

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

Date of meeting: 17 March 2015

Subject: Adoption Agency Six Month Report

**Cabinet member: Councillor Laura Mayes
Children's Services**

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary

The purpose of the report is to ensure that Wiltshire Council Cabinet is satisfied that the adoption agency is effective and achieving good outcomes for children, young people and service users. Wiltshire Council is an Ofsted-registered Adoption Agency.

This six monthly written report on the management, outcomes and financial state of the adoption agency is a statutory requirement and covers the period 1 April 2014 to 31 October 2014.

In March 2013, Wiltshire Council's Adoption Service was subject to Ofsted inspection. The overall effectiveness of the service was judged to be adequate. There has not been another Ofsted inspection since, but there have been significant changes within the management structure and the development and delivery of the service.

The number of adoption orders granted during 2013/14 totalled 40 and 40 adoptive families were also approved as suitable to adopt, both of which signified a dramatic increase on the previous year's figures. Between 1 April 2014 and 31 October 2014 16 adoption orders have been granted and 25 adoptive families approved. During the same period last year, 27 adoption orders were granted and 17 adoptive families had been approved.

A number of significant incentives and changes have been implemented within the service in response to the continuing focus on adoption reform. Against a backdrop of continuing change and development, the service has improved its performance and risen to the challenges posed by the adoption reform agenda. There has also been extra external scrutiny by the National Adoption Leadership Board set up by the DfE.

Proposal(s)

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

Reason for Proposal

The 2013 Statutory Adoption Guidance and the 2014 Adoption Minimum Standards place a requirement on local authority adoption services to ensure that Wiltshire Council Cabinet is satisfied that the Adoption Agency is effective; achieving good outcomes for children, young people and service users; and complying with the conditions of registration.

Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

Date of meeting: 17 March 2015

Subject: Adoption Agency Six Month Report

**Cabinet member: Councillor Laura Mayes
Children's Services**

Key Decision: No

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of the report is to ensure that Wiltshire Council Cabinet is satisfied that the adoption agency is effective and achieving good outcomes for children, young people and service users. The report will also satisfy Wiltshire Council Cabinet that the adoption agency is complying with the conditions of registration (Minimum Standard 25.6; Statutory Adoption Guidance 3.93 and 5.39).
2. This six monthly written report on the management, outcomes and financial state of the adoption agency is a requirement of the 2013 Statutory Adoption Guidance and the 2014 Adoption Minimum Standards.
3. The report covers the period 1 April 2014 to 31 October 2014.
4. It is recommended that the contents of this report are noted and accepted.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

5. The Wiltshire Council Adoption Service is a central priority for Wiltshire Council as set out in the Wiltshire Council Business Plan 2013-2017 key priority to protect those who are most vulnerable. Key actions in the Business Plan include:
 - To develop an outstanding adoption service for all children for whom adoption is in their best interest
 - To work with voluntary sector partners to ensure that we offer and deliver a comprehensive array of adoption support services.

Background

6. Wiltshire Council is an Ofsted-registered Adoption Agency. The Adoption Service provides permanency through timely and quality adoptive placements for the children and young people in Wiltshire who have a decision made that they should be placed for adoption.

7. The overall requirement of the service is that children and young people are placed for adoption with families who have been assessed and approved as suitable to provide a safe, secure and supportive environment in which children and young people are nurtured to ensure that they develop in all aspects of their lives. The Department for Education publish adoption scorecards which were introduced as part of a new approach to address delays in the adoption system, set out in 'An action plan for adoption: Tackling Delay' (2012). The scorecard measures the timeliness of securing permanency through adoption and has set out reducing thresholds for the period between 2013 and 2017. The present benchmarks are 486 days from a child entering care and being placed for adoption and 152 days from receiving a placement order to being matched with adoptive parents.

8. The Adoption Service:
 - Provides an appropriate range of enduring adoption placements to meet the assessed needs of children and young people in need of permanent placements that promote and safeguard their long-term welfare.

 - Ensures that adoption placements promote stability and positive outcomes for children and young people by working in partnership with adopted children and young people, adoptive parents, birth families and other professionals in the adoption and post adoption support services.

