Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

Date of meeting: 15 January 2019

Subject: Wiltshire Council Adoption Service: 2018/19 Q1-2, 6 Month Report

Cabinet member: Councillor Laura Mayes – Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Skills

Key Decision: Non Key

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.

For this reporting period, two main areas remain as the focus for continued 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 2017/18, 22 adoption orders were granted and 19 families were approved as suitable to adopt. In Quarters 1-2 of 2018/19, 15 adoption orders were granted, 15 children were placed for adoption and 13 families were approved as suitable to adopt. A further 3 children have been matched at matching panel in October and November.

Recognising the Government's 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, within the broader context of the development and implementation of Adoption West, has continued. Annual comparative performance is measured using the Adoption Scorecard which, for Wiltshire Council, shows overall continued improvement and is included within this report for information.

The 2017-18 Annual Report described progress in developing the collaborative arrangements to improve adoption performance. The regional response to this is Adoption West, comprising of six local authorities and a small number of locally operating Voluntary Adoption Agencies working together to form a new adoption agency. Wiltshire Council is a member of the Adoption West partnership.

Cabinet has previously received detailed information regarding Adoption West and the role, responsibility and accountability arrangements that are in place

Proposal(s)

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.

Adoption West will be required, as a registered Adoption Agency, to provide regular reports to the Local Authorities within the partnership.

Terence Herbert
Corporate Director

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

Date of meeting: 15 January 2019

Subject: Wiltshire Council Adoption Service: 2018/19 Q1-2 6 Month Report

Cabinet member: Councillor Laura Mayes – Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Skills

Key Decision: Non Key

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 2017-18 in July 2018, covering the period from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

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. There is information about the development of Adoption West.

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 became an Ofsted registered Adoption Agency in October 2018 and is scheduled to become fully operational in January 2019. This represents a delay from the initial anticipated go-live date, in 2018, because of the highly complex nature of the work required to secure the new Agency and the time taken to recruit a permanent Service Director.

8. Some aspects of work, within the Adoption West remit, are developing closer alignment across the partnership, building on Adoption West Panels which began in October 2017. Until January 2019, Wiltshire Adoption Service remains responsible for the recruitment, assessment and support of adopters, matching them with children and providing adoption support. From January 2019, this set of responsibilities will formally 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 with reduced responsibilities.

Main Considerations for the Council

9. The main consideration for the Council is to be assured about statutory compliance and the effectiveness of the Adoption Service. In 2017/18 22 children were adopted. Of these, 19 (86%) were placed within 12 months of the decision that adoption was in their best interest being made. In 2017/18 19 families were approved as suitable to adopt. Whilst this approval rate needs to increase to be able to provide adoptive families for the children who need them, this is a similar situation across Adoption West. What Adoption West does provide is a wider pool of approved adopters who can be accessed directly through the partnership.

10. In Quarters 1-2, 15 children were adopted, 13 (87%) were placed within 12 months of the decision that adoption was in their best interest being made. The two children falling outside this had complex needs. In this time, 13 families were approved as suitable to adopt

11. Wiltshire's current Adoption Scorecard is included, below, for information. The most recently published performance to March 2017 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 (2014-17) is 469 days. This is shorter than the three-year average of 545 days in 2013-16 and shorter than the England three-year average for 2014-17 of 520 days. The Scorecard shows steady improvement over time.
- Excluding two legacy cases the three-year average figure becomes 419 days for 2014-17
- The local authority figure for 2017-18 is 326 days, down from 445 in the previous year.

- Including Early Permanence (Fostering for Adoption) placements and legacy cases, locally reported data estimates the figure for 2015-18 as 392 days, a continued improvement on 469 days and a marked improvement on 545 days, remaining significantly less than the England average.

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 (2014-17) is 186 days. This is an increase on the three-year average of 158 days in 2013-16. Excluding two legacy cases this figure becomes 154 days for 2014-17.
- It remains shorter than the England three-year average of 220 days. Overall the Scorecard shows steady improvement over time.
- The local authority one year figure for 2017-18 is 126 days. In 2016-17 the figure was 221 days, excluding 2 legacy cases this figure becomes 144 days for 2016-17
- This includes 2 children adopted in May 2016 following protracted court proceedings, who were originally placed for adoption in 2014 with the placement orders being granted in 2011. One child has significant additional needs and the second experienced placement disruption prior to being matched with adoptive parents. In addition, 2 children were adopted by their foster carers whose adoption assessments needed to be completed once placement orders were granted. Three adoptive placements were found for a family of 7 children, meaning significant sibling contact was required.
- Including legacy cases where they remain in the three-year period, locally reported data estimates the figure for 2015-18 as 171 days. 2019-20 will be the final three-year average where these legacy cases will have an impact.

