



Annual Adoption Report 2018/2019

Introduction

This report provides information about the Adoption Service and outcomes for children looked after by Lincolnshire County Council, from the period April 2018 – March 2019 inclusive. The purpose of the Annual Report is to inform the public, Elected Members, partners and staff of the progress and developments of the Adoption Service during this period.

The County Council's Business Plan outlines the organisational values that reflect the Council's Vision and Purpose, providing a set of consistent, simple values that will guide our attitudes and behaviours. These values define how we do things, and are the principles by which we work together and with our customers and partners, and are underpinned by the following statement:

Our vision

Is working for a better future by

- Building on our strengths
- Protecting your lifestyle, and
- Being ambitious for the future

Our purpose

- Investing in infrastructure and the provision of services
- Commissioning for outcomes based on our communities' needs
- Promoting community wellbeing and resilience
- Influencing, coordinating and supporting other organisations that contribute to the life of Lincolnshire, and
- Making the best use of all of our resources

Our purpose within Regulated Services is to ensure that every child in every part of the county achieves their potential, responding appropriately to the assessed needs of all looked after children and young people, to ensure that their life chances are maximised by their experience of the service. The vision is 'Putting Children First'

National Adoption Agenda

The Government continues to maintain a clear focus on minimising delay for children with a plan for adoption and maximising the potential pool of adopters. April 2014 saw the implementation of the main provisions of the Children and Families Act 2014. Key provisions of the Act relate to reform of the family justice system formally

introducing the 26 week timescale for care proceedings and reforming the use of expert reports, both aimed at reducing delay for children. Consideration of Foster-to-Adopt was promoted in this legislation along with a change in emphasis around contact to ensure that the focus remains on the needs of the child.

A further non-ring fenced Adoption Reform Grant was allocated to local authorities in 2014/15 to continue to support the programmes of change underway in the area of adoption. Lincolnshire was awarded 644,283, which was utilised to improve timescales and support adoption activity through to the end of March 2017.

On the 13th March 2014, the Children and Families Bill received royal assent and became the Children and Families Act 2014 on 22nd April 2014. To reflect the changes, regulations, National Minimum Standards and the statutory guidance for adoption were amended and came into force in July 2014. The changes inherent in the Act have continued to be implemented in Lincolnshire, with the establishment of Foster-to-Adopt placements, a two-stage approval process for adopters, and the development and expansion of support services to adoptive families.

On the 1st May 2015, the new Adoption Support Fund (ASF) was rolled out to all local authorities. The fund offered a fast, simple service for local authorities to apply to, meaning that adoptive families can access the support they need, as and when they need it. To access the fund, adoptive families need to have an assessment of adoption support needs completed by the local authority. Where the assessment identifies that therapeutic services would be beneficial to a family, the local authority can apply to the ASF on the family's behalf, who will then release the funding to the local authority.

In April 2016 the Adoption Support Fund was extended to cover adopted people up to the age of 21, children placed under special guardianship who were previously looked after, and adopted children from outside of the UK. In 2017 the fund was extended to SGO families provide that the child had been 'looked after' prior to the order being made.

In October 2016 there was a £5,000 cap put onto individual applications to the Adoption Support Fund, with an expectation for 'match funding' from local authorities. This was followed by a provision of up to £2,500 for the purpose of assessment of therapeutic need over and above the £5,000. Over the period of this report Lincolnshire has continued to make use of the Adoption Support Fund to support adoptive families, and has developed the adoption support offer considerably.

In June 2015, the government published its proposal for the regionalisation of adoption services. The rationale behind this proposal was outlined as:

"By the end of this Parliament, we want to see all local authorities being part of regional agencies. We want to accelerate the pace of change to ensure those children for whom adoption is the right path, are given the best chance of finding a loving, forever family as quickly as possible. This year, we want to provide up to £4.5M of start-up funding to support early adopters to take forward their proposals."

The government invited local authorities and voluntary organisations to combine their resources and submit an expression of interest to become early adopters of regionalisation.

In response to the proposal, The East Midlands Adoption Consortium submitted, and was successful, in its bid for government granted development funding to progress plans for an adoption agency, which would bring together five local authorities, three unitary authorities, and three voluntary agencies into a new regional adoption agency across the East Midlands area. Lincolnshire is a member of the Consortium and is supporting the development of the project. Over the period 2018/19 Lincolnshire has continued to be involved in planning for the region, which has now evolved with Nottingham city, Nottinghamshire, Derby city and Derbyshire operating a 'pilot' regional agency, and Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland working cooperatively together with a now established regional family finding group and plans in place to coordinate the work processes across the region.

In July 2015 the government published the amended aspects of the 2005 Adoption Regulations and accompanying statutory guidance as well as specific aspects of the National Minimum Standards for Adoption. This followed the consultation earlier in the year "Getting it Right: Making it Work" which sought to align the regulations and guidance with part one of the Children and Families Act. The changes reflected the broad scope of the Act in relation to adoption and included:

- A duty to consider placing the child with local authority foster carers who are also approved prospective adopters.
- Where it is considering adoption for siblings, to assess whether the siblings should be placed together or separately, taking into consideration the interests of each child.
- Amending the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 to make clear that, when considering whether contact between a child in care and their birth family (and certain others) is consistent with safeguarding and promoting the child's welfare, the local authority must have regard to the child's care plan.
- A duty on local authorities to inform prospective adopters and adoptive parents of their adoption support entitlements and other prescribed information.

The new regulations also put the Adoption and Children Act Register onto a statutory footing and allowed the Department for Education to pilot adopter led matching.

In July 2015, the Department for Education was allocated £30M to reimburse local authorities for the cost of using the Inter-Agency fee to place hard-to-place children between July 2015 and the end of July 2016. The intention of the Inter-Agency Funding Scheme was to remove any potential barriers to successful adoptions and ensure that as many children as possible found the right, loving parents to support them as they grow and prosper. The scheme covered the costs of inter-agency fees for harder-to-place children. During the period of this report, Lincolnshire's Adoption Service has recovered the cost of three inter-agency fees. There was a change to the inter-agency fees, which was brought in on the 1st November 2016, that the fee

would be payable only for children who had waited more than 18 months from the date of coming into care to the date of adoptive placement. Over the period of this report there were no children who met the new criteria for a claim, as it is rare for any Lincolnshire child to be in care for more than 18 months before being placed for adoption. The inter agency fee ceased in 2017.

Following the decline in the number of decisions for adoption made by the courts and councils, the government on the 14th January 2016 announced that it will seek to change legislation as soon as possible to prioritise the placement of vulnerable children with a loving family where adoption is in the best interest of the child. For the first time ever the law will explicitly state that councils and courts must prioritise the quality of care the child will need to recover from abuse and neglect. Where appropriate, children will be placed as quickly as possible with the person best able to care for them until their 18th birthday, rather than with carers who can't provide the support they need over the long term.

Over the course of 2016, staff members within Adoption Support worked alongside education staff in order to assist schools in developing awareness of the needs of adopted children, and in the autumn of 2016 East Midlands Adoption Support was launched. The funding for this was time limited so the project came to an end in the summer of 2017, but the service had managed to assist many adoptive carers to access and use pupil premium, and had provided a range of support to adoptive and SGO families over the time they were active.

