

REPORT for: Corporate Advisory Parenting Committee: 4 July 2017
Item number:
Title: Adoption Report



Report Authorised by: Jon Abbey, Director of Children's Service

Lead Officer: Sarah Alexander, Assistant Director, Children's Social Care and Lead Practitioner

Ward(s) affected: ALL

Report for Key/

Non Key Decision: Non-Key

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report seeks to brief Committee Members on the business and service delivery activities within the council's Adoption Agency during 2016/17 period. The report provides performance data on the service, reports on the activity and functioning of panel, and details service developments that have occurred during the year and future plans proposed for 2017/18. In addition, this report incorporates information and data for Supervision Orders for the same period
- 1.2 The London Borough of Haringey Adoption Agency operates within the regulatory framework of the National Minimum Standards 2014; Adoption & Children Act 2002 and associated regulations, the Children Act 1989 & 2004. The Service also adheres to the Adoption Statutory Guidance and National Minimum Standards 2014 with scope to update Corporate Parenting Panel on progress/developments concerning the Adoption Agency.
- 1.3 Prior to September 2013, Adoption Agencies were inspected separately by Ofsted. However, since then adoption work is now incorporated into the Single Inspection Framework (SIF) which includes a graded judgement on adoption.
- 1.4 During the last inspection, held in 2011, the service received a satisfactory rating.
- 1.5 In May 2014 Ofsted undertook a further inspection of children's services under the Single Inspection Framework resulting in services being graded a Requires Improvement rating for all aspects of service delivery including adoption. Haringey are expecting an inspection notice in early 2018 as part of the new Ofsted inspection regime.

Recommendations

That Committee notes the content of the report.

2. National Agenda and Developments

- 2.1 During the last 12 months, the Government has continued to retain a focus on adoption following proposals for establishing new regional adoption agencies (RAAs) to improve life chances for children, improve adopter recruitment and adoption support, speed up matching and achieve cost efficiencies. In its policy paper, Adoption: A Vision for Change (March 2016), the DfE indicated that to ensure long term, sustainable success, the adoption system must operate at the right scale and to facilitate this it must ensure that all local authorities will become part of an RAA by 2020. Despite ministerial changes and changes in Government, the DfE has reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring policy brings about greater integration, shared functions, efficiencies and sharing of best practice.
- 2.2 In response, the Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS) submitted a high level London proposition paper that was subsequently approved by DfE resulting in formal establishment of the London Regionalisation Steering Group (LRSG).. The group includes representatives from London boroughs and Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) who have formally signed up to scope and develop a pan London offer providing new families and post permanency support for children who cannot be bought up by their biological parents.
- 2.3 A paper was submitted to Cabinet on 13th December 2016 setting out full details concerning plans and developments for the proposed London Regional Adoption Agency (LRAA). Committee approval was given for Haringey to continue working collaboratively with the LRSG with the intention of joining the new London Regional Adoption Agency when it becomes operational. However, with such a large-scale undertaking delays have resulted in an uncertain start date for the London RAA and no plans are currently in place for the transfer of staff and duties.
- 2.4 Following Cabinet's endorsement of plans for establishing the LRAA, management will continue to engage with unions and staff members via regular updates outlining future activities and work streams linked to the LRAA action plan.

