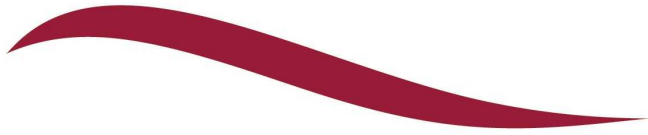


# Wolverhampton

## City Council



## **ADOPTION AGENCY INTERIM REPORT**

### **APRIL 2014 – JANUARY 2015**

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## **Introduction**

This is an interim report detailing the work of Wolverhampton City Council Adoption Service between April 2014 and January 2015.

## **Panel Business**

Approval of Prospective adopters	Links of children with prospective adopters
23 (30)	47 (49)

## **Adopter approval**

There have been 23 approvals of prospective adopters so far in this reporting period. It is expected that a further ten adopters will be approved by April 2015. This will represent a small increase in the approval of prospective adopters.

ABC (adoption in the Black Country) continues to experience a growth in numbers of enquiries and subsequent referrals. The implementation of the two stage process has however posed some threats with regards to progressing enquires in a timely manner. Statutory checks are now conducted in stage one. There have been lengthy delays in receiving some of the checks; DBS's have taken up to four months to be processed. The escalation procedures have been used but this has not resulted in DBS's being completed speedily. The delay in stage one has resulted in lower numbers of prospective adopters being approved than was anticipated.

There are currently 13 families waiting to be linked. Of the 13 families six links are being progressed with children from Wolverhampton who have plans of adoption.

One family is being linked with a child from another local authority.

There are four Asian families currently waiting. This year no children of Asian or Asian dual heritage background have become subject to a plan of adoption in Wolverhampton. This compares to eight in the previous year. As a result these families have waited longer than anticipated for a link. Family finding has been active on their behalf and they have been advised to attend national exchange days. They have also been featured on Adoption Links which is a national adoption data base. The National Adoption Register is not currently in use as the website is being updated to enable adopters to use the data base themselves.

Two families have asked to be placed on hold and active family finding is taking place on behalf of the other prospective adopter as we do not currently have any children who fit his matching criteria.

The continued increase in the assessment and approval of prospective adopters has been supported by the adoption reform grant.

## **Links of children with prospective adopters**

During the last reporting period April 2013 to March 2014, 49 children were linked with prospective adopters. This year panel have already recommended 47 links. Families have been identified for a further 23 children.

25 of the 47 children linked at panel were part of a sibling group.

When considering the ethnicity of the children Linked, 11 of the 47 children were of BME (black and minority ethnic) background. This equates to 23% of children linked. This is significantly above the England average of 8%.

Of the 47 children linked 19 were over three, with six of these being boys over the age of five.

22 of the 47 children were placed within four months of a placement order which equated to 46%. Nine others were placed within 12 months of a placement order. The majority of children who waited more than four months were part of a sibling group, in five cases the children had complex health needs and in one case the child had received therapeutic support from CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health services) for a significant period of time which prevented the case being progressed.

80% of children who have become subject to a placement order in this reporting year have been linked within four months.

This year the adoption service has experienced even more success with placing both sibling groups and older children. This may be a result of both the national media coverage of adoption and localised targeted recruitment for adopters of sibling groups and older children.

The adoption service has therefore been able to place almost all of the children for whom adoption was deemed to remain appropriate and had been waiting 12 months or more in this reporting period. Of the children currently waiting, only nine have been waiting for more than five months. Six are part of two sibling groups and have plans to be placed for adoption with their current foster carers. Placements have been identified for two others.

The A2 indicator measures 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. The current target is five months but this will reduce to 4 months next year.

It is therefore anticipated that the adoption service will enter 2015-2016 in a good position to meet the national target for the A2 indicator.

This has partly been achieved through the extra resources provided to the family finding unit in the form of two social workers.

Of the children placed 14 children were placed with adopters approved by Wolverhampton, three children were placed with adopters approved by an ABC authority, the remainder were placed with adopters approved by other local authorities or voluntary agencies.

## **Children's decisions**

In the last reporting year 85 children were considered as children who should be placed for adoption. In 14 cases placement orders were not subsequently made by the courts. In this reporting period 46 children have had plans of adoption agreed; of these five have not been granted placement orders.

National statistics state that there has been just over a 50% decrease in the making of placement orders nationally. It is largely agreed that this is a result of a key adoption judgment Re B&S. Other judgements have since been made by Judge Munby (President of the Family Division of the High Court of England and Wales) in which the legal test for adoption is explained and the point made, that the threshold for a placement order has not changed.

Of the 46 children 38 children were White British. Three were Black British Caribbean. Two were dual heritage, White British Black Caribbean. Three were White British Other.

This equates to 17% of children with a plan of adoption being from BME backgrounds. The annual adoption report 2013-2014 reported a marked change with regards to the amount of BME children becoming subject to a plan of adoption in Wolverhampton. This figure had moved from 14% in 2011 to 32% in 2012 to 59% in 2013.

Of the 46 children 20 were female and 26 male.

33 children were 0-2

11 children were 3-5

2 were 6 plus years of age.

This equates to a 10% increase of 0-2 year olds when compared with 2013-2014. 23 of these children were under one.

The adoption service has placed more children for adoption and in this reporting year has significantly improved timeliness.

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