In April 2017, the Pupil Premium was increased again in value and since that date all school aged children adopted from care now benefit from the additional Pupil Premium monies, and the scheme was extended to include children subject to Special guardianship orders provided they were 'looked after' prior to being SGO.

Developing the workforce to ensure all social workers have the skills and knowledge to make swift and robust decisions about the best placements for children that meet their short and long term needs, was seen as a priority, and in Lincolnshire the adoption staff have all been involved in the Signs of Safety framework in order to support their work.

The government also announced plans to change regulations so councils have to carry out more thorough assessments of 'Special Guardians' to make sure children are in the right home, and with the right relatives, rather than distant family members they have never met.

There remains a clear alignment of the local, regional and national agenda which is encapsulated in Lincolnshire County Council's vision "*that every child in every part of the county should achieve their potential*". To achieve this, the work of the Adoption Service is delivered according to the principles that the Council adheres to, specifically:

- Early Intervention and Prevention
- Safeguarding
- Aspiration and Well-being
- Learning and achievement
- Best use of Resources

In addition to the above principles, four strategic outcomes for children have been agreed by Children's Services.

- Children and young people are Healthy and Safe
- Develop to their full potential in their early years and are ready for school
- Learn and Achieve
- Children and young people are ready for Adult life.

The report details how the activity of the Adoption Service fits within the framework of the above principles.

Progress on Development Goals identified in 2017/18 Annual Report

Early Intervention and Prevention

The use of the Signs of Safety model has been further embedded into practice, with most of the staff having completed training. The supervising SW's are using 'mapping' as an effective tool in the initial assessment of prospective adopters. The children's workers have developed their skills in using 'words and pictures' to enhance children's understanding of their situation and the plan for adoption and 'groups supervision.' and 'problem solving circles' have become part of the day to day work.

There was continued improvement on the adoption scorecard performance against key threshold measures and in quarter three the government target of 121 days was almost achieved with Lincolnshire showing at 123 days. We continue to perform well in this area, which means that wherever possible Lincolnshire children are placed with their adoptive family as quickly as possible.

There has been an increase in the number of families who we have been able to help through the Adoption Support Fund, and have increased the training to adopters to enable them to parent therapeutically with the introduction of a new 'transitions' course open to both adopters and foster carers, which has been designed to improve the transitions for children from foster care to adoptive families, using a therapeutic model.

Adoption Scorecard

The most relevant indicators refer to the years ending 31st March 2016, 31st March 2017 and 31st March 2018

There are 3 main indicators pertinent to adoption performance:

- (A1) Average time between entering care and being placed for adoption, this has decreased to 372 days with the all England average having decreased to 486 days and statistical neighbour average of 466 days. Lower is better.
- (A2) Average time between gaining authority to place and achieving a match is 141 days, significantly lower than the all England average of 201 and the statistical neighbour average of 203. Lower is better.
- (A3) The percentage of children who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family is 74% in Lincolnshire, slightly down on last year but still well above the all England average of 56%.
- Adoptions as a percentage of children leaving care remain strong at 12%.

For the single year 2018/19, performance for Lincolnshire (A1) as at 31st March 19 is 344 days, with (A2) reducing to 141 days.

These remain to be strong figures compared to both statistical neighbours and the national average, and the challenge going forward will be to remain 'on target' as this will be difficult to maintain. There continues to be a small cohort of children whose timescales will fall out of the target and this is due to them being difficult to place or applications from parents for leave of the court to appeal Placement Orders which has been a cause for delay. This year has seen a similar number of children with a plan of adoption, from 45 to 42, which indicates that the trend for high numbers of

children placed on Special Guardianship Orders, have levelled out , as has the number of children coming into care following a marked increase last year. The number of adoption orders granted this year has gone up from only 28 in 2018 to 41 for 2019 , which takes the figures back to the average number for Lincolnshire.

Regionalisation Agenda

RAA's will need to be fully operational by 2020 at the latest, and each region was expected to have demonstrated significant progress by 2017. The East Midlands was one of 19 areas that were given funding to progress scoping work around an East Midlands RAA. The initial expression of interest submitted to the DfE was on behalf of eight local authorities (Lincolnshire, Derby City, Derbyshire, Leicester City, Leicestershire including Rutland, Nottingham City, Nottinghamshire and Peterborough, and three voluntary Adoption Agencies; Adopt Together, Coram East Midlands and Family Care.) An East Midlands RAA Transition Plan was submitted to the DFE and there has been extensive work on this throughout the year, planning the various different 'workstreams' which need to be agreed before regionalisation can take place. This continues to be progressed.

A governance structure has been established with representatives from across the region forming the Project Governance Board.

Safeguarding

Over the course of the year 'Signs of Safety' has continued to be incorporated into the adoption process wherever possible as a model for assessing matches, adoptive placements and for risk assessments, and in direct work with children whilst preparing them for placement. Staff members in the team have been actively involved in developing the use of 'words and pictures' in direct work with children assisting them in understanding the reasons they are in care, and were not safe in their birth families.

The supervising social workers in the team have all completed their adult attachment style training and are now using this alongside 'mapping ' as a way of analysing their initial assessments of adopters, in order to ensure that we are assessing and approving adopters who will be able to manage the needs of the children who require adoptive placements .

In response to research by Julie Selwyn commissioned by the government, which introduced the concept of "Child on Parent" violence, Lincolnshire staff attended training on Non Violent Resistance and then set up an in-house training course for adopters. This is a model of parenting which has been effective in dealing with children and young people who are violent or physically aggressive to their carers. This training is now running on an annual basis.

Aspiration and Well-being

Maximise the benefits to adoptive families in Lincolnshire arising from the Adoption Support Fund.

Over the course of 2018/19 there have been 86 applications to the Adoption Support Fund in order to provide therapeutic input for adopted children and families. The amount of funding granted from the fund to cover these was £242,000.

Of these applications there were three group submissions to support the funding for the 'Safebase' courses for the year. The Safebase course was offered to all newly approved adopters with a child in placement, and to existing adoptive families who were in need of additional therapeutic support. In addition a 'teenage years' Safebase course was held and was attended by mainly SGO carers. Safebase was attended by 30 adoptive and SGO families, almost all of whom gave positive feedback finding the course to be effective and useful to them in their parenting. In addition, there was some funding for Non Violent Resistance courses for adopters which has been on-going and effective.

There were fifty six cases where individual therapy was delivered either by therapeutically trained staff within the Post Adoption Team, or by external providers. In all of the cases there were individual sessions using Theraplay, therapeutic Lifestory work, DDP or sensory integration therapy. There were also nine cases where there was a detailed assessment of therapeutic needs, followed by an intensive period of therapeutic input and attachment focussed therapy, delivered from the external provider. All of the families in receipt of these services have reported them to be positive in helping them to meet the challenge of parenting their adopted children.

Learning and achievement

Maintain strong links with the virtual school and ensure adopted children in schools receive the full benefit from initiatives including the Pupil Premium.

