

## **Cabinet – 7 September 2016**

### **Adoption Service Annual Report 1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016**

**Portfolio:** Councillor Rose Burley

**Related portfolios:** N/A

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

**Wards:** All

**Key decision:** No

**Forward plan:** No

#### **1. Summary**

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:

- 1.1. Receive written reports on the management, outcomes and financial state of the agency every six months
- 1.2. 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
- 1.3. 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:

- 1.4 The number, type and age of the children waiting for an adoptive placement and length of time they have been waiting;
- 1.5 The local authority's performance against the adoption scorecards;
- 1.6 Progress in the recruitment of suitable adoptive families;

- 1.7 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;
- 1.8 Whether the child's need for a permanent home has been addressed and a permanence plan made by the four month review;
- 1.9 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;
- 1.10 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 Annual Adoption Service Report for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

The report details the work of Walsall Council's Adoption Service during this period. It contains commentary with regard to adoption performance locally and how we compare nationally, it will comment on adoption panel activity, adoption support activity, service user involvement 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:

- 3.1 The number of children suitable for adoption within this 12 month period is considerably higher than the previous year and is the same figure reported in 13/14. This trend appears to be continuing, which is an indication of Walsall's commitment to considering adoption for a wider range of children.
- 3.2 The figure for children being matched with adopters is lower than last year by one. However, 19 of these children were matched with Walsall approved families.
- 3.3 The total number of children adopted during 2015-16 is 32; this is a decrease of 6 on the previous year. This is reflective of the number of children presented for adoption decision during 2014-15, which stood at 25.
- 3.4 There have been significant changes to the overall delivery of adoption services in response to the intense government scrutiny of local authority performance. This has meant significant growth in the service to accommodate family finding for permanence and support to special guardians, it has also seen the beginnings of 'Regional Adoption Agencies'.

- 3.5 Walsall's responsibility for the provision of adoption support continues to grow as more children are adopted year on year.
- 3.6 This year the service undertook three adoption participation events which utilised adopters input to produce Walsall Adoption Passport and also to revamp our Adopter's Charter.
- 3.7 There are three clear areas for service development for the coming year, all activities in adoption recorded into mosaic, Embedding permanency and progressing with the Adoption reform.

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

- 4.1 Key Council priority of **lifelong health, wealth and happiness** will be addressed by working towards more children being placed in adoptive placements in a timely way which will keep them safe from harm so that they can succeed and flourish in a permanent family setting.
- 4.2 Key Council priority of **Safe, resilient and prospering communities** will be addressed through effective recruitment and retention of adopters from across the region who are able to meet the diverse range of needs of children cared for by the local authority. We aim to do this by strengthening our partnership with our regional partners and working with them to ensure we have appropriately trained and skilled adopters who can promote children's life chances through support with education, health, leisure and recreation throughout their childhood and beyond.
- 4.3 Key Council priority of **Sustainable change and improvement for all** will be addressed through a reduction in the use of expensive external providers as a result of more children being placed for adoption and by redirecting resources back into the recruitment and retention of more Walsall approved adopters and foster carers.

#### **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 In terms of the financial context of this service, the total budget associated with Adoption is £0.687m. From a financial perspective, significant cost reductions can be realised through an increased uptake in the number of adoptive families and a potential decrease in the reliance on other high cost settings such as IFAs. During 2015/16, Children services reported an ongoing financial pressure associated with the number and mix of Looked After Children. As part of the 2016/17 budget agreed by Full Council, corporate investment was allocated to Children services to ensure budget was in line with 2015/16 costs at the start of the new financial year.

As stated within the body of the report, this service is subject to review as part of the Regional Adoption Agency.

## **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**

The Marmot Review: Fair Society, Healthy lives identifies 6 key policy objectives. The report in Annex A is evidence of Walsall's commitment to addressing the Marmot principles and in particular the following:

- 9.1 **Give every child the best start in life:** One of the key objectives for the adoption service is to ensure that we are able to provide timely and robust adoption placements for as many Walsall children as possible where it is clear they are unable to remain within their birth family. Walsall has a proven track record of providing secure adoption placements; evidence of this is our year on year adoption rate and our very low disruption rate.
- 9.2 **Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives:** The adoption service has a statutory duty to offer training and development opportunities to adopters to enhance their parenting capabilities to enable them to support children and young people to maximise their potential. This support extends beyond a child's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, with the vast majority of support, including access to new learning opportunities being provided to adoptees in their teenage years and their adoptive families.
- 9.3 **Ensuring a healthy standard of living for all:** The earlier a child is identified as being at risk and is removed from that risk, the better the long term outcomes will be for the healthy development of that child. Children's services have a real commitment to making early defensible decisions for children and where it is clear that adoption is the most appropriate plan that these children are placed in adoptive families who have also undergone robust assessment to ensure they maintain a good healthy lifestyle for themselves and the children placed with them.

## **10. Staffing implications**

- 10.1 None for this reporting period.

## **11. Equality implications**

- 11.1 None identified.

## **12. Consultation**

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

## Background papers

Adoption Annual Report (Appendix A)

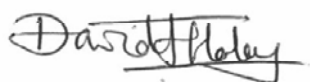
### Author

Linda Franks

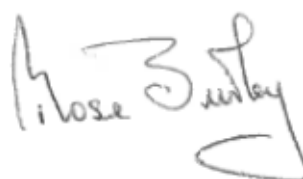
Professional Advisor for Adoption & Fostering

☎ 650834

✉ [franksl@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:franksl@walsall.gov.uk)



David Haley  
Executive Director  
10 August 2016



Councillor Rose Burley  
Portfolio holder  
23 August 2016



**Walsall Council**



*'Walsall Children: Safe, Happy and Learning Well'*

**Adoption Service Annual Report 1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016**

## **Overview of Service Delivery 2015-16**

The Adoption Service has had a busy and challenging year not only with regard to ensuring we discharge our statutory functions but also moving forward with the Government's adoption reform agenda, most notably the development of a Regional Adoption Agency. There has also been further service re-design to support Walsall's commitment to ensuring permanence for every Looked after Child.

There has been an increase this year in the number of children being presented for an adoption decision. This has increased from 25 in 2014-15 to 60 this year. The figure of 60 compares with 2013/14 the highest Walsall had in the previous five years, however the trend appears to be continuing at the higher level. We have continued to match children with their adopters in a timely way and this year there has been a slight decrease from 38 in 2014/15 to 37 this year, which is reflective of the lower number of plans made during the previous year. The number of approved families decreased from 17 during 2014-15 to 12 this year, which is a similar figure achieved across the previous five years. The high number of approvals during the previous year was achieved as a result of government grants which provided the service with additional assessment capacity. However, on a more positive note, the majority of approved families have offered placements to Walsall children or are in the process of doing so; which continues to demonstrate good use of internal provision.

The Public Law Outline and the requirement to complete care proceedings within 26 weeks has continued to result in more timely decision making for children. The emphasis is very much on early identification of adoptive families through pro-active family finding and the need to fully explore all permanence options alongside that of adoption.

In September 2015 and February 2016, the service supported our adopters to host their bi-annual 'Adoption Picnic' and adoption day event. This was well attended by a number of adopters and their children; the adoption picnic saw an increase in the attendance of new families, which is positive. Members of the adoption team attended the events and were able to consult with adopters on changes they wished to see to the service. On a similar theme, a group of adopters were consulted on changes to be made to Walsall's adoption passport and adopter's charter, both of which are available on Walsall's adoption website.

The new Adoption Scorecard was published in March 2016. Walsall showed improvements in some areas, whilst some stayed similar to last year. Further information can be found in section 4.

