

Briefing for Children's Services Select Committee

Adoption Scorecard

1. The scorecards show, for each LA (based on three-year rolling averages from 2008-2011):
 - A. the average time taken for a child who has been adopted from entering care to moving in with their adoptive family. The initial performance threshold is 21 months (639 days), but this will be lowered within four years to the statutory threshold of 14 months (currently achieved by only four LAs)
 - B. the proportion of children waiting longer for adoption than the current 21 month threshold
 - C. the average time taken to match children with a family after the courts have agreed a placement order. The initial performance threshold is seven months (213 days), but this will be lowered within four years to four months.
2. They also show: the trend from 2010 to 2011; the England 3-year average; the distance from the 2010-13 threshold; a graphic representation of the thresholds to 2013-16, with the LA's current position. There are panels for related information (adoptions from care, permanence decisions changed away from adoption, adoptions of children from ethnic minority backgrounds, adoptions of children aged five or over, average length of local care proceedings, number of children awaiting adoption, and number of approved prospective adopters) and data on timescales for prospective adopters (which will not be available until 2014).
3. The scorecards show 80 local authority areas have met the interim thresholds (of 21 months from entering care to adoption and matching a child to a family within seven months of a court order being made) but the other 72 did not meet one or both of these key measures.

Wiltshire's position

4. Wiltshire does not meet the interim threshold for (A) entering care to adoption but does meet the other indicator (B) of court order to match.
5. Wiltshire's 3 year average between 2008-2011 of days between entering care and moving in with adoptive family is 803. This is above the England average of 625 and above the Department for Education (DfE) threshold for 2010/13 of 639.
6. There are a number of reasons why the threshold has not been met. The first is to do with complexities in individual cases. The second reason is to do with delays happening at identifiable stages within the process between the date a child becomes LAC and the date of moving in with their adoptive family.
7. A delay is occurring between the date a child becomes LAC and the decision that the child should be placed for adoption. There are also a number of reasons behind the delay:
 - Lack of early decisive decision making and permanence planning
 - Legal delays, courts ordering further assessment or delays in scheduling of court time.
8. For the 2008/11 cohort, the average length of time taken between the date a child becomes LAC and the decision that the child should be placed for adoption is 534 days.

9. Provisional data for the 2009/12 cohort shows that this time is dropping – the average length of time taken between the date a child becomes LAC and the decision to place for adoption is 496 days on average.

Recruiting adopters

10. Wiltshire has an Adoption Recruitment Strategy for 2011/12 to “attract and support sufficient adopters with a diversity of skills and backgrounds to be appropriately matched with local children with a range of needs and experiences, who need stable and permanent homes”.
11. There were 18 approvals in 2011/12. The average time taken from application to approval is 6.3 months (1st April 2011-31st March 2012). 1 application took 15 months due to the personal circumstances of the applicants.
12. As evidence of our continued improvement, in May 2012 an application came to panel that was completed within 5 months and all applications so far this year have been well within timescales.
13. In 2011/12, we received 129 initial contacts from prospective adopters. 18 of these 129 progressed to application (14%), a further 17 are still open enquiries allocated for initial assessment. 3 have been approved as adopters, 15 remain in the assessment process and it is expected all will proceed to approval. Enquirers who left the process left at varying stages; 41 at the point of initial contact decided not to proceed having been offered relevant information, 57 information packs were sent out and those enquirers were invited to information sessions, 21 did not attend although expected. 8 returned enquiry forms but then withdrew, 3 did not return enquiry form, 6 are not ready to proceed at this time and we have arranged to call them back at an arranged date. 1 was allocated but chose not to proceed with assessment.

Improvement

14. There are a number of important recent improvements that we anticipate will improve our position against this indicator:
 - Current structure and establishment of dedicated specialist teams.
 - Service & practice improvements:
 - A more robust permanence policy
 - Decisive care planning
 - Court Liaison work
 - Home finding processes
 - Community Family Assessment and Safeguarding Service (FASS).
 - Better quality assurance.
15. An Adoption Improvement Plan has been devised to support improvement against this indicator. This links to the overall Social Care Improvement Plan and is structured using the same improvement priority themes. Key deliverables are:
 - Implementation of permanency policy
 - Creation of a dedicated “home finder” post
 - Strengthening the role of Independent Reviewing Officers
 - Workforce review and training needs analysis
 - Creation of an adopters reference group to inform practice
16. Wiltshire volunteered to be part of the “Diagnostic Assessment” that the DFE is promoting. A small team of consultants have visited and looked at the way we work, confirming that our plan contained the right actions for improvement.
17. Progress will be monitored by the Children in Care Commissioning Group.

18. Comparative Data:

LA name	Adoptions from care (number adopted)	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 21 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (number)	Children who wait less than 21 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (%)
Cambridgeshire	70	468	98	70	71
Dorset	25	502	50	30	65
Gloucestershire	65	627	105	40	47
Hampshire	130	540	163	145	65
Oxfordshire	70	501	136	95	77
Shropshire	40	507	17	35	69
Somerset	75	614	141	95	69
Suffolk	190	550	230	225	73
West Berkshire	25	414	25	25	64
Worcestershire	65	626	170	80	53
Wiltshire	50	803	107	35	46
England		625	171	9,440	58

17 May 2012

Adoption Scorecard

Choose Local Authority Wiltshire

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 21 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (number and %)
LA's 3 year average (2008-11)	803	107	35 (46%)
Trend - improvement from previous year (2010)	Average time in 2011 was shorter	Average time in 2011 was longer	n/a
England 3 year average (2008-11)	625	171	9,440 (58%)
Distance from 2010-12 performance threshold	163 days	Threshold met	n/a

Average Time Threshold Indicators

Year	Child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family threshold (Days)	LA receiving court authority to place a child and matching with adoptive family threshold (Days)	Wiltshire's 3 year average (2008-11) - Child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family (Days)	Wiltshire's 3 year average (2008-11) - LA receiving court authority to place a child and matching with adoptive family (Days)
2010-13	639	213	403	107
2013-16	428	121	-	-

Prospective Adopters			Related Information								
	The time taken from registration of interest to decision of suitability to adopt (days)	The time taken from receipt of application form to decision of suitability to adopt (days)	The time taken from decision of suitability to adopt to matching with child (days)		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	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 2011)	Number of approved prospective adopters (as at 31 March 2011)
	Data not available until 2014			LA's 3 year average (2008-11)	50 (13%)	x (x%)	x (x%)	20 (6%)	68	15	Data not available
				England 3 year average (2008-11)	9,570 (12%)	1,030 (7%)	1,590 (7%)	2,560 (5%)	52	4,290	Data not available