In the autumn of 2015, the Practice Supervisor, Adoption Support, and the Virtual School attended the Head Teacher Briefings in order to promote the Virtual School, advise on the introduction of the Pupil Premium for children adopted from care, and the Adoption Support Service including the Adoption Support Fund. The Briefings received positive feedback with a number of schools subsequently using Adoption Support Services for advice and guidance in promoting outcomes for adopted children. In autumn 2016, the Practice Supervisor for Adoption Support was actively involved with Families First to plan and establish the East Midlands Adoption Support Service linked to schools in order to raise the profile of adopted children and their needs in the school setting. This service launched in spring 2017, but was only funded for a year. In 2018 the Caring2 Learn project started and there are a number of adopters and SGO carers who have been involved in the project.

To implement adoption support training for all adoption social workers to enable team members to work effectively across all adoption support tasks, creating a flexible workforce who can respond to the changing needs of the service.

During 2018/19 the majority of adoption staff team have continued to be trained/supported in 'Theraplay', so that they can support adoptive families with children newly in placement to use therapeutic parenting models in order to enhance the building of positive attachments in the early stages of placement. In some of the

cases, where sibling groups are placed, there is an intensive package of Theraplay to support the transition from foster care into adoptive placement. To compliment this, there are three clinicians within the Adoption Support Team who are trained in Dyadic Therapy, Filial Therapy and Family Therapy, thus creating a flexible and sustainable adoption service.

Also the Team was able to further extend the range of post-adoption activities for children and families during school holidays with new groups focussed on music making at Soundlinks, which resulted in the young people attaining awards; watersports activities which promoted confidence, built skills and teamwork; and a drama workshop to encourage children to express emotions. All of these activities enabled adopted children to meet one another and provided an environment in which the children could talk about being adopted as well as increasing self-esteem.

In October 2016 Lincolnshire won the national award for 'Excellence in Adoption Practice' which was awarded during National Adoption Week and in the autumn of 2018 Lincolnshire were involved in producing a podcast for BBC radio 4 which has won a number of awards , and promoted public awareness about adoption.

Best use of Resources

Use and embed new case management recording system in adoption whilst maintaining business as usual.

The implementation of the new case recording system "Mosaic" was delayed, but the Go Live date was on 2nd December 2016. The staff team were trained in the autumn of 2016, and further training was extended into the spring of 2017. Throughout the change, staff members have been dedicated to resolving difficulties and have maintained the service. Staff members within the adoption team have been involved in rebuilding the Mosaic system so that it is now a useful and effective recording system which is being used by all team members. The final part of the build will be to ensure that the adoption support workflows are correct and effective.

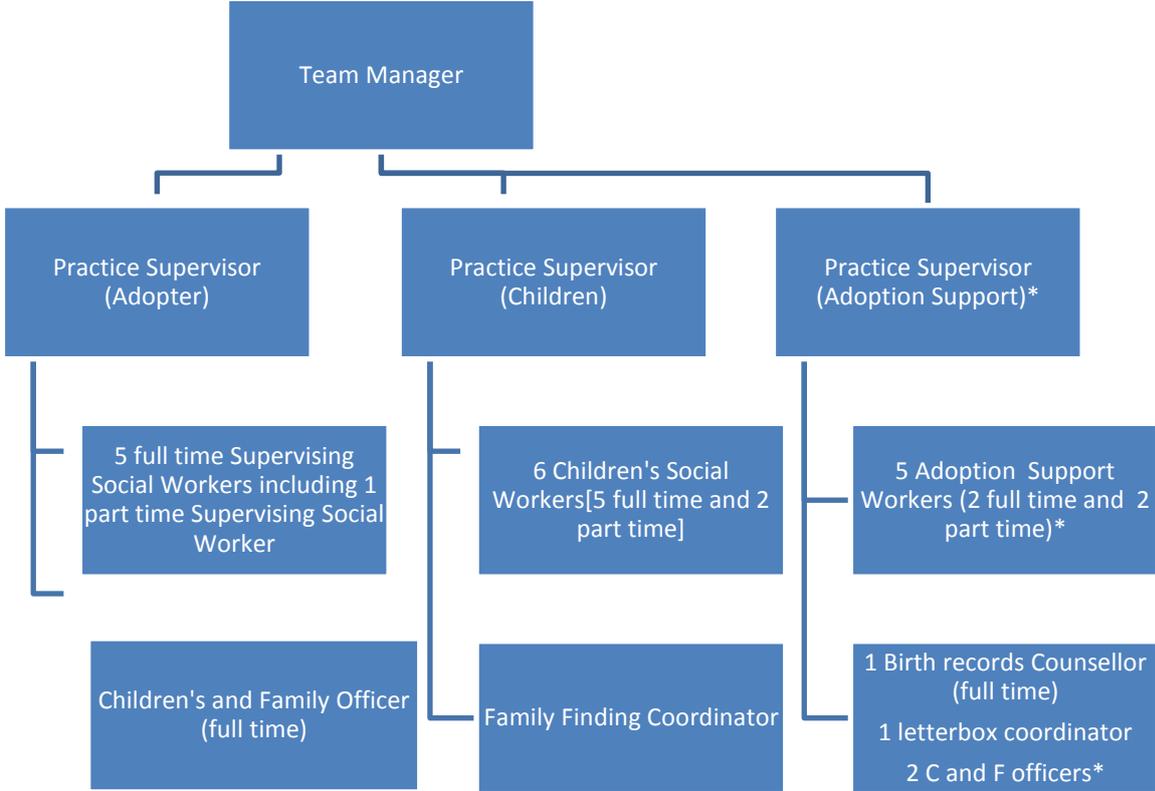
The Adoption Support Model is being developed to include families who have Special Guardianship Orders (SGO). A report was presented to the DMT in October 2015, where there was agreement to the proposal to develop SGO support. Initially support to these families has been incremental with several families benefitting from Theraplay input, Safebase training, or social work intervention to provide them with support. Plans are in place to start to initiate formal assessments and develop a range of services for SGO support, to enable them to have access to training, support groups, and advice and guidance. Support proposed will be two-tiered, with the FAST Teams completing the formal reassessment of SGO support plans. The Adoption Support Team has developed an information leaflet and helpline for Special Guardians. Guardians will be granted access to the e-Learning currently available for foster carers and a quarterly newsletter is being developed. Applications to the ASF will be managed through the adoption service.

Service Role and Structure

The core duties of the Adoption Service remain broadly unchanged. The Adoption Service continues to provide services to children, adopters and birth family members

as required by the National Adoption Minimum Standards 2014 as issued by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the [Care Standards Act 2000](#), Adoption and Children Act 2002, The Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013, the Adoption Support Services Regulations (2005) and the Adoption Statutory Guidance July 2014, the Children Act 1989 and 2004 and the Children and Families Act 2014.

The Adoption Team remains a stand-alone countywide service with office bases at Lincoln, Sleaford and Louth.



The Adoption Service is staffed by a Team Manager, three Practice Supervisors, six Children’s Adoption Social Workers and six Supervising Social Workers. The Adoption Support Team has one Birth Records Social Worker, two full-time and two-part time Adoption Support Social Workers, a Children and Families Officer who manages the 'letterbox' and an adoption support worker who supports adoptive families in the community.

