



## Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee 29 March 2012

### Report from the Director of Children and Families

For Information

Wards Affected:  
ALL/

**Adoption Inspection, Outcome and Action Plan. February 2012.**

#### **1.0 Summary**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the outcome of the Adoption inspection which took place between 13 and 17 February 2012. The detail is contained within the attached full inspection report and attached Action Plan.

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Members note the outcome of the Adoption inspection report for Brent. The report was published by Ofsted in March 2012 and is attached as Appendix A.
- 2.2 That Members approve the Action Plan contained in Appendix B which addresses the requirements and improvements needed within the Adoption Service.

#### **3.0 Background**

- 3.1 The Powers and duties to inspect Local Authority Adoption agencies are specified in Section 136 of the Education and Inspection Act 2006. Ofsted also gives consideration to the relevant regulations and

- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Adoption and Children Act 2002
- Adoption National Minimum Standards 2011

All adoption agencies must have at least one inspection in each three year inspection cycle. Brent's last inspection was 2008.

#### **4.0 Detail**

- 4.1 A judgement is made by inspectors about how the Council achieves outcomes for those who use the Adoption Service. Consideration is given therefore to the following outcomes:

**Staying Safe, Enjoying and Achieving, Making a Positive Contribution** and additionally there is a judgement made regarding **Management and Organisation**. Equality and Diversity runs as a thread throughout the inspection and is judged as such, not as a single judgement

- 4.2 The evidence for the judgement comes from the ability or otherwise of the Adoption Service to meet the National Minimum Standards for Adoption 2011.
- 4.3 The methodology used during Brent's inspection involved
- Interviews with key managers and staff, IRO including the Agency Decision Maker
  - Interview with Adoption Panel Chair
  - Interview with Adoption Panel Advisor
  - Discussion with service users including Adopters
  - Meeting with birth parent
  - Inspection of policies, procedures, and protocols
  - Reading of case files, case tracking
  - Examination of personnel records and HR procedures
  - Inspection of administrative procedures and practice
  - Analysis of survey questionnaires returned from prospective adopters, placing social workers, planning authorities, birth families and specialist advisors
  - Checking recommendations from the last inspection have been implemented
- 4.4 The overall quality rating is judged to be satisfactory. This means that provision is 'sound'. From the individual areas 3 were judged as good and 2 satisfactory. It is reported that 'there is evidence of improvement in most areas with an acknowledgement that all recommendations from the last inspection have been fully addressed and that Senior Managers are aware of the areas which need improvement and have taken steps to rectify these areas..
- 4.5 It was acknowledged that there has been considerable improvement within the service and there is a high level of commitment from all the staff to improve. The key points highlighted by the Inspector were around the service addressing historical issues (especially around the timeliness of placement of children) and the improvements made in terms of recruitment, matching and placing children within timeframes, the involvement of birth parents in the process and the support provided. Children are protected through the service's effective implementation of safeguarding procedures. Adopters find the service accessible and staff easy to talk to. The promotion of equality and diversity is good with the service reflecting the community it serves.
- 4.6 The recent changes to the Adoption Inspection has meant it has become far more difficult for the Adoption Service to achieve a good or outstanding rating. John Golding, Deputy Chief Inspector of Ofsted has been quoted as stating "Inspection of Adoption Services has been too lenient in the past and that people were right to question who so many services had previously been rated good or outstanding". Given this and the historic difficulties around meeting timescales for Brent children, the team has worked exceptionally hard to deliver the improvements required and to achieve good in three areas.
- 4.7 Below are the four recommendations required from the Inspection. Work is already underway to address these areas. These four recommendations form the Action Plan attached.

1. Ensure that the life story book is given to the child and prospective adopters in stages: at the latest by the second statutory review of the child's placement with the prospective adopters and the completed life story book at the latest within ten working days of the adoption ceremony (NMS 2.7)
2. Monitor performance against the timescales outlined in this guidance and make this information available in the six-monthly reports under the National Minimum Standards 25.6 (Adoption and Children Act 2002, Chapter 2, paragraph 3)
3. Provide a children's guide to adoption support including all the information outlined in this standard (NMS18.6)
4. Continue to manage the service efficiently and effectively to ensure delivery of a good quality service which meets the needs of children and other service users. (NMS 25)

## **5.0 Finance**

5.1 There are no financial implications from this report.

## **6.0 Legal**

6.1 This report complies with the legal requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Adoption National Minimum Standards 2011.

## **7.0 Diversity Implications**

7.1 There are no Diversity Implications arising from this report.

## **8.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)**

8.1 There are no staffing/accommodation issues arising from this report.

## **9.0 Background Papers**

- a) Ofsted Adoption Inspection report
- b) Adoption Action Plan

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