

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

Date of meeting: 30 January 2018

Subject: Wiltshire Council Adoption Service: 2017 Q1-2 6 Month Report

Cabinet member: Councillor Laura Mayes – Children’s Services

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary

It is a statutory requirement that the Adoption Service provides regular assurance reports to the Council. The main mechanism is the provision of the annual year-end report which is supported by a brief six-month update report relating to Quarters 1 and 2 of the financial year.

During the reporting period, two main areas have continued to be the focus for improvement regarding the Adoption Service:

- The need for timeliness of the assessment of adopters and their match with a child to be adopted, and
- The need for timeliness of the adoption of children with complex needs.

As previously reported, for the year 2016/17, 33 adoption orders were granted and 26 families were approved as suitable to adopt. In Quarters 1-2, 17 adoption orders were granted, 8 children were placed for adoption and 8 families were approved as suitable to adopt. A further 8 children have been matched at matching panel in October and November.

Driven by the Government’s previous commitment to improving adoption services in terms of numbers of children being adopted and the timeliness of matches for children requiring adoptive placements, the development of the Adoption Service has continued. Annual comparative performance is measured using the Adoption Scorecard which, for Wiltshire, shows overall continued improvement and is included within this report for information.

The 2016-17 Annual Report described the Government expectation that local authorities were to develop collaborative arrangements to improve adoption performance. The regional response to this is the Adoption West initiative, comprising of six local authorities and a small number of locally operating Voluntary Adoption Agencies working together to design and deliver a new adoption agency. Wiltshire Council is a member of the Adoption West partnership.

Cabinet has already received detailed information regarding Adoption West and the role, responsibility and accountability arrangements that are being developed, agreeing to the terms of the partnership.

Proposal

It is recommended that the contents of this report are noted and accepted.

Reason for Proposal

Wiltshire Council is an Adoption Agency registered with Ofsted. The 2014 Adoption Minimum Standards (25.6) and 2013 Statutory Guidance (3.93 and 5.39) describe the information that is required to be regularly reported to the executive side of the local authority to provide assurance that the adoption agency is complying with the conditions of registration whilst being effective and achieving good outcomes for children and service users.

Terence Herbert
Corporate Director

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

Date of meeting: 30 January 2018

Subject: Wiltshire Council Adoption Service: 2017 Q1-2 6 Month Report

Cabinet member: Councillor Laura Mayes – Children’s Services

Key Decision: No

Purpose of Report

1. This report provides an interim six-month report to Cabinet regarding the performance of the Adoption Service within Wiltshire Council. It is a requirement of the condition of registration as described in 2014 Adoption Minimum Standards and 2013 Statutory Guidance that Cabinet is satisfied that the Adoption Agency complies with the conditions of registration, is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children.
2. Cabinet received the Annual Report for 2016-17 in July 2017, covering the period from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.
3. There are two main areas of focus for the Adoption Service:
 - The timeliness of the assessment of adopters and their match with a child to be adopted, and
 - The timeliness of the adoption of children with complex needs.
4. This report includes brief information regarding the management of the Adoption Service, children who require adoptive placements and those who are placed, the recruitment and approval of adopters, the disruption of placements, children where the plan for adoption changes and the work of the Adoption Panel.
5. It is recommended that the contents of this report are noted and accepted.

Relevance to the Council’s Business Plan

6. The Wiltshire Council Adoption Service supports a central priority of the Wiltshire Council Business Plan, to protect those who are most vulnerable. Two specific actions are:
 - To develop an outstanding Adoption Service for all children for whom adoption is in their best interest, and
 - To work with voluntary sector partners to ensure that we offer and deliver a comprehensive array of adoption support services.

7. Adoption West is scheduled to become operational on 1 April 2018 with Adoption West Panels having begun from October 2017. Until April 2018, Wiltshire Adoption Service remains responsible for the recruitment, assessment and support of adopters, matching them with children and providing adoption support. From April 2018, this set of responsibilities will move to Adoption West. The Council will retain some functions of an Adoption Service in respect of the children to be adopted and, therefore, it will remain as an approved Adoption Agency, albeit with different responsibilities.