The Children’s Adoption Social Workers progress children’s plans for adoption. The Supervising Social Workers recruit and assess prospective adopters, as well as completing step parent adoption assessments. Supervising Social Workers also deliver preparation training courses for adopters. A qualified Social Worker in the Adoption Support Team carries out the agency’s statutory duties of birth record counselling for adopted adults. Lincolnshire does not provide intermediary services

but does provide limited assistance in tracing where it is able. The Adoption Support Social Workers complete work directly with families who have adopted and who are struggling to manage issues specifically linked to their adoption. In addition they organise groups and activities to support adopters and adopted children. The Children and Family Officer co-ordinates the indirect contact arrangements for adopted children and birth relatives together with the completion of life story work for the preparation of children placed for adoption.

Adoption Performance

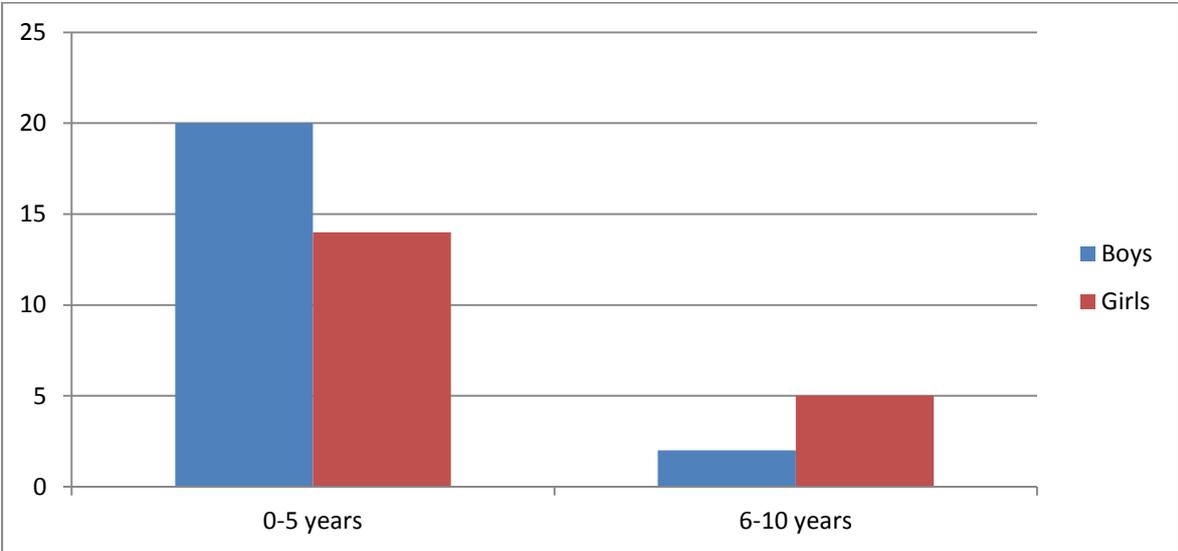
Adoption Orders granted April 2018– March 2019

- In the year to March 2019, 41 adoption orders were granted.
- In addition 63 Special Guardianship Orders were granted.

This year has seen an increase in the number of adoptions in Lincolnshire with 41 adoptions being back to the average of between 40 and 50 a year, and it would appear that the number of children being placed on SGO's has levelled out .Performance against the Adoption Scorecard has already been discussed in detail above with performance against all three threshold measure continuing to improve.

Adoption Activity for 2018/2019

Profile of children adopted 2018/2019:



Lincolnshire County Council achieved forty one adoption orders during 2018/2019, an increase of 13 from the previous year and a return to the average number for Lincolnshire. Also there was a change in the demographic as there were 22 boys and 19 girls .There were a number of cases which had been delayed in the courts for many months due to contested adoption cases .Contested adoption cases have become a common theme, as more adoptions are being contested by birth parents , and the court are giving birth families every opportunity , before making the final decision.

The reduction in the numbers of children granted Placement Orders has enabled Lincolnshire to achieve high performance levels for the timely placement of children. There are fewer children waiting and many of the children are pre-matched prior to the court granting the Placement Order. In addition to this, 63 Special Guardianship Orders were granted and these are counted by the DFE as part of the adoption performance measure.

In this year three of the children were placed in Foster-to-Adopt' placements, prior to being adopted, where they benefitted from being securely attached to their prospective adopters from as early as possible in the process. Four children were adopted by their foster carer.

There were five sibling groups. One was a sibling group of three children and there were four sibling groups of two. The other thirty children in the cohort were all singletons .In terms of a profile of ethnicity, there were three children of Eastern European heritage, and one of French heritage. All other children were recorded as White British.

Profile of children with a best interest plan of adoption 2018/19

During April 2018 to March 2019, forty eight children had an agency decision of adoption, of which 42 went on to, be subject to a placement order. This was less than the previous year's figure of sixty, although of the sixty there were only 45 children made subject to placement orders, so in fact the figures were similar .The number of Special Guardianship orders has dipped slightly.

Of the 47 children there were the following groups of siblings:

- 1 group of 3 children
- 5 groups of 2 children
- 35 single children

This is a decrease in the numbers of sibling groups as compared to last year, and will be easier than last year with only one sibling group of three to place. There continued to be use of kinship placements and Special Guardianship Orders throughout the 2018/19 performance year, at a slightly lower rate with the numbers of children in care remaining fairly steady.

Age ranges of children with a best interest plan of adoption 2018/19

Previous year performance in brackets

- 0 - 5 years = 47 [53]
- 6 -10 years = 1 [7]
- 10 plus = 0 [0]

The predominant ethnicity of the children with a best interest plan remains White British although there were two children of Eastern European heritage .These are low numbers as compared with the previous year.

In line with the Government's intention set out in the Children and Family Bill 2014, the matching policy for Lincolnshire is clear that it seeks to place children with adopters who will actively seek to meet all their needs, including those that arise from their culture and ethnicity. However this will not be achieved at the expense of delay for the child in securing an adoptive family.

Children under 5 years remain the largest age group placed for adoption; these children often come as part of a sibling group with older children and therefore the target of the service's recruitment strategy continues to target adopters willing to consider sibling groups and older children.

Profile of children placed for adoption

With regard to placements made this year 38 children were placed as opposed to 37 the previous year, showing that the numbers with adoption plans are fairly steady. Of these, 26 were singleton placements, 6 children were placed in 3 sibling groups of 2, and two groups of three were placed. Of these sibling groups, four of the groups had one child over five. All the other children placed were under five with 24 of them being placed before they were 2 years. There were 24 boys placed and 18 girls, so a similar proportion to last year.

Overall, with some variation in the numbers of sibling groups, this is similar to the previous year as approximately 25 under 5's a year seems to be fairly constant.

Children Awaiting Placement at the close of 2018/19.

At the end of March 2018, there were 7 children whose plans were not agreed by the court and who did not yet have a placement order. There were a further 5 children whose plans were changed by the courts and who either returned home or were placed with relatives on an SGO. There were therefore only 5 children awaiting placement. There are 2 children who are 'difficult to place' or children whose legal position is complex. In addition, there is one sibling group of 3 children who will be difficult to place.

Adopters approved as suitable to adopt during 2018/19

A total of 43 adoptive parents were approved to adopt during 2018/19, with no adopters approved for inter-country adoption. Eleven of these were also approved for Foster to adopt. This is an increase of fifty per cent on the last year's figures as we have increased recruitment in line with the referrals for children with adoption plans coming through the system. The focus of the work during this year was to match the children waiting and place them into adoptive families at the earliest opportunity. The trend changed from one of adopters waiting, to one of children waiting early in the year, but then evened out again, so that by the end of the year adopters were being offered links quite quickly in line with the children coming through. At 31/03/2019 there were 7[9] adopters approved and waiting, three of which were being considered for possible links. In addition there were four adopters fostering children with a view to adoption.

