

# HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

9 DECEMBER 2014

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Adoption Report 2013-2014</b>		
<b>Report of the Corporate Director of Children's Services</b>			
<b>Open Report</b>	<b>For Information</b>		
<b>Wards Affected: All</b>	<b>Key Decision: No</b>		
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<b>Sponsor:</b> Helen Jenner, Corporate Director of Children's Services			
<b>Summary:</b>  This report summarises the work and performance of the Adoption Service during 2013-14.  Important points to note:  17 children were adopted and 19 adopters were approved by Adoption Panel in the year 2013-14.  Adoption Scorecard Performance is as follows:  <b>A1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Our three yearly rolling averages (2010-2013) for the time taken between a child entering care and moving into its adoptive family <b>have reduced to 657 days compared to 785 days in 2009-2012</b>. The England average is 647 days so we are very close to the national position on this measure now. Our performance is far better than our statistical neighbours (average time is 705 days)</li></ul> <b>A2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Our three yearly averages regarding the time taken from when the authority receives a Court Order agreeing to a child being matched with an appropriate adopter is good and improving in 2010-2013. Our three yearly rolling averages <b>have reduced to 144 days compared to 168 days in 2009-2012</b>. Performance continues to fall within the Government threshold for this adoption measure set at 182 days in 2010-13 and is already lower than the 2011-14 threshold set at 152 days. Our performance is also far better than national and statistical neighbours.</li><li>• We commissioned an Adoption Diagnostic to support us in addressing issues of delay for children whenever the child's assessed permanence needs indicate the value of adoption. The aim of this diagnostic was to assist in analysing those practices and processes which give rise to delay for children in Barking and Dagenham. The findings of the diagnostic were in line with Ofsted findings in May 2014 – see report for details.</li></ul>			

**Recommendation(s):**

The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to note and comment upon the report attached.

**Reason(s)**

To assist the Council in achieving its vision and priorities, particularly in relation to the priority of 'Enabling social responsibility'.

**1. Introduction and Background**

- 1.1 An annual report on the work of the Adoption Service is required under Adoption Regulations (Minimum Standard 25.6; Statutory Adoption Guidance 3.3, and 5.39) and must be presented to Cabinet.
- 1.2 The information is also highly relevant to the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Children's Trust and is reported to both.

**2. Proposal and Issues**

- 2.1 For Information and comment.

**3. Mandatory Implications****3.1 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment**

The JSNA contains a section on Looked after Children. Adoption and foster care are important 'solutions' to identified problems or risks, but potentially they are also contributors to problem behaviours or emotional difficulties. In their problem-solving role, they are seen as potential solutions, not only to actual or future mental health problems of children, but also to the adverse effects of involuntary childlessness. In addition to the emphasis in both the NHS Mandate and the JSNA and Joint Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy guidance, Department of Health will include evidence based material relevant to adoption in both the children and young people's mental health e-portal (to be delivered by 2014) and the NHS Information Service for Parents. DfE will fund NICE to develop guidance on care and services to promote permanence for children with attachment disorder issues, including those who have been adopted, by 2014/15.

**3.2 Health and Wellbeing Strategy**

Our strategy as a key theme that early intervention can prevent ill health and reduce mortality and morbidity for children and young people. Healthy behaviours in childhood and the teenage years set patterns for later life. Continued support for children and young people can mean that society as a whole can reap all the benefits of a resilient next generation, which is healthier and happier.

The CQC and Ofsted have developed a programme of joint inspections of services for looked after children, fostering and adoption services. The new inspections will look at the contribution of both health and social care to providing

health services to improving the health and wellbeing of these children. The refresh of the joint Health and wellbeing Strategy will need to consider the findings and themes emerging from inspections.

### **3.3 Integration**

The attached report sets out how the Adoption team works with other organisations. The Adoption & Permanence Panel has representation from other agencies, including a Medical Adviser.

### **3.4 Financial Implications**

Implications completed by: Gaspare Nicolini, Group Accountant

Financial implications are contained throughout the Adoption Annual report 2013-14.

It should be noted that the Adoption Grant was reduced without notice this year and there has been no confirmation that it will continue next year. Without this additional capacity there is a high risk that timescales will slip backwards and progress to recruit adoptive parents will cease.

### **3.5 Legal Implications**

Implications completed by: Lindsey Marks Principal Solicitor Children's Safeguarding.

The Statutory Adoption Guidance and the Adoption Minimum Standards place a requirement on local authority adoption services to ensure that the executive side of the Council receives an annual written report on the management, outcomes and financial state of the adoption agency to satisfy themselves that the agency is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or service users. They must also satisfy themselves that the agency is complying with the conditions of registration (Minimum Standard 25.6; Statutory Adoption Guidance 3.3, and 5.39).

### **3.6 Patient/Service User Impact**

Research indicates that the success of family finding and placing children in permanent adoptive families will facilitate better long term outcomes for children. Post adoption support has become a focus for the government and an expectation in legislation and there are potential resource implications on therapeutic support for more challenging children who are in adoptive families.

## **5. Non-mandatory Implications**

### **5.1 Safeguarding**

The vast majority children who have care plans for adoption have experienced safeguarding concerns in their lives (apart from those relinquished at birth) and adoption provides a permanent alternative family for them. Research indicates that the outcomes for adopted children are far better than those who have

remained within the care system and the earlier the adoption happens, the outcomes improve further.

## **5.2 Customer Impact**

Ensuring Every child is Valued. Adoption enables children to have a permanent alternative family and research indicates that outcomes for adopted children are much better than children in care.

## **5.3 Staffing issues**

In the event that the Adoption Grant from central government is withdrawn, there will be a loss of 3 staff members from the Adoption Service, putting pressure on service delivery of effective recruitment of adopters and finding adoptive families for children.

### **Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:**

None

### **List of Appendices:**

**Appendix 1:** Adoption Annual Report 2013-14