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

- In the period 2017-18, there were 69% (85) of children who waited less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family. This is an increase from 48% (60) in the previous cycle when the measure was those who waited *less than 16 months*. The England three-year average (2014-17) is 53%. Locally reported data estimates the figure for 2015-18 as 94 children (73%). This shows steady improvement over time.

12. As indicated in the previous annual report, the most recent Scorecard three year averages relate to 2014-17, therefore there has been a further year of work taking place in Wiltshire which has produced the unverified averages described above. This data indicates that the three key measures have continued to improve, with the overall pace and trajectory of improvement being positive. There is significant improvement for indicator **A1** (which is showing an improvement of about 20%, meaning that more children are being placed in their adoptive placements in a shorter time after being received into care) and **A3** where there is an improvement of about 20 percentage points and in the context of a tougher definition (a reduction of two months each reporting year). This is good progress. The increase in **A2** includes two children who have been hard to place and who are now in adoptive placements, demonstrating commitment to seek secure,

permanent arrangements for all children where adoption is in their best interest.

13. 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.

14. It is concerning that the number of families being approved as suitable to adopt has been low, with the increased risk that if the need for adoptive placements remains high, it may be harder to place children. This reflects a national and regional challenge, although some parts of Adoption West have reported stronger recruitment, bringing benefit to the wider Agency. Appropriate steps are being taken to increase the number of families being approved and an upturn in numbers can be seen through the approval process. It is anticipated that this rise will be reflected in the 2018/19 Adoption West Annual Report.

15. Despite this concern, there has not been an impact on timeliness to date, indicated in Scorecard, below. Improvements to processes have continued, to ensure that family finding starts at the earliest opportunity and that all activities are monitored and completed in a timely fashion. Previous practice had family finding beginning later in the child's journey with the resultant impact on timeliness. This work will continue in the coming year and into the development of Adoption West, making sure that best practice is recognised and delivered within Wiltshire and across the Adoption West area.