## **Introduction and Legal Context**

The Adoption Service operates within the following legal framework: Adoption Agency Regulations 2005 and 2013, Adoption National Minimum Standards 2014, Adoption Statutory Guidance 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014.

The requirement to report on the progress of the Adoption Service is contained within the 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:**

8.4 The agency should monitor its performance and provide reports to the executive side of the local authority every six months. These reports 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.

This report will fulfil the obligations outlined above by providing evidence and supplementary commentary on the role, function and activity of the Adoption Service during 2015-2016; it will also include our performance in relation to the Adoption Scorecard.

### **Adoption Reform Agenda**

The Government is continuing to push forward on its adoption reform agenda. Most notably during 2015-16, the Government announced it plans for Local Authorities to become 'Regionalised Adoption Agencies' (RAA's) alongside Voluntary Adoption Agency partners. Walsall along with our Black Country partners prepared a bid for submission in July 2015 along with our voluntary partner Adoption Focus. Just prior to submission of the bid, our consortium was approached by Telford and Wrekin and Shropshire who indicated they wished to 'declare' their interests in joining with us to form a larger regional adoption agency. Following a number of consultation meetings, the recommendation was that the bid for submission would now include all 6 local authorities and Adoption Focus.

The latter part of 2015 saw frenetic activity with regard to pushing forward with the RAA agenda, there has been various meetings with the Department for Education (DfE), we have been given a 'coach' from the DfE and our RAA appointed a project manager to support all six local authorities with the setting up of an RAA.



The initial proposal was for the RAA to go live in April 2017. However, the complexity involved in establishing such an arrangement has meant the appointment of legal and financial experts who are independent of the Local Authorities and also a comprehensive scope has had to be undertaken to consider the various operating models of the RAA. The early part of 2016 has seen increased activity for adoption managers as they have worked on what a 'Good' RAA would look like and what services are in scope and those which are not.

The establishment of the RAA will be a key service priority for next year; the current proposal is that the RAA will become operational in the next 18 to 24 months.

The DfE has also introduced others measures to support adoption improvement, these are the continuation of the 'Adoption Support Fund' (ASF), this has meant that all those families who require therapeutic intervention following an assessment of need from the Local Authority can access the ASF to provide for this need. This has reduced pressure on Local Authority adoption support budgets and has also enabled families to access a much broader range of adoption support services.

The third initiative has been to introduce the re-payment of inter-agency fees to Local Authorities where it has placed a 'hard to place' child for adoption. Those considered hard to place are as follows:

- Children who have been in care for longer than 18 months
- Sibling groups
- Children from BME background
- Children with a recognised disability

The introduction of this re-payment has meant that Walsall has been able to claim for a number of children we have placed for adoption. The intention of the re-payment was to ensure Local Authorities utilised external placements to increase the number of children being placed for adoption, the assumption by the Government was that finance may have been a barrier to pursuing adoption. Whilst this re-payment will clearly benefit Walsall, finance has never been a reason for us not placing a child for adoption. Walsall has always robustly pursued adoption for any child where their plan is adoption regardless of the cost of purchasing an inter-agency placement, hence our consistent high use of external provision.

## **Role and Function of the Adoption Service**

### **Professional Profile of the Adoption Service**

At the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015, the adoption service comprised the following;

Lisa Preston, Group Manager-Strategic Lead for Provider Services and the Adoption Team comprises of 1 Team manager, 1 Practice Manager, 9 Social workers and 3 non qualified workers. Activity is supported by the Professional Advisor to adoption panel and specialist panel administrator posts.

In recognition of the need to embed permanence across children's services, the Group Manager submitted a business case to increase capacity within the family placement service. The outcome of this for the adoption service was to appoint to a post for family finding for permanence, to appoint a Special Guardianship Coordinator and to appoint a coordinator for permanence who will be responsible for promoting and robustly challenging permanency for all looked after children. At the time of writing, the Special Guardianship Coordinator has commenced their post, the post of family finder is under offer and the

coordinator for permanence will be advertised for the third time as previous campaigns have not been successful.

The adoption team undertake the following core duties:

- recruitment, training and assessment of adopters
- provision of support to adoptive families following their approval and subsequent match to a child
- family finding and matching for children with an adoption plan and for those requiring long term fostering placements
- provision of adoption support and special guardianship support both pre and post order
- facilitation of contact arrangements for adopted children and to adopted adults
- completion of non-agency adoption work including the completion of inter-country adoption work and completion of step-parent adoptions

The service also offers consultation on adoption related matters as part of a duty system and when required will attend court to provide evidence of family finding activity in relation to individual cases.

The Adoption Team's work involves initial visits to applicants, staffing of information evenings as part of Adoption in the Black Country (ABC), hosting adoption preparation courses, conducting assessments of adopters, family finding for children with an adoption plan, provision of post adoption support and completion of step parent adoption applications. Specialist workers assist children in preparation to move on to their adoptive placements and also in the provision of Life Story Work. The team continue to work collaboratively with Consortium colleagues as part of Adoption in the Black Country and Adoption Focus whilst work is underway on RAA plans.

In preparing adoptive families for the realities of parenting, the majority will have the opportunity to attend a 'Child Appreciation Day', this enables adopters to hear about children from those who know children best, such as contact supervisors, nursery and school staff, foster carers and previous and existing social workers. The use of Child Appreciation Meetings continues to have a positive impact on placement stability.

Children and adopters continue to be well prepared for the realities of adoption placements, direct work is provided to the children to help prepare them for a move to an adoption placement whilst practical support is given to adopters in the form of advice and support and where appropriate financial support including the purchase of essential equipment in preparation for placement. Walsall is fortunate to have a dedicated life story worker and also a worker focusing on direct work and transition planning. These workers ensure that all children moving onto adoption have life journey work undertaken with them to help them contextualise their past experiences and prepare them for their new life in their adoptive placement, ongoing direct work is available to support children once they have moved if this is felt to be appropriate. With regard to Walsall's life story worker, this person ensures that all children moving onto adoption have a life story book, these books help children understand their past experiences and are a really useful tool for adopters to use in explaining how their children came to be placed with them.

## **Activity of the Adoption Service**

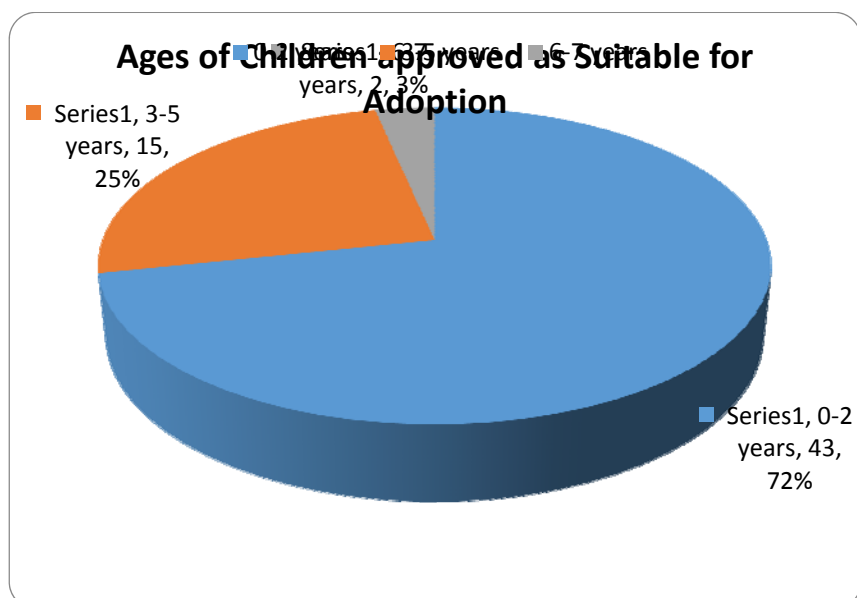
### **Profile of Children suitable to be placed for Adoption**

During April 2015 to March 2016, a total of 60 children were presented for a decision on their suitability for adoption. This is considerably higher than last year; reasons for the increase were greater numbers in Walsall's Looked after Children population and the renewed emphasis as a result of the Family Justice Review to make swift robust decisions for children. A combination of children awaiting a match from 2015/16 and those children having an ADM decision this year has culminated in 29 children being placed.