Main Considerations for the Council

8. The main consideration for the Council is to be assured about statutory compliance and the effectiveness of the Adoption Service. In 2016/17 33 children were adopted. Of these, 30 (91%) were placed within 12 months of the decision that adoption was in their best interest being made. In 2016/17 26 families were approved as suitable to adopt.
9. In Quarters 1-2, 17 children were adopted, 12 (92%) were placed within 12 months of the decision that adoption was in their best interest being made. In this time, 8 families were approved as suitable to adopt
10. Wiltshire's current Adoption Scorecard is included, below, for information. The most recently published performance to March 2016 shows overall continued improvement. There are three key measures that are included:

A1: the average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted:

- The local authority three-year average (2013-16) is 545 days. (For 2012-15 it was 610 days.) This is shorter than the one year and three year trends from 2015 and 2012-15 and shorter than the England three-year average of 558 days. The Scorecard shows steady improvement over time.
- Excluding 2 legacy cases this figure becomes 325 for 2016-17. (For 2012-15 the three-year average for Wiltshire would be 567 if the 2 legacy cases were excluded.)
- Including Fostering for Adoption placements and legacy cases, unverified Wiltshire data estimates the figure for 2014-17 as 450 days, a marked improvement on 545 days and significantly less than the England average.
- In Q1-2 of 2017-18, unverified Wiltshire data estimates performance to currently be at 328 days, with the three-year average for 2015-18 currently at 398 days.
- The Government Performance Threshold is 14 months and so the Q1-2 performance is within this measure.

A2: 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 local authority three-year average (2013-16) is 158 days. (For 2012-15 it was 161 days.) This is shorter than the one year and three year trends from 2015 and 2012-15). It is shorter than the England three-year average of 226 days. The Scorecard shows steady improvement over time.
- Excluding 2 legacy cases this figure becomes 144 for 2016-17.
- Including legacy cases where they remain in the three-year period, unverified Wiltshire data estimates the figure for 2014-17 as 184 days.
- In Q1-2 of 2017-18, unverified Wiltshire data estimates performance to currently be at 121 days, with the three-year average for 2015-18 currently at 174 days.
- The Government Performance Threshold is 4 months and so the Q1-2 performance is on target with this measure.

(Legacy cases include children whose care proceedings pre-date changes in adoption regulations in 2013. The last 2 children who were included in this group had Adoption Orders made in May 2016 and these figures are currently included in the scorecard figures as detailed above. However, this means that over time, should a specific Wiltshire scorecard continue to be published, A1 and A2 will continue to improve as these children will not be in the three-year cohort after 2019.)

A3: the number of children who waited less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family:

- In 2016-17, there were 60 (48%) children who waited less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family. The England three-year average (2013-16) is 47%. Based on Quarters 1-2 information, unverified Wiltshire data estimates the figure for 2014-17 as 91 children (72%).
- In Q1-2 of 2017-18, unverified Wiltshire data estimates performance to currently be at 75%, with the three-year average for 2015-18 currently at 74%.

11. The figures above indicate positive, steady improvement which shows some acceleration in terms of the effectiveness of placing children for adoption in the past 12-18 months. The numbers of children placed for adoption in the first half of the year indicate that it is likely that the year end figure for 2017-18 will be in line with that of last year showing that we continue to be effective at ensuring that children who require permanence through adoption achieve this in a timely way. There is robust tracking of children who require decisions that they Should be Placed for Adoption, through to home finding, matching and the application for Adoption Order.

12. It is concerning that the number of families approved as being suitable to adopt is low and there is a risk that if the need for adoptive placements remains high and approval of adopters is low, it may be harder to place children. This reflects a national challenge although some parts of Adoption West report stronger recruitment. We are working hard to determine why this is so. Where an interest in adoption is expressed but no formal application is received, we contact those concerned and ask why they have not acted, it is often due to changes in personal

circumstances but there are sometimes indications of how the Adoption Service could deal with potential applicants more effectively, for example in the timeliness of response. Information sessions are booked through the year and we ensure that information packs are sent out immediately to maintain momentum. It is heartening that this work has shown an impact and number of applications are expected to recover. In addition, we have developed our approach to Early Permanence (EP) and more children are being placed earlier in such arrangements. There needs to be sufficiency of adopters, including those who are assessed and prepared to provide EP placements.