Profile of adopter approval:	
Adoptive families approved for 1 child	37
Adoptive families approved for 2 children	6
Adoptive families approved for 3 children	0
Total:	43
Adopters approved to adopt in following age ranges:	
0 – 5	36
5+	7
Adoptive families approved for Inter-country adoption	0
Adoptive families approved for a Foster-to-Adopt placement	15
Adoptive families approved to adopt a sibling of their adopted child/ren	4

In order to reflect the government's aspiration to encourage foster carers who then go on to adopt we supported four foster families with children in placement to apply directly to the courts for an Adoption Order. This was a higher number than last year. As reported the number of families approved for Foster-to-Adopt has increased as compared to last year with 15 placements made this year.

We will continue to maximise our capacity to recruit for larger sibling group through a mixture of targeted recruitment and the flexible use of support packages for families seeking to adopt three or more children

The Recruitment Team

During this period, the Recruitment Team still consisted of a dedicated Team Manager, three Supervising Social Workers, and a Marketing and Recruitment Officer. The team were supported in their role by two Recruitment Co-ordinators.

The role of the Recruitment Co-ordinator is to log and track initial enquiries, and to act upon the information received and process enquiries in a timely manner.

The Marketing and Recruitment Officer is responsible for delivering the adoption recruitment strategy and subsequent campaigns.

The Adoption Service continued to undertake its own initial visits to determine the suitability of prospective adopters up to the approval stage.

Marketing & Recruitment

Following a relatively quiet period for the previous 2 years, marketing and recruitment activity stepped up again in 2018-2019 as more children were seen coming through for adoption.

Advertising campaign

During this year Lincolnshire Adoption Service launched a new campaign to attract more prospective adopters. The campaign idea was to get people to think about if they could meet a child's needs with advert imagery depicting the priority needs groups for the service i.e. children aged 3 year and over, children with additional needs, siblings, and those placed under the foster to adopt scheme with the tag lines:

- *"Someone to give me a future" Could you be his someone? (Child aged 3+)*
- *"Someone to be my champion" Could you be her someone? (Additional needs)*
- *"Someone to give me stability" Could you be his someone (Foster to adopt)*
- *"Someone to keep us together" Could you be their someone? (Siblings)*

Poster artwork:





A full advertising schedule occurred for the year including:

- Paid for Facebook adverts
- Local advertising within several publications owned by Johnston Press (including digital)
- Local advertising within several publications owned by Iliffe Media (including digital)
- Lincs FM
- Advertising on The Lincolnite and Lincolnshire Reporter websites
- Lincolnshire Life Magazine
- Int Comms
- Local press releases

All advertising in the media directed people to the information evenings to learn more about adoption from staff and approved adopters so that they could make an informed decision about if adoption was right for them and their family.

Information evenings

The adoption information evenings were each run in Lincoln, Grantham and Boston three times throughout 2018-2019. They were all from 7pm – 9pm with the format of the evening being short talks from social workers about what adoption is, why children need adopting and what adopters the service currently needs i.e. those for children aged 3 years and over, sibling groups, children with disabilities and additional needs, and children who have been placed under the Foster to Adopt scheme. This was followed by an animation which was newly commissioned for this year to explain the process to adopt in a visually engaging and easy to understand way. Two adopters / adoptive families then share their experiences of adoption both through a 15 minute talk to the audience. Finally the support which is on offer from the Adoption Support Team was presented to the audience. The evenings finish with

time for the audience to mingle with the adopters and staff to ask any questions they may have one-to-one. If anyone is interested in filling out an IEI at this point they are also invited to do that.

Information evenings run throughout 2018-2019:

- Tuesday 5th June at Branston Hall Hotel, Lincoln
- Tuesday 12th June at Belton Woods Hotel, Grantham
- Tuesday 26th June at Boston West Golf Club, Boston
- Tuesday 16th October at Branston Hall Hotel, Lincoln
- Wednesday 17th October at Belton Woods Hotel, Grantham
- Thursday 18th October at Boston West Golf Club, Boston
- Tuesday 5th February at Branston Hall Hotel, Lincoln
- Tuesday 12th February at Belton Woods Hotel, Grantham
- Tuesday 19th February at Boston West Golf Club, Boston

The information evenings proved to be successful with an average of 9 households attending each event and 1-2 IEIs being completed at each.

County Shows

The adoption service also had representation at Lincolnshire Show on Wednesday 20th and Thursday 21st June 2018 in the main Lincolnshire County Council marquee.

Facebook

The eagerly anticipated dedicated fostering and adoption service Facebook page was launched on 18th June 2018 and gained almost 400 followers within the year. The page is being managed by the Marketing and Recruitment Officer for the fostering and adoption services and is predominately being used as a marketing aid to recruit more foster carers and adopters, and to convey key messages including who can adopt, good news stories, and to advertise information evenings etc.

Identity

During 2017-2018 an identity was created for the fostering service which was used on information booklets, the website, advertising etc. A twin identity using different primary colours was created for the adoption service during 2018-2019 and has been rolled out on the information booklet, website and advertising. The idea being that given time, the identities will begin to resonate with the public as being Lincolnshire County Council's Fostering or Adoption Services just by looking at them after they have been in the public eye for a while.

Newsletter

The service has continued to deliver a quarterly e-newsletter to approved adopters which contains information, guidance, news, and events locally and nationally which are in the interests of our adopters.

Figures

Adoption IELs received = 177

Foster to adopt IELs received = 21

Total IELs = 198

Adoption ROIs received = 40

Foster to adopt ROIs received = 2

Total ROIs = 42

This gives a conversion rate of 26% for adoption from enquiry to application, 10% for Foster-to-Adopt from enquiry to application, with a total conversion rate of 20% from enquiry to application. This is an improvement on the figures for the previous year.

Adoption Panel Activity for 1st April 2018 – 31st March 2019

The Adoption National Minimum Standards 2014 17.2 provides a requirement for:

“Adoption Panels to provide a quality assurance feedback to the agency every six months on the quality of reports being presented to the Panel. This includes whether the requirements of the Restrictions on the Preparation of Adoption Reports Regulations 2005 have been met, and whether there is a thorough, rigorous, consistent and fair approach across the service in the assessment of whether a child should be placed for adoption, the suitability of prospective adopters and the proposed placement.”

Children’s Plans for Adoption

As part of the Quality Assurance Process for children to be considered for Adoption, these reports have been scrutinized in advance by the Panel Advisor along with Team Managers from Fostering, Adoption, FAST, Looked After Children and the Independent Reviewing Service. The Quality Assurance meeting is available each week and cases are booked in consultation with Legal Services and the Adoption Team in advance to ensure the timescales in relation to Care Proceedings are met. This process allows for a rigorous cross-agency check to ensure that the work is of a high enough standard and that the child’s wishes and views are recorded.

When compiling these reports the current Foster Carers provide a profile for the child, which is circulated. The views of parents and birth family are detailed within these reports. If there are no views then the Advisor will request that the facts and reasons why there are no views from the parents are recorded.

