

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE

29 April 2013

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - CHILDREN

ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

1. Purpose of Report.

- 1.1 The Adoption Agencies (Wales) Regulations 2007 set out the requirement for an annual review of the Adoption Service. The attached report fulfils this requirement and the request from the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee in 2012 to provide such a report to the Committee for consideration.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority

- 2.1 Looked After Children are a key responsibility for the Council as corporate parents and, as such, are included within the following community strategy themes:
- Raising aspirations and driving up educational achievement,
 - Supporting children and families by helping them to deal with their problems as early as possible,
 - Encouraging healthy lifestyles to reduce health inequalities.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Adoption Service provides a range of services and interventions across five key domains to those affected by adoption. The domains are:
- assessing and supporting prospective adopters;
 - assessing non-agency adoption (also known as step parent adoptions);
 - birth record counselling and intermediary services (BRC&IS);
 - adoption support (assessments and support to anyone affected by adoption);
 - twin tracking and family finding, which involves working with birth families of children in or following care proceedings and once a Placement Order has been granted by court, searching for an adoptive placement.

3.2 The Adoption Service was created as a distinct service, separate from Fostering, in 2006 and has since that time strengthened not only its identity but also performance.

4. Current Situation

4.1 In 2012/13, the Adoption Service Manager set local performance indicators (PIs), in the absence of any national PIs. The targets reflected the number of LAC at the time and the trend in Wales to place approximately 4%-4.5% of LAC in adoptive placements. The targets also reflected the national shortage of adopters and provided an aspirational target for approval of adopters. In summary, the targets have been surpassed this year as in previous years. The targets are not overly simple or artificially low but are realistic yet challenging. Achieving the targets has involved prioritizing the placement of children for adoption and approving adopters over other aspects of the service. This has created some backlogs and waiting lists, particularly in terms of BRC & IS.

4.2 The targets, achievements and performance of the Adoption Service are set out in the attached Regulation 22 Report but in summary have been presented in table 1.

	Target Set	Number Achieved
Number of Children Placed for adoption	14	21
Number of Adoption Orders granted	14	17
Number of adopters approved	16	22

Table 1: Summary of targets and achievements in 2012/13

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules.

5.1 There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 This report is concerned with performance information rather than policy or decision making. Each individual and family, across all five domains of the service are identified on an individual basis. Hence, an equality impact assessment is not applicable.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 The increase in the number of looked after children each year, which continues to be the position nationally, results in greater pressures on the Adoption Service. Approximately 20% more children were referred in 2012/13 thus increasing the number of adoptive placements needed. Whilst every effort is made to find placements that are suitable for the child, careful consideration is also given to the financial implications of placements. For each child placed, a nationally agreed fee is required for the placement. However, the same is true in terms of adopters approved. For each placement used by another Adoption Agency, a fee is paid to Bridgend County Borough Council. Therefore, no increase or decrease in the Adoption Service Budget is proposed.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Committee notes this Review of the Adoption Agency and its ability to meet the needs of those affected by adoption within the County Borough Council.

Hilary Anthony
Corporate Director Children
8 April 2013

Contact Officer: Colin Turner, Head of Safeguarding & Family Support

Telephone: 01656 642319

E-mail: colin.turner@bridgend.gov.uk

Postal Address Children's Directorate
Safeguarding & Family Support Services
Sunnyside Offices
Sunnyside
Bridgend
CF31 4AR

Background documents

Regulation 22 Report into the Adoption Agency.