

**DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**6 May 2014**

**REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR FOR  
CHILDREN & YOUNGER ADULTS**

**Proposals for Use of Adoption Grant 2014/15**

**1. Purpose of Report**

To inform the Cabinet Member of extended Government funding for local authorities on adoption recruitment and to seek approval on proposals for its use in adoption services.

**2. Information and Analysis**

The Government has recently announced extended funding for local authorities on adoption services.

In 2013/14 Derbyshire received £1,212,782 funding from the Adoption Reform Grant. £990,180 was ring-fenced to be used on speeding up the adoption process and increasing the number of adoptive parents. This funding was used on:

- Staffing
- Advertising and recruitment activity.
- Staff training
- Increased efficiency in the placing of children for adoption

**Staffing**

- Appointment in Adoption Assessment Team of temporary half-time Service Manager and 3 full-time equivalent social workers and 1 full-time Community Care Worker.
- Additional 0.5 hours for family-finding staff.

- Increased capacity for the medical advisers who contribute to the adoption process

### **Advertising and recruitment activity**

- Rebranding and updating of all adoption information and recruitment material to reflect recent changes to regulations for adoption assessments.
- Increased funding to target adoption recruitment activity in PR department.

### **Staff training**

- Systemic training focusing on adoption assessment workers
- Training for staff focusing on visual media to help raise profile of children looking for adoptive placements
- Training in improving outcomes for placing large sibling groups.

### **Outcomes of adoption reform Grant 2013/14 to December 2013**

Numbers of adoptive households approved

2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Projected 2013/14
24	29	36	53

Numbers of children placed for adoption

2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Projected 2013/14
48	59	76	83

As demonstrated above, the funding provided by the Adoption Reform Grant has provided better outcomes for children with an adoption plan.

- More placement choice due to increased numbers of approved adopters
- Increased number of children with more complex needs i.e. older children, sibling groups and children with known disabilities being placed within adoptive families.
- Children waiting less time to be placed in adoptive families (the adoption scorecard indicators A1 and A2).

- More dedicated social work time to focus on assessment of prospective adopters by use of Community Care Worker to undertake stage 1 of the adoption assessments.
- Feedback from adopters is that the assessment process is more streamlined and undertaken in a timely manner.
- Adopters are more involved in decision-making around the matching process due to increased involvement in family finding events.

The high standard of Adoption practice was recognised by the recent Ofsted inspection; continued improvement forms a key part of the Department's Journey to Excellence.

Derbyshire is ambitious for the children who cannot live with their birth families to seek adoptive families where other Local Authorities might give up. Thus there is currently a large number of children waiting for an adoptive family. The figures above reflect the fact that we are increasing the numbers of children for whom we have been finding families. Although there is always a cost to adoption, placing children with adoptive parents reduces costs in terms of not paying the costs for a Looked After child. The numbers of children for whom adoption is agreed to be the plan continues to be high as demonstrated by the table below.

2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Projected 2013/14
103	80	93	80

### **Proposals for Extended Adoption Reform Grant 2014/15**

Derbyshire's allocation of the 2014/15 £50 million Adoption Reform Grant is £604,392. The Government has agreed that Local authorities can use this one-off grant to recognise the programmes of change underway in the area of adoption.

As demonstrated above, there have been significant improvements for children with adoption plans and prospective adoptive families. This needs to be sustained and improved.

The impact of placing children with more complex needs is that adopters need access to increased support and this is reflected in this year's proposals.

The proposals are:

- To continue with agreed additional temporary staff within the adoption assessment team and family finding teams - Costing £128,000
- To increase adoption support to meet the demands of increased numbers of children being approved and complex needs of children placed for adoption (2FTE) – Costing £70,000
- To increase temporary part-time management from 2.5 days to 3 days in order to provide management oversight to the 2 adoption support workers - Costing £5,000 per year
- Increased capacity for medical advisers to ensure that increased medical reports and attendances at panels can be facilitated – Costing £23,841
- Increased recruitment activity including targeted recruitment on children with disabilities Some work has been done on this already and features will be included in: Derbyshire First: the DNET; Derbyshire CC website; Facebook / twitter; Press releases etc. We are also targeting: NHS staff; Fire and Rescue staff; the police; DCC staff through e-mail / DNET / payslip; Probation service; CVS; WI - Costing £10,000.
- ICT and other adoption-related expenditure including staff training and to enable flexible working for additional staff - Costing £20,000
- 0.9 towards a full-time Business Development Manager for the East Midlands Adoption Consortium. This will improve the efficiency of the East Midlands consortium which is made up of 9 local authorities. This is in line with the Government agenda of increasing performance and co-operation within the consortium. Costing - £8,000
- Offsetting current over-run on purchasing outside adoption placements – Costing £339,551

The impact of not using the Adoption Reform Grant 2014/15 to maintain the continuous improvement in the Adoption Service would be more children with adoption plans waiting to be placed impacting on:

- Available fostering placements and numbers of children in care.
- Performance measures i.e. A1 and A2 on adoption scorecard impacting on future Ofsted inspection and highlighted in recent inspection as an area for improvement.
- Increased cost of purchasing out of county placements.

- Decreased capacity to deal with current adoption enquiry levels and the associated risk of Derbyshire having to signpost people to alternative adoption agencies.
- Being able to maintain Derbyshire's reputation of being the first choice for prospective adopters within the county.
- The key role of Adoption in contributing to the 'Journey to Excellence'.

### **3. Financial Considerations**

Grant will be paid in four instalments of as near equal value as possible on, or by, 31 May 2014, 31 August 2014, 30 November 2014 and 28 February 2015, and must be spent within the specified timescale.

The proposals above are consistent with the identified Government priorities and grant conditions.

### **4 .Legal & Human Rights Considerations**

Implementing these proposals, together with other initiatives already underway, strengthens Derbyshire's ability to meet its Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

### **5 .Human Resources Considerations**

The intention is to continue with existing temporary, suitably qualified Derbyshire County Council staff, thus avoiding the cost of new recruitment expenditure.

The temporary additional staff will continue to be based with the Adoption team in the Derbyshire Dales office in the grounds of County Hall, Matlock, but will be expected to work flexibly in accordance with the Changing the Way Derbyshire Works initiative.

### **6 .Other Considerations**

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: - prevention of crime & disorder, equality of opportunity; and environmental, health and transport considerations.

### **7. Officer Recommendations**

1. That the information regarding additional funding is noted.

2. That the proposals detailed above are agreed, specifically:
- a) That current additional temporary staff are maintained within the Adoption Service.
  - b) Funding is allocated to offset current financial over-run on purchasing outside adoption placements
  - c) Funding is allocated to a significant increase in recruitment and advertising activity including supporting existing initiatives with Public Relations.
  - d) The rest of the Adoption Grant is used to fund related work consistent with Government priorities.

**Ian Thomas**  
**Strategic Director for Children and Younger Adults**