

Rotherham Adoption Service

Annual Report

2017/18



1. Introductions

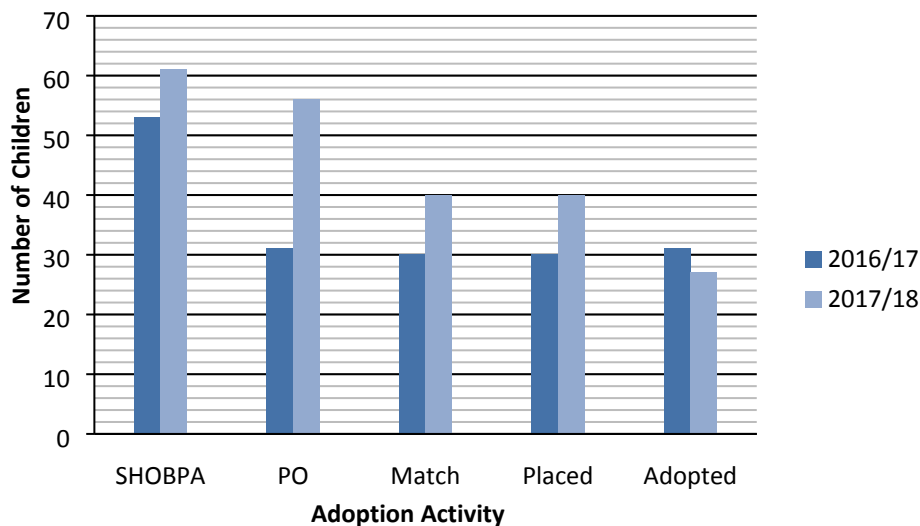
- 1.1 This report is an annual report to brief on the business and activity within the Council's Adoption Service in 2017/18.
- 2.2 The report provides performance and activity data on the service, reports on the activity and functioning of the Adoption Panel, and details service developments that have occurred in the year and those that are planned moving through 2018/19.

2. The Adoption Service

- 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 November 2017, Ofsted undertook an inspection within the Single Inspection Framework and the Children's Services overall rating was Good with adoption performance rated as 'Good' and achieving an Annex O, (outstanding) for the bespoke Family and Supporters training.
- 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 'should be placed for adoption' decision (referred to as the SHOBPA) 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, (referred to as the ADM). 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 2017/18



4.1 Should be placed for Adoption Decisions

4.1.1 The decision by a Local Authority that a looked after child SHOBPA 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 2017/18 61 SHOBPA decisions were made. This is an increase in the number of children having an adoption plan compared to 2016/17 when 53 children received a SHOBPA decision. The increase in Shobpa decisions reflects the increase in the number of Looked After Children and more timely decision making by the children’s Social

Work Teams. This increase is in line with the national increase in the number of children with an Adoption plan.

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 2017/18 Placement Orders were made in respect of 56 children compared with 31 Placement Orders made in 2016/17. This increase reflects the increase nationally in the number of Placement Orders being granted. Of the 61 children who had SHOBPA decisions made 2017/18 (reported in 4.1.2), 11 children are still in proceedings and therefore Placement Orders have not yet been granted. 45 children have had Placement Orders granted and 5 children's plans have been revoked (a sibling group of 3 children and a sibling group of 2 children) as they have been placed with family members.