This significant rise in family finding has impacted on the availability of resources for other aspects of adoption activity; however, the service rose to the challenge and has concentrated its efforts on robust family finding for all children.

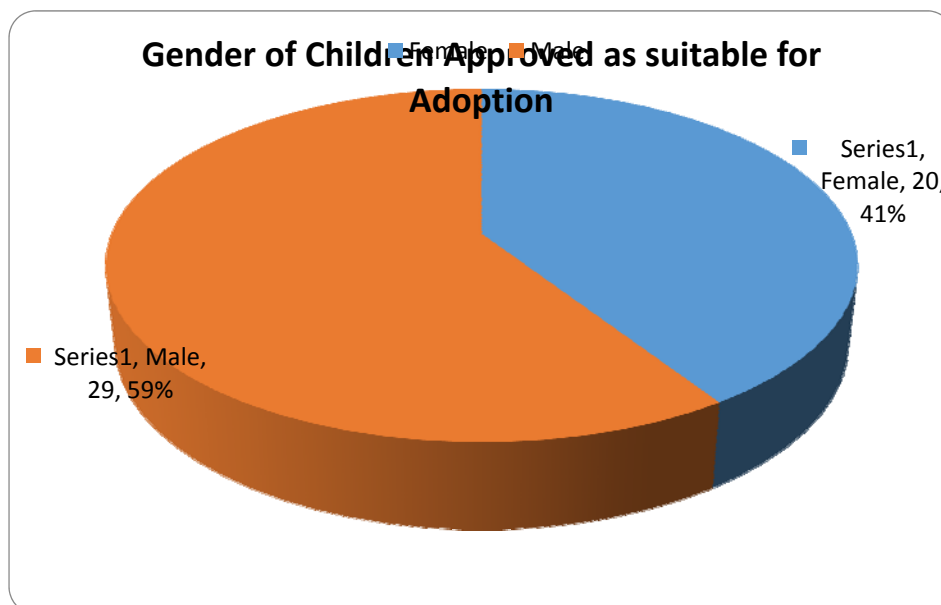
The following sections provide further detail of the profile of these 60 children.

### **Age**



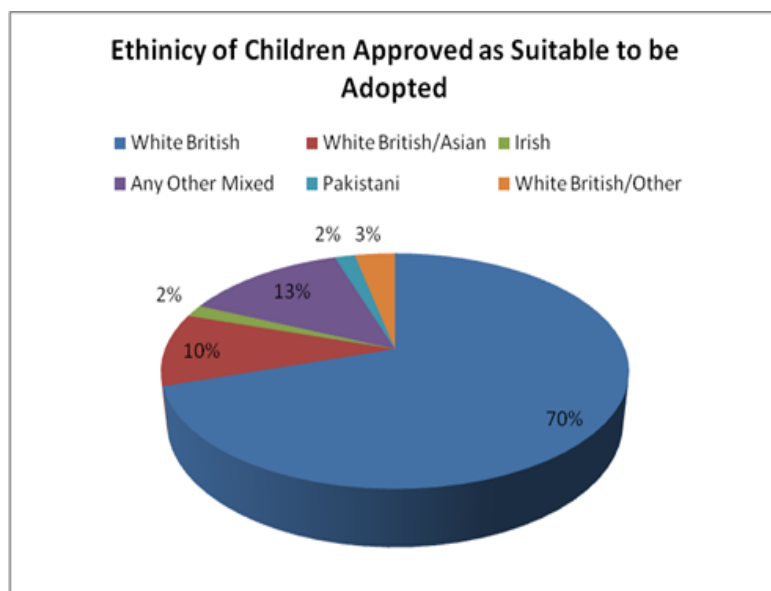
The age profile of children requiring adoption remains similar to previous years with a high percentage under the age of 3 years. Nationally, the average age at which a child becomes legally adopted is 3 years 5 months (BAAF 2015). Walsall's average age at the point of adoption for 2015-16 was 3 years 1 month; this is evidence of Walsall's commitment to ensure adoption is considered at the earliest opportunity if it becomes clear a child is unable to remain with their birth family.

## Gender



On a similar theme to last year, more boys than girls were presented for an adoption decision. This reflects the national picture of the gender profile within the care system, with 55% being boys and 45% girls (Coram BAAF 2016). Of the 60 children that have been presented, 18 have been matched and placed with prospective adopters within this period with minimal delays. Adoption in the Black Country Consortium (ABC) has profiled boys and siblings groups as a high priority for their marketing campaign as this is a limited resource across the region, with all Local Authorities taking longer to place this cohort.

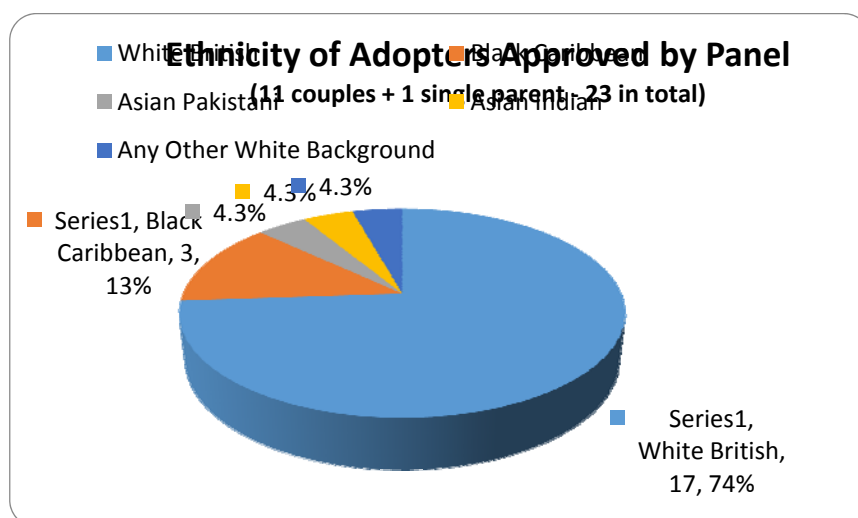
## Ethnicity of children



Walsall continues to have children presented for an adoption decision from black and minority ethnic groups; however this year there has been a decrease.

The majority (42) 70% of children were from a white European origin, which is then also reflective in the number of white European children matched to adopted families, of which 87% were of white European origin.