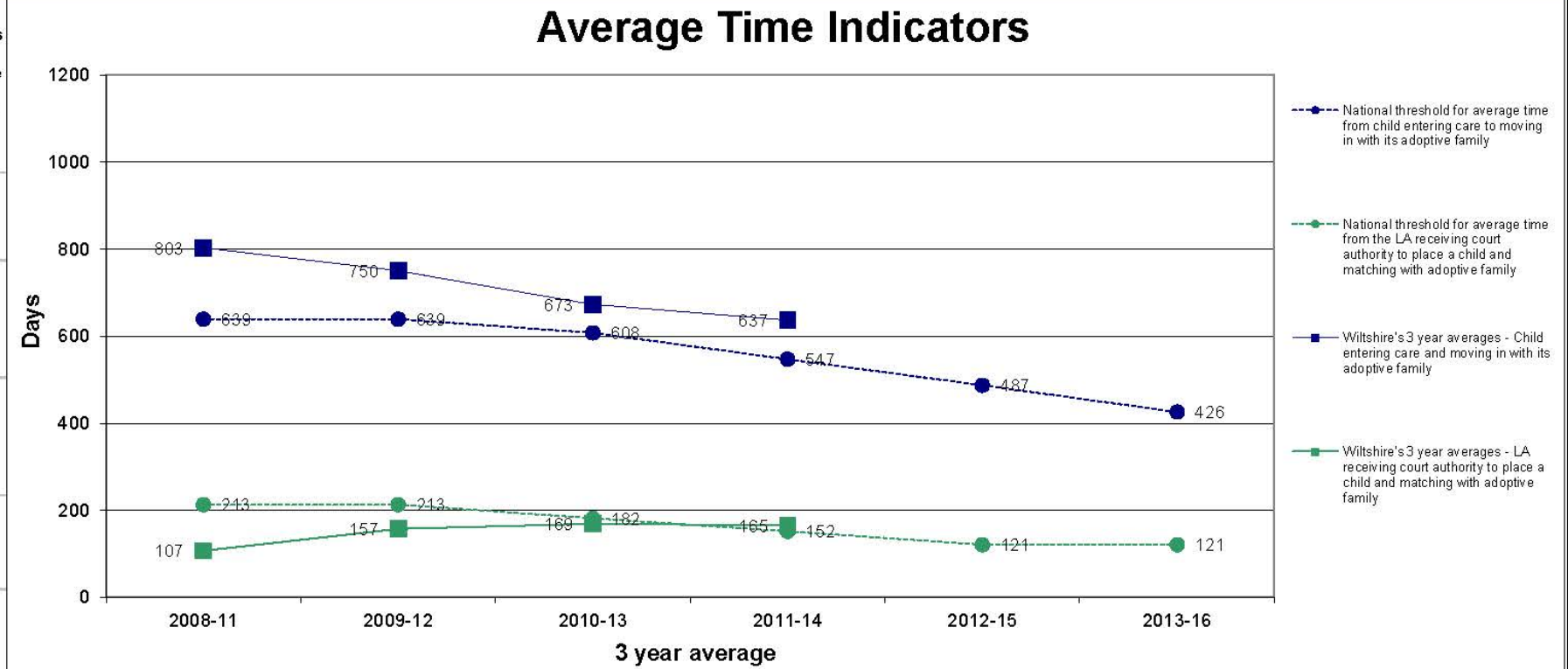
Meets the timescales set out in The Children Act 1989, Statutory Adoption Guidance (2013) and the Adoption National Minimum Standards (2014). Specifically to ensure the time taken to place a child for adoption from the point the child becomes a Looked After Child meets regulatory timescales. These timescales are also monitored by The Adoption Scorecard which were introduced as part of a new approach to address delays in the adoption system, set out in An Action Plan for Adoption: Tackling Delay (March 2012).