3. Haringey Adoption Agency Performance - Adoption Scorecard

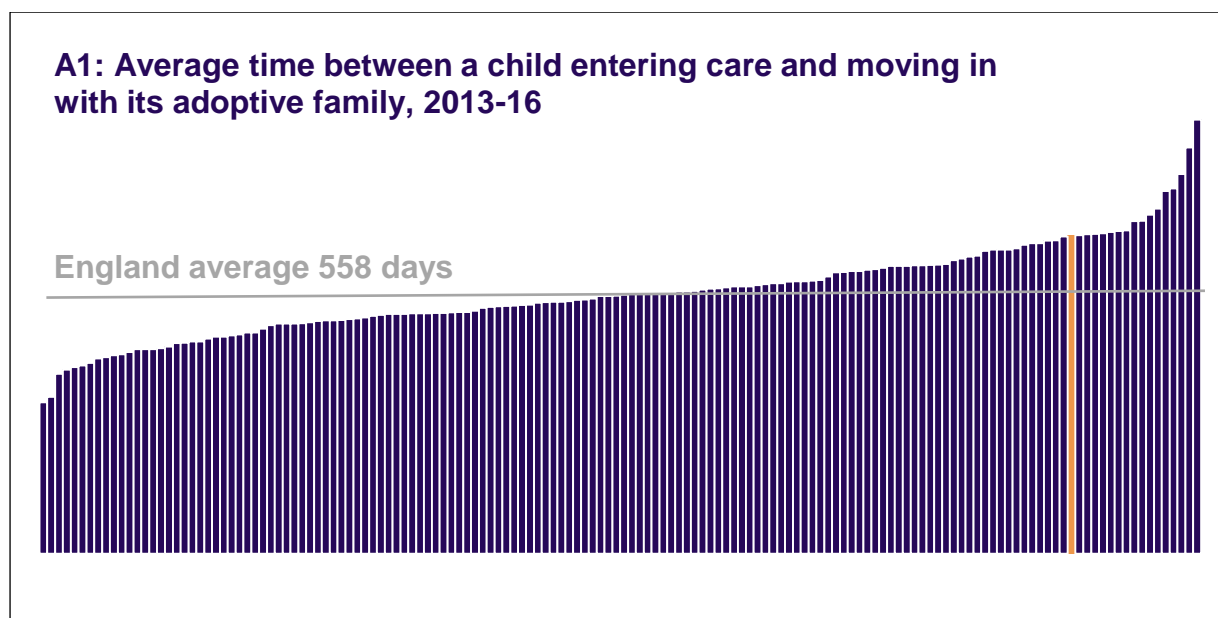
- 3.1 The Adoption scorecard was first published in November 2011 introducing a number of key indicators to measure local authority performance in relation to achieving permanence for looked after children; these are measured over a 3 year average. Key benchmark indicators include the following:
- A1: the average time it takes for a child who goes on to be adopted from entering care to moving in with his or her adoptive family;
 - A2: The average time between local authorities obtaining a placement order for a child and matching that child with a prospective parent;
 - The Adoption Scorecard for 15/16 was released by the DfE in June 2017; Haringey's performance is as follows:
- 3.2 The Adoption scorecard was first published in November 2011 introducing a number of key indicators to measure local authority performance in relation to

achieving permanence for looked after children; these are measured over a three year average. Key benchmark indicators include the following:

- A1: the average time it takes for a child who goes on to be adopted from entering care to moving in with his or her adoptive family;
- A2: The average time between local authorities obtaining a placement order for a child and matching that child with a prospective parent;
- A3: The percentage of children who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family.

3.3 The draft Adoption Scorecard for Haringey was released by the DfE in March 2017; Haringey's performance is as follows:

- On A1: The average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted in Haringey was 683 days compared to a national position of 558 days. This is a gap of 257 days between performance and the national threshold of 426 days.
- The table below shows the average days for Haringey and nationally over the last three years. The average days in the year to March 2016 making it longer than in the year to March 2015 but the three year trend is improving i.e. the average days in the period 2013-2016 are shorter than in the period 2012-2015. Haringey ranks 132nd in the country on this indicator.
- The graph below shows Haringey's comparative position on the 3 year rolling measure but only includes up to 2015/16 so does not illustrate any recent improvement on timeliness of adoption.



3.4 The adoption scorecards were due to be published in April 2017 but were delayed owing to Purdah guidelines; we have not yet been advised of a new timeline for the publication. When the scorecards are published we will have access to latest statistical neighbour comparison. In the meantime, we can compare our

performance on this measure with the previous published figures for our statistical neighbours. Haringey's figure on indicator A1 for the period 2013-2015 was 691 days, this compares with an average of 696 days for our statistical neighbours so we are not out of line.