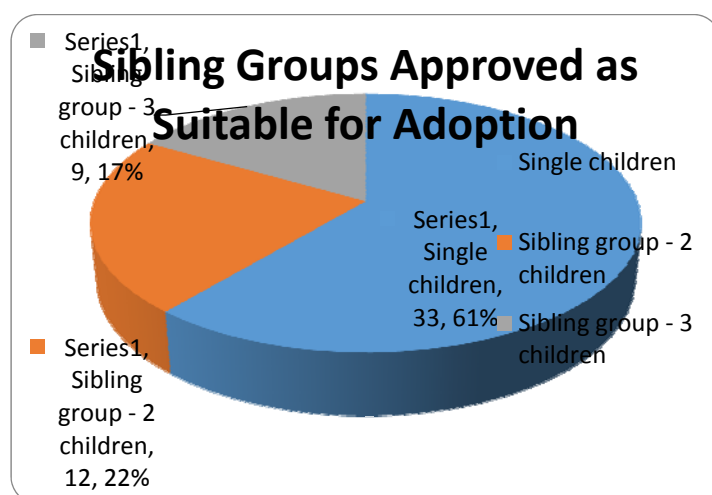
## Ethnicity of adopters



During 2015 – 2016, the majority of adopters 74% that were approved by panel were of a white British ethnicity. This is a decrease from last year's figure of 86%. Finding suitable placements for black and ethnic minority children continues to be problematic nationally as there is a shortage of black and minority ethnic adopters. In response to this, the Government made an amendment to the Children and Families Act 2014 and supplementary Statutory Guidance and removed the clause requiring us to consider ethnicity as a predominant factor in matching.

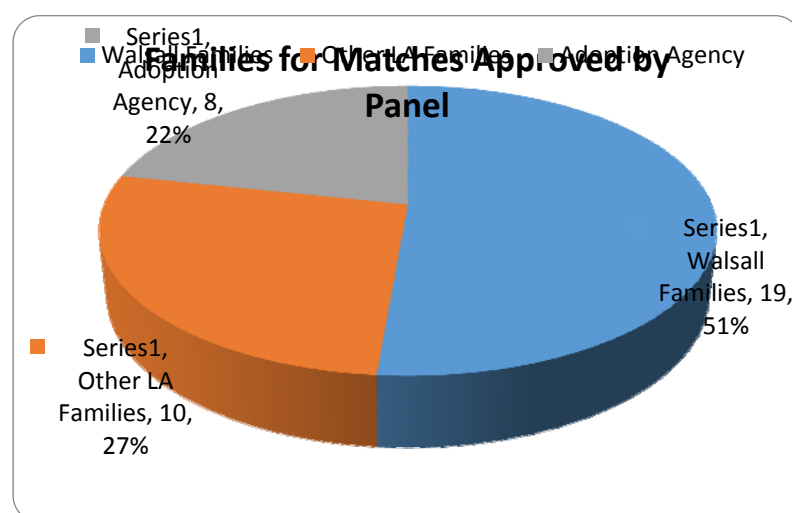
However, Walsall has had an increase in the number of black and minority ethnic adopters. 2014-2015 figures are shown as 3% and 2015-2016 figures are shown as 13%. The intention is that this will open up adoption of black and minority ethnic children to a wider range of approved adoptive families. Whilst this may have an impact for children nationally, for many years the practice in Walsall has been to consider ethnicity as part of a child's holistic needs and because of this children have always been placed in appropriate trans-racial placements. The important factor is careful consideration of the holistic needs of a child. Sometimes an ethnic match is identified as the priority need, if this is the case then every effort is made to find the most appropriate match.

## Sibling Placements



With regard to placement identification, the chart above shows the number of single children compared to those in sibling groups. There were a high number of single children (33) requiring placements; and there was an increase in the number of sibling groups compared with last year (3 groups of 2 children). During 2014/15 there were 3 sibling groups of 2 children compared with 6 sibling groups of 2 children for the period 2015/16. In 2014/15, there were no sibling groups of 3 reported for the year. In 2015/16 there were 3 sibling groups of 3 children which is a significant increase.

## Children Matched 2015-2016



The Adoption Panel recommended 37 children for a match with an approved adoptive family; this is a decrease of 1 from last year. 19 of these were matched with Walsall approved families; a further 10 were placed with other local authorities and 8 within voluntary adoption placements.

72.9% (27) of the children were matched within 6 months of their adoption decision. For those not matched within 6 months, 21% (8) placed within 12 months, and 5.4% (2) were over 12 months. The delays are attributable to timing of placement order applications. The cases of 2 children took longer than 12 months. The reasons for delay were

- Family finding did not identify many appropriate matches
- Placement Orders were challenged by birth parents

Cases such as these do pose a challenge to Local Authorities as the timescales involved will adversely affect scorecard data. However, the view of the service, supported by the senior leadership team is that every child has to be treated as an individual and adoption should be pursued wherever possible for children who are unable to remain within their birth family. We will not cease or alter a plan of adoption simply because it improves our apparent performance.

## Children Adopted

The total number of children adopted during 2015-16 is 32, a decrease of 6 on the previous year. This is reflective of the number of children presented for adoption decision during 2014-15, which stood at 30.

## **Good Practice Requirements**

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 introduced monitoring functions for adoption panels. During 2014-15, these will be replaced by the new requirements of the Adoption Scorecard.

- Of the 60 children presented for an adoption decision, 96.6% had their permanence plan considered and ratified at their 4 month statutory review. This is an increase on last year's figure of 88% and continues to demonstrate Walsall's commitment to securing permanence for children.
- 93.3% of children were presented for an adoption decision within 2 months of the review which agreed adoption as the care plan. This is a decrease of last year's figure of 100%. This has reduced because ongoing assessments were ordered within the court process which caused delay.
- 3.3% of children had their wishes and feelings clearly recorded in their CPR. The reason given for this not happening in the vast majority of cases was that the children were too young to be consulted. Training on the completion of CPR's is now mandatory. There have been improvements in the quality and social workers have provided evidence of their interpretation of children's wishes and feelings through their observational and assessment skills. The reasons for this low number are due to the number of children below the age of 2 years who are unable to voice their wishes and feelings for the Childs Permanency Report.
- 78.3% of parents had the opportunity to read and comment on the CPR prior to submission for an adoption decision. This is a decrease on last year's figure of 84%. The reasons for this are because birth parents have refused to engage with the Local Authority or their whereabouts have not been known.

## **Placement Stability/Disruptions**

All children moving onto adoption have a robust Adoption Support Plan. This plan identifies key areas of support for both adopters and children with lead professionals identified. Walsall's 'Agreement to Placement' document also makes specific reference to adopters needing to ensure that the holistic needs of children are addressed, which includes their social and emotional development and their learning needs. Adoption Support plans are monitored as part of the Statutory Review process, if additional needs are identified, these needs are met by the provision of additional services and are again subject to review.

With regard to post Adoption Support Plans, adopters are written to on an annual basis inviting them to request an annual review of their support needs. If adopters request this, an assessment is undertaken and any additional needs identified will then either be met through signposting to universal services or through the provision of additional services under our post adoption support obligations, again this will then be subject to ongoing review.

Placement stability is high in Walsall; there have been no placement disruptions this year. There have been two sets of introductions which did not proceed. The first related to a 6yr female child, following a protracted period of introductions, the adopters disclosed they had not made a connection with the child so withdrew from the process. The child was supported through this by her foster carer and the professional network. She has now been matched to another family and will be joining her adoptive family soon. The second was a 2 yr old female child. The adopters felt her needs far outweighed their capacity to manage so they also withdrew from the process. Family finding for her continues.



Child Appreciation Days continue to be a contributing factor to our low disruption rate. These take place prior to matching panel and enable adopters to hear all available information prior to committing to a match with a child. They are able to withdraw from the match if they feel the child is not right for them. The child is unaware of the planning process at this stage and therefore it is the adults that shoulder the emotional burden and not the child.

