

## **Cabinet – 16 March 2016**

### **Adoption Service 6 monthly Progress Report 1 April 2015 – 30 September 2015**

**Portfolio:** Councillor Eddie Hughes

**Related portfolios:** N/A

**Service:** Adoption Service – Specialist Children's Services

**Wards:** All

**Key decision:** No

**Forward plan:** No

#### **1. Summary**

- 1.1 The requirement to report on the progress of the Adoption Service is contained within the Adoption National Minimum Standards 2014 and Adoption Statutory Guidance 2014 as follows:

##### **National Minimum Standards 2014 Standard 25.6**

The executive side of the Local Authority should:

- Receive written reports on the management, outcomes and financial state of the agency every six months
- Monitor the management and outcomes of the services in order to satisfy themselves that the agency is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and or service users
- Satisfy themselves that the agency is complying with the conditions of registration

##### **Adoption Statutory Guidance 2014:**

The agency should monitor its performance and provide 6 monthly updates to the executive side of the council. These updates should cover all children who are in the care of their local authority and include:

- the number, type and age of the children waiting for an adoptive placement and length of time they have been waiting;

- the local authority's performance against the adoption scorecards;
- progress in the recruitment of suitable adoptive families;
- the number of children placed for adoption and adopted since the last report; and the number of children whose placement has disrupted or where there has been a change of plan and the child is no longer to be placed for adoption;
- whether the child's need for a permanent home has been addressed and a permanence plan made by the four month review;
- whether the adoption panel is receiving all the necessary information from the agency within six weeks of the completion of the child's permanence report;
- whether the adoption panel's recommendation on whether the child should be placed for adoption is being made within two months of a review where adoption has been identified as the permanence plan.

The report contained in **Appendix A** is the Adoption Service 6 monthly Progress Report for the period 1 April 2015 to the 30 September 2015.

The report details the work of Walsall Council's Adoption Service during this period. It contains commentary with regard to Walsall's adoption performance and how we compare nationally, it will comment on adoption panel and agency decision maker activity and also the key areas identified for future service developments.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the contents of this report are accepted as an accurate reflection of how Walsall council is meeting its statutory duties in relation to delivery of adoption services.

## 3. Report detail

Please see the report in **Appendix A**. The headlines from this report are as follows:

- The number of children approved as suitable for adoption within this 6 month period is significantly higher than the previous year. The reasons for this are the continued impact of the Government's focus on adoption, the on-going impact of the public law outline, requiring Local Authorities to complete care proceedings in 26 weeks and also anecdotally, the increase in children being referred where siblings have already been adopted and there has been no change in the birth family.
- The figure for children being matched with adopters is lower than for the same period last year last year but the majority were placed with Walsall families which is evidence of the effective use of internal provision.

- The total number of children adopted during this period is 17 which more than for the same period last year.
- This period has seen significant growth of our partnership working with Adoption Focus and the growth of Adoption in the Black Country as a brand.
- The Regionalising Adoption Agenda was introduced by the Government during this period, this is likely to have significant implications for service delivery in the coming months and will be further explored in the annual report.
- Two out of the three key performance indicators for adoption performance have shown significant improvement and the third has remained fairly steady.

#### **4. Council priorities**

- 4.1 Improving Safeguarding, Learning and the life chances for children and young people, raising aspirations-** For those children where it is decided adoption is the most appropriate plan; this plan should be implemented without delay. Walsall should as part of care planning, ensure that permanency for all children is considered at the earliest opportunity. The priority for progressing adoption plans will be met through effective and targeted recruitment of prospective adopters who are able to meet a diverse range of needs.

#### **5. Risk management**

- 5.1** In order to monitor compliance with required statutory duties it is important that cabinet is made aware of service priorities, developments and resource implications.

#### **6. Financial implications**

- 6.1** None

#### **7. Legal implications**

- 7.1** Legal services have been consulted and no legal implications were identified.

#### **8. Property implications**

- 8.1** None

#### **9. Health and wellbeing implications**

- 9.1** None

#### **10. Staffing implications**

10.1 In order to support the key service priority of supporting permanence for as many children as possible, additional posts have been created to support permanence. These are currently in the process of being recruited to.

## **11. Equality implications**

11.1 None identified.

## **12. Consultation**

12. Lynn Levesley – Legal Services Manager.  
Nilu Ghai – Senior HR consultant.  
Lynn Harvey-Service accountant

## **Background papers**

None

### **Author**

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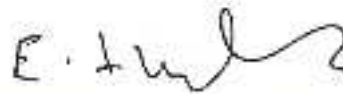
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David Haley  
Executive Director  
16 February 2016



Councillor E Hughes  
Portfolio holder  
7 March 2016