

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

14 NOVEMBER 2019

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET INFORMATION ITEM

Children & Young People – Lead Cabinet Member - Councillor Lisa Evans

ADOPTION TEES VALLEY UPDATE

SUMMARY

This report presents the second bi-annual report of the work of Adoption Tees Valley, which covers the period 1 October 2018 to 31 March 2019 and includes key performance information from the prior period of 1 May 2018 to 30 September 2018, for first operational year reporting.

REASONS FOR PRODUCING THIS REPORT

To provide an update on year end performance of ATV.

DETAIL

1. Adoption Tees Valley is the new Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) operating as the Local Council adoption service for the 5 Local Authorities of Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton.
2. The RAA has been in operation since the 1 May 2018 and Valley has been the first RAA to set up in the North East region, and has embraced the change required to stimulate new ways of working, while maintaining and building on successful practice of the 5 Local Authority adoption services operating previously. There has been a lot of hard work, commitment to talk and explore change, and resilience through the change process within the adoption team.
3. As the service enters its second year of operation, a lot of the process of embedding change has taken place, and review/evaluation is directing the service plan for the year ahead.
4. Key highlights include:
 - The service is now fully operational and has embedded new practice and process following a period of significant change.
 - Children are referred at an early stage for consideration of adopters, and the service has established better mechanisms to track all children, and identify potential suitable families. 53 Tees Valley children have been placed for adoption within the first 11 months.

- Adopters waiting have been matched with children, and ATV has been effective in utilising available adopters, or enabling them to have children from other areas placed.
- Partnership work with regional Voluntary Adoption Agencies, and RAAs is energised and positive, and is starting to generate better mechanisms for early permanence for children.
- ATV is now beginning to achieve momentum in the recruitment of adopters: the numbers of people coming through the service to adopt has increased significantly.
- Many more adopters and children have accessed post adoption support. Awards from the Adoption Support Fund have increased by over 150%.
- The service has established a 3 tier offer of adoption support, and is holding events, and post placement training.
- Many harder to place children have been able to achieve an adoptive family, and in a number of cases the foster carers for those children have decided to go on to adopt them, providing for security and stability in their futures.
- The analysis of this years' performance on timeliness identifies an increased timescale for the average A1 and A2 figures. Deeper scrutiny of this data highlights that there are a small number of children who have waited a significant period for an adoptive family, by virtue of needs, and circumstances. A number of these children have now been adopted. However, their high timescales have led to increased figures in some LAs, as they are now "counted" from a statistical perspective. The service is working hard with the LA's and with regional VAA's to secure sufficient adopters, and adoption support, for children with more complex needs.
- The workload and volume of adoption activity has increased significantly, creating some pressures on staffing and capacity to respond and deliver in a timely way. The service has taken on additional temporary staffing, and has focussed on prioritising adoption placement for children waiting, over other areas of work, including allocation of step parent adoptions, and allocation of adoption support.

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