Adoption Scorecard

Choose Local Authority

Children

	Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted (days)	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)	Children who wait less than 18 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (number and %)
LA's 3 year average (2011-14)	637	165	50 (40%)
1 year trend - Improvement from 2013 to 2014	Average time in 2014 was shorter than in 2013	Average time in 2014 was longer than in 2013	n/a
3 year trend - Improvement from 2010-13 to 2011-14	Average time in 2011-14 was shorter than in 2010-13	Average time in 2011-14 was shorter than in 2010-13	n/a
England 3 year average (2011-14)	628	217	11,360 (51%)
Distance from 2011-14 performance threshold	90 days	13 days	n/a



Adopters

	Number of approved adoptive families as at 31 March 2014	Proportion of adoptive families who were matched to a child during 2013-14 who waited more than 3 months from approval to being matched to a child
LA average	45	61
England	5,795	58

Related Information

	Adoptions from care (number adopted and % leaving care who are adopted)	Number and % of children for whom the permanence decision has changed away from adoption	Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family. 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)	Adoptions of children from ethnic minority backgrounds (number adopted and % of BME children leaving care who are adopted)	Adoptions of children aged five or over (number adopted and % of children aged 5 or over leaving care who are adopted)	Average length of care proceedings locally (weeks)	Number of children awaiting adoption (as at 31 March 2014)	Number of children awaiting adoption with a placement order (as at 31 March 2014)	Number of applications for approval as an adopter still being assessed (not yet approved or rejected) as at 31 March 2014
LA's 3 year (2011-14)	75 (13%)	5 (4%)	580	10 (15%)	15 (4%)	50	40	15	30
England 3 year (2011-14)	12,530 (14%)	3,230 (12%)	525	1,910 (8%)	2,790 (5%)	48	6,370	4,680	4,245

9. The work of the Adoption Agency is underpinned by the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the 2005 regulations informed by this Act. The aim of the Act is to improve outcomes for children whose permanence plan is to be secured through adoption.
10. In March 2013, Wiltshire Council's Adoption Service was subject to Ofsted inspection. The purpose of an inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the National Minimum Standards. The overall effectiveness of the service was judged to be 'Adequate'.
11. The Adoption Agency annual report was presented to Cabinet on 22 July 2014 updating Cabinet on the performance of the Adoption Agency for the period 1 October 2013 to 31 March 2014.
12. Cabinet noted that year on year data indicated a decrease in the numbers of children deemed suitable for adoption, falling from 38 in 2012/2013 to 27 during 2013/2014; the corresponding figure for the period April 2014 to October 2014 was 12.
13. The adoption service continues to be able to recruit adopters for babies and younger children without any difficulty. The agency's response to the Adoption Reform Agenda was to take up the challenge of becoming a net provider of approved adopters for the region via the South West Adoption Consortium and nationally through the National Adoption Register. We assessed and approved adopters regardless of whether the placement met the needs of Wiltshire children. This has resulted in a surplus of adopters wanting to parent children under the age of two and few who are able to meet the more complex needs of children with additional health needs or disability, older sibling groups and children of dual heritage. Having reviewed our strategy we have adjusted our approach and from late 2014 we have been targeting our recruitment activity on attracting and progressing applications from prospective adopters who can meet the needs of these 'harder to place' children. It is envisaged that this strategy will result in the more timely placement of most Wiltshire children who need to be adopted and as a result a positive impact on the Adoption Scorecard.

Main Considerations for the Council

14. The number of adoption orders granted during 2013/2014 increased from 14 the previous year to 40 and the number of prospective adopters approved also totalled 40 for 2013/2014, increasing from 26 in 2012/13. Between 1 April 2014 and 31 October 2014 16 adoption orders were granted and 25 adoptive families approved as suitable to adopt.
15. A number of significant incentives and changes have been implemented within the service in response to the continuing focus on adoption reform, for example:

