

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

DATE: 23 February 2015

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise

PORTFOLIO: Children, Young People & Families

SUBJECT: Adoption Scorecard 2011-14

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 in December 2014.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION THAT:

2.1 The report is noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

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

3.2 The scorecard (Appendix 1) covers the three year period to March 2014 and therefore shifts the three year average forward from 2010-13 to 2011-14.

3.3 Within the scorecard there are two threshold indicators and these are made more challenging on an annual basis. These threshold indicators measure –

- (i)** The average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family was 521 days in Halton compared to 628 nationally. This also represented a shorter average time than in 2010-13 (A1). Halton has met the threshold for this measure (547 days).
- (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 155 days in Halton compared to 217 nationally. Halton has missed the threshold (152 days) by three days. It is important to note the context in relation to this. Halton Adoption Service has successfully placed what is regarded as 'hard to place children' within this period placing sibling groups and achieving finding a family for a sibling group where a child was of school age and there were significant uncertainties in terms of genetic mental health issues. The match of these children was achieved within timescales, the preparation for the adopters and children is of importance to ensure a smooth

transition and prevent any future disruption this impacted upon the timing of the placement of the children.

- 3.4 Within the statistical neighbour comparator group¹, Halton is amongst the 6 authorities to have met the threshold for measure A1. Only 3 authorities in the group met the threshold for measure A2.
- 3.5 Within the North West, Halton is amongst 7 authorities to achieve A1. Only one authority met the threshold for A2 (Cheshire West and Chester).
- 3.6 On a national basis, Halton is ranked 19th on threshold A1, an improvement from 22nd in previous year, and 31st on threshold A2 (previously 24th).
- 3.7 Given the challenging nature of the expectations in respect of adoption performance, this is a very positive outcome for children in Halton.
- 3.8 However, as is indicated on the scorecard, the thresholds will continue to reduce over the next year to 2016, which will be very demanding. Since the first scorecard, indicator (A1) will have reduced 21 months to 14 months, and (A2) will have reduced 7 months to 4 months.
- 3.9 Some figures in respect of Halton are too small to be represented and so are suppressed for statistical purposes.

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.

¹ Statistical Neighbours for Halton: Hartlepool, St Helens, North East Lincolnshire, Redcar and Cleveland, Sunderland, Barnsley, Tameside, Darlington, Wakefield, South Tyneside

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 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Action Plan for Adoption	DfE website	Christine Taylor

10.0 APPENDIX 1

See attached Appendix