

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

**DATE:** 21 May 2012

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise

**SUBJECT:** Adoption Scorecard

**WARDS:** Boroughwide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 The report sets out Halton's position in relation to the Adoption Scorecard that is due to be published by DfE in May 2012. Each Local Authority (LA) has been sent a copy of their scorecard which covers the three year period 2008-11 and the Scorecard is attached as Appendix 1.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- (1) the Adoption Scorecard be received;**
- (2) Members note that Halton has met both timeliness threshold indicators sets by DfE; and**
- (3) a further report be submitted to the Board detailing how the Scorecard and other changes will affect the Adoption Service.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 In October 2011 the Children in Care and Adoption performance tables were published and the DfE expressed their intention to use data in this area as a means to focus on improving performance.

3.2 The Scorecard is supported by a set of performance thresholds that set out the Government's expectations of LA's on two of the main timeliness indicators, the introduction of these will be staged process, as detailed below:

- Initially the threshold for the overall journey (child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family) will be 21 months, moving to 14 months within four years (by 2013-16); and
- The family finding threshold (average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the Local Authority (LA's) deciding on a match to an adoptive family) will be set at 7 months initially, moving to four months within four years (by 2013-16).

3.3 Ministers do not intend to automatically take intervention action in every local authority that fails to meet the performance thresholds when the scorecards are initially published.

3.4 It is anticipated that approximately 80 of the 152 LA's across the Country will not meet these thresholds and some form of monitoring or intervention will take place. For these LA's with performance below one or two of the thresholds, discussions are expected to take place in April and May to agree action plans for improvement. This may involve a special inspection by Ofsted of their Adoption Service.

### **3.5 Threshold Indicators**

3.5.1 The graph on the scorecard shows Halton's 2008-11 average performance against the thresholds set for 2010-13 for indicators.

3.5.2 The average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted was 580 days which is better than the threshold set (639 days) and the England average (625 days).

3.5.3 The average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the LA deciding on a match to an adoptive family, for 2008-11 was 97 days which is better performance than the threshold (213 days) and the England average (171 days).

3.5.4 This means that Halton has met the thresholds for both timeliness indicators, and is one of the better performers in England.

### **3.6 Other indicators**

3.6.1 For other indicators on the scorecard no thresholds or targets have been set.

3.6.2 The number and percentage of children who wait less than the 21 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family for 2008-11 was 30 children, which equates to 62% of all children who were adopted.

3.6.3 For the prospective adopters section, data will not available until 2014.

3.6.4 In the related information section, the number of adoptions from care was 35 in 2008-11 which equated to 20% of all children who left care.

3.6.5 The figure for the number of children for whom permanence decisions changed away from adoption for 2008-11 was suppressed due to low numbers.

- 3.6.6 The adoption of children from ethnic minorities has been rounded and is listed as 0, however, local data suggests that there was one child from an ethnic background adopted in the three year period.
- 3.6.7 Of the children aged 5 or above who left care, 10 children were adopted, which equated to 8%.
- 3.6.8 The average length of care proceedings locally between the application being submitted and the case being closed on CAFCASS national Case Management System (CMS) is 60 weeks. This performance has yet to be validated.
- 3.6.9 There were 5 children who were awaiting adoption at 31 March 2011 and who had not yet been placed with their adopters.
- 3.6.10 The data for number of approved prospective adopters at 31 March 2011 will not be available until 2014, however, local data suggests that there were 11 prospective adopters at the end of year.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Government has set challenging thresholds for Local Authorities to meet and work is ongoing within the Directorate to work towards these for future years. However, it is also worth noting that there are a low number of children in the cohorts for each three year period, which will mean that figures in the scorecard can easily be skewed.
- 4.2 If the Council fails to meet the thresholds set, the DfE will take intervention action and it is anticipated that the scorecard will be a limiting judgement in relation to future Children in Care inspections. The guidance for this inspection framework has yet to be published.

#### **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Not applicable.

#### **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton**

*As detailed in 4.1 and 4.2 above*

6.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

*Not applicable*

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

*Not applicable*

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

*Not applicable*

**6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

*Not applicable*

**7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 As detailed 4.2 above

**8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 There are no additional equality and diversity issues which have been identified in relation to Adoption as a result of the production of the Scorecard.

**9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Office</b>
Letter to Matt Dunkley	Grosvenor House/Rutland House	Nigel Moorhouse, Operational Director, Children and Families