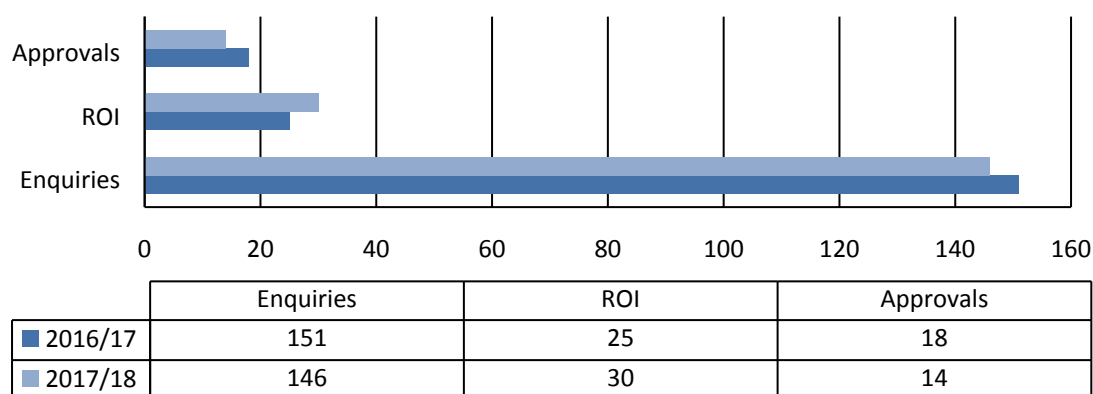
4.3 Adopter Approvals

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 2017/18 was 146 compared to 151 in 2016/17. A refreshed recruitment campaign, a press campaign for a sibling group of 4 and regular publicised monthly drop in sessions have all contributed to maintaining adopter enquiries. The number of 'Registration of Interests' received has increased from 25 in 2016/17 to 30 in 2017/18. Of these, 9 prospective Adopter households have been approved, 9

are in Stage 1, 7 in Stage 2 and 5 have withdrawn. 10 prospective adopters withdrew in total this year. 9 of the families have been counselled out by the assessing social worker following concerns raised in either Stage 1 or Stage 2 of the process. This included concerns about information shared by referee, current family circumstances and uncertainties, poor understanding of a child's needs and inability to prioritise these, length and stability of relationship, openness regarding finances and concern about ability to meet longer term needs of a specific child. 1 couple withdrew following approval due to an unexpected pregnancy.

Recruitment Activity 2 Year Comparison

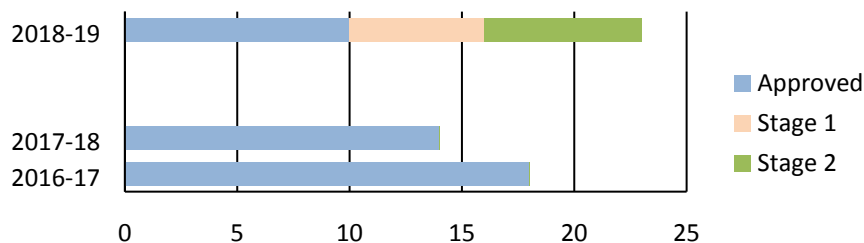


4.3.3 The Agency is ensuring that whilst prospective adopters enquiring are being given a positive welcome, the messages being shared about adoption and the children available for adoption are realistic. The agency is clear about the qualities and skills needed by prospective adopters in order to successfully 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 2017/18 is 14 compared to 18 approved in 2016/17. The agency recognises that there is a need to recruit and approve more adopters particularly for larger sibling groups. Information from the other 3 Local Authorities in South Yorkshire, Doncaster, Sheffield and Barnsley indicates that the

number of adopters approved by Sheffield and Barnsley has reduced slightly with Doncaster approving slightly more than the previous year. The total number of adopter approvals across the South region is 71 for the year. This reflects the national picture of more children waiting and less adopters approved. Nevertheless, whilst outside there has been an improvement in performance in year end 18/19. In this reporting year there have been 10 adopters approved, with a further 6 in stage one of the process and 7 in stage 2 and the service is therefore projecting that by end year 18/19, 23 adopter approvals will have been made.