16. The full Scorecard is as follows:
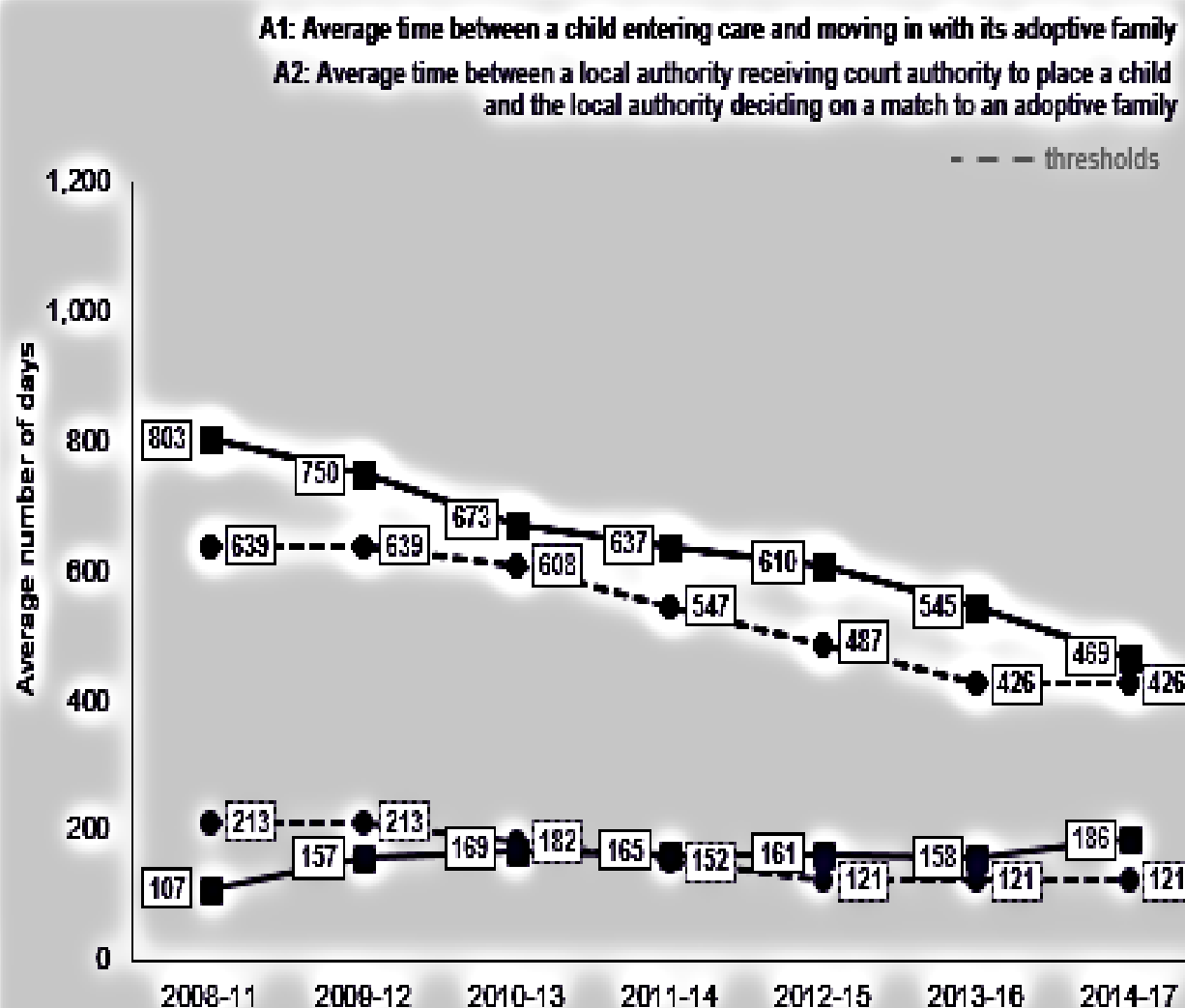
Adoption Scorecard

Choose Local Authority | Wiltshire

Children

	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...	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 (2014-17)	469	186	85 (69%)
Distance from 2014-17 performance threshold (426 and 121 days)	43 days	65 days	n/a
1 year trend – Improvement from 2016 to 2017	Average time in 2017 was longer than in 2016	Average time in 2017 was longer than in 2016	n/a
3 year trend – Improvement from 2013-16 to 2014-17	Average time in 2014-17 was shorter than in 2013-16	Average time in 2014-17 was longer than in 2013-16	n/a
England 3 year average (2014-17)	520	220	11120 (53%)

Average time indicators

A1: Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family

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

- – – thresholds

A1 line: 803, 750, 673, 637, 610, 545, 469 (2014-17)
A1 threshold line: 639, 639, 608, 547, 487, 426, 426
A2 line: 107, 157, 169, 182, 165, 152, 161, 158, 186
A2 threshold: 213, 213, 121, 121, 121

X-axis: 2008-11, 2009-12, 2010-13, 2011-14, 2012-15, 2013-16, 2014-17
Y-axis: Average number of days (0 to 1,200)

A1: Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, 2014-17

England average 520 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, 2014-17

England average 220 days

Adopters

Related Information

	Number of approved adoptive families waiting to be matched as at 31 March 2017	Number of applications to become an adoptive family still being assessed (not yet approved or rejected) as at 31	Proportion of adoptive families who were matched to a child during 2016-17 who waited more than 3 months from approval to being...	New ADM decisions / New placement orders granted		Adoptions from care during 2014-17 (with % leaving care who are	Children for whom the permanence decision has changed away from	Number of children waiting to be placed for adoption (as at 31 March 2017)	Number of children waiting to be placed for adoption with a placement order	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) [2014-	Number of children in a Fostering for Adoption / Concurrent Planning foster placement	Adoptions of children from ethnic minority backgrounds during 2014-17 (number adopted and % of BME children leaving	Adoptions of children aged five or over during 2014-17 (number adopted and % of children aged 5 or over leaving care who	Average length of care proceedings locally during 2014-17 (weeks)
LA	25	20	75%	30 (2016), 35 (2017) / 30 (2016), 25 (2017)		80 (16%)	30 (19%)	20	10	402	x	5 (10%)	15 (5%)	27
England	2,040	1,690	74%	LA % change 20% / -17%, National % change -3% / -%		14410 (15%)	2880 (12%)	4,100	2,580	435	390	2210 (8%)	3130 (5%)	30

THESE ARE NOT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

17. Management arrangements and staffing have remained broadly 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. A Service Director has been appointed to Adoption West. The appointee was the Wiltshire Adoption Team Manager and a successor Team Manager has also been appointed. In the interim, cover has been provided through a temporary arrangement.

18. 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

19. 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. The Adoption Service is also responsible for providing support to Special Guardians; this work will not move to Adoption West at this time and so arrangements have been made to manage this work within the Wiltshire Council Fostering Service.