13. There has not been an impact on timeliness to date, indicated by the Scorecard, below. The landscape is changing as adopters are now more able to identify children from other local authority areas they are interested in adopting via on line resources like Link Maker. Most Wiltshire sibling adopters provide placements for children from other local authorities because we have small numbers of sibling groups needing adoption at the same time and so these adopters look nationally. This means that most of our sibling groups are placed with adopters from other agencies as there is a reduced likelihood of Wiltshire having sibling adopters available at the right time for these children. As we move into Adoption West it is anticipated that the majority of adoptive placements will be made between adopters recruited by Adoption West and children from the six partner local authorities. Any 'loss' of adoptive placements to distant authorities will therefore reduce.

14. The full Scorecard is as follows:

Adoption Scorecard

Choose Local Authority

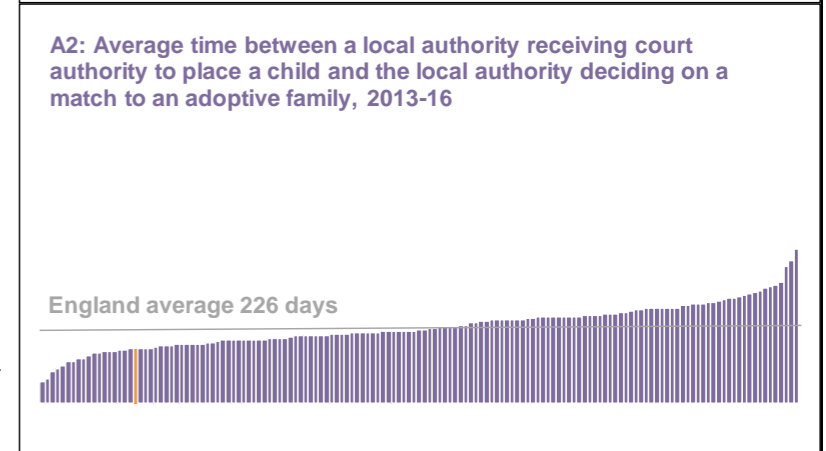
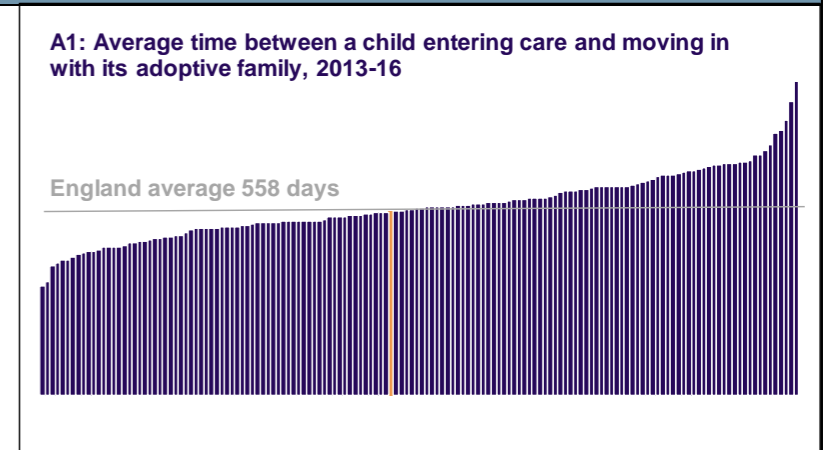
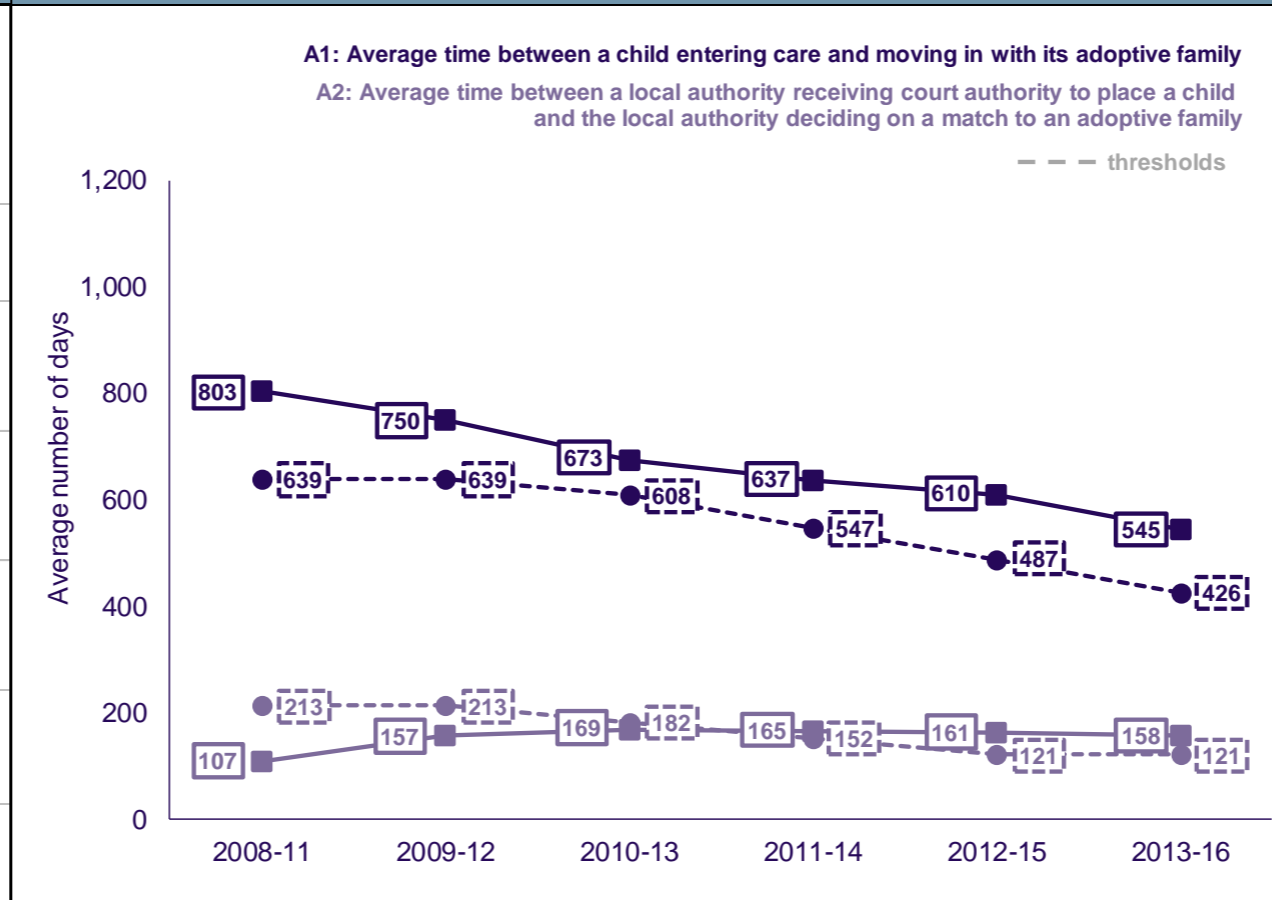
Wiltshire

See methodology and guidance document for further information

Children

Average time indicators

	A1: Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family (days)	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 (days)	A3: Children who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (number and %)
LA's 3 year average (2013-16)	545	158	60 (48%)
Distance from 2013-16 performance threshold (426 and 121 days)	119 days	37 days	n/a
1 year trend - Improvement from 2015 to 2016	Average time in 2016 was shorter than in 2015	Average time in 2016 was shorter than in 2015	n/a
3 year trend - Improvement from 2012-15 to 2013-16	Average time in 2013-16 was shorter than in 2012-15	Average time in 2013-16 was shorter than in 2012-15	n/a
Latest quarterly data (April to September 2016)	539	253	45 (77%)
England 3 year average (2013-16)	558	226	10200 (47%)