Projection for 2018-19



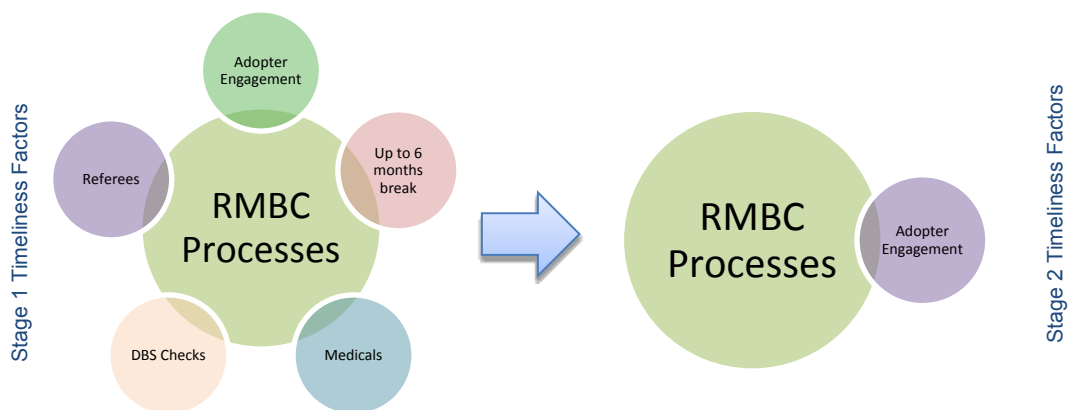
4.3.5 Whilst the 10 withdrawals may appear a loss to the service, and a strain on resource in terms of social worker assessment time, the aim of this assessment process is to ensure that the adoption service is confident that adopters approved are resilient to care for Rotherham children throughout their 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 and this strategy manifests itself in a very low disruption rate .

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 this reporting year. Whilst outside this reporting year, the trajectory is promising with 10 prospective adopters approved to date.

Projection is for a further 10 to be approved bringing the total projection to 20 for 2018/19. This is an increase of 6 families.

4.4 Timeliness of assessment of prospective adopters

4.4.1 The average time between Registration of Interest and Agency Decision for the 14 adopter approvals in 2017/18 was 208 days, compared to the previous year's average of 192 days. The Agency Decision Maker requires the paperwork and panel minutes 7 days to enable careful consideration and decision making which has led to the slight increase in average time. Since the introduction of the two stage process the timeliness for adopter assessments has declined mainly due to the delay experienced in Stage 1. The agency has no control over the timeliness of medicals, DBS or availability of referees. However, after reporting the delays in receiving DBS results in November 2017 there has been a significant improvement in this. 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 2017/18 2 families took a break between Stage 1 and Stage 2 which has impacted on the overall timeliness of adopter approval.



4.4.2 28.5% of adopter assessments were completed within the 6 month timescale in 2017/18 compared to 56% in 2016/17. The main delay being in Stage 1 due to DBS, with no Stage 1's being completed within

timescale this year. By comparison 93% of Stage 2 assessments, where the agency have control of the process were completed within timescale.

4.5 Matches Approved

4.5.1 Rotherham Adoption Service has one full time and two part time 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 2017/18 the service matched 40 children with adoptive families. This compares with 30 matches in 2016/17. The increase in number of children matched and placed reflects the increase in Placement Orders being granted.

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 2017/18, the number of children who were placed for adoption was 40. In 2016/17, the number placed was 30 children.

4.7 Children Adopted

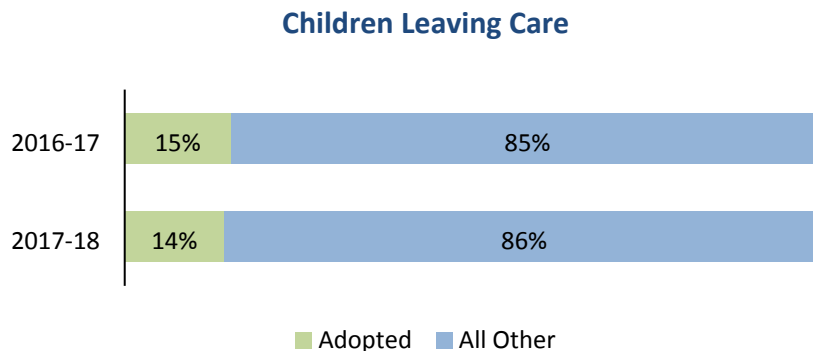
4.7.1 Once a child is placed for adoption, the adopters must wait a minimum ten week period before they can apply to the Court for an Adoption Order to legally adopt the child. Once an Adoption Order is granted the adopters obtain full parental responsibility for the child.

4.7.2 In 2017/18 there were 27 looked after children adopted in comparison to 31 in the previous year. The Adoption Service had predicted an increase in Adoption Orders for 2017/18 however; there has been an increase in the number of Adoption Applications being contested and applications to revoke Placement Orders which usually serves only to delay the adoption process. However, despite this, no children had their Placement Orders revoked and whilst there was delay in the Adoption Orders being granted

these children have subsequently been adopted. In addition, changes have been made to the Court process for Adoption Orders including an additional hearing and subsequent 28 day appeal period. These changes have impacted on the number of Adoption Orders granted.

