

REPORT TO: Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 24th February 2014

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Children & Enterprise

PORTFOLIO: Children, Young People and Families

SUBJECT: Adoption Scorecard 2010-13

WARDS: Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To inform Members of Halton's position in relation to the Adoption Scorecard, which was published on 14th January 2014.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: The report is noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 This is the third set of Adoption Scorecards produced by the DfE since May 2012.

3.2 The scorecard (Appendix 1) covers the three year period to March 2013 and therefore shifts the three year average forward from 2009-12 to 2010-13.

3.3 In the letter from Edward Timpson which accompanied the scorecard, he indicated that as the thresholds have become increasingly challenging, only 36 local authorities have been successful in meeting both thresholds on this scorecard, compared to 71 in 2012. These are -

(i) The average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family was 538 days in Halton compared to 647 nationally. This also represented a shorter average time than in 2009-12 (A1).

(ii) The 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 was 134 days in Halton compared to 201 nationally. This represented a slightly longer time than in 2009-12 (A2).

3.4 Halton has therefore met both thresholds. Only 5 authorities in the North West achieved A1 and 4 authorities achieved A2. There were however only two authorities in the region who achieved both indicators, Halton and Cheshire West and Chester.

3.5 On a national basis, Halton is ranked 22nd on threshold A1 and 24th on threshold A2.

- 3.6** Given the challenging nature of the expectations in respect of adoption performance, this is a very positive outcome for children in Halton.
- 3.7** However, as is indicated on the scorecard, the thresholds will continue to reduce over the next three years to 2016, which will be very demanding. Since the first scorecard, indicator (A1) will have reduced from 21 months to 14 months, and (A 2) will have reduced from 7 months to 4 months.
- 3.8** Information in the Adopter and Related Information sections of the scorecard appears for the first time in this one and will develop further. Some figures in respect of Halton are too small to be represented and so are suppressed for statistical purposes.
- 3.9** Over the past year, in order to assist with a range of changes in respect of adoption, the Government has provided all local authorities with an Adoption Reform Grant (ARG). Halton continues to utilise this funding to assist with recruiting additional adopters, providing adoption support and ensuring there is no delay for children. The Government has recently announced that further funding will be available for 2014-2015 but the amount is not yet known.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1** The Scorecards are a part of the Government's policy as outlined in the Action Plan for Adoption and reflected in subsequent legislative changes.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** Strong performance is clearly in the best interests of those children for whom adoption is their plan and is also consistent with the Council's responsibility as a Corporate Parent.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

Timely long term planning for children in care will ensure the best possible outcomes for them.

6.2 Employment Learning & Skills In Halton

Improving outcomes and ensuring long term stability for children in adoptive placements will enhance their ability to achieve.

6.3 Healthy Halton

Improved outcomes will contribute to the emotional and physical wellbeing of children.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Raising the aspirations and achievements of children will contribute to positive long term options for them.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

Children who live in long term stable families will be able to enhance their own and the boroughs economic environment.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The key risk in not achieving the scorecard threshold is that it causes delay for children.

7.2 However, the thresholds are becoming increasingly challenging and achieving them can be impacted by a range of things including the child's complex needs, health issues, developmental concerns, the need for further assessments, court proceedings etc. Both actual and average performance can therefore be impacted by particular children and ensuring their needs are able to be met.

8.0 **EQUALITY & DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 Improving life chances of children in care through placing them in new permanent families, will contribute to meeting the needs of this vulnerable group.

9.0 **REASON FOR DECISION**

9.1 Report to be noted.

10.0 **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED**

10.1 No alternative options.

11.0 **IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

11.1 Already implemented.

12.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Action Plan for Adoption

DfE website

Christine Taylor

APPENDIX 1

See attached.