### **Good Practice**

Adopters are involved in all aspects of matching and planning. Prior to approval as adopters, they are invited to attend Adoption Activity Days, exchange days, and receive a copy of 'Children Who Wait' as part of their Adoption UK membership; they will also get to hear about the children waiting for adoption in Walsall. This approach enables adopters to have some input into the process and to begin to understand the processes involved in approval and subsequent matching. Following approval, if it looks unlikely that we will match the family within 3 months, we will refer them immediately to the Adoption Register, this enables adopters to have some control over the matching process as it gives them access to identifying children who they may be interested in. Families are also able to access 'Placement Link' this is a new resource now used by a vast majority of adoption agencies. Once a possible match has been identified, the sharing of all available information to adopters begins; this includes the CPR, DVDs, photographs, 'All About Me' document, which details the daily life experiences of the child and what is involved in caring for them. Following this, adopters have the opportunity to attend a Child Appreciation Day. During the Child Appreciation Day, they will have the opportunity to meet all those who have been involved with their child or children. Adopters attend adoption placement planning meetings and are asked to contribute to the completion of associated adoption paperwork. Adopters are asked to complete a 'Family Book' and a DVD for use during introductions, which ultimately will help them and the child in early stages of introductions. A significant number of adopters contribute to the development of our agency. These contributions include; help and support in the delivery of preparation training, in providing support to other adopters during introductions or difficult placements, in co-hosting our annual adoption picnic and other social events, in the writing, editing and publishing of our adoption newsletter and also through their inclusion on the central list for adoption panel members. There are currently 3 adopters included on Walsall's central list for adoption panel members.

### **Service User Participation**

The need to consult with adopters and adopted children is vital in ensuring effective service delivery. Consultation happens in a number of ways: through feedback about experiences of first point of contact through Adoption in the Black Country, the adoption assessment process, feedback from attendance at adoption panel and through the regular communication between adopters and their social workers.

This year the service undertook three adoption participation events which utilised adopters input to produce Walsall Adoption Passport and also to revamp our Adopter's Charter. The Group manager attended the 'Adoption Fun Day' which took place in September and was able to converse with adopters about what additional adoption support measures they would like to see implemented. Their comments were to ask us to consider more social events, to consider an 'adults' only event, to consider an area of our website where adopters could converse and to set up a 'WhatsApp' group so that adopters can more easily converse. These suggestions are now being considered by the adoption service and if felt appropriate, will form part of their planning for the coming year.



## **Profile of Adopters**

During 2015-16, 12 families were approved as suitable to adopt. This is a decrease of 5 families from the previous year. It is likely that the relentless focus on family finding for an increased number of children meant that some focus was taken away from recruitment. However, it is also important to highlight that 12 approvals does not equate to the amount of assessment activity. There were a number of families that started the assessment process but they had to be aborted for a number of reasons, including unresolved loss, lack of thought to what adoption would bring to their family, complex issues in marital and family relationships, financial matters and lack of available support network. The coverage/national campaign and Government focus on adoption has resulted in more people coming forward much earlier in the decision making process (able to get through an info event screening but not developed their thinking of adoption in enough detail to progress after an Initial Visit), this results in more work for adoption teams with no guarantee of a resource at the end of it.

## **Adoption Scorecard**

The Adoption Scorecard contains a number of key performance indicators relating to how swiftly local authorities implement adoption plans for children. Scorecard data allows local authorities and other adoption agencies to monitor their own performance and compare it to other similar local authorities or adoption agencies. It can also serve to highlight areas of practice which may require improvement. The data is updated annually, the new data released in March 2016 relates to 2012-15 as the scorecard runs a year behind the financial year.

The Scorecard provides data which is already known to Walsall. Rigorous monitoring of all adoption activity is ongoing and key actions are identified and implemented on a continuous basis. The main benefit of the Scorecard is the comparable data available from other local authorities, which can sometimes highlight areas of good practice both within Walsall and often from other local authorities from whom we can share good practice.

## **Key Performance Indicators 2012-2015**

A1 Average time from a child entering care to moving in with their adoptive family: - number of days **626**. The data for 2014-15 does show an increase in the number of days for 2013-14 but looking at the three year trend 2012-15, the overall figure has reduced. The England average is 593, so Walsall still has some way to go to achieve this. However, the most recent data from the adoption scorecard for the period April to September 2015 is that our average is 411 days, which is clearly below the England average. The reason for the one year increase is due to a number of completed adoptions whereby the needs of the children were extensive. For example

Child M-African child, significant health issues, question regarding HIV status, confirmation testing could not be completed until he was 18 months old, this meant that adopters would not consider him until outcome of this was known. Once result came back favourably, he was then an 18 month old African boy who was competing with a large number of other Black children requiring adoption. Following a robust campaign an adoptive family was eventually identified and M has been successfully adopted.

Child C-Family finding commenced soon after admission to care, the prognosis for C was unknown as there was a genetic risk of him developing a condition where he would never walk and have significant needs. Families came forward as C was a young child. However, upon reading the information, families pulled out quickly, not being prepared to care for a disabled child. During this time, C continued to develop well, he was profiled at an Adoption

Activity day and eventually a family with a medical background saw him, saw beyond the risk and proceeded to a match. The social worker had been about to consider changing the plan to long term fostering. However, following a protracted period of family finding, he is now successfully adopted.

A2 Average time between Local Authority receiving court authority to place a child and the Local authority deciding on a match – The data for 2014-15 reflects the same pattern as 2013-14 of an average number of days of **184**, and the three year trend for this period has remained static although is better than the England 3 year average for 2102-15 of 223 days. It demonstrates consistent robust family finding activity with the emphasis on achieving adoption for the majority of children for whom adoption is the plan. The most recent data from the adoption scorecard for the period April to September 2015 is that our average has reduced to 153, which is an improving picture.

A3 Children who wait less than 16 months between entering care and moving in with an adoptive family. This national indicator has reduced from a target 21 months for 2013-14 down to a target 16 months for 2014-15 in recognition of the Government's clear focus on speeding up the adoption system. Walsall's three year average for 2012-15 was 49% in relation to this indicator. Most recent data for April to September 2015 shows an improving picture of 66%.

The percentage of LAC discharges who were adopted is the same as the England average of 16%; this is a slight improvement on last year's figure of 15%.

The percentage of children who had their permanence decision changed away from adoption during 2012-15 is lower than the England average at 8%, which is a clear indication that Walsall pursues adoption where this is the plan for a greater number of children.

The percentage of children adopted from a Black or Ethnic minority background being adopted was higher than the three year England average of 9%, Walsall's stands at 14%.

The percentage of children aged 5 years and over from the point of being adopted is the same as the national average of 5%.

The average length of care proceedings locally stands at 39 weeks; this is the same as the England average.

### **Financial Aspects of Service Delivery**

In terms of the financial context of the adoption service, the total budget associated with Adoption is £0.687m. From a financial perspective, significant cost reductions can be realised through ensuring that family finding for children is done in a timely way so that those currently placed in high cost independent fostering placements can join their new adoptive more quickly. The scorecard data would suggest we are managing to do this as there has been an improvement in timeliness for A2 indicator. During 2015/16, Children services reported an ongoing financial pressure associated with the number and mix of Looked after Children. As part of the 2016/17 budget agreed by Full Council, corporate investment was allocated to Children services to ensure budget was in line with 2015/16 costs at the start of the new financial year.