Adopters

Related Information

	Number of approved adoptive families waiting to be matched as at 31 March 2016	Number of applications to become an adoptive family still being assessed (not yet approved or rejected) as at 31 March 2016	Proportion of adoptive families who were matched to a child during 2015-16 who waited more than 3 months from approval to being matched to a child	New ADM decisions				New placement orders granted				Adoptions from care during 2013-16 (with % leaving care who are adopted)	Children for whom the permanence decision has changed away from adoption during 2013-16 (number and %)	Number of children waiting to be placed for adoption (as at 31 March 2016)	Number of children waiting to be placed for adoption with a placement order (as at 31 March 2016)	A1 timeliness where times for children who are adopted by their foster family are stopped at the date the child moved in with the foster family (days) (2013-16)	Number of children in a Fostering for Adoption / Concurrent Planning foster placement (as at 31 March 2016)	Adoptions of children from ethnic minority backgrounds during 2013-16 (number adopted and % of BME children leaving care who are adopted)	Adoptions of children aged five or over during 2013-16 (number adopted and % of children aged 5 or over leaving care who are adopted)	Average length of care proceedings locally during 2013-16 (weeks)
				2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016											
LA%	35	30	20	25	2015	2016	2015	2016	90 (16%)	30 (18%)	20	10	505	x	10 (17%)	15 (5%)	28
England	2,530	1,730	73%	LA % change	-12%	LA % change	19%	National % change	2%	National % change	-3%	15100 (16%)	3520 (14%)	3,960	2,410	462	320	2330 (9%)	3180 (5%)	30

15. Management arrangements and staffing have remained as described in the Annual Report and are compliant with regulation in terms of qualification and experience. Significant support has been given to the development of Adoption West and the implementation of Adoption West adoption panels.
16. The core task of the Adoption Service is to provide secure and stable adoptive placements for children who require legal permanence and are no longer able to remain living safely with their parents or other family members. Services have continued to be delivered by two teams within the Adoption Service:
- The Adoption Recruitment and Assessment Team
 - The Adoption Support Team
17. In addition, the Adoption Service is responsible for providing an intermediary service for adopted adults and birth relatives wishing to trace family members, for those wishing to trace adopted children, support for non-agency adoptions (typically step-parents wishing to adopt), and those wishing to adopt children from overseas.
18. The establishment operational staffing of the Service (Recruitment and Assessment and Adoption Support) is unchanged from that described in the Annual Report. The Service is managed by a Team Manager. The Assistant Team Manager remains on long term sick leave, subject to absence monitoring. One full time social worker is on a phased return from a period of long term sick leave.
19. The Service continues to work to a development plan, supported by an adopter recruitment strategy, which was published in autumn 2016. This reflects the priorities of the Service and the key areas of improvement. This plan will be continually monitored and refreshed as required until the implementation of Adoption West in April 2018, at which time a new plan will be required for what remains of the Service within the Council.
20. The priorities of the 2016-17 Adoption Service Development Plan include:
- Suitable adoptive families will be identified without delay for children for whom adoption is in their best interest
 - Adopter recruitment and retention
 - Provide an effective and efficient home finding service
 - Implement an adopters' training pathway
 - Promote the concepts of Early Permanence
 - Provide an adoption support service that is responsive to the needs of adopters, special guardians, adopted children and their families
 - Ensure that the Adoption Panel is effective
 - Ensure that the Adoption Service is integral to the development of Adoption West

21. As described in the previous annual report to Cabinet and indicated above, Adoption West is the local response to the Government's position that local authorities (and Voluntary Adoption Agencies) should work collaboratively to ensure more effective arrangements are in place to deliver adoption where it was in a child's best interest. Cabinet has approved the outline design, budget and implementation arrangements of the partnership. Staff and managers from Wiltshire are fully involved in the development to not only ensure it is an effective agency but also that the interests of children and adopters from Wiltshire are well served. This is a significant commitment from the Service and care has been taken that it does not affect "business as usual".

22. Staff who are currently employed within the Adoption Service and/or whose work partly involves adoption functions, have been identified for consultation, with specific transferring to Adoption West from April 2018. This will be done through TUPE and work has taken place throughout autumn 2017, with Human Resources colleagues, to ensure that the correct process is followed and consultation is made with staff and the Trades Unions. Adoption West will procure back-office functions (for example legal services, payroll, ICT) from the partner authorities within Adoption West and a tendering process was initiated in October 2017 for this.