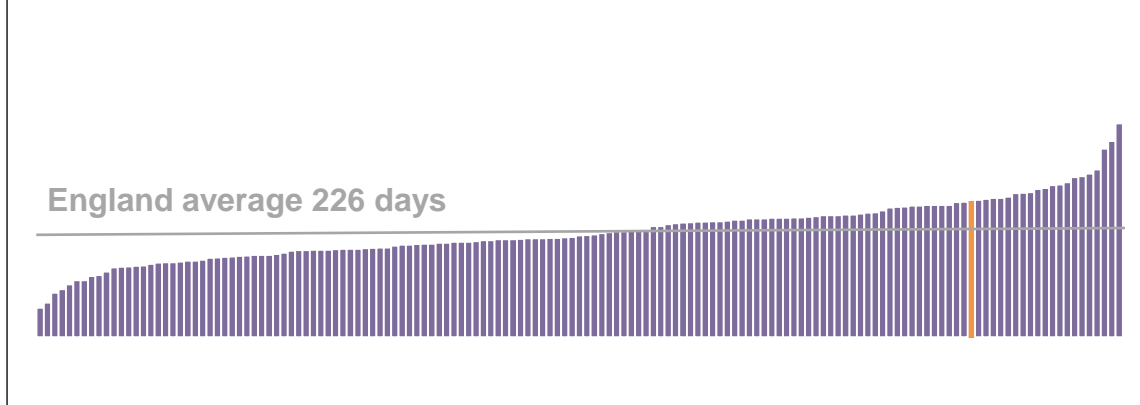
- 3.5 Our provisional 2016/17 figure of 560 days compares favourably with statistical neighbours and whilst we still have not achieved the government threshold, the data shows an improving trajectory. This will mean that when the next Adoption Scorecard covering the period 2014 to 2017 is published our estimated three year rolling average figure will reduce to 603 days and we'll be showing improvement on both the one year and three year trends.

LA Code	LA Name	Indicator value for the 3 year average in 2014, 2015 and 2016 (days)	Indicator value for the 3 year average in 2013, 2014 and 2015 (days)	Indicator value for the 3 year average in 2012, 2013 and 2014 (days)	Indicator value for the 3 year average in 2011, 2012 and 2013 (days)
970	ENGLAND	558	593	628	647
309	Haringey	683	691	731	725

- 3.6 On A2: The average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family has been increasing and Haringey's three-year average is 287 days compared with a national position of 226 days. There is a 166-day gap between Haringey's performance and the national threshold of 121 days and this gap between our performance and the national threshold has been widening. The table below shows the figures over the last three years. The average time in 2013-16 was longer than in 2012-15 so the trend on this measure is going in the wrong direction. Nationally, Haringey ranks 127th on this indicator. Our comparative position can be seen on the graph below. Haringey is shown as the orange line.

LA Code	LA Name	Indicator value for the 3 year average in 2014, 2015 and 2016 (days)	Indicator value for the 3 year average in 2013, 2014 and 2015 (days)	Indicator value for the 3 year average in 2012, 2013 and 2014 (days)	Indicator value for the 3 year average in 2011, 2012 and 2013 (days)
970	ENGLAND	226	223	216	210
309	Haringey	287	260	248	227

A2: Average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family, 2013-16



3.7 On A3: In the rolling 3-year period 2013-2016 37% of children waited less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive families in Haringey, compared with 47% in England. The latest data covering the first six months of 2016/17 shows that this position has worsened in Haringey (although based on only five adoptions) compared to the national trend which is showing improvement.

Adoption Scorecard: Latest quarterly data (April to September 2016)	
Children who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family in Q1 & Q2 2016-17 (number)	Children who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family in Q1 & Q2 2016-17 (%)
4930	59
5	25

3.8 The associated performance tables show the trend in adoptions over the past five years with comparison to the England position. Our rank nationally on this measure is 109th in the country.

LA Code	LA Name	Indicator value for the 3 year average in 2014, 2015 and 2016 (%)	Percentage of looked after children adopted during the year					Number of looked after children adopted during the year				
			2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
970	ENGLAND	16	13	14	17	17	15	3,470	4,010	5,050	5,360	4690
309	Haringey	12	5	6	15	10	11	15	15	40	25	25

3.9 Special Guardianship Orders are also a form of permanency. Haringey has had more success with these legal orders and is in line with the national position over a three-year period despite the numbers declining in 2016. Our rank nationally on this measure is 77th.