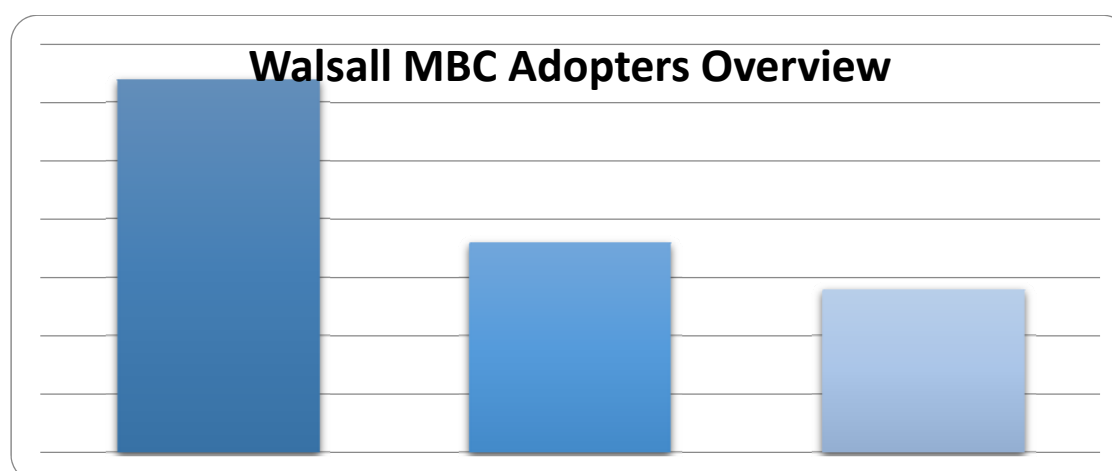
As stated within the body of this report, the adoption service is subject to review as part of the Regional Adoption Agency. Whilst initially this will represent no saving to the local authority, overtime is it hoped that savings can be achieved through the amalgamation of

aspects of service delivery and through more timely adoption placements through a pooling of resources.

### **Adoption in the Black Country**

The work of Adoption in the Black Country (ABC) continues to be very successful. There has been a slight decline in referrals from the previous year (8%) due both a request to reduce the event activity, target specific hard to reach BME groups and significantly due to a reduction in marketing spend. Adoption in the Black Country referrals was 1.5% above the agreed target.

#### **Walsall Referrals from ABC**

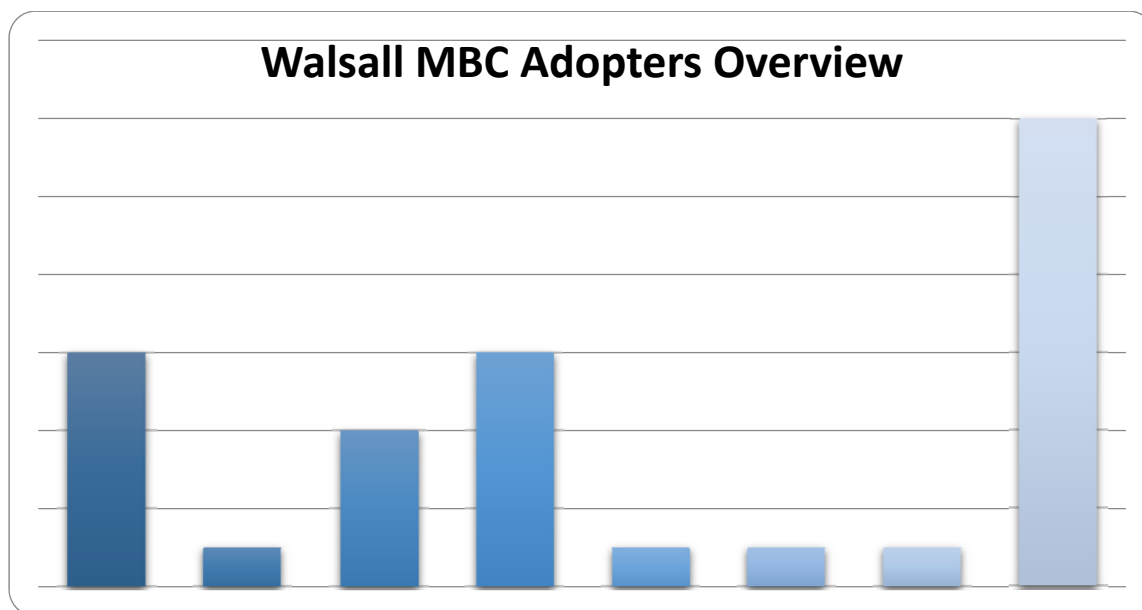


The lack of Adoption Reform Grant (ARG) this year has encouraged Adoption in the Black Country to utilise new medium of recruitment marketing and has once again increased its footprint and profile in the region – now pulling adopters from new areas such as Redditch, Kidderminster and Shrewsbury. Ethnic minority engagement has remained a key strength of Adoption in the Black Country with 23% of referrals coming from BME backgrounds (compared to 15.2% of the Black Country being made up of BME groups and 9% nationally)

#### **Walsall conversation rate from ABC**

The number of prospective adopters withdrawing is lower than last year, down by over 2% and the number withdrawing and counselled out is also down by 5%. Less marketing and communications intervention from a national government levels has seen the trends move back favourably towards the 2012/13 level as ABC delivers timely marketing activities to engage prospective adopters at the correct time. Previously in addition to the ABC marketing national campaigns and high profile messages from central government had encouraged people to come forward much earlier in the decision making process however these individuals and couples had not developed their thinking of adoption in enough detail to progress after an initial visit.

## Walsall MBC Adopters Overview



ABC has maintained a high number of Adoption Information events (33 this year) spread right across the region therefore any prospective adopter will only wait a maximum of 12 days between each event. We also provide monthly adoption preparation courses and on-line training materials as part of Stage One training requirements. The system has ironed out initial teething issues and is now supporting adopters through Stage One and Stage Two in line with required timescales. This means a quicker more robust service for adopters but more importantly a growth in local placements for children from the Black Country.

The partnership with Adoption Focus has continued to develop since they joined the consortium as a member. This has seen an increase in placements available for harder to place children, these being sibling groups, children from black and ethnic minority backgrounds and those with additional needs. It has also allowed activities such as exchange days to be developed within the consortium.

Walsall continues to be part of wider consortium working arrangements through Adopt West Midlands and the Midlands Family Placement Group. Meetings are bi-monthly and quarterly respectively. The advantages of consortium working are the ability to share good practice, offer training at a reduced unit cost, contract service level agreements at a reduced cost and most importantly to have the opportunity to identify local matches for Walsall children.

New marketing strategies have been put in place.

- Redesign of the mobile-phone version of the ABC website
- Further enhancement of the ABC website to increase the profile of the need for adopters for harder to place children.
- New social media management tools to ensure targeted marketing for hard to place children
- Increase in our social media presence and dialogue with prospective adopters through 'boosted' Facebook site and Twitter account.
- Development of a web-based on-line chat function
- Development of a new adopters DVD
- Deliver info events at a wide choice of locations
- Specific recruitment info events for Siblings
- Specific recruitment info events for Foster for Adoption

- Launch #AdoptionInfoLive – a live feed of information for info events via social media
- Launch Instreaming (innovative pop-up adverts linked to radio campaigns)
- Launch in-house exchange days

### **Adoption Panel and Panel Membership**

Panel responsibilities continue to be recommendations for the approval of adopters; matches of adopters and children and relinquished babies of whom there was 1 this year. The panel also deals with rescind reports presented to them. A rescind report is where a care plan has been changed away from adoption or where a match did not proceed and panel are asked to consider the situation and to agree a way forward.

During this period 21 panel members were on the central list. Lisa Cawthorn is the Panel Chair and was appointed in October 2014. Lisa has experience of working in the field of fostering and adoption for 27 years as a Supervising Social Worker, Senior Manager, Trainer, Panel Member, Panel Advisor and Panel Chair.