20. The establishment operational staffing of the Service (Recruitment and Assessment and Adoption Support) in unchanged from that described in the Annual Report. The Service is managed by a Team Manager. Staff will transfer to Adoption West via TUPE arrangements in January 2019, remaining as Wiltshire Council employees in the meantime. Consultation was carried out with staff and the Trades Unions. Wiltshire Council provides Human Resource support to Adoption West and so is well placed to support affected staff.

21. The Service continues to work to a 3-year development plan, supported by an adopter recruitment strategy, which was published in autumn 2016 and reviewed in 2017. This reflects the priorities of the Service and the key areas of improvement. This plan is monitored and refreshed and will be replaced by the Adoption West Development Plan and a new plan for the adoption responsibilities that remain within the Council.

22. The priorities of the 2016-17 3-year Adoption Service Development Plan include:

- Identification of suitable adoptive families without delay for children for whom adoption is in their best interest
- Adopter recruitment and retention

- Provision of an effective and efficient home finding service
- Provision of an adopters' training pathway
- Promotion and continued development of Early Permanence for children
- Provision of 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

23. Adoption West is managed through the Governance Group which is supported by a Service Manager group

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	2016/17	2017/18	Q 1-2 2018
Section 20	0	0	1
Interim Care Order	7	17	21
Care Order	7	0	0
None	10	3	3
Total	24	20	25

Ethnic Origin	2016/17	2017/18	Q 1-2 2018
White British	20	19	24
Mixed/Other	3	0	0
White Irish	0	0	0
Other Ethnic Group	1	1	1
Total	24	20	25

Age	2016/17	2017/18	Q 1-2 2018
0-11 months	4	9	7
12-23 months	3	2	2
2-4 years	11	5	6
5-10 years	6	4	10
11 and over	0	0	0
Total	24	20	25

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	2016/17	2017/18	Q 1-2 2018
0-11 months	3	5	1
12-23 months	7	8	6

2-4 years	14	5	6
5-10 years	8	4	2
11 and over	1	0	0
Total	**33**	**22**	**15**

Rescissions of Placement Orders and Disruptions

26. In 2017-18, 7 rescissions were made where the plan for the child moved away from adoption, leading to the rescission of Adoption and Placement Orders. Wiltshire Council applies rigorous scrutiny to care planning and 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; for example, a family member or parent can resume the care of a child where it had not previously been envisaged, a court may not grant a Placement Order but make a Special Guardianship Order instead or a plan will move to long term fostering, particularly for older children. In Q1-2, 1 rescission was made and there are a further 3 children who are currently in this rescission process.

27. During 2017-18, there were no adoption placement disruptions notified to the Adoption Service before an Adoption Order was made. In Q1-2, there have been no disruptions.

Prospective adopters

	2016/17	2017/18	Q 1-2 2018
Enquiries to be an adopter	85	66	32
Applications to be an adopter	n/a	30	15
Number of newly approved adopters	26	18	10
Application to approval: 0-3 months	3	0	0
4-6 months	15	3	3
7-12 months	7	13	4
Over 12 months	1	1	3
Number approved adopters unmatched	14	12	25
Number approved adopters matched	14	18	12

28. Of the 25 adopters, unmatched in Q1-2 and "waiting", 6 were linked and waiting to go to Adoption Panel for a match and 4 had withdrawn from wanting to adopt and required deregistration (briefly, the reasons were that two families experienced significant life changes, one became pregnant and one formally resigned after transition for a child broke down). This left 15 families actively looking to be matched with children. There were 10 children with Placement Orders waiting for placements at the end of Q2. Of these 8 children, 4 have subsequently had a change of care plan to long-term fostering; despite extensive searches for adoptive families, 2 had significant additional needs and all were aged 5 plus. The remaining 4 children have all been successfully linked and will be progressing to adoption panel in November 2019 (this includes one sibling group of two). All but one of the matches are with adopters from the Adoption West region.

Financial summary of the agency

29. The table below indicates the current budget for the financial year 2018/19:

Adoption Team	2018/19 Budget (£)	2018/19 Forecast (£)	2018/19 Forecast Variance (£)
Salaries and team running costs	576,800	506,464	(70,336)
Adopter recruitment and training	17,000	12,124	(4,876)
Adoption allowances (all types)	610,600	888,130	277,530
Special Guardianship Allowances	1,654,700	1,585,681	(69,019)
Adoption income (from interagency placements)	(200,000)	(111,333)	88,667
Total	2,659,100	2,881,065	221,965

30. The overspend in the table above relates to an overspend on inter authority fees paid and a shortfall on budgeted inter authority income. It is thought this this is the impact of many regional adoption agencies taking from their own larger pools rather than our pool of children. In year, this overspend is offset with underspends elsewhere in the Children in Care service.