23. The project continues to be managed through the Governance Group which is supported by a Service Manager group. As indicated, in October 2017, the local authority Adoption Panels were closed and Adoption West panels replaced them. Adoption West sought to recruit and appoint a Service Director in autumn 2017 but was not able to do so, despite interviewing. It is anticipated that the post will be filled via secondment, probably from within the Adoption West partnership. If this cannot be secured, this will represent a significant risk to the project.

24. As required to be provided to Cabinet, brief performance information and commentary relating to Quarters 1-2 in 2017 is as follows:

Profile of children waiting for an adoptive placement (at end of period)

Legal status	2015/16	2016/17	Q 1-2 2017
Section 20	0	0	0
Interim Care Order	7	7	6
Care Order	5	7	3
None	1	10	4 ¹
Placement Order			13
Total	13	24	26

1. 4 who are not currently LAC as living at home during care proceedings.

Ethnic Origin	2015/16	2016/17	Q 1-2 2017
White British	7	20	22
Mixed/Other	2	3	3
White Irish	1	0	0

Other Ethnic Group	3	1	3
Total	13	24	26

Age	2015/16	2016/17	Q 1-2 2017
0-11 months	1	4	8
12-23 months	7	3	4
2-4 years	3	11	9
5-10 years	2	6	5
11 and over	0	0	0
Total	13	24	26

25. To be noted is that several children remained at home with birth family whilst subject to care proceedings with a care plan for adoption. This meant that other permanence options (such as Special Guardianship Orders) will be considered by the court for these children.

Children adopted

Age	2015/16	2016/17	Q 1-2 2017
0-11 months	0	3	4
12-23 months	7	7	6
2-4 years	7	14	5
5-10 years	8	8	2
11 and over	0	1	0
Total	22	33	17

Rescissions of Placement Orders and Disruptions

26. In the three-year period 2013-16 the permanence decision for 30 children (18% of all children for whom an initial decision was made that adoption was in their best interest) moved away from adoption leading to the rescission of Adoption and Placement Orders. The England figure for this period was 14%. Wiltshire applies rigorous scrutiny to care planning and over a three-year period, it is inevitable that there will be developments in a case or a child's situation that means that adoption is no longer in that child's best interest. Of these 30, 1 rescission was made in 2016-17. In Quarters 1-2 of 2017, 3 rescissions were made. Our forecast is we will be in-line with national average going forward.

27. During 2016-17, there was one adoption placement disruption notified to the Adoption Service before an Adoption Order was made. In Quarters 1-2, this number is 0. There have been 1 placement breakdown that occurred post-order, when the child return to being looked after. This child was 9 years of age. The child had been placed by another County with Wiltshire adopters. Learning from these cases is provided to Teams within Children's Services and, where appropriate, is reflected to Adoption Service Development planning and is taken forward to Adoption West work streams.

Prospective adopters

	2015/16	2016/17	Q 1-2 2017
Enquiries to be an adopter	147	85	69
Applications to be an adopter	29	n/a	28 ¹
Number of newly approved adopters	13	26	8
Application to approval:			
0-3 months	0	3	0
4-6 months	4	15	2
7-12 months	7	7	5
Over 12 months	2	1	1
Number approved adopters unmatched	21	14	22 ²
Number approved adopters matched	17	14	4 ³

1. Prospective adopters starting stage 1.
2. Approved but unmatched at end of period
3. Matched in period

28. Of the 22 adopters, unmatched in Q1-2 and “waiting”, 14 were linked and waiting to go to Adoption Panel for a match and 0 had withdrawn from wanting to adopt and required deregistration, leaving 8 families actively looking to be matched with children. There were 12 children with Placement Orders who were waiting for placements at the end of Q2. Although it is anticipated that these children will be placed with Wiltshire adopters, it is nationally recognised that it remains more challenging to find placements for children with complex needs, older children and sibling groups. However, some of these children are young infants and it is anticipated that they can be placed with adopters quickly.