LA Code	LA Name	Indicator value for the 3 year average in 2014, 2015 and 2016 (%)	Percentage of looked after children who ceased to be looked after because of a special guardianship order during the year					Number of looked after children who ceased to be looked after because of a special guardianship order during the year				
			2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
970	ENGLAND	11	8	10	11	11	12	2,150	2,770	3,360	3,550	3,830
309	Haringey	11	4	13	10	14	8	15	30	25	35	20

3.10 Other data that is published on the adoption scorecard that may be of interest is:

- Children for whom the permanence decision has changed away from adoption during 2013-16. Haringey had 20 children or 14% in the 3-year period, in line with the national proportion of 14%.
- Following the Prime Minister's announcement in November 2015 of plans to increase the number of children in fostering for adoption placements, a new indicator has been included in adoption scorecards; Number of children in a Fostering for Adoption / Concurrent Planning foster placement (as at 31 March 2016)- Haringey's number was so small it could not be published but compares with 320 in England.
- Adoptions of children from ethnic minority backgrounds during 2013-16. Haringey had 45 adoptions (10%) of BME children leaving care who were adopted, slightly higher than the national position of 9%.
- Adoptions of children aged five or over during 2013-16. Haringey had 20 children (4%) aged 5 or over leaving care who were adopted in the period, close to the national position of 5%.

3.11 A further update on the latest number of adoptions and special guardianship orders in 2017/18 has been included in the performance report which is also being presented to the meeting on 4 July 2017.

3.12 Numbers placed and numbers of those who are waiting

3.13 The number of children placed for adoption by Haringey, in 2016/17 was 11 - a decrease of thirteen from the 2015/16 figure of 24. The decline in the number of adoptions is also a trend featured within the North London Consortium boroughs with the exception of Hackney. The reason suggested is the national decline in the number of children available for adoption. This decline was evidenced in the March 2016 statistical release by the Department of Education. This was particularly the case in the 1 to 4-year-old age group, which covers 72% of all adopted children in 2016.

Borough	Barnet	Camden	Enfield	Haringey	Islington	Hackney	Total
Children Adopted	8 (12)	8 (7)	10 (15)	11 (24)	14 (8)	19 (16)	70 (82)

3.14 Number of children awaiting a match and what activity is being undertaken

Table 2 highlights the current number of children waiting to be matched in Haringey a total of 17 children with Placement Orders.

- 3.15 There is a similar number of approved adopters in 2016/17 at six, compared to 2015/16. This mismatch of a greater number of children with placement orders than adopters is because the children are older, from sibling groups, or have special needs, which do not match the identified needs of the approved adopters.

	Barnet	Camden	Enfield	Hackney	Haringey	Islington	Total
Children	5 (0)	0 (0)	4 (6)	5 (2)	17 (1)	8 (1)	39(10)
Adopters	4 (11)	3 (4)	5 (3)	4 (3)	6 (6)	5 (3)	27(30)

3.16 Numbers of adopters assessed and waiting for a placement

- The numbers of new approved adopters in Haringey has reduced from 11 to six in 2016/17 an explanation for this reduction is likely to be due to changes in the court judgements such a Re B and the success of placement initiatives.
- Re B.S and subsequent cases 2014/2015 (15 listed), contested hearings has had a huge impact on prospective adopters; rising fears of uncertainty which is evidenced in decreased number of expressions of interest.
- Adopters' limitation has been a focal point in respect of recruitment. This is to ensure that prospective adopters are fully informed of the complex needs of the children we have waiting and how these will be met in an adoptive placement.
- The reduction in children with a plan of adoption and the specialist nature of their needs such as complex attachment issues or long-term health needs has meant that recruitment has had to become much more selective to be able to match the needs of the children waiting. This has resulting in reduced numbers of adopters approved.
- Alongside this, there has been a significant drop in the number of enquires (39 compared to 52). Staff have risen to the challenge to recruit adopters from a smaller pool and for more complex children and increased the number of information sessions.

Borough	Barnet	Camden	Enfield	Haringey	Islington	Hackney	Total
Adoption Enquiries	87 (138)	141 (175)	65 (268)	39 (52)	199 (227)	81 (142)	612 (1,002)
Information Sessions	12 (5)	3 (4)	12 (4)	12 (5)	4 (4)	5 (4)	48 (26)
Adopters Approved	4 (9)	4 (2)	2 (8)	6 (11)	8 (3)	7 (8)	31 (41)

Table 3: NLAFC Adoption Recruitment 2016/2017 (2015/16 in brackets)

4. Service Structure and Service Delivery Arrangements

4.1 Team Structure & Remit

The Service has gone through some personnel changes in the last few months resulting in a new management arrangement and team members.

The establishment is as follows:

- one service manager shared with fostering
- one Team Manager
- six social workers.

