 2016 the Government introduced a maximum of £5000 per therapeutic package. If the cost of the therapeutic package exceeds this then the Local Authority Have to commit to funding the excess, (see also paragraph 10 adoption Support Services).

9. Staffing

9.1 The Adoption Service is responsible for recruiting, assessing, training and supporting adoptive families as well as family finding for children with an adoption plan. There are two full time team managers and 10.5 full time equivalent social work posts, comprising 13 part-time/ full-time social workers. Currently there are 2 full time and 1 3 day social work vacancies in the adoption team plus one social worker is taking 12 months maternity

leave. 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 and Fostering who reports to the Head of Service for Children in Care.

9.3 There has been a level of uncertainty within the adoption service regarding regionalisation. As a result three experienced social workers have left to take up posts elsewhere.

10. Adoption Support Services

10.1 Rotherham's Therapeutic Team is an in-house service that has developed extensive knowledge around the emotional wellbeing of children in care, and the needs of adopters and foster carers. Led by a Consultant Psychologist this specialist service provides training and support specifically for children in care and adoption and this best practice service had led to better outcomes for children and adoptive family experience. The service provides input from point of assessment of adopters, work with foster carers and children in care, and through to adoption and beyond to promote stability and permanence. 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
- Theraplay

10.2 The Therapeutic Team have a pre-adoption worker who is available to foster carers, child, social workers and adopters to support during/ and advise on the transition plan to enable a positive adoption experience. This can include preparation work with the child, including narrative therapy, attachment understanding and therapeutic parenting techniques.

10.3 Post adoption support is provided by the Therapeutic Team. The team has a dedicated Post Adoption Therapeutic Social Worker who supports and assesses adoptive parents and submits applications into the Adoption

Support Fund, (ASF) where it is necessary to do so. In 2016 – 2017 the team successfully secured £260022.23 which has funded support for 59 Rotherham families.

10.4 Of this amount an ASF application was made to fund a young person's therapeutic residential stay which was part of a joint venture with Sheffield Local Authority. This came about following a previously successful initiative that Sheffield Local Authority led on, where 5 Rotherham children enjoyed a similar experience.

10.5 The adoption team also run a range of support groups. 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 as detailed above.

10.6 RMBC Adoption Services also commission PAC-UK to provide a range of post adoption support services to adults including birth parents, adult adoptees and relatives of adopted children.

10.7 Yorkshire Adoption Agency undertakes 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 In 2016 – 2017 Rotherham had been working towards a regionalised adoption agency; 'One Adoption'. This was in partnership with:

- 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 At time of writing this report Rotherham remains committed to the principle of a South Yorkshire Regional Adoption Agency. However, until there is a fit for purpose Business Case in place that specifies that adoption services will be provided at no extra cost to Rotherham and that the current performance will not decline as a result of its implementation then Rotherham will not be in a position to formally commit to a regional adoption agency.

12. Summary

12.1 The service continues to achieve adoption for a high number of Looked after children including harder to place children with 31 children being adopted in 2016/17. Tracking and monitoring of adoption plans continues to ensure a timely response to adoption and early identification of areas of delay so swift action can be taken to address this.

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. 52% were children considered to be harder to place.

12.3 Rotherham Adoption Team has continued to promote early permanence planning for children, with seven Early Permanence Placements (EPP) being made in 2016/17. Rotherham continues to be a leader in this area within the region.

12.4 Whilst Rotherham has not performed as well on the 2 key Adoption Scorecard measurements this year timeliness for children adopted for the A1 measure is still below the DfE measure of 426 days and a high percentage (52%) of the children were harder to place.

12.5 Rotherham Adoption Service has successfully supported adoptive families by accessing the Adoption Support Fund, with 59 families benefitting from therapeutic support packages in 2016/17 equating to 6. £260022.23 secured funding from ASF.

12.6 One adoption placement disrupted in 2016/17. An independent disruption review identified lessons learned and these have been implemented. This child has successfully placed with an adoptive family and the Adoption Order will be granted imminently.

12.7 The Panel has operated successfully and plays a key quality assurance role. The quality of CPRs has been variable and the adoption team manager continues to work with the court permanence team managers to improve consistent quality.

13. Improvement and Development for 2017/18 onwards

13.1 We will continue to strive to improve and develop our service over 2017 – 2018. 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 children with an on plan.
- Increase number of Early Permanence Placements available and the use of EPP to include consideration for older children.
- Improve the timeliness of the adoption journey for both children and applicant adopters through robust tracking.
- Improve the quality of assessments.
- Improve the quality of post adoption support plans.
- 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 Public Law Outline to promote adoption best practice and ensure that timely planning and achieving permanence is prioritised.

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 2016 – 2017 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
Mel.Meggs@rotherham.gov.uk

Ian Walker Interim Head of Services, Children in Care
Ian.Walker@rotherham.gov.uk

Approvals Obtained from:-

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services:- Mark Chambers is content with the content of this report and for it to be progressed to DLT and CPP.

Director of Legal Services:- This report has been sent to Legal Services (N.C.) for their comments but as at the date of submission no comments have been received.

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

Theresa Caswell (HR) has also had access to this report and is content that there are no implications from her perspective.

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	Head of Services, Children in Care

This report is published on the Council's website or can be found at:-

<http://moderngov.rotherham.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?Categories=>