Written Legal Advice is provided independent of the case holder and ensures that any matters concerning Re B-S (Children) 2013 are well evidenced for the Agency

Decision Maker and that the plans are robust and there are no legal issues which may prevent the plans from being considered.

The Quality Assurance meeting will collectively scrutinise each report to ensure that in their opinion the Welfare Check list has been addressed and that, if any expert reports have been requested in Care Proceedings these are available. This is particularly important in order to ensure there is a balanced approach and that key points raised have been considered fully within the Childs Permanence Report.

A summary of the assessments are included in the Child Permanence Report and copies of those expert reports are available to the Agency Decision Maker in good time to be read.

The Panel Advisor liaises with the agency to provide any actions and feedback from this forum; this may be addressed with the Adoption Service, FAST Teams, Independent Reviewing Service and Legal Services.

The Agency Decision Maker considers the welfare check list in particular:

“the relationship which the child has with relatives and with any other person in relation to whom the court or agency considers the relationship to be relevant, including (i) the likelihood of any such relationship continuing and the value to the child of its doing so, (ii) the ability and willingness of any of the child's relatives, or of any such person, to provide the child with a secure environment in which the child can develop, and otherwise to meet the child's need and (iii) the wishes and feelings of any of the child's relatives, or of any such person, regarding the child, to ensure that any recommendations made have taken account of these relationships.”

Analysis

Child Permanence Reports detail the child's history well. They are written in a style which is easy to read and consideration is made to how the views of children who are nonverbal, can still be included in the reports.

The wishes and views of birth parents can sometimes be difficult for the workers to report on due to the family disengaging with the workers; however these instances are few and those where the family have disengaged the worker has detailed the reasons why the views have not been forthcoming.

These reports are written to a high standard and they utilise the Signs of Safety tools in their analysis. The reports detail the child's history well and are easily read and understood. The report details the challenges that a child may have faced in their early life including matters which detail the harm which was attributed to the care given to them by their birth family. The reports also provide significant insight into the functioning and experiences of the birth family and extended family members, this allows for a fuller understanding of who was considered and an explanation as to why they could not offer care to a particular child.

This is important information needed for prospective adopters and in due course the child themselves who may come to view these reports at a later stage.

Between April 2018 and March 2019, the following children have had a decision to support a plan for Adoption made by the Agency Decision Maker compared to the previous year.

	2018/19	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Boys approved for adoption	24	35	17	12
Girls approved for adoption	27	20	6	8
Total children approved for adoption	51	55	23	20
Single children approved	38	41	15	16
Children in sibling groups of two	5 [10]	4 [8]	2 [4]	2 [4]
Children in sibling groups of three	1 [3]	2 [6]	0	0
Children in sibling groups of four	0	0	1 [4]	0
White British children	45	52	22	19
Other white background (European)	2	1	1	1
Other	4	2	0	0
Age Range 0 - 2	39	32	15	11
Age Range 3 - 5	8	15	6	8
Age Range 6 - 8	3	6	2	1
Age Range 9 -11	0	2	0	0
Age Range 11+	1			
% meeting the National Minimum Standard 17.6	100%	100%	100%	100%

Between April 2018 and March 2019, the following children have been placed for Adoption.

National Minimum Standard 17.7

The Adoption Panel makes a considered recommendation on the proposed placement of a child with particular adopters within 6 months of the Adoption Agency Decision Maker deciding the child be placed for adoption.

	2018/19	2016/17	2015/14
Total Children	51	55	23
Linked with adopters in timescale NMS 17.7	19	23	17
Linked with adopters outside timescale NMS 17.7	11	3	1
Awaiting link	21	29	1
Returned to family	0	0	4
% meeting the National Minimum Standard 17.7	78.5%	94.5%	95%

Suitability of Prospective Adopters

There have been twenty three Panels in this period. This figure is a decrease to the previous year, which had twenty four Panels. In that time the following applicants have been approved;

	2018/19	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Total Adopters approved	43	22	32	24
Of which Foster-to-Adopt	15	14	12	0
Foster-to-Adopt New Applications	10	5	12	6
Foster-to-Adopt Subsequent Applications	4	9	5	0

	2018/19	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Approved for one child	37	13	20	14
Approved for two children	6	9	11	9
Approved for three children	0	0	1	1

	2018/19	2016/17	2015/16
White British	40	21	29
Asian/Asian British – Indian	1	1	2
Other white background	1	0	1
Mixed White/Black Caribbean	1		

% reports meeting the National Minimum Standard 17.7 timescale 78.5%

Again these reports have all been prepared by social workers who meet the requirements of the Restrictions on the Preparation of Adoption Reports Regulations 2005.

Panel Administration requests the papers are available fourteen days ahead of the Panel date to allow the quality assurance process to take place. Reports are passed to the Advisor who checks that the applicant's statutory checks have been completed and that health checks as well as health and safety checklists have been completed. Alongside this the Advisor will ensure that the assessment is completed and that it adequately covers aspects of the couple's or individual's strengths as adopters and their ability to provide safe care to a child.

The report must ensure that the couple's or individual's child care experience, background history and life story, including education, is detailed as well as their support network and what attitude they have regarding contact arrangements for the future. The couple's or individual's financial details should be contained in the report.

The quality of Prospective Adopters Reports is very good and Adult Style Attachment interviews are being used as well as evidence from referees to appropriately explore skills and strengths.

On occasion the Advisor and Chair have required additional work to be completed prior to formal consideration by Panel however this is rare.

If there is any third party information or clarification of issues sought by Panel the workers will be asked to join Panel ahead of the applicants.

Analysis

There is evidence within the minutes of Panel that detail the sound nature of Panel's consideration of applicants. The current central list provides us with panel members

who have the experience and understanding of the adoption process in order to be able to consider the assessment.

There has been further development in using the referees as a positive source of evidence for the assessment with workers using the referee interview to confirm the views of the workers or in some cases to appropriately challenge the prospective adopter's views.

The Prospective Adopter Reports seen since April 2013 continue to be of a high standard with only single numbers where further information has been needed to achieve the standard.

These reports have all been prepared or been supervised by social workers who meet the requirements of the Restrictions on the Preparation of Adoption Reports Regulations 2005.

Panel Administration requests the papers are available fourteen days ahead of the Panel date to allow the quality assurance process to take place. Reports are passed to the Advisor who checks that the applicant's statutory checks are up-to-date and that health checks as well as health and safety checklists have been completed and that a comprehensive and detailed contact plan is included within the reports.

The Panel Advisor will request any update of reports, medicals and support plan be prepared ahead of Panel to be circulated to Panel Members ahead of the deadline

The Advisor quality assures all the reports to ensure that a clear explanation as to why this particular family has been suggested as the best match for the child and how they will best meet the child's needs. Any discrepancies between the child and the potential adopters must be detailed in the reports and an explanation as to why this match is seen as suitable and how these discrepancies can be alleviated within the support plan. The Panel Members will also consider the relative strengths of each match and also any areas where they may require further clarity.

The quality of these reports has been good with positive matches for sibling groups and single children. Reports have detailed the needs of children and how the prospective adopters will meet these needs.

Panel have consistently raised issues regarding the ability of couples to maintain the ethnicity or cultural aspects of children and have been satisfied that couples are committed to meeting the child's needs in this area.

