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| <b>Item No.</b><br>9a              | <b>Classification:</b><br>Open | <b>Date:</b><br>23 February 2015                                      | <b>Meeting Name:</b><br>Education and Children's<br>Services Scrutiny Sub-<br>Committee |
| <b>Report title:</b>               |                                | Timeliness of adoption  |   |
| <b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b> |                                | All   |   |
| <b>From:</b>                       |                                | Director of Children's Social Care, Children's and<br>Adults Services |   |

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Scrutiny Sub-Committee requested further detailed information on the timeliness of adoptions for under 2 year olds, for different ethnic groups and for children with special needs and disabilities.

## KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

### 1. Under 2s

The timeliness of adoption for children under 2 years of age has improved steadily since 2010/11. In 2010/11 it took under 2s an average of 552 days from entering care to being placed for adoption with their adoptive families for those that were adopted. In 2014/15\* this has decreased to 287 days. This is a 265 day improvement.

Some children are already living with foster carers who go on to adopt them. When this is taken into account the average time from entering care to moving in with their adoptive family is lower at 223 days for 2014/15\*.

Timeliness is monitored by the Adoption Taