



**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE**

**11 SEPTEMBER 2017**

**LEICESTERSHIRE FOSTERING AND ADOPTION SERVICE  
STATUTORY QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PERFORMANCE  
REPORTS 2016 – 2017**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY  
SERVICES**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to bring to the Committee's attention the activity of the Leicestershire and Rutland Adoption Agency and the Leicestershire Fostering Service during the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017. The Annual Reports are appended to this paper.

**Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. Leicestershire County Council is responsible for a Local Authority Fostering and Adoption Service. It undertakes statutory responsibilities related to fostering and adoption.
3. Under the 2011 National Minimum Standards all Fostering Services and Adoption Agencies are required to provide one half year and one annual report to the Local Authority Executive<sup>1</sup> regarding their activity and work.

**Background**

4. The County Council operates an integrated Fostering, Adoption and Placements Service. This arrangement has been in operation since April 2015 following a service review. The adoption service, which includes services for Rutland, is called the Leicestershire and Rutland Adoption Agency (the Adoption Agency).
5. Whilst the services are combined, the Fostering Service is subject to its own set of standards, being a regulated service and subject to inspection under the Care Standards Act, 2000.
6. The Adoption Agency implemented a recruitment freeze from April 2015 to April 2016, based on the number of children with adoption plans and the number of

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<sup>1</sup> The Executive in Leicestershire is the Lead Member and Scrutiny Members

available carers. The Agency continued to respond to spontaneous enquiries and as a result 73 potential adopter households attend 5 open evenings between May 2016 and 31 March 2017.

7. Over recent years the Fostering Service has been subject to many changes as the scope of and demand on Family Placements has become more challenging and the service changed to meet demand. A range of initiatives have been implemented to attract new carers, support existing carers and maintain placement stability.

### **Executive Summary – Adoption**

8. The Leicestershire and Rutland Adoption Agency Annual Report 2016 – 17 is attached at Appendix A. It shows continued good service to children and adopters. In particular -
  - i. The average time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family is 517 days the England average is 558;
  - ii. The average time between receipt of court authority to place a child and a match agreed to an adoptive family is 195 days; the England average is 226 days;
  - iii. Children waiting less than 16 months between entering care and moving in with their adopted family currently stands at 68%; significantly better than the England 3-year average of 55%;
  - iv. 68% of adopters wait for less time before being matched after approval; the England average is 73%.
9. Consistently, across all indicators, Leicestershire performs better than the three-year average for England.
10. Leicestershire is in line with the England average for placing children aged over 5 years old. However there has been an increase in the number of older children coming through to the Agency Decision Maker<sup>2</sup> and there needs to be a specific recruitment campaign for adopters who would consider matches with older children and sibling groups. The Adoption Agency is also working with the Specialist Adoption Agency Service (SAMS) and the Regionalisation of Adoption to trial matching of harder to place children across the region. A summary of adoption activity is provided below:
  - i. 25 Adoption Orders were finalised for children in this period, all of which were Leicestershire children, including 1 interagency match;
  - ii. 10 Adopters were approved in this period, all are white British;
  - iii. 31 children have been placed with their prospective adopters during this period (28 Leicestershire children and 3 Rutland);

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<sup>2</sup> The person within a fostering service and an adoption agency who makes decisions on the basis of recommendations made by the Fostering Panel and the Adoption Panel.

- iv. 21 children were adopted by County Council approved adopters, and 10 via the inter-agency process (7 Leicestershire, 3 Rutland);
  - v. 5 sibling groups were placed – 4 sets of 2 sibling groups, and 1 set of 3 siblings.
11. At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 there were 37 children awaiting an adoption placement. The Adoption Agency estimates that 70 new adopters will be needed to undertake good matching for this number of children, as well as provide families for children with more complex needs. This is an ambitious target.

### **Executive Summary – Fostering**

12. The Leicestershire Fostering Service Annual Report 2016 – 17 is attached at Appendix B. It shows that performance in recruitment and retention of foster carers is improved compared to the previous year. Points to note include -
- i. There were 704 expressions of interest in becoming foster carers, of which 74 then requested initial visits (i.e. to discuss it in more detail). Arising from this there were 28 fostering applications, and the eventual approval of 22 new carers (one lower than the previous year).
  - ii. There were a total of 119 approved mainstream carers, a decrease of 1 compared to last year. This had been anticipated as a number of carers were approaching retirement.
  - iii. 5 carers were deregistered as they were unable to provide the standard of care required. Another 16 carers have either retired or no longer foster having decided to adopt the children.
  - iv. The number of people being referred for assessment to foster continues to rise. 81 assessments were completed and 24 placements agreed (comprising of single children, sibling groups, and parent and child placements).

### **Conclusion**

13. Over the past year, the service has seen a change in practice, has embraced commissioning principles, has worked to targets and has achieved success in recruitment in a competitive market.
14. The fostering and adoption service operated within its budget envelope of £23.3million for 2016/17. Within the context of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, increased in-house provision is proving most cost-effective and resources will ensure that funding is used in the most effective way to provide the best care. There continued to be a financial pressure related to complex need and the use of residential care throughout the year.

**Circulation Under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

None.

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**Appendices**

Appendix A - Leicestershire and Rutland Adoption Agency Annual Report 2016 – 17  
Appendix B - Leicestershire Fostering Service Annual Report 2016 – 17

**Equality and Human Rights Implications**

15. The Choices Sufficiency Strategy and Market Position Statement identified priorities for recruitment, support and training of foster carers.
16. The Market Position Statement has been refreshed for 2017-18. The Market Position Statement uses demographic and statistical information to identify the most vulnerable and highest needs. Priority action, supply needs and development issues related directly to the analysis of this information.