- Funds from the Adoption Reform Grant have been utilised to enable adoption records to be electronically maintained and retained.
- The new two stage process aimed at speeding up the assessment (and training) of adoptive parents has been introduced and procedures and processes have been adapted to reflect new expectations and timescales. However, there have been challenges which have been dealt with on a pragmatic case by case basis largely relating to the completion of background checks within a specified time frame. The proposal is that a clear Wiltshire policy is developed to prevent any unnecessary delay in progressing prospective adopters from one stage to the other without compromising repercussions for the agency.
- An Adoption Support Helpline has been introduced providing information and advice to adoptive parents on Monday's, Wednesday's and Friday's.
- The profile of the Adoption Support Service has been improved significantly by the allocation of a dedicated part-time Assistant Team Manager taking a lead for service development, provision and delivery.
- Three of the main Libraries located within the three main towns have been provided with an Adoption Resource Section which is accessible to both staff and the general public.
- Utilising funds from the Adoption Reform Grant (ARG) an incentive of introducing paperless adoption panels has been implemented.
- Further ARG monies were invested in the appointment of a dedicated Virtual School's Officer whose role is to advocate on behalf of adopted children within the school environment and to work and support teachers to meet the needs of adopted children and families.
- The development of a therapeutic support service across placement services teams.
- The use of DVD's featuring the children during family finding events and interviews, has been a positive and effective incentive.

16. The trend of an increasing number of children being matched with Wiltshire Adopters from other local authorities has continued apace during this period. The number of Special Guardianship Orders granted is also increasing. Where other agencies place a child with Wiltshire Council approved adoptive parents, Wiltshire Council receive the agreed inter-agency fee of £27,000 for one child placed. This increases to £43,000 where 2 siblings are placed at the same time and to £60,000 where 3 siblings are placed at the same time. The agency needs to make a strategic decision whether there is any benefit in continuing to be a net provider of approved adopters taking into account that the number of

approved adopters currently exceeds the number of children who have a permanence plan of adoption. There is a pending change in the senior management of placement services and this will be a key priority in determining the focused activity of the adoption service.

17. Staffing has remained consistent in the team and has been increased by an innovative use of the adoption reform grant. There has been a change in Head of Service bringing in an interim who has specific experience in family placement work. There will be a permanent Head of Service starting in February 2015 which will bring much needed stability to the service as there will have been 4 different senior managers in the space of 12 months

Management of the service

18. The table below details the management and staffing for Wiltshire Council's Adoption Service. The Managers, adoption support workers and adoption support social workers hold the minimum social work qualification and have had a minimum of 2 years experience in children and families social work or a closely related field.

Name	Designation
Carolyn Godfrey	Corporate Director
Terence Herbert	Associate Director
Anita Traynor	Interim Head of Service
Owen Evans	Adoption Team Manager
Alison Lewis	Assistant Team Manager - Adoption Support (part time)
Debbie Harper	Assistant Team Manager Recruitment and Assessment (part time)
Sarah Dainty	Concurrency Officer
Adoption Recruitment and Assessment Charlotte Gilbertson Leonie McKenna Pauline Fairman Jane Priborsky 2 x Agency Social Worker (3 months contract) Danielle DeSilva Vacant post	Qualified social worker Qualified social worker Qualified social worker (part time) Qualified social worker (part time) Adoption Support Worker Qualified social worker (part time)
Adoption Support Isobel Mills (SGO) 2 x vacant posts (recruitment in progress) Denise O'Connor Ann Mazzotta Catherine Bull	Qualified social worker Qualified social worker Adoption Support Worker Adoption Support Worker

Services provided

19. The Wiltshire Council Adoption Service provision of a quality and timely child-centred service for children and young people who cannot be brought up within their birth families continues to improve as the Adoption Scorecard on page 5 indicates. The thresholds have not been met, but the direction of travel is positive.
20. The Wiltshire Council Adoption Service is delivered by two distinct teams, namely the Adoption Referral and Assessment Team and the Adoption Support Team.
21. The Adoption Referral and Assessment Team provide permanency for children and young people through the recruitment, assessment and preparation of prospective adopters.
22. The Adoption Support Team supports adoptive families and their children to ensure placement stability and longevity. The services in place include therapeutic support, counselling, advice and information, training workshops / support groups, family days and events, an annual conference, a quarterly newsletter, financial support and links with educational psychologists and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) provided by Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust.
23. Through a contract with PACT (Parents and Children Together), a voluntary adoption agency, the Adoption Service provides:
 - a. An intermediary service for adopted adults and birth relatives who wish to trace.
 - b. A full range of services to step-parents who wish to adopt a specific child
 - c. Services to Prospective Adopters interested in adopting from overseas.