Financial summary of the agency

28. The table below indicates the current budget for the financial year 2017/18:

	2017/18 Budget (£)
Salaries and team running costs	559,400
Adopter recruitment and training	17,000
Adoption allowances (all types)	501,500
Special Guardianship Allowances	1,835,600
Adoption income (from interagency placements)	-200,000
Total	2,713,500

There is a projected year end overspend on Adoption Allowances of approximately £132k and an underspend on Special Guardianship Allowances of up to £364k. Staffing budgets are expected to be on budget or show a slight underspend.

29. There have continued to be adoptive families who are financially supported:

	At 31 March 2016	At 31 March 2017	Q 1-2 2017

	Children/Carers	Children/Carers	
RO Allowance	20/16	14/11	14/11
Adoption Allowance	50/40	38/31	34/27
Other (SGO)	165/124	184/136	196/150
Total	235/180	236/178	244/188

Adoption Panel

	2015/16	2016/17	Q 1-2 2017
No. Panels held	21	19	8
Adoptive families considered	14 (including one deferred and not reconsidered)	25	9
Matches considered	28	31	10
Relinquished Children	2	0	1
Reviews of Adopters notified	0	0	0

30. During Quarters 1-2, the Adoption Panel complied with Regulation as described in the Annual Report. Appraisals for members have been held and Training days have continued to be held as required. The arrangement for Panel recommendations being considered by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) is robust.

31. The Adoption West panels began to operate in October 2017. They comply with regulation and so all Wiltshire business considered by that Panel has been managed appropriately, with clear recommendations and decisions made.

Next Steps and Recommendations

32. It is important to continue the effective work of the Adoption Service during the period building up to the implementation of Adoption West in April 2018. In addition to normal activity, attention will be paid to the following:

- Maintain a high level of involvement in the development and implementation of Adoption West, supporting staff who will move into the new organisation whilst considering the needs of children and adopters in Wiltshire. This includes ensuring that the responsibilities that are retained by Wiltshire Council as an Adoption Agency are effective and there is strong partnership working with Adoption West.
- Further develop Early Permanence practice, linked to Adoption West.
- Maintain positive Home Finding practice to ensure the effectiveness of the process to bring about timely identification of potential adoptive matches for Wiltshire children who require adoption. This will be supported using the on-line facility provided by Link Maker.
- Until the implementation of Adoption West, continue to ensure a sufficiency of adopters who can meet the diverse needs of the population of children requiring adoption in Wiltshire. A suitably diverse pool of approved adopters allows matching to begin early in the process, often

- before a Placement Order is made. Approved adopters will move to Adoption West in time, if they are still waiting to be matched with a child.
- Continue to ensure that formal Disruption Meetings take place where adoption placements breakdown before Adoption Orders are made to consider key learning to inform whole service improvement.

Background

33. The Adoption Service provides permanency for children who are no longer able to live safely with their parents or other family members. This is achieved through the provision of quality adoptive placements for children who live in Wiltshire and where a decision has been made that adoption is in their best interest.
34. The fundamental requirement of the Service is that children are placed with families who have been assessed as being suitable to adopt. A recommendation of suitability is made by an Adoption Panel and this is ratified as a decision by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM). Through this process, there is rigorous assurance that approved adopters can provide safe, secure and enduring family placements for this vulnerable group of children. This allows them to grow, develop and thrive in a nurturing, supportive and loving family environment, removed from the stigma of being Looked After by the local authority.
35. To do this, there must be an appropriate range of enduring adoption placements to meet the assessed needs of children who need permanent adoptive families. These families must promote stability, safety and positive outcomes for children by working in partnership with all agencies as required.
36. The legislative basis of this work is the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the accompanying 2005 Regulations. From April 2018, Adoption West will be the regional adoption agency; Wiltshire will retain the functions of an Adoption Agency that relate directly to children's planning.
37. The local authority, through reporting to Cabinet, must be assured of regulatory compliance and effectiveness through performance monitoring, challenge and improvement planning. The Looked After Children (LAC) Improvement Plan is the focus of this and it, in turn, reports to the overarching Children's Services Improvement Board.
38. The Adoption Service continues to be able to recruit adopters for infants and younger children. Through a programme of general and targeted recruitment, this will be maintained and the pool of adopters will be expanded to include those who can provide permanence for children who may be considered "harder to place". This group includes older children, sibling groups and children with disabilities. The Service is part of the South West Adoption Consortium (SWAC) which works regionally to identify matches for children across the area. Where necessary, children are also referred to the National Adoption Register (NAR) which provides national opportunity to identify adopters for children who cannot be placed

locally. The authority subscribes to Link Maker, an online adopter-lead resource.

