

**Report to OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE AND
VALUE FOR MONEY SELECT COMMITTEE**

Update on Adoption Performance

Portfolio Holder:

Councillor Amanda Chadderton, Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Officer Contact: Merlin Joseph, Director of Children's Services (Interim)

Report Author: Patsy Burrows, Head of Service - Children Looked After & Care Leavers

Ext. x5068

21 March 2019

Purpose of the Report

This report presents the Adoption Annual Report and an overview of the Adoption Scorecard for 2017 to update the Committee on the performance of the Adoption Service in relation to the Adoption Leadership Board performance indicators, and to provide an update on local, regional and national developments in adoption.

Recommendations

The Committee to note the report.

Adoption Performance

1. Background

- 1.1 Since the government's focus on Adoption Reform and the development of the Adoption Leadership Board Scorecard in 2012, an annual briefing has been presented to the PvFM Committee to provide an overview of Oldham's performance in relation to the Adoption Leadership Board performance indicators, as well as an update for Members on local, regional and national developments in adoption.
- 1.2 In 2015 the Department for Education set out its proposal for adoption services to be delivered via Regional Adoption Agencies in its paper *Regionalising Adoption*. This next step in the Adoption Reform Agenda was aimed at reducing fragmentation in the UK adoption system, thereby speeding up the adoption process for children, improving adopter recruitment and adoption support, and reducing costs. The expectation is that all local authorities will become part of a Regional Adoption Agency.
- 1.3 In line with the Adoption Reform Agenda, Oldham has joined with Bolton, Bury, Blackburn with Darwen, Rochdale and Tameside to develop a Regional Adoption Agency, Adoption NoW, which went live in November 2017. The Annual Adoption Report provides an overview of the progress of Oldham's children through the adoption process, Adopter Recruitment and Adoption Support.

2. National Context

- 2.1 The Department for Education's *National Data for Children Looked After* for the year ending 31 March 2018 reports a national trend of the number of Children Looked After continuing to rise while the number of adoptions from care continues to fall. This has serious implications for adopter sufficiency locally and regionally, with the ratio of approved adopters to children going from 1:1 in June 2017 to 3:1 currently. This has been logged as a risk with the Regional Adoption Agency Board.

3. Oldham's Adoption Performance

- 3.1 The Adoption Scorecard measures performance against a set of indicators over a 3 year period. The Adoption Scorecard for 2018 has not yet been published and as a result, it is not possible to provide up-to-date comparisons with Statistical Neighbours and England averages. Oldham's performance is provided via the Adoption Annual Report at Appendix A and an overview of the Adoption Scorecard for 2017 at Appendix B. Headlines are as follows:

- 35 children were adopted in 2018 compared with 25 children in 2017.
 - The cohort of children adopted includes a high proportion of children considered hard to place due to age, ethnicity, health needs or being part of a sibling group and this will inevitably have an impact on adoption timescales for children.
 - The A1 indicator measures the average time over a 3 year period between a child becoming looked after and moving in with the adoptive family, for children who have been adopted. Oldham's performance improved from 469 days in 2016 to 447 in 2017. The 3 year average to March 2018 further improved to 430 days and was only slightly above the Adoption Leadership Board target of 426 days.
-

-
- The A2 indicator measures the length of time between the local authority obtaining a Placement Order to matching a child with adopters, for children who have been adopted. Oldham's performance improved from 223 days in 2016 to 213 days in 2017. In 2018, performance in relation to the A2 indicator has deteriorated to 265 days. This is 144 days above the Adoption Leadership Board target of 121 days.
 - The Regional Adoption Agency has increased the pool of adopters available to Oldham children.
 - Oldham performed better than the England average for almost all Adoption Leadership Board measures in 2017, and better than our Statistical Neighbours against the indicators which measure adoption timescales.

4. **Links to Corporate Outcomes**

- 4.1 Promoting the opportunities for all Oldham children to grow up in loving and secure homes is central to the Co-operative values of the Council.

5. **Additional Supporting Information**

- 5.1 Appendices provided.

6. **Consultation**

- 6.1 The Adoption Annual Report was produced by the Regional Adoption Agency in consultation with Oldham Council.

7. **Appendices**

- 7.1 Appendix A – Adoption Annual Report
Appendix B – Performance against the Adoption Scorecard 2017
-