Panel minutes show the various matches of children to couples and single carers and confirm that questioning has been relevant and focussed upon the specific task i.e. the match with the adopters to ensure that the needs of a child can be met in the suggested placement.

Adoption Support

The period covered by this report has seen further improvements to the range of adoption support services are provided within the framework set out within the Adoption Agency Regulations 2005. The majority of the support is provided by our in-house team with a limited commissioned service through independent providers. The service is provided on a tiered basis dependent on assessed need.

Tier 1	Wide universal support to adopters includes: Contact coordination, helpline advice, information via the Lincolnshire adoption website. Birth records counselling for adults. Also included in this tier is counselling for birth relatives whose children have been adopted as well as seminars for grandparents of adopters.
Tier 2	All of tier 1 and in addition adoption support groups/activities for adopters and for children affected by adoption. These include a programme of activities which bring adoptive children together to share experiences of adoption as part of leisure activities. This tier also included the Safebase parenting programme.
Tier 3	Previous tier support plus specific adoption support include assessment of need, individual adoption support packages, Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy, Theraplay, EMDR, and Non Violent Resistance, Extended Life Story Work. This tier also includes access to primary mental health services and CAMHS. Since the spring of 2015 with the introduction of the Adoption Support Fund, government funding has been made available to provide for therapeutic input to adoptive children and their families in recognition of their lifelong needs.

Tier 1

The Lincolnshire Adoption website remains the first point of support for adopters and adopted children and during the period covered by the report all written and web materials have been benchmarked against best practice and revised. This secure site has information regarding Theraplay techniques, safeguarding information, including how to help a child access the internet safely. The site advertises adoption activities and groups and enables the Adoption Service to consult users about planned future services. Links to services from Children's Centres and a range of education services are also available from this site. In addition to the website service users can contact the Adoption Helpline for advice and guidance. Adopters can also access a range of e-learning modules.

Adopters can sign up to receiving a regular electronic newsletter which provides information on forth-coming activities, useful short articles offering advice, and encourages contributions from both adoptive parents and children.

In 2018/19 the service received 70 referrals for birth records counselling, which is similar to last year, and only 12 enquiries from birth relatives seeking advice on tracing, which is less than in the previous year. Callers enquiring about tracing relatives were signposted to other agencies as Lincolnshire does not provide intermediary services.

Birth Ties service delivered by After Adoption, supplies counselling to birth relatives who have lost their children to adoption. The contract is at capacity and provided counselling to 26 birth parents /relatives during this year, although with the reduction in numbers of birth parents in care proceedings the nature of the referrals has changed with more of the work now being focussed on birth relatives at a later stage in the process, who may have been self-referrals or referrals through the 'letterbox'.

Contact

Indirect Letterbox contact activity

April 2018 – March 2019

As of 31st March 2019 there were 654 children on the letterbox.

For the twelve month period there were 36 new children added and 52 children removed as they turned 18.

Access to birth records counselling – 70 referrals (27 were requests from other agencies for our files)

Birth relative enquiries – 12 enquiries (for recording and signposting only)

There are 8 letterbox arrangements for families who hold Special Guardianship Orders and 4 where children are not adopted but letterbox contact was ordered by the court.

Direct Contact

- 14 children have direct contact with birth parents
- 16 with siblings
- 15 with non-adopted siblings
- 5 with grandparents

Tier 2

At the core of provision in this Tier is the offer of adoption support groups across the county, coordinated by adopters supported by the service. Attendance by adopters at these groups continues to vary but those who attend report they are appreciated. During this year we have seen the continuation of the Safebase Programme. This four-day training course offered post placement to all adopters has been a highly successful addition to our adoption support provision at this level. The programme is delivered in partnership with After Adoption who also provides our Birth Ties scheme and has been secured for a further three year period ending March 2018. This year we piloted ' Teenage Safebase ' course which was well attended by special guardianship carers and was very well received.

We have further developed our programme of social activities to be organised during the school holidays to enable adopters and children to meet and network. We have provided funding to these Localised Adoption Support Groups totalling £3,500. The groups are adopter led and held Christmas parties, outings to local venues such as Rand Farm Children's Park, family swimming sessions, Eco Centre in Skegness and days at the beach. We have provided the following during the past year

There were:

Woodland Adventure Days for primary age children – July 2018 – 12 attendees

Music Tech Workshops for secondary age children – series of one-day events with the same group of up to 10 children – held in April, June, September 2018 & February 2019

Activities Away, outdoor water based activities for secondary age children – 2 events on 2nd & 23rd August 2018 – one with 10 children and one with 12 children

Theatre Workshop for primary age children – 3 days in February 2019 – 10 attendees

Circus Skills – for primary age children - 29th May - 10 children attended & 16th August - 6 children attended.

Lincoln City Football Club Sports Activity Day – for primary age children – 20 children attended

We also continue to provide on-going training to adopters and this has included;

Non-Violent Resistance training course – one started in April 2018 and ran for 6 weeks – 13 attendees

Talking about Adoption workshops – 5th & 12th June 2018 - 11 people attended

Safebase training courses for adopters – March and September. Attended by 16 families

For teenagers – October 2018 – 10 families attended

Courses advertised by the Training section for adopters, all of the following training was advertised in the newsletters as available to be booked via the LSCB website:

June

14/06/2018 - Diversity (1- day course) at Stanhope Hall, 1 Boston Road, Horncastle, LN9 6EY

18 & 19/06/2018 - Autism / ADHD Awareness (2-day course) at Sleaford Road, Ruskington, NG34 8SP

28/06/2018 - Emergency First Aid at Work (1-day course) at Sleaford Road, Ruskington, NG34 8SP

29/06/2018 - Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (1-day course) at Sleaford Road, Ruskington, NG34 8SP

July

02/07/2018 - Behaviour Management (1-day course) at Myle Cross, Macauley Drive, Lincoln, LN2 4EL

05, 06, & 09/07/2018 - TCI (3-day course) at Sleaford Road, Ruskington, NG34 8SP

11/07/2018 - Safeguarding (1-day course) at Myle Cross, Macauley Drive, Lincoln, LN2 4EL

16/07/2018 - Safe Care (1-day course) at Stanhope Hall, 1 Boston Road, Horncastle, LN9 6EY

September

12/09/2018 - Diversity (1-day course) at Myle Cross, Macauley Drive, Lincoln, LN2 4EL

13/09/2018 - Safeguarding (1-day course) at Sleaford Road, Ruskington, NG34 8SP

18 & 19/09/2018 - Attachment Development (2-day course) at Myle Cross, Macauley Drive, Lincoln, LN2 4EL

25/09/2018 - Safe Care (1-day course) at Myle Cross, Macauley Drive, Lincoln, LN2 4EL

28/09/2018 - Emergency First Aid at Work (1-day course) at Sleaford Road, Ruskington, NG34 8SP

October

04/10/2018 - Emergency First Aid at Work (1-day course) at Deacon Road Business Park, Deacon Road, Lincoln, LN2 4JB
8, 9 & 10/10/2018 - Child and Adult Placement (3-day course) at Myle Cross, Macauley Drive, Lincoln, LN2 4EL
15/10/2018 - Safe Care (1-day course) at Riverside Church Southgate, Sleaford, NG34 7RY
29/10/2018 - Signs of Safety (1-day course) at Sleaford Road, Ruskington, NG34 8SP

March

14, 15 & 18/03/2019 - TCI (3-day course) – Myle Cross Centre, Lincoln, LN2 4EL

Tier 3

This Tier provides specialised therapeutic support to those families who require direct adoption support with tailored plans of support intervention. All adoption support referrals are now completed by the Adoption Support Team. Safeguarding Referrals continue to be assessed by the Family Support and Assessment Teams. 82 adoption support assessments have been completed and the majority indicated some form of therapeutic intervention was required. Cases can be allocated to Post Adoption Support workers who are trained to provide specialist therapeutic input across a range of therapeutic models including Dyadic Therapy, Theraplay, Psychotherapy, EMDR and Non Violent Resistance.