Councillor Robert Thomas did not stand for re-election therefore his last panel was May 2014. Councillor Tina Jukes has been identified to sit on panel as an elected member from 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2016.

15 panel meetings occurred during this period. All items heard at panel were dealt with with the exception of 1 item being deferred in April 2015. Applicants are encouraged to attend panel meetings for approval and matching with children. Panel members welcome their attendance as this assists them to ask questions to them directly and adds to the written assessment.

Panel was well supported by the Adoption Panel administrator, Gillian Hateley and in her absence Cheryl Harper. Gillian left the Local Authority in February 2016 and this role was taken over by Rebecca Jeffery.

Panel members were invited to a training event on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2016. This was lead by Linda Franks, Professional Advisor to Adoption Panel. This involved an update on Regulations and Panel Members carried out a 'SWOT' analysis.

An Adoption and Permanency Panel commenced from January 2016 and is now fully operational.

### **Training and Development**

There is now a commitment from workforce development to ensure social workers have the necessary skills to plan and take the child through the adoption journey.

Information articles/items of interest continue to be distributed to panel members to assist them in keeping up to date with changes in law, practice and research. Feedback from individual appraisals about training needs has highlighted that panel members are particularly interested in knowing about the adoption journey for adopters, parents and children. In response to this, briefings are proposed within panel to provide additional information. A great deal of effort was put into trying to move the panel to a paperless system with the use of i-pads to reduce the cost and also the vulnerability of having to post all the panel papers to members. However, due to technical difficulties this was not possible, although there may be scope to address this at a later stage.

## **Attendance and Performance**

Quoracy and expected attendance at panels has been reduced. There is now a central list of 21 adoption panel members in operation, which allows for flexibility of membership. The central list has already been added to in an effort to have more qualified social work input to the panel. Panel meets twice monthly and additional dates are added if required. In 2015/16 there were a total of 15 panel meetings held, all matters being dealt with at panel and 1 item being deferred.

Panel members welcome adopter's attendance at panel as this assists them in asking questions to them directly and adds to the written assessment.

At the time of writing all panel members have either had their performance reviewed or are in the process of having this completed. Feedback has been both positive and constructive with any areas of concern highlighted. Overall feedback has reflected the following:

- Members continue to speak very highly of the quality of reports submitted by members of the adoption team.
- There remain some concerns about the quality of Child Permanence Reports which is being addressed through workforce development and practice training sessions with the importance of these for children in later life emphasised and reinforced. However there has been a noticeable improvement in the majority of these.
- The quality assurance element role of the team manager and panel advisor is also seen as crucial in ensuring that reports presented comprehensively cover significant issues.
- Panel members continue to have a high regard for the panel administrators skills in the management of panel information, the circulation of reports and quality of panel minutes which are seen as an accurate record of panel discussion.
- Panel members feel that they have the opportunity to express their views and have these heard with respect shown for them.
- Panel members consistently commented on the skills and experience of the panel chair.
- The input from the medical advisor continues to be recognised as significant both with respect to the contribution they make with panel decision making but also with respect to their specific medical advisory role as they undertake adoption medicals on children suitable for adoption and can give input into comments made by other doctors about adopters. Of particular note is their availability to meet with adopters to discuss any medical issues or concerns relating to children prior to placement to ensure that adopters are as well informed as they can be about any current or future health issues.

Feedback from social workers, prospective adopters and other professionals attending panel and completing feedback forms has generally been positive.

## **Adopters attending Panel**

Whilst not a requirement to do so, Walsall actively encourages adopters to attend panel at both their approval stage and their matching stage. Of all the approvals and matches achieved last year all attended. We continue to receive positive feedback from adopters about their panel experience and the service as a whole.

### Some quotes received from adopters:

**‘Although I was nervous, I felt encouraged by the panel who were genuinely listening and interested in my views.’**

**‘Panel Members were professional and welcoming and made me feel at ease (at what was a very nervous day for me). I felt very encouraged by the way panel was conducted, especially the Chair who greeted me warmly and explained the process. I could not be happier at the outcome. After nearly 3 years in the process I am finally going to be a mommy! Thank you!’**

**‘Coming to panel was a daunting process but our fears were immediately allayed. The panel were extremely welcoming and considerate, the chair particularly so. It was a wonderful experience on our journey to becoming parent’s. Thank you!’**

## **Adoption Support Activity**

### **Contract with Adoption UK**

The partnership between Adoption UK and Walsall Council is still active and fully operational. The service level agreement is commissioned jointly with the other Black Country authorities and regular liaison meetings take place to review the service provision.

Walsall has continued to have an increase in its membership of Adoption UK as all newly approved adopters are automatically given one year’s free membership to Adoption UK. This includes adopters receiving up to date information on new research and development in the arena of adoption. All adopters, once members, are invited to Adoption UK support group meetings. As a supportive measure to some adoptive families, we have on occasion agreed to fund a further year’s membership to enable continued support to families who we identify would benefit from this.

In order to increase our use of the Buddy scheme, families who were about to go through the matching process with a child or children, were encouraged to have a referral made to the Buddy Scheme to ensure they would have independent support during the critical stage of introductions. The Buddy Scheme will not be available from April 2016 onwards.

A “Child on Parent Violence” (CPV) project has been implemented by Adoption UK. By January 2016, the worker responsible for this had begun overseeing all of the referrals that were coming through for families who are suffering from CPV. A “Parenting Our Teens” course has also been made available to adoptive parents, subject to sufficient referrals being made to the course.

Adoption UK continues to run monthly support groups at venues in Walsall and Halesowen. Approved adopters from the four Black Country Consortium agencies are invited, as are other approved adopters who subscribe to Adoption UK and may also live within close proximity to Walsall and surrounding areas. The groups give adopters the opportunity to



meet with other adopters at all stages of the process and facilitates the use of outside speakers to advise on specialist areas of adoption.

### **In House Adoption Support Provision**

The adoption support aspect of the service operates within the Family Placement Team at Essington Lodge in Willenhall. There have been some changes in staffing over the last year, and in March 2016, the staff composition was as follows:

A full time Social Worker  
A full time Life Story Worker

The functions of the Adoption Support workers are varied. They work with adopted children and their adoptive parents, birth families and adults who have been adopted. They continue to operate the contact letterbox scheme and facilitate some direct contact arrangements.

There continues to be increased activity in all aspects of adoption support with steady increase of the numbers of adopted families eligible for support and generally adopters being more aware that support is available. This has increased further since 1<sup>st</sup> May 2015, with the implementation of the much publicised government Adoption Support Fund.

Adopted adults and birth relatives are also more aware that services are available to them.

There continues to be joint working with the three other agencies in the Black Country, particularly around training for adopters on relevant adoption issues such as 'Explaining Adoption to Children' and 'Education and the Adopted Child'.

### **Support to Families and Children under 18 years of age**

The Adoption Support side of the service continues to offer an annual review of children's support plans to adoptive families who are eligible. The number of adoptive families eligible for an annual review for 2015-2016 was 90. The number of adoptive parents requesting additional support for this period was 14, with assessment for therapeutic support and financial support making up the greatest number of requests. Theraplay ® has been available in-house since October 2015, and referrals for Theraplay ® support can now also be made to Adoption Focus. Adoption Focus is now part of the Black Country Consortium, and support referrals can be made for a variety of work, including a teenagers group, therapeutic life story work, and a group for adoptive fathers.

Adoption Support workers have developed good working relationships with Walsall CAMHS commissioning service, to support families who live outside of the Walsall boundary, in securing funding for relevant therapeutic services which cannot be met by their local CAMHS. There have also been a number of requests for support to adoptive families and their children to provide information about their children's birth history, medical history or information about their birth families. These account for 3 referrals in this period. The work this generates involves the retrieval and research of archived records and possibly communication with birth relatives by phone, letter or face to face.

Training workshops for approved adopters are now well established and Walsall continues joint working with the Black Country agencies to achieve this. Workshops that were offered



and taken up by adopters during 2015-2016 covered the following topics:

- Explaining Adoption
- Sensory Integration
- Education – Adoption Support

Walsall and the Black Country partner agencies have commissioned the Safe Base Parenting Programme which is run by After Adoption, which commenced in September 2013. Two programmes run each year, of which Walsall is able to nominate 5 families per year. The feedback from adopters who have attended has been very positive.

The Family Connections newsletter continues to be distributed three times per year and is valued by adoptive families. Several adoptive parents continue to take a lead on producing and editing the newsletter which is overseen by Adoption Support Social Workers before distribution. This has proved to be successful and the feedback from adopters continues to be positive.

Walsall Adoption Service continues to host its own family events for adoptive families. There was a Family Fun day in September 2015 that took place at a children's activity centre which was hired exclusively for adoptive families. The feedback from this event was very positive.

During 2015-2016 three coffee mornings for adopters were organised and hosted by different adopters. The numbers attending remains low and is an area for future consideration.

Adoption UK continues to offer monthly support groups to adopters across the Black Country with guest speakers for specific topics being invited. These are always well attended by Walsall adopters and the feedback remains positive.

A steady stream of enquiries from adoptive parents, birth parents/relatives, adopted adults and professionals continues to be received by the duty system. There is a daily duty system which allows for these enquiries to be dealt with rapidly. Many of the enquiries generate pieces of work for the Social Workers to undertake, all of which are dealt with in timely manner.

## **Contact**

Contact Agreements from adoptive parents are generally being completed just prior to the child (ren) being placed and are lodged with the Adoption Support Workers who manage the letterbox scheme. The agreements are then facilitated by the letterbox scheme allowing for better tracking and monitoring of the agreements.

The contact agreements of birth relatives, which are the responsibility of the child's social worker, are sometimes delayed in being completed and Adoption Support Workers have to complete these. Referrals to facilitate contact agreements grew with the number of children placed for adoption. The letterbox scheme generates a high volume of work and a wide range of enquiries which need to be addressed and dealt with by workers. This may involve writing reminder letters, finding out information or sharing of information about the change in circumstances of birth families e.g. new siblings being born or sharing of medical information and updating or creating contact agreements.

There are a number of direct contact arrangements within existing contact agreements, which are managed by the respective adoptive parents. These usually involve the promotion of sibling contact between children placed in different adoptive placements. Adoption

Support workers supported and facilitated 4 direct contact meetings, which involve staff arranging and supervising the contact.

Social media continues to present some difficulties for adoptive families when unauthorised contact is being made between adopted children and their birth families. Generally it has been adopted children in their teenage years who have initiated this out of curiosity. Adoption support workers have supported adoptive families in these circumstances.

## **Schedule 2 and Section 98**

The service continues to receive referrals from adopted adults, who wish to access their birth/adoption records (Schedule 2). There were 13 referrals received this period with 6 being signposted to their residing authority or After Adoption, if Walsall was not the placing adoption agency.

There were 6 enquiries/referrals from adopted adults who wish to trace their birth relatives or birth relatives wishing to contact or be reunited with adult adoptees (S.98). 5 of these were signposted to After Adoption in line with our service level agreement for intermediary services or were signposted to their residing authority. Some cases are held and worked by Walsall Adoption Support social workers. The reasons for this are either the complexity of presenting issues or risk factors relating to early life experiences, which may have a detrimental effect on the adoptee or members of the birth family. There have been several requests by birth parents to be reunited with adults, who were adopted as children which have not been realised as the adoptees have not wished for this to progress. No vetoes have been received into the adoption agency this past year. A veto is when an adopted adult can record on their adoption file, which indicates that should an approach be made by a member of the birth family for contact; the adopted adult has no wish or desire for any contact now or in the future. There continue to be requests made by other adoption agencies on behalf of adult adoptees and birth relatives for access to records which involve the retrieval and research into archived files by Adoption Support social workers. In some cases a file summary is prepared for the other adoption agency. There were 14 such requests this year.

## **Service Development Plan 2016-2017**

There are three significant areas for development during the year. These are the continued embedding of Mosaic to ensure firstly, that the system can improve on practice by embedding the adoption footprint onto children's records and secondly that the system can be relied upon to populate both Ofsted and statutory returns. The second areas for improvement is the embedding of permanence across wider children's services and thirdly is the need to move forward on the adoption reform agenda, most notably the establishment of Regional Adoption Agencies.

**Mosaic-** Audit activity will continue to monitor the 'adoption' footprint onto children's records. This should include clear evidence of family finding activity, direct work undertaken and life story work. Whilst mosaic is supporting the service with regard to some data requests, there is still a significant gap with regard to statutory reporting which has led to some errors in reporting. This is a critical aspect of service improvement and one which must take priority for the coming year.

**Embedding permanence-** There is an identified need within Walsall to ensure that every child who is looked after has their permanence plan identified and implemented as soon as possible. This does not only extend to those children requiring adoption, it also extends to children who need the security of an alternative permanence order such as Special

Guardianship Orders. The priority for this year will be to improve on key adoption indicators but in doing so ensure that family finding plans are robust and timely and where extra time is needed to identify an adoptive family that this is given full consideration. It will also be to track and monitor all other permanence plans so that a timely discharge through alternative orders can be secured. This will be supported through the activity of a co-ordinator for permanence.

**Adoption reform-** the intense focus on adoption reform is likely to continue, the service must therefore remain flexible to accommodate change. The service must also further embed Fostering for Adoption and to continue to consult with adopters and adoptees to influence future service delivery. The focus for next year will be the formation of 'Adoption @ Heart', the Regional Adoption Agency for the region.

## **Conclusions**

The government's determination to improve adoption services continues to have an impact on the Local Authority. There is an expectation on all adoption agencies that delay will be minimised, more adopters will be recruited and more children from the care system will be placed in new families. Within this context it is to be noted that the figures for this period show that there has been a decrease and an increase, in comparison to the previous year reported period, in the number of children placed for adoption and the number of children for whom adoption is the decided plan. The Local Authority has always shown a commitment to the improvement of its adoption service so as to meet the enduring demands for new families for children who cannot return to their birth families.

The success for the service this year has been the increase in the use of internal provision which means that more Walsall children have been placed with approved Walsall families and the significant increase in the number of children being presented for an adoption decision, which is clear evidence of the councils commitment to considering adoption for a wider and diverse range of children.

There have been significant changes to the overall delivery of adoption services in response to the intense government scrutiny of local authority performance. This has meant significant growth in the service to accommodate family finding for permanence and support to special guardians, it has also seen the beginnings of 'Regional Adoption Agencies'. This government scrutiny will most likely continue for the foreseeable future, as the Government continues to push local authorities to improve their adoption performance. Walsall continues to remain flexible in its approach to adoption reform, there are likely to more changes ahead which will affect practice across children's services.

Service development for the year ahead will focus on three critical areas, each of these will require significant input from everyone involved in the delivery of adoption practice, including adopters and children and young people. The service is confident that with the continued investment and focus on adoption activity that there will continue to be improvements in all areas of adoption practice, these will not only reflect positively on our adoption scorecard but more importantly on the individual outcomes for our Looked after Children.

Linda Franks Professional Panel Advisor  
July 2016