

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

3 February 2014

ADOPTION PERFORMANCE SCORECARD

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE SERVICES

1. Purpose

Sunderland has had a long term commitment to promoting adoption for children who cannot grow up within their own birth families. This includes children with a wide range of needs, including older children, larger sibling groups, disabled children and children with significant health needs.

2. Adoption Performance Scorecard

In May 2012 the Department for Education introduced the Adoption Performance Scorecard, with two new indicators which were intended to provide more outcome focused measures for the adoption process.

These 2 indicators focus on:

A1. The “Whole Journey”; from entering care to being placed for adoption

A2. The “Family Finding” process; the time between the Council having the authority to place and the child moving in with the adoptive family.

In 2013 a new indicator; A3, was introduced, to measure the percentage of children who wait for less than 14 months between entering care and being placed for adoption.

The 3 scorecard targets for 2013 -16 are:

- A1: average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted. The target for the 2013 to 2016 average (as measured during the 3 years 2013 to 2016) is 14 months
- 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. The target for the 2013 to 2016 average (as measured during the 3 years 2013 to 2016) is 4 months
- A3: measures the number and percentage of children who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (2013 to 2016)

3. National Picture

- The third set of adoption scorecards, covering financial years 2010 to 2013, were published on 14 January 2014. They demonstrate that, despite the increased focus on adoption timescales, nationally there has been no overall improvement in timeliness since the 2009 to 2012 scorecards were published in May 2012. The thresholds have been up-rated this year and only 36 Councils

met both of the revised thresholds. 65 Councils, including Sunderland, failed to meet both thresholds.

4. Sunderland's overall Adoption Performance

- Sunderland's overall performance in relation to adoption remains strong, with 35 children adopted from care in the year between April 2012 and March 2013. This was below the total for 2011/12 when a record 48 children were adopted from care, but is still above the number adopted in 2009/10 and 2010/11.
- Over the 2013 year period 2010/2013 adoptions accounted for 21% of children leaving care in Sunderland, significantly above the national average of 13%. Over the 3 year period 110 Sunderland children left care through adoption.
- The national average for the proportion of children aged over 5 years who leave care through adoption is 4%; in Sunderland this figure was 11% (40 children) over the 3 years 2010 -13. Across the North East Region Sunderland had the highest percentage of children age 5 and over leaving care through adoption.

5. Adoption Scorecard; Sunderland's position 2010/13

- In 2012 it was recognised that it would take time for Sunderland's adoption timescale performance to be turned round. As the measures span a 3 year period much of the timescale performance currently being reported upon relates to practice prior to 2010.
- In the Corporate Parenting Annual Report presented to Scrutiny Committee in September 2013 it was recognised that, from the data available at that time, the length of Family Finding in 2012 -13 was longer than in previous years, which would lead to the 3 years average moving further from the national threshold. It was also recognised that although the 3-year average for the "Whole Journey" was expected to improve for 2012/13 performance, it would still be above the threshold.

6. The Whole Journey - Average time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (days)

- The "Whole Journey" to Adoption reduced to 660 days during the year April 2012 to March 2013. Although this was an improvement of 26 days on Sunderland's 12 performance, this still remains below the national average. The 3 year performance was 680, an improvement of days on the 2009/12 performance of 695 days in 2009/12 and 738 days in 2008/11, but still 74 days outside the target.

7. Family Finding - 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 (days)

- The time taken for matching a child to an adoptive family after the court granted a Placement Order for the child increased in 2012/13 , which resulted in the overall 2011/13 performance deteriorating to 256 days, 74 days longer than the target.

