

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 13 October 2021

Subject: Adoption Counts Annual Report 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021

Report of: Adoption Performance

Summary

This report fulfils the obligations in Adoption National Minimum Standards (2011) and Adoption Service Statutory Guidance (2011) Adoption and Children Act 2002 to report to the “executive side” of the local authority.

Recommendations

To note the report.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

Our Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Providing children with a secure family base from which to maximise their social, emotional and learning potential through should promote children’s potential to play their part in the City’s economy
A highly skilled city: world class and home-grown talent sustaining the city’s economic success	Providing children with a secure family base from which to maximise their social, emotional and learning potential through should promote skills to further develop economic success
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	With the support of loving forever families adequately supported by professionals, children will be supported to achieve their personal potential contributing to both progressiveness and equity of the city

A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Supporting outcomes for adopted children helps build and develop whole communities and increase the appeal of the city
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Successful services support successful families who in turn are able to deliver growth in the city

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Background documents (available for public inspection): None

1.0 Introduction

The annual report highlights there have been positive outcomes and work in Manchester between April 2020– March 2021 for children with a plan of adoption.

2.0 Background

The performance data evidences that children have been matched, placed and adopted in a timely manner with a high number of children joining their permanent families within / under the recommended thresholds. 44 children were placed during the period with 26 children within the A2 threshold and a further 6 children placed within six months of their Placement Order. This is an excellent outcome in a year where we were unable to place children for a period of time due to COVID restrictions. The majority of children have therefore still been able to gain stability and permanence by joining a family who can meet their needs with minimum delay and at the earliest point possible. Research indicates that such early and decisive action is needed, as delays in the process can reduce children's chances of finding a permanent family and increase the chance of adoption breakdown.

Robust systems are in place to identify the children who are likely to wait longer. We are aware from the performance data that children of BAME heritage, large sibling groups and older children can wait longer to achieve permanence. In line with this we are focussing on recruiting BME adopters and providing a comprehensive training programme to prospective adopters to widen matching criteria. We will also be joining other regional adoption agencies in the north west to hold a profiling event for children of BAME heritage later in the year.

The family finding progress of all children continues to be scrutinised at monthly tracking meetings with an established strategic matching process. This enables oversight of all potential matching decisions, time limited searches and decisions to ensure children who are likely to wait longer are prioritised and there is no drift.

Adopter approval numbers have remained consistent with 104 families approved this year, compared with 110 last year. We consider this is an excellent outcome as this entire period was during the COVID-19 pandemic when many families delayed making applications, or had to withdraw due to uncertainties in their lives, e.g., redundancies, caring responsibilities, home schooling, etc. This consistency has ensured we continue to have a greater pool of prospective adopters available, all of whom have been assessed as having the skills needed to meet the needs of vulnerable children requiring permanence. More children are placed in house with adopters approved by Adoption Counts. 84% of children were placed with in house adopters and are therefore placed within the Northwest with easily accessible adoption support.

3.0 Recommendations

Adoption Counts and Manchester continue to work together to ensure:

- Children with a change of plan from adoption are tracked so SHOBPA rescinds can happen in a timely manner.

- Improve the quality of child permanence reports at SHOBPA consultation to avoid any delays at this stage.
- Ensure early identification of children needing adoption by working closely with colleagues at an early stage in care planning to ensure that adoption is achievable and the right plan.