39. Adoption West is a regional development involving six local authorities and a small number of locally operating Voluntary Adoption Agencies. This will provide a single Adoption Agency for the region in line with government requirement. Adoption West is intended to have significant impact on outcomes for children as it will deliver a more effective regional response to adoption and the needs of children.

Safeguarding Implications

40. Wiltshire Council Adoption Service is part of Children's Services, all of which are delivered in accordance with Wiltshire Children's Services Policy and Procedures, overseen by the Wiltshire Safeguarding Children Board. The local authority has clear and effective safeguarding procedures in place for children and vulnerable adults.

41. This report is for note by Wiltshire Council Cabinet.

Public Health Implications

42. Not applicable - for note by Wiltshire Council Cabinet.

Corporate Procurement Implications

43. Not applicable - for note by Wiltshire Council Cabinet.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal (detailing conclusions identified from Equality Analysis, sections 4 and 5)

44. Not applicable - for note by Wiltshire Council Cabinet.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

45. Not applicable - for note by Wiltshire Council Cabinet.

Risk Assessment

46. Risks that may arise if the performance and management of the Adoption Service is not effective and it does not achieve good outcomes for children:

- Safeguarding risk to looked after children if they are placed with adopters who have not been fully assessed, prepared and supported. Safeguarding is considered a high-level risk within the corporate risk register.
- An inadequate supply of adopters to meet the needs of Wiltshire children requiring permanence through adoption.
- Reputational risk for the Council if the Agency (and subsequently Adoption West) is not effective and does not achieve good outcomes for children who require adoption.
- Reputational risk if statutory timescales are not met regarding adoption.

- Reputational risk if the Agency is rated as Inadequate through inspection.
- Financial risk if placements are made, are unstable and subsequently breakdown leading to children returning to local authority care.
- Looking ahead, there are risks associated with the safety and effectiveness of service delivery should the development of the commissioned Adoption West service not be robust.

Effective delivery of the Service and implementation of Adoption West, the improvement plan, reporting and challenge will mitigate these risks.

Financial Implications

47. The budget for the Adoption Service is indicated, in summary, above. Over recent years, the Government has provided additional money over the base budget through the Adoption Reform Grant, the Adoption Support Grant (now extended until 2020) and, more recently, to Adoption West to promote regional collaboration. The Service has been managing within budget due to external incomes collected. The cost of supporting an adopted child is less than the average cost of looking after a child in the care system and is often time limited as opposed to costs of care which extend to 18 years old and beyond. Cabinet has received information relating to the financial implications of Adoption West and the contribution that the Council will make to the new organisation.

Legal Implications

48. It is a requirement of registration as an Adoption Agency that the Executive side of the Council receive regular written reports regarding the effectiveness, compliance and management of the Agency. It has been agreed that this will be in the form of an annual report and interim report and so it ensures that legal requirements are met. There are no additional legal implications arising.

Options Considered

49. Not applicable - for note by Wiltshire Council Cabinet.

Conclusion

50. Recent years have seen considerable change within the world of adoption and a focus on improving adoption performance. This has led to the need to review and develop services, amend policy and practice and so increase the effectiveness of the Wiltshire Adoption Service. At the heart of this is the belief that, for some children, adoption is the best route to legal permanence, security and the opportunity to achieve their potential. Wiltshire Council's Adoption Service is committed to improving service delivery and, therefore, outcomes for children. Adoption West will bring further significant change and improvement in coming years. The Council is an Adoption West partner, working collaboratively and regionally to ensure a whole service approach to prevent delay in securing appropriate adoptive placements for children in a timely and safe way.

Lucy Townsend (Director - Family and Children's Services)

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November 2017

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None