Adoption Service Improvement Plan

24. In March 2014, the LAC Improvement Group approved the conclusion of the Permanency and Adoption Improvement Plan and agreed that the development of 1 overarching LAC Improvement Plan should include a focus on:
 - Improving timescales for children and young people needing to be adopted – this includes the role of the adoption panel, resourcing assessments, use of Family Group Conferencing and meeting the timescales of the revised Public Law Outline as part of the implementation of the Family Justice Review.
 - Improving the range of adoption support services on offer
 - Developing a commissioning plan for possible sub-regional partnership for the Adoption West Directors of Children's Services.

25. This section of the report gives the performance information covering the period 1 April 2014 – 31 October 2014, as required for Wiltshire Council Cabinet.

Number, type and age of children waiting for an adoptive placement

Legal status at that time	2012/13	2013/14	01/04/14 – 31/10/14
Section 20	9	20	Data not available
Interim Care Order	26	19	Data not available
Care Order	2	1	Data not available
None	1		Data not available
Total	38	40	16

Ethnic origin	2012/13	2013/14	01/04/14 – 31/10/14
White British	27	35	13
Mixed / Other	11	5	3
Total	38	40	16

Age	2012/13	2013/14	01/04/14 – 31/10/14
0-11 months	13	6	5
12-23 months	7	13	4
2-4 years	13	12	2
5-10 years	5	9	4
11 and over			1
Total	38	40	16

Children Adopted	2012/13	2013/14	01/04/14 – 31/10/14
Age			
0-11 months	0	1	0
12-23 months	5	5	4
2-4 years	7	20	8
5-10 years	2	13	4
11 and over	0	1	
Total	14	40	16

Children Matched out of County	2012/13	2013/14	01/04/14 – 31/10/14
	<i>4 children in 3 placements</i>	<i>5 children in 4 placements</i>	<i>4 children in 3 placements</i>

Out of County Children Matched with Wiltshire Adopters	2012/13	2013/14	01/04/14 – 31/10/14
	<i>1 child in 1</i>	<i>16 children</i>	<i>11 children</i>

Out of County Children Matched with Wiltshire Adopters	2012/13	2013/14	01/04/14 – 31/10/14
	<i>placement</i>	<i>in 11 placements</i>	<i>in 9 placements</i>

Agency's performance against timescales

26. The latest scorecard was published in December 2014 and is included in the body of this report on page 9.
27. The scorecard reports on activity during a rolling three year period, the latest depicts the period 2011 to 2014.
28. The scorecard reports that the average time between Wiltshire receiving a court order to place a child and deciding to match a child to an adoptive family was 165 days compared to the national average of 217 days.
29. Similarly, the average time from a child entering care and moving in with an adoptive family was 637 days compared to the national average of 628. This figure continues to be above the national average, but is an improvement on last year's figure of 673 days.
30. The table below details performance against the scorecard timescales month-by-month:

Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted (days) A1														
Wiltshire 01/04/2014 – 31/10/2014													Wiltshire YTD average 2014/2015	English 3y average 2013/2014
2013/14 Target	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar		
547	N/A	N/A	706	543	647	999	229						624	628

Table showing average days between becoming LAC and being placed for adoption if Placement Order granted within 26 weeks NB does not include

fostering to adopt cases. This provides an indication of anticipated performance once delayed care proceedings have been overcome.

Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted (days) A1															
Wiltshire 01/04/2014 – 31/10/2014													Wiltshire YTD average 2014/2015	English 3y average 2013/2014	
2013/14 Target	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
547	N/A	N/A	N/A	328	465	400	229							355.5	628

Average time between a local authority receiving a court order to place a child and the local authority deciding to match an adoptive family A2															
Wiltshire 01/04/2014 – 31/10/2014													Wiltshire YTD average 2014/2015	English 3y average 2013/2014	
2013/14 Target	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
152	226	171	14	259	64	166	115								217

% children who wait less than 21 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family A3															
Wiltshire 01/04/2014 – 31/10/2014													Wiltshire YTD average	English 3y average 2013/2014	
2012/13	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
61%	100%	100%	100%	N/A	60%	67%	100%								51%

Applications and assessments of prospective adoptive families

	2012/13	2013/14	01/04-31/10 2014
Number of enquiries to be an adopter		137	
Number of applications to be an adopter		67	14
Number of newly approved adopters and time taken to approve adopters from application (scorecard indicator B2)	26	40	25
0-3 months	2	4	0
4-6 months	6	17	2
7-12 months	14	18	23
More than 12 months	4	1	
Number of approved adopters unmatched		24	32
Number of approved adopters matched to a child		26	30

31. The latest publication of the Adoption Scorecard shows a 5.3% improvement in the average time between a child entering care and

moving in with their adoptive family. The average time between the local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match with an adoptive family is 8.5% above the national threshold. These figures are not synonymous with the improvements made to the timeliness of assessing adopters and placing children; the reasons for this are as follows:

- The scorecard is based on a rolling three year average of indicators and a cohort of historical cases continues to adversely affect Wiltshire's performance indicators.
- Two fostering families adopted 2 children in their care during the period April to October 2014.
- Two children who were adopted during this period, had proved difficult to place and considerable family finding activity was required to identify adoptive placements.

Financial state of the adoption agency

32. The tables below set out the budget and actual expenditure for the 2013/14 financial year and the budget and projected expenditure for the 2014/15 financial year.

2013/14 Financial Year	Budget ¹	Actual Expenditure
Salaries & team running costs	600,230	737,716
Carer recruitment & training	17,000	7,332
Adoption Allowances (all types)	742,500	668,965
Adoption Income	0	-365,016
	1,359,730	1,048,997

2014/15 Financial Year	Budget ¹	Projected Expenditure
Salaries & team running costs	534,900	509,688
Carer recruitment & training	17,000	10,623
Adoption Allowances (all types)	642,500	672,874
Adoption Income	-60,000	-196,650
	1,361,800	996,536

¹ Excluding SGOs

33. This financial information details the activity for the adoption service for the period to 31 October 2014. The income in both years relates to an element of grant income where adoption team staff have worked on grant activity and relate to inter agency fees which are the fees charged when adopters approved by one agency are matched with a child in the care of another, the forecast is higher than budget based on children's plans.

34. There has been a significant increase in requests for financial support to adopters. As at 31 October 2014, there were the following families being supported with ongoing financial allowances:

	At 31 March 2013		At 31 March 2014		At 31 October 2014	
	Children	Carers	Children	Carers	Children	Carers
RO Allowance	15	11	20	15	20	15
Adoption Allowance	52	39	63	44	64	49
Total	67	50	83	59	84	64

35. In addition to the budget above, the Adoption Reform Grant (ring fenced) totalling £188,960 was fully utilised during the financial year to 31 March 2014 and the un-ring fenced grant totalling £881,740 was partially spent, with the remainder (£629,818) being rolled over into a corporate reserve that Children's Services Leadership Team will administer to a number of priorities including children's social care during 2014/15.
36. A further £50 million Adoption Reform Grant was allocated to local authorities in 2014-15 by the Department for Education to continue to support the work to improve adoption services. The grant is not ring-fenced and has been allocated using a similar formula to the non ring-fenced element of last year's grant. Local authorities are able to use the funding at their discretion in order to meet local need. Wiltshire's allocation for 2014-15 is £438,999. Plans are in place to fully spend this grant and the amount rolled over from 2013/14 financial year by 31st March 2015.

37.
Panel activity

	2012/13	2013/14	01/04/2014 – 31/10/2014
Number of panels held	25	24	15
Number of Prospective Adoptive Families considered	28	41	25
Number of Matches considered	25	26	17

Safeguarding Implications

38. The Wiltshire Council Adoption Service is part of Wiltshire Council's children's social care services. All Wiltshire Council children's services are delivered according to the Wiltshire Children's Services Procedures Manual and are overseen by the Wiltshire Safeguarding Children Board. The local authority has effective child and vulnerable adult safeguarding procedures.
39. This report is for note by Wiltshire Council Cabinet.