In addition to the above services, we provided direct financial support through allowances for over 100 adoptive families through the period 2018-2019. This totals £750,000 over the year.

During 2018/19 the support service received 82 new referrals that became support cases under Tier 3. The requests for support covered the following areas:

- Attachment difficulties
- Life Story work
- Contact issues
- Requests for funding for support
- Requests for respite care.
- Request for therapeutic or Theraplay input
- Mediation for adoptive families to maintain the adoptive placement.
- Child on parent violence.

It is clear that the service is managing some extremely complex cases with children who have significant difficulties. This is indicative of the Service being able to target support appropriately and reflects a small but highly skilled team. The significant support from the Adoption Support Fund has made a positive difference to the speed at which these specialised services can be delivered, and the range of services which can be offered to adopters. 65 applications were made to the fund and all were successful. Sixty five families received therapeutic support via the Adoption Support Fund. A total of £232,000 was claimed from the fund in 2018/19.

The Local Authority continues to invest in the on-going training of Adoption Support staff ensuring that Clinical supervision is available to therapists within the Team and that staff participate in on going therapeutic training to ensure that the needs of families can be met. This has included further training in DDP and Therapeutic Lifestory work.

National Changes for 2018/19

The government looks set to follow on from the previous one as it seeks to make adoption a priority area in the coming year. The Queen's speech announced the Adoption and Children Bill which was laid before Parliament on 3rd June 2015. The Bill would enable the Secretary of State to require local authorities in England to make arrangements so that their adoption functions (including the recruitment, assessment and approval of prospective adopters) could be carried out by other authorities or adoption agencies. Part of the rationale for this was to enable 'excellent' agencies to support other agencies in their improvement journey. Trailblazer funding was made available to local authorities to form a regional adoption agency. Lincolnshire has been actively involved in developing plans for a regional adoption agency which will consolidate the East Midlands Consortium authorities and the local VAA's.

The target date for achieving regional adoption agencies is 2020, so there will be the need to progress plans for this over the next 12 months.

The Adoption Support Fund went live on the 1st May 2015 and is funded for 2018/19. The Fund will continue to pay for therapeutic services, such as cognitive therapy, play and music therapy, and intensive family support with the aim of helping children to recover from their previous experiences and thrive in their adoptive families. The Fund will enable the continued offer of the Safebase Programme to all adopted families and extend our capacity to deliver direct therapeutic work with adopted children and young people

It is essential that going forward the agency has a clear focus on how best to deliver services in a way that maximises the impact of limited resources and that will include looking at efficiencies which can be delivered through the regionalisation agenda.

Service planning

Our development goals for the coming 12 month period continue to be aligned to the five County Council principles set out at the beginning of the report and the objectives for children which are set out below.

Children and young people are healthy and safe.

To continue to develop the 'signs of safety' model and restorative practice as a part of the adoption process including the framework for preparing children for placement.

Maintain and consolidate progress on improving adoption scorecard performance against key threshold measures to minimise delay for children requiring adoption placements.

Ensure that placements are timely either through placing children as soon as they are subject to a Placement Order or through an early placement scheme, in order to promote positive attachment.

To extend the range of training available to adopters, in order to provide them with therapeutic parenting skills.

To plan and implement training for 'family and friends' of adopters, which will further enable them to support families in their role as adopters.

Children develop full potential in early years and are ready for school

- Extending the Adoption Support Service to include intensive support at the early stage in placements for sibling groups, in order to promote therapeutic parenting, and attachment work early in the placement, so that children are 'ready for school'.
- Making use of the Caring2learn project with adopters.
- Support and develop 'play and stay' adoptive family groups to promote social learning.
- Making good use of nursery provision for adopted children.

Learn and achieve.

- Maximise the benefits to adoptive families in Lincolnshire arising from the Adoption Support Fund.
- New course for adopters to build their confidence in talking to their children about being adopted, and the use of life story.
- Continue to make best use of the pupil premium to support adopted children in school.
 - To be creative and innovative in terms of developing training to include a 'Talk about Adoption' workshop.

Children and young people are ready for adult life.

- Introduce Peer Support Network through the Non Violent resistance course to tackle 'Child on Adopter' violence.
- To continue to provide activities for adopted children who build their skills, recognise their achievements, and build their confidence.

Best use of Resources

- Use and embed new case recording system in adoption whilst maintaining business as usual.
- Explore options to broaden Adoption Support Model to other permanence options starting with Special Guardianship Orders.

- Through the regional lead, to continue to participate and support the emerging regionalisation agenda, positioning Lincolnshire at the forefront of any development.

Summary

The challenge for 2018/19 was to adjust services in line with the significant service developments in the previous year, whilst maintaining high levels of performance against government targets. In addition there has been the challenge of being proactive in responding to trends in the increased numbers of children, set aside the apparent reduction in numbers of adopters coming forward. This was addressed through an increased number of recruitment events. The Service will continue to embed the changes to practice resulting from statutory and legislative reform and translate them into positive outcomes for children being adopted, adoptive families and those needing support post adoption.

Performance in 2018/19 against the key threshold measures in the adoption scorecard has improved both for the single year and for the three year rolling average. The number of adoptions completed this year was back to the average but the timescales have consistently improved. The number of children waiting at the year-end has decreased due to the team being proactive in family finding.

The Adoption Service was subject to scrutiny by Ofsted along with the rest of Children's Services in October 2015. The inspection was undertaken under the new Single Inspection Framework which was intended to provide a far more rigorous test of adoption agencies, with a clear focus on outcomes for children. To again achieve a judgement of 'Outstanding' was a strong endorsement of the professionalism and expertise within the team and the confidence shown to it by senior managers and the council as a whole.

Following this there was considerable interest from a range of other providers around the strategy, systems and practices which sit behind the success of the service. This led to a number of invitations to showcase the Service at regional and national events which has enabled the agency to assist other LA adoption agencies in getting to "Good" and has raised the profile of Lincolnshire's Adoption Service. Hopefully the next year will see further involvement in showcasing our Service.

In March 2017, Lincolnshire was announced to be a 'Partner in Practice' and this has meant that the team has been involved in the Partners in Practice programme. In the coming year it is hoped that there will be similar opportunities for Lincolnshire adoption staff to participate in, and learn from.

Going forward the Service will look to respond positively to the challenges presented through austerity and the regionalisation agenda and, in so doing, maintain its strong focus on delivering excellent outcomes for the children of Lincolnshire who have a plan for adoption.

Yvonne Shearwood
Head of Regulated Services

Anne Johnson
Adoption Team Manager

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