31. Please note that from 1st March 2019, the service will be provided through the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) Adoption West and under the terms of the agreement, approximately one twelfth of team costs above will be paid to the RAA to use as operating budget.

32. With effect from 1st April 2019, there will be a contract for services with the RAA but the local authority will retain the inter authority budgets and special guardianship budgets.

33. There are adoptive families who are financially supported:

	At 31 March 2017 Children/Carers	At 31 March 2018 Children/Carers	Q 1-2 2018
RO Allowance	14/11	11/10	11/10
Adoption Allowance	38/31	32/26	34/27
Other (SGO)	184/136	195/150	203/155
Total	236/178	238/186	248/192

Adoption Panel

	2016/17	2017/18	Q 1-2 2018
No. Panels held	19	19 (inc AW)	8
Adoptive families considered	25	24* (including 4 assessed by other AW local authorities)	15 (including 2 assessed by other AW authorities)
Matches considered	31	36 (28 Wiltshire children and	14 (All Wiltshire children)

		8 from other AW local authorities)	
Relinquished Children	0	1 (Wiltshire child)	1 (Wiltshire child)
Reviews of Adopters notified	0	0	0

* Two suitability assessments were considered by panel on 27.3.18 and their ADM decision was made in April. Therefore, they do not appear in the 2017-18 count.

33. During Quarters 1-2, the Adoption Panel complied with Regulation as described in the Annual Report. Appraisals for members have been held and Adoption West Training days are planned. The arrangement for Panel recommendations being considered by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) is robust within Wiltshire Council. This responsibility will move to Adoption West in January 2019.

Next Steps and Recommendations

34. It is important to continue the effective work of the Adoption Service during the period up to the full implementation of Adoption West in January 2019. In addition to normal activity, attention will be paid to the following:

- Through the chairing of the Governance Group and other means, maintain a high level of involvement in the development and implementation of Adoption West before and after implementation; considering the needs of children and adopters in Wiltshire, staff currently working in the local authority and other stakeholders
- Provide Early Permanence placements for children in partnership with Adoption West and continue to support them once they are provided by the new Agency.
- Use positive family finding practice (anonymised profiles, information days and events, Link Maker, child appreciation events) to ensure the effectiveness of the process to bring about timely identification of potential adoptive matches for children who require adoption
- In partnership with 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.
- In cases where it is recognised that the agency may struggle to match children with in-house prospective adopters, request Court consent to feature the children's profiles beyond Wiltshire's boundaries and be pro-active in referring children to regional and national placement finding services once a Placement Order has been granted (sooner with the consent of the court)
- Continue to ensure that formal Disruption Meetings take place where adoption placements breakdown before Adoption Orders are made to consider key learning in to inform whole service improvement

Background

35. 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.

36. 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. His 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.

37. 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.

38. 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.

39. The local authority, through reporting to Cabinet, must be assured of regulatory compliance and effectiveness through performance monitoring, challenge and improvement planning.

40. The Adoption Service, working in partnership with Adoption West, continues to be able to recruit adopters for infants and younger children. Through a programme of 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.

41. Adoption West is a Regional Adoption Agency 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 will 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

42. 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.

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

Public Health Implications

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

Corporate Procurement Implications

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

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

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

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

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

Risk Assessment

48. Risks that may arise if the performance and management of the Adoption Service (and Adoption West) 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 Adoption West) is not effective and does not achieve good outcomes for children who require adoption.
- Reputational risk if statutory timescales are not meet 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 and delivery of services through Adoption West not be robust.

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

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

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

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

50. See above. Not applicable - for note by Wiltshire Council Cabinet.

Financial Implications (MT for BH 131218)

51. The budget and forecast expenditure is included in the table in paragraph 29 above, the service is forecasting an overspend which is 8% of the net budget. The shortfall in inter authority activity is offset slightly by the team having vacancies which are largely due to the forthcoming transfer to Adoption West and the overall forecast overspend offset by underspends elsewhere in the children in care service.

52. 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. This annual report relates to the work of the Wiltshire Adoption Service and *not* Adoption West, the implementation of which does have financial implications.

Legal Implications

53. 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

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

Conclusion

55. 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.

Terence Herbert
Corporate Director

Report Author: Martin Davis
Head of Service: Care and Placement Services
Contact Details: Martin.Davis@Wiltshire.gov.uk
                        01225 712590

November 2018

Background Papers

The following documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report:

None

Appendices

None