Public Health Implications

40. Not applicable – for note by Wiltshire Council Cabinet.

Procurement Implications

41. Not applicable – for note by Wiltshire Council Cabinet.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

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

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

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

Risk Assessment

44. Risks that may arise if the performance of the adoption agency is not effective and is not achieving good outcomes for children and young people:

1. Safeguarding risk to looked after children and young people if they are placed with adoptive parents who have not been fully assessed, prepared and supported – safeguarding is considered a high level risk in the corporate risk register
2. Reputational risk to Council if the adoption agency is not effective and does not achieve good outcomes for children and young people who need adoption
3. Reputational risk to Council if we do not meet statutory timescales for children and young people needing to be adopted
4. Financial risk to Council if placements that are made are not stable leading to placement breakdown and subsequently children returning to the Local Authority's care

An effective delivery of the plan and monitoring of the scorecard will mitigate these risks.

45. Risks that may arise if Cabinet note and accept the contents of this report and actions that will be taken to manage these risks:

	Risk	Action to mitigate the risk
1.	Inadequate supply of adopters to meet demands	An Adoption Service Marketing Strategy will be developed and implemented, building on knowledge gained during the marketing campaign of 2013/14
2.	Ability to meet budget – increased costs of service provision	Use of the Adoption Reform Grant 2014/15
3.	The service cannot meet statutory timescales for children and young people needing to be adopted	Key actions are included in the Looked After Children Improvement Plan to improve performance and ensure we meet statutory timescales

Financial Implications

46. The budget and expenditure for 2013-14, and projected expenditure for 2014-15, are outlined in paragraphs 35 – 40 above. The activity and therefore expenditure has increased in 2013-14 financial year as per the Government's agenda for adoption reform. We would anticipate the same or increased levels for 2014-15. The cost of supporting an adopted child is less than the average costs of care and is often time limited as opposed to care costs which continue until 18 years or longer if the young person has additional needs or is in full time education.

Legal Implications

47. The Executive side of Wiltshire Council, as a registered adoption agency approved by the DfE, has a legal duty to receive written reports on the management outcomes and financial state of the agency every 6 months; to monitor the management and outcomes of the services in order to satisfy themselves that the agency is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or service users; and to satisfy themselves that the agency is complying with the conditions of registration.

This report ensures that the legal requirements are being complied with on an on-going basis and as such, there are no additional legal implications arising.

Options Considered

48. Not applicable – for note by Wiltshire Council Cabinet.

Conclusions

49. During the past twelve months the Government's continuing adoption reform agenda has brought about further changes to adoption policies and practice. Central to the reform programme is a belief in the importance of recruiting more adoptive families and reducing the amount of time a child has to wait before being adopted. Wiltshire Council's Adoption Service is committed to improving service delivery and permanent outcomes for adopted children and young people. The Adoption Service is working collaboratively with other social care teams and agencies to ensure a whole service approach to prevent delay in securing permanency for children and young people through adoption.
50. In Wiltshire during the period between March and October 2014 we have consolidated upon the improvements achieved during the previous year and then maintained an increased level of recruitment and assessment activity. However, there has been a noticeable decrease during the latter months of this reporting period in the number of children whose permanency plan is one of adoption. It is predicted that the number of adoption orders granted during 2014 / 2015 will fall considerably short of that achieved in 2013 / 2014; however there is no direct correlation between the two figures and a decrease is indicative of wider changes in

case law, thresholds and social work practice as opposed to underperformance by the adoption service. Similarly we are unlikely to surpass or even match the same number of approvals this year as we did last, because the Adoption Reform Agenda has effectively closed the 'adopter-gap'. Consequently the significant number of families now waiting to be matched together with a corresponding decrease in the availability of children has led to the agency making a decision not to accept or progress any new referrals or applications for the majority of this reporting period and concentrate its activity on the matching of approved adopters and the successful conclusion to approval of those already in the assessment process.

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12 February 2015

Background Papers

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

None
