

Item No. 7.	Classification: Open	Date: 21 February 2012	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Adoption Service Inspection Report	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Strategic Director of Children's Services	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To note the results of a full Ofsted adoption inspection which took place from 9 – 12 January 2012.
2. To note and agree ongoing requirements placed upon the Corporate Parenting Committee outlined in the new adoption regulations April 2011.
3. To note that the Ofsted Adoption Inspection was GOOD whilst noting several key areas were outstanding.

KEY MESSAGES

4. The corporate parenting committee in November 2011 requested a “deep dive review” of the Adoption Service in light of significant media and government interest/profile.
5. Whilst Southwark had been anticipating an inspection of adoption before the end of March 2012, on the 16 December, Ofsted confirmed that they wished to undertake an adoption inspection from 9 – 12 January 2012. This constituted less than 4 weeks notice which included the Christmas and New Year break. NB: the recent fostering inspection had provided 8 weeks notice. Ofsted is currently considering whether future inspections should have no notice.
6. The adoption inspection methodology included a comprehensive practice and file review of all open adoption cases and all children/adopters brought before the monthly adoption panel since September 2011. It was felt that to avoid duplication and additional work, the Ofsted inspection should replace the internal “deep dive review” of Southwark’s Adoption Service requested by the Corporate Parenting Committee in November 2011.
7. The Inspectors provided verbal feedback on 12 January 2011 confirming their findings that Southwark’s Adoption Service was an overall “good” and outstanding in one area. A further update will be given at the meeting.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

8. Southwark's Adoption Service is delivered primarily through the Adoption and Permanence Team. It is part of the Children Looked After (CLA) Business Unit in the Children's Specialist Services (CSS). The Service has a key role to play in meeting CSS's strategic aims in relation to:
 - Providing permanent families and placement stability for children in care
 - Reducing the number of children in care by adopting children from care;
9. Southwark is an approved adoption agency under the Adoption Agency Regulations 2005 (amended 2011) and the service undertakes key functions as set out in the Statement of Purpose 2011/12 which was presented to the previous committee in November.
10. Significant changes to the management and structure of service delivery in respect of adoption were implemented from April 2011. The Adoption and Fostering Service Manager and the Adoption and Permanence Team Manager retired in Autumn 2010. The Service was reorganised and the Adoption and Permanence Team moved to the management of the Service Manager for children in care 0-12 years. This was both to meet the requirements of renewed regulation, statutory guidance and National Minimum Standards relating to all aspects of CLA, and to respond to the need to reduce costs. In doing so this created a natural synergy with social work teams heavily involved in the above strategic aims particularly around adoption.
11. Adoption is one of the most highly regulated and high profile areas of childcare practice. It has received increased national political scrutiny. An adoption order irrevocably transfers full parental responsibility for a child to a new parent and therefore is a very carefully considered process.
12. Adoption performance (adoption and special guardianship orders granted) is reported to the Department for Education (DfE) on an annual basis as part of the set of performance indicators relating to children in public care. Southwark's adoption performance is then benchmarked against other similar local authorities.
13. In November 2011 Southwark's Adoption Service presented its mid year report (2011/12) and revised statement of purpose for committee approval.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

14. The Adoption regulations April 2011 expect Corporate Parenting to receive the following reports each year
 - 1) End of Year Adoption and Permanence Report
 - 2) Mid year Progress Report
 - 3) Revised and updated (if considered necessary) statement of purpose.
15. It is therefore proposed that any changes to the Adoption Statement of Purpose will be submitted each year (at the same time as) the end of year annual report.

16. The corporate parenting committee work plan will schedule committee agenda's to receive the end of year and mid year adoption reports.
17. It is expected that the Ofsted formal letter outlining its inspection findings and recommendations will be available by mid February 2012.
18. A summary of the inspection recommendations (obtained from verbal feedback on 12 January) will be given at the committee meeting.
19. This considerable achievement should also be viewed alongside the result of the Ofsted inspection of Southwark's fostering service which took place in December 2011 – assessed as "good" with outstanding features.

Policy implications

20. Ensure Adoption reports to the Corporate Parenting Committee are compliant with regulations

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Adoption Statement of Purpose	160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Chris Saunders, Head of Services for Children in Care 020 7525 1039

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Rory Patterson Deputy Director Children's Specialist Services & Safeguarding	
Report Author	Chris Saunders, Head of Services for Children in Care	
Version	Final	
Dated	7 February 2012	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES /CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	No	No
Finance Director	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	7 February 2012	