4.2 The Service is responsible for operational practice/delivery in the following key areas:

- Recruitment, assessment and approval of applicants seeking to become approved adopters.
- Supporting adopters post approval in respect of matching.
- Family-finding leading to linking and matching of children with adoptive parents/families. Monthly consortium meetings to share profiles across the six authorities and fortnightly in-house tracking meetings.
- Supporting adopters, special guardians and their families to create placement stability and achieving good outcomes for children.
- The Adoption Panel, a regulatory requirement where Panel considers and makes recommendations around the suitability of prospective applicants and on the matching of children requiring adoption with approved adopters. The Panel is chaired by a skilled and experienced independent social care professional.
- Agency Decision Maker (ADM) – the Assistant Director for Social Care performs the role of ADM for the Adoption Service. The ADM considers and makes decisions on whether or not children should be placed for adoption. Also, following panel recommendation, the ADM has final approval on the suitability of any matches between a child and approved adopter(s).

4.3 Haringey is a member of the Adoption North London Consortium, a partnership of six local adoption agencies: Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey and Islington. The Consortium offers joint working arrangements to carry out recruitment of adopters, information and preparation sessions and support groups for adopter.

5. Recruitment Activity Undertaken

5.1 The local authority carries out a number of different marketing strategies in order to identify prospective adopters and share the profiles of all children requiring adoption.

During the course of the year the Adoption team has undertaken the following activities:

- advertising on the North London Consortium website;
- attending Consortium meetings where children profiles and prospective adopter's information are shared to spread the possibility of matching;
- publishing children's profiles on secure and established adoption websites such as Link Maker and the National Adoption Register (Adoption Match);
- attending National Consortium Exchange meetings;
- for hard to place children using specific media such as education magazines, mail shots to all local authorities, Nursing Times, Voice newspaper and BME exchange events;
- all children's profiles are supported with a professional DVD video and photographs.

5.2 In May 2017 Haringey hosted an all-day event inviting approved prospective adopters from within the consortium. This event was intended to raise awareness of the needs of children who are adopted and give prospective adopters information about the children requiring adoption in Haringey.

5.3 In May 2017, Haringey hosted a workshop for approved adopters who are currently waiting. The day was broken up into two parts. The morning looked at why adopters are waiting, explored their limitations and exercises for the adopters to think about the needs of children currently waiting. The afternoon was focused on all the profiles of children waiting. This event was extended to the North London consortium and also South London consortium and two adopters from Lambeth attended. Ten households attended and we have made two potential links. The aim is to deliver this workshop on a bi-monthly basis and continue to work alongside the North and South consortiums.

5.3 The publications of children's profiles on the Link Maker website has proved to be very successful as we have had a significantly higher response rate and anticipate further matches coming to fruition throughout the course of this year.

6. Complaints and requests for post adoption support by Adopters in 2016/17

- 6.1 There were four formal complaints by adopters in the year 2016/17 which were resolved.
- 6.2 In the same period there were 76 requests for adoption support from adopters and 42 of these requesters resulted in assessments. These requests impact on the team's capacity throughout the year by increasing case loads. Requests are generally for additional support for therapy, financial support when an adopter's circumstances or child's needs change.

7. Future Plans

- 7.1 Adoption continues to be a challenging area in both practice and development. The strategic push and scrutiny imposed by the government alongside the courts view that adoption should be the last resort for a child's permanency arrangement has resulted in fewer children available for adoption and a mismatch between the number of adopters and children. Those children who do have plans for adoption often have complex needs and behaviours making them less desirable to prospective adopters which causes a delay as seen by the reduction in the numbers of adoptions and the number of days it takes to achieve adoption placements. However, the team continue to work towards achieving permanent arrangements for children who are referred, at the earliest opportunity.
- 7.2 Over the next six to twelve months the service will focus on the following actions to improve the service and its responsiveness:
- prepare for any upcoming Ofsted Inspection:
 - refresh and implement the adoption marketing & recruitment plan for 2017/18 in conjunction with North London Fostering & Adoption Consortia:
 - recruit new members of the Adoption panel and have a adoption and fostering combined panel:
 - continue ongoing learning & development work in embedding resilience model approach and signs of safety:
 - ensure practice surrounding permanency planning provides positive options for children with plans for adoption including foster to adopt: and
 - engage and contribute towards preparation and design work linked to London Regionalisation Project.