4.8 The Percentage of Children Leaving Care via Adoption

4.8.1 14.21% of children left care via adoption in Rotherham in 2017/18. Slightly less than the previous years amended figure of 15.2%. 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. Right Children, Right Care tracking is also supporting timely adoption of children providing senior manager oversight. It is likely that the number of Adoption Orders will increase in 2018/19 as more children have been placed due to the reasons outlined in 4.5.2.



4.8.2 The table below demonstrates the number and percentage of children adopted from care in 2017/18 as compared to statistics from previous dataset year. The table also examines the adoption of ‘difficult to place’ children.

4.8.3 Of the 27 children adopted, 20 were female and 7 were male. 24 children were of white British origin and 3 children were of BME backgrounds, 1 sibling groups of 2 children, 3 children with disabilities, 1 child aged 5 or over.

Number of children adopted in Rotherham in 2016/17	31
Number of children adopted in Rotherham 2017/18	27
Percentage of children leaving care via adoption in Rotherham in 2016/17	15.2%
The percentage of children leaving care via adoption in Rotherham in 2017/18	14.21%
Percentage of children from the 27 adoption orders who were 'harder to place'	29.6%

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 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 2017/18 was 316 days. In 2016/17 for children adopted it was 379 days. 81% of children adopted met the A1 measure

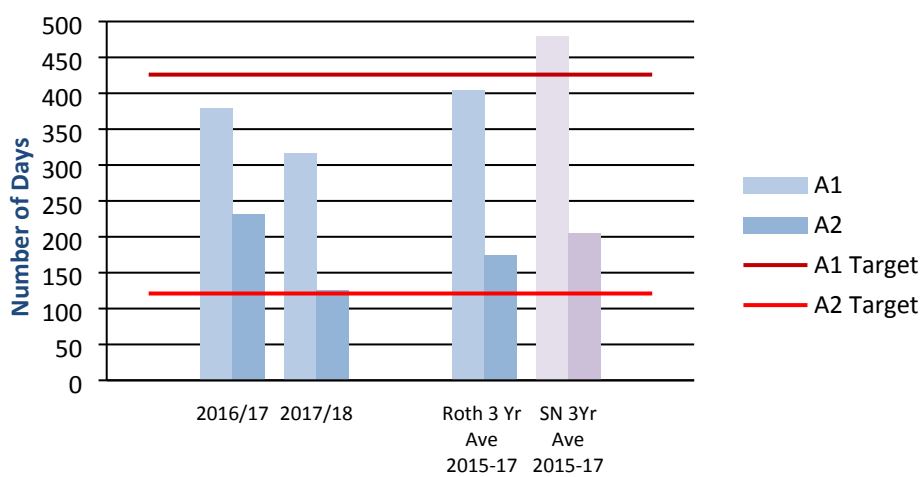
5.3 Adoption Scorecard Measure 2

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 2017/18 for children adopted was 124.7 days; a significant improvement on the 232 days average the previous year. 70% of children adopted met the A2 measure.

Timeliness Measures



6. Family Finding

6.1 The service has one full time and two part time 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, Exchange days, Activity days and arranges local profiling events. In April the Adoption Team arranged and facilitated a Fun Day (similar to an Activity Day) where 32 children with an

Adoption Plan attended, supported by their foster carers and social workers. Invites to adopters locally and nationally were sent and 17 families have attended.

6.4 In 2017/18 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. This fee increased on 1st April 2018 to £31,000, £50,000 and £68,000 for Voluntary Adoption agency placements. In 2017/18 Rotherham Adoption Service had 3 adoptive families where children were placed from other Local Authorities equating to a fee to be received of £81,000.

