

Annual Report on Adoption Panel Activity 2005-2006

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the adoption activity over the last year highlighting the adoption panel's work and pointing out the areas of achievement and challenges for the coming year for the adoption agency.
- 1.2. During the last year we have seen the full implementation of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. This has brought about fundamental changes in adoption practice and the adoption section has been extremely busy preparing new policies and procedures to ensure they are compliant with the new regulations.
- 1.3 Training has been undertaken for the adoption panel and for all social workers in children's services to help them get to grips with the new legislation. The adoption panel has introduced Independent Adoption Panel Chairs in line with the legislation and prospective adopters now attend adoption panel for consideration of their approval.
- 1.4. In November 2005 the fostering and adoption section was restructured into distinct services. This was undertaken to improve the service delivery and increase the performance in the number of adopters approved as well as providing increased post placement support.

2. Adoption Panel Activity

- 2.1.1 Leeds continues to operate two adoption panels. However, work has been undertaken to establish a third panel. This development of this panel has been problematic due to the lack of medical advisor time for it to become operational. Steps are being taken to resolve this issue in order for the panel to process the level of business that is required of it.
- 2.1.2 Prospective adopters began attending panel in January 2006 for consideration of their approval and the evaluation of this new initiative has been extremely positive. It is the intention of the panel to invite applicants for the matching panel which will enable the prospective adopters of the children to have greater input into the process.

3. Profile of children accepted for adoption

- 3.1 84 children were accepted for adoption in 2005/06. However, some children were presented to Panel on a twin-tracking basis and out of the 84 children presented 17 children never proceeded to adoption leaving 67 children requiring adoption.

This figure is similar to last years figure where 66 children required adoption

3.2 Ethnicity

Of the children accepted in 2005/06:

62	White British
1	White /Black Caribbean
1	White/Black African/White Asian
1	Caribbean
4	Pakistani
2	White British/ O4ther
2	White British/White Asian
1	White British/White Jewish
1	White British/African/Caribbean
1	White British/Irish/other
1	White British/White Black Caribbean
2	White British/White Black African
2	White British/Pakistani
1	White British/Bangladeshi
1	White Asian/African/Caribbean/Other
1	Other

3.3 Religion

During 2005-6

70	children had no specified religion
4	Church of England
2	Muslim
2	Christian
5	Roman Catholic
1	Jewish

3.4 Care Status

There was a slight decrease in the number of freely placed babies from 7 (in 2004/05) to 4 in 2005/06.

80 children were the subjects of freeing applications in 2005/06, indicating that their birth parents contested the plan for adoption for their child.

3.5 Twin Tracking

In 2005/06 17 children's plans changed following being presented to Panel. 7 returned home to parents, 3 were placed with family network carers and 7 were placed in long term foster care with a view to Special Guardianship being applied for in the future.

3.6 Age

During 2005/06

40	children were under one year of age
33	were pre-school age
11	were over the age of four years

Comparing this to 2004/05 figures it is noteworthy that the number of pre school children accepted increased by 10 in 05/06. The acceptance of babies slightly decreased by 3 and children over 4 remained similar in number.

3.7 Placement with siblings

This year the number of sibling groups of 2 accepted for adoption more than tripled this year from 4 sets to 14 sets. There was one sibling group of 3.

3.8 Disabilities

4 of the children accepted were described as children with a learning or physical disability. However, most of the children accepted for adoption have, or are likely to have, emotional or behavioural difficulties as a result of their earlier experiences and, as such, could be described as having special or complex needs.

3.9 Additional Financial Support

13 children attracted additional Adoption support, 13 were recommended for support in the future should problems occur. 65 children did not attract financial support.

3.10 Contact

Of the 76 children accepted for adoption in 2004/05:-

2	stipulated no contact
39	identified indirect contact through information exchange with birth parents and siblings
33	agreed indirect information exchange with parents and direct contact with siblings
1	direct contact with birth parents and siblings
9	not determined at the point of acceptance

4. Children matched with adoptive families

4.1.1 In 2005/06, 66 children were matched with families at adoption panels (3 more than the previous year). This figure includes 19 children who were matched through inter agency placements. Of these, 11 children were placed via the Yorkshire Adoption Consortium and 10 of these placements were “free placements”. 7 placements were identified by the National Adoption register and placed in different parts of the country and 1 child was placed with a sibling in another Local Authority area.

4.1.2. During the introductory period 1 placement disrupted and the child has subsequently been placed again for adoption. Another placement of an older child disrupted after 11 months into placement. A long term professional foster placement is being sought for this child.

4.2 Ethnicity and Religion

53 of the 66 children matched with families were of White British origin.

1	White Black African
1	Caribbean
1	White British/Kashmiri
2	White British/other
1	White British/White Black Caribbean
1	White British/White Black African
1	White British/Irish/Other
2	White British/African Caribbean
1	White Asian/African Caribbean/other
2	Other

Approximately three quarters of the children matched were described as having no specified religion.

4.3 Age range

25 of the children matched were babies and 3 of these were babies given freely. 11 of the children matched were aged four years or older and 30 were pre school children. Out of the children matched 14 children were placed in sibling groups of 2.

4.4 Disability

None of the children matched were described as having a physical disability.

4.5 Foster parent placements

During 2005/06 there was 5 children matched with their foster parents, which is a small decrease from the previous year.

4.6 Additional Financial Adoption Support

In 2005/06, 17 children were placed attracting additional financial support. Just over two thirds were placed without additional adoption support.

5. Adoptive parent profile

5.1 During 2005/06, 59 families were approved to adopt a child. This is an increase from the previous year from 43. Of these, there were 56 couples and 3 single adopters.

5.2 Ethnicity

49 families were of white British origin. However, there was a slight increase in Black and Minority Ethnic adopters including 1 Indian couple, 1 White British/Caribbean couple and 2 White British/Indian couples. Other ethnic origins included 1 German couple, French/ White British and White British/ White Jewish and White British/Other.

5.3 Age and number of children for who approved

40 adopters stated a preference for a child under 4 years of age, although 11 of those 40 were approved for a child under the age of 1 year. 8 families were willing to be considered for children over four years. Of the 59 families approved to adopt, 46 wanted one child and 13 were willing to take two siblings.

5.4 Gender of children

During 2005/06, 38 families were willing to be considered for either a boy or a girl. 16 families specifically wanted to be matched with a girl and 5 for a boy. This is a pattern that has been familiar for many years.

6. Conclusion

8.1 In conclusion the report highlights that we have seen an increase in the numbers of adopters approved during 2005/06 following a dip down to 43 in 2004/05. This is a positive move forward, however more active recruitment for black and minority ethnic adopters must be taken on if the needs of the children requiring placement are to be met via adoption from within our own resources. (It is perhaps worth noting however that sometimes it is not appropriate to place black and minority ethnic children within the Leeds area due to the close knit communities that exist for some ethnic groups). The fostering and adoption

Appendix C

section have now restructured into separate adoption teams and fostering teams and it is hoped that more assessments of adopters will be undertaken to increase the numbers being approved. The numbers of children matched has slightly increased and the challenge over the coming year will be to increase that figure further, ensuring that support is in place for those adoptive families for them to feel confident in making their applications to court for an adoption order and ensuring that priority is given to social workers in the area in completing the court reports for applications to progress in a timely manner.

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