

14th October 2019

Agenda Item: 13

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND SOCIAL WORK

ADOPTION EAST MIDLANDS: REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY UPDATE APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2019

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide information on activity in the Regional Adoption Agency from April to September 2019 and seek approval to continue media activity to promote adopter recruitment.

Information

2. The Government continues to drive improvement of performance in the adoption sector, with a range of legal, policy and organisational changes
3. The Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board, chaired by Andrew Christie with representatives from the Association of Directors of Children's Services, the Voluntary Sector and Academics, continues to monitor performance and drive change.
4. The quarterly adoption survey is a Department for Education monitoring tool. The survey reports on all significant dates for all children with an adoption plan, and since 2014, for all adults who have completed a Registration of Interest in adoption. Further reporting fields have been added such as disruption data pre-order and if children have been placed with in house or external adopters.
5. The data allows national and local analysis of number and demographic of children waiting for adoption, and adopters available to take placements of children. This data informs the adoption scorecard, which sets targets in relation to placement order being obtained to children being matched and children entering care to placement with an adoptive family.
6. The Regional Adoption Agency, Adoption East Midlands, was formed from four Local Authority Adoption Services, merging with Nottinghamshire as the host, on 3rd April 2019. The partner authorities are Derby, Nottingham, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.
7. The Partnership, Performance and Quality Board meets monthly. Each Local Authority Service Director attends, and the performance of the Regional Adoption Agency is scrutinised.

8. Each month there is an Operational Group meeting with partner Service Managers from each local authority with an agenda focused on fostering, permanence and partnership. These are meetings where issues can be raised and resolved, and best practice can be agreed. A monthly finance leads meeting is held, scrutinising the budget, ensuring Adoption East Midlands delivers at no additional cost.
9. Data to date shows the four local authorities are likely to seek to place 180 children with adoption plans in this financial year.
10. Nottinghamshire are likely to make 60 adoption plans 2019-20 (20 April-June 2019).
11. Adoption East Midlands must recruit at least 105 adoptive families to meet the needs to place these children.
12. Adoption East Midlands has very few adopters not in a match at present (22). The adopters who continue to wait have a narrower matching profile than peers - for example only wanting a girl, a very young child, having birth children or adopted children, which are additional matching considerations.
13. From April - August 2019:
 - 46 adopters approved
 - 66 children placed
 - 44 within Adoption East Midlands
 - 22 interagency
 - 0 disruptions pre order
 - 35 children adopted – April-June
 - 59 new adoption plans April-June.
14. Children matched include 11 sibling groups and 13 children 5 years old and over including sibling groups. There have been 15 Foster for Adoption placements since Adoption East Midlands went live.
15. Children continue to attend Adoption Activity Days, and Adoption East Midlands will seek to develop a local offering of Adoption Activity Days.
16. Linkmaker is used for adopters to see all waiting children and consider possible matches.
17. Adoption East Midlands hosted by Nottinghamshire continues to utilise all homefinding opportunities for children – publicity, adoption activity days, adoption register events, local profile sharing events and this consistent activity proves successful. Local media continues to be utilised to publicise the need for adopters and videos of adopter stories have been added to Adoption East Midlands website. Consistent partnership working with children's social care allows the service to track children who may need adoption and plan its recruitment strategy accordingly.
18. Changes to legislation in March 2014 allow children to be placed in a fostering placement which will become adoption. This is not the same as foster carers who may then choose to adopt (about 15% of all adoptions of children from care are by foster carers). It relates to

approved adopters who are also temporarily approved as foster carers for a named child, to enable a child to be placed with them at an earlier point. This is then a foster placement until it becomes adoption.

19. There is an element of risk for the adopters in this type of placement, but the advantage is that the child is settled in a permanent placement at a much younger age, usually an adoption placement can only be made after a child is subject to a Placement Order, and the adoption panel has recommended a match which the agency decision maker agrees. However, a foster to adopt placement can be made at any point in the time before the Placement Order.
20. The national aim is for 25% of all adoptions to follow foster for adoption placement. Adoption East Midlands is successful in recruiting adopters willing to undertake Foster for Adopt and has experienced adopters able to speak positively about this.
21. Adoption support continues to be an area of development for the Government. Since 1st May 2015 all local authorities have been applying to the Adoption Support Fund on behalf of adopters to purchase support packages. All Adoption East Midlands applications have been successful with circa £448,000 awarded to fund support packages, for 151 recipients in 132 families.
22. Future plans include:
 - local Adoption Activity Days for homefinding
 - developing best practice in the region, for example Later Life Letters, relinquished babies, birth family support
 - consistent practice as far as possible in the region
 - further increasing the recruitment of adopters, to meet sufficiency locally and nationally.
 - embedded Adoption Support throughout life
 - Peer Support for adopters
 - use of Adoption Support Fund to provide different services.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

23. It is a regulatory requirement that an annual update is provided to the Committee. This report is accepted by Ofsted as an annual update.
24. National Adoption week is 14 - 20th October and Adoption East Midlands will have co-ordinated activity via social media, and adoption information events. Committee is asked to agree continuation of this strategy, including media interviews by officers of Adoption East Midlands, through to March 2020.

Other Options Considered

25. No other options have been considered.

Statutory and Policy Implications

26. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human

rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

27. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the Committee:

- 1) considers whether there are is any further information it requires in relation to the update on activity in the Regional Adoption Agency from April to September 2019
- 2) approves the continued media activity to promote adopter recruitment.

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Constitutional Comments (EP 20/09/19)

28. The recommendations fall within the remit of the Children and Young People's Committee by virtue of its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (SAS 23/09/19)

29. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

[Adoption Service update: June 2018 to March 2019](#) – report to Children and Young People's Committee on 29th April 2019.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.
C1297