6.5 Of the 41 children matched for adoption in 2017/18:

- 19 were matched with in-house approved adopters
- 16 were matched with voluntary adoption agency adopters (8 single children and 4 sibling groups of 2) equating to a cost of £378,000
- 6 were matched with other Local Authority adopters (all single children) equating to a cost of £172,000

6.6 As of 31st March 2018 there are 48 children with an adoption plan where family finding is ongoing. Of the 48 children 37 have a Placement Order. The child waiting the longest has had a placement order for 1003 days. He is an older child with disabilities. A potential match had previously been identified however the family withdrew following an informal pre-match introduction, (“bump into” meeting), when the extent of his complex needs became a reality for them. This child’s permanency plan has subsequently changed to long term fostering, and he has since been formally long term matched at Fostering Panel in July 2018 and an application to revoke his Placement Order is being made. For children with a Placement Order not yet placed the average time waiting in days for a match since granting of Placement Order is currently 186.6 days.

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. Rotherham Adoption Service is recognised as being a regional practice lead in Early Permanence Provision.

7.2 Rotherham Adoption Service has 3 Early Permanence Champions who alongside the Adoption Team Manager work closely with sw's to identify children who can benefit from Early Permanence Planning.

7.3 There are currently 8 children in Early Permanence Placements. 5 of the children adopted in 2017/18 experienced early permanence placements. The average time from becoming looked after to being adopted for these children is 257 days, compared to 560 days for the 22 children who did not experience Early Permanence. This demonstrates the positive impact EPP has in securing permanence at the earliest opportunity.

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 members in 2017/18 received joint training with the Adoption Team on the Impact of Early Childhood Trauma on children.

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 2017/18 the Adoption Panel considered and made recommendations in respect of matches for 40 children and approval of 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. The reports include Child Permanence Reports, (CPR's), matching reports and post adoption support plans and Prospective Adopter Reports.

8.3.2 During 2017/18 there has been 2 adoption disruptions in Rotherham; a single child and a sibling group of 2 children. Independent disruption reviews have been completed and the findings shared with the Adoption Panel, the Adoption Team and LAC 4 and 5. Presenting themes in both instances noted that there needed to be a clear and robust analysis of the potential impact on child/ren as a result of loss and change from placement disruptions, and the impact of early life history and trauma on child development and attachment, and that this needed to be clearly identified and explored as part of matching of children with adopters. Trauma impact analysis is now explored by the child's social worker and recorded in the CPR, which is scrutinised by the service in the Quality Assurance Meetings, chaired by Service Managers from both Adoption and LAC 4 & 5. In addition, the Adoption Life Appreciation Day Chair also ensures that adopters fully understand the impact of the child's lived experience on development and how this may impact on the child both currently and in the future. The Adoption Service have also refreshed transition planning, in particular for older children, where there is an extended period of introductions that entails greater involvement from the foster carer as the child says goodbye to their life as a child in care and moves into adoption.

8.3.4 Consultation is available with Clinical Psychologist, Dr Sara Whittaker. Two Social Workers have recently completed Attachment Style Interviewing training. This evidence based assessment of prospective adopters attachment styles will support the assessment of suitability to adopt and matching of adopters and children.

8.3.5 A robust approach is taken with regards to Registration of Interests and progression to Stage 2 with clear managerial oversight and 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. Support is available to social workers completing CPR's from the Adoption Team Manager

8.4.2 The quality of CPR's continues to be inconsistent, although are improving on an upward trajectory. Areas of development include greater scrutiny in sibling assessments, child's identify and educational needs. To support the improvement in quality of CPR's the Adoption Service has introduced a Quality Assurance Group (QAG) which includes Adoption Team Manager, Fostering and Adoption Service Manager, LAC Service Manager and Head of Service. The QAG quality assures CPRs and meets with the social worker and Team Manager to provide advice, guidance and feedback on areas of the CPR needing further work. The QAG meetings are minuted and these minutes are available to the ADM. Advice and guidance is available from the Therapeutic Team to Social Workers completing Life Story Work and Books. In addition bespoke narratives and guidance on transition planning and preparation of children is offered. 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. In addition to this, the Court Permanence Team have recently recruited an Advanced Practitioner whose role is to work with the teams to improve practice.

