



CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE: 5 NOVEMBER 2019

LEICESTERSHIRE ADOPTION AGENCY STATUTORY REPORT

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the activity of the Leicestershire and Rutland Adoption Agency for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019. The Annual Report is attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. Leicestershire County Council is responsible for the Local Authority Adoption Agency. It undertakes statutory responsibilities related to adoption.
3. Under the 2011 National Minimum Standards, Fostering Services and Adoption Agencies are required to provide one half year and one annual report to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee 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 for 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019 includes services for Rutland, is called the Leicestershire and Rutland Adoption Agency (the Adoption Agency).

Summary of the Report

5. The service recognises that it operates within a challenging market, with adopter recruitment across the country being difficult and the number of children requiring adopter homes increasing. As such, ambitious priorities and targets were set in the following areas:
 - Adopter recruitment

- Quality and timely assessments of prospective adopters
 - Timely matching and placement
 - Adopter support.
6. A range of work has been completed over 2018/19, the highlights of which are:
- An ambitious marketing and recruitment plan, resulting in the successful recruitment of adopters and matching of children
 - An increased adoption support offer including increased birth records counselling, increased therapeutic capacity and embedding of a support worker (who makes contact at specific times, post placement, to review the support plan and the adoption support needs of the family), and the introduction of First Family for the birth family
 - Shared Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland adopter training offer
 - Shared Leicestershire, Leicester, Rutland and Voluntary Agency Family Finding Meeting
 - Revitalised Birth Records Counselling

2018-19 Achievements highlights

7. Recruitment: in 2018/19 there were 353 adopter enquiries and 143 households attended an open evening. 93 initial visits were undertaken that led to 49 households starting the stage 1 assessment. Following this 34 households were approved. On 31st March 2019, there were 20 adopter applicants in stage 1 and 25 in stage 2.
8. Family Finding: in 2018/19 35 adoption orders were finalised for children and 32 children were placed with their prospective adopters. 20 children were placed with Leicestershire County Council approved adopters, and 12 via the inter-agency process. Included in this were four sibling groups, all of which were made up of two siblings. Seven children with ethnicities other than White British were placed with adopters during 2018/2019 and these have been through interagency matches. Six children were placed under Foster for Adoption (FFA). There was one disruption of a placement and two disruptions during introductions. On 31st March 2019, there were five adopter households waiting. The longest waiting adopter was approved in December 2018 and was waiting for a specific age range and cultural background. On 31st March 2019, 31 children awaiting an adoption placement although a link had been identified for 11.
9. Support: During 2018/19, 60 Birth Records Counselling were completed and there were 0 Birth Records Counselling on a waiting list. Six Birth Parents have accessed First Family and 26 referrals were made to Coram's Adoption Support Gateway. £338,000 was drawn down from the Adoption Support Fund to provide a range of different support for children post adoption and 72 children were provided with advice and guidance from the Virtual School. 81 Special Guardianship Order carers were offered 3-year support.
10. The 2018-19 performance overview (Adoption Scorecard) is as follows:–

- The average time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family for 2015-2018 is 413 days. The England average is 486.
- The average time between Leicestershire receiving court authority to place a child and match to an adoptive family is 153 days. The England average is 201 days.
- Children who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adopted family currently stands at 64%. This is significantly better than the England 3-year average of 56%.
- Leicestershire adopters wait for less time than the England average before being matched after approval (62% compared to 69%).
- Securing adoptive placements for children from ethnic minority backgrounds is at 14% compared with an England average of 7%.

Targets and priorities for 2019-20

11. Leicestershire's Adoption Agency has a two targets for 2019-20:-
 - a. To approve 50 adopters during 2019-2020 as set out in the Adoption and Permanence Strategy 2018-2020; and
 - b. To strive to improve Adoption Scorecard Performance.

Resource Implications

12. The Adoption Team makes a significant contribution to Leicestershire's sufficiency duty by ensuring those children with adoption plans or who are likely to have adoption plans are prepared for adoption and are matched to their forever families in a timely way. Because of this work, children spend less time in care, reducing placement and other resource costs for the authority.

Conclusion

13. The Adoption Service has achieved significant success in 2018-19, particularly in relation to the recruitment of adopters, the performance against the national adoption scorecard and the offer of support. The Department remains focused on the recruitment of adopters as a key priority over the forthcoming year.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

14. None.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

15. There are no equality or human rights implications arising from the report.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Leicestershire and Rutland Adoption Agency Annual Report 2018/19

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