8.4.3 The introduction of a second court permanence team has led to some improvement in the timeliness of CPR's and the preparation work of children with an adoption plan. However, the increase in the number of children with an adoption plan over the last 12 months has impacted on the consistent improvement in practice. In addition, the work completed prior to transfer of cases to the permanence team and the timing of transfer has resulted in social workers completing viability assessments and rehabilitation to parents or family members which has impacted on ability to prioritise and focus on

permanence planning. This is being addressed by the LAC Service Manager and changes are being made to when cases are transferred particularly for the unborn babies being tracked where Adoption is likely to be the plan.

8.4.3 The Adoption Team Managers work closely with the managers of LAC Teams 4 and 5 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. The number of Care Proceedings for children where Adoption is likely to be the Care Plan remains high. Adoption team managers and court permanence team managers are tracking progress of children and quality of work to identify training needs and areas for improvement.

8.4.4 The Adoption Support Fund (ASF) was introduced by the Government to improve access to therapeutic support services for adoptive families. In 2017/18 104 applications were made to the fund and a value of £315,681.87 received to provide Therapeutic Support to 72 adopted children. Applications to the fund are made following an assessment of the child's therapeutic needs which is reviewed by Rotherham's Therapeutic Team. Applications to the Fund can also be made for SGO Therapeutic Support. The increase in the number of children placed for adoption increases the demand on the Therapeutic Service for applications to the fund. There is a £5,000 limit set for each Therapeutic Package and any costs above this have to be met by the LA.

8.4.5 5 Adopted children attended Summer Camp funded through the ASF.

8.4.6 35 referrals were received from Adoptive Families requesting Post Adoption Support and the Post Adoption Support social workers are currently working with 140 adoptive families.

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. In 2017/18 the service was successful in recruiting to the 3 full time assessing social work vacancies and the 1 part time Family Finder vacancy. Since September the service has been fully staffed. 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 Looked After Children.

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 range 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 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 The adoption team 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. Teenagers have access to the support group AT-ID via the Regional Hub
- 10.6 RMBC Adoption Services commission PAC-UK to provide a range of post adoption support services to adults including birth parents, adult adoptees and relatives of adopted children. In the Ofsted inspection in 2017 it was noted that whilst a high level of families affected by adoption access PAC UK this wasn't promoted on the adoption website. Following the inspection this action has now been addressed.
- 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 2017 – 2018 Rotherham has continued working towards a regionalised adoption agency, in partnership with:
- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Adoption Service
 - Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council Adoption Service
 - Sheffield City Council Adoption Service

- Doncaster Children's Trust
- Alliance of Voluntary Agencies

11.3 RMBC are continuing to discuss a regional adoption agency proposal with the DfE and Barnsley, Sheffield and Doncaster.

12. Summary

12.1 The service continues to achieve adoption for a high number of Looked after children including harder to place children with 27 children being adopted in 2017/18. 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. 29.6% 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 2017/18.

12.4 Performance on the 2 key Adoption Scorecards has improved this year with timeliness for children improving against both measures and A1 being 110 days below the target measure of 426 days and A2 being only 3.7 days over the target measure of 121 days.

12.5 Rotherham Adoption Service has successfully supported adoptive families by accessing the Adoption Support Fund, with 65 families (72 children) benefiting from therapeutic support packages in 2017/18 equating to £315,681.87 secured funding from ASF.

12.6 Two adoption placements disrupted in 2017/18 for 3 children. Independent disruption reviews identified lessons learned and these have been

implemented. The plan for the single child has changed to Long Term Fostering in recognition of his significant attachment and behaviour needs. Family Finding is ongoing for the sibling group of 2 with potential families identified.

12.7 The Panel has operated successfully and plays a key quality assurance role. The quality of CPRs has been variable and the Quality Assurance Group has been introduced to improve consistent quality.

13. Improvement and Development for 2018/19 onwards

13.1 We will continue to strive to improve and develop our service over 2018 – 2019. Adoption has a key role to play within our overall Looked after Children and Care Leavers Strategy and the Right Child Right Care strategy. Key improvement actions include:

- Recruit more adopters who are able to meet the needs of children with an adoption 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.
- Address changes needed to Transition planning in line with research and practice.
- Review and improve the quality of life story work
- Engage in the ongoing development of the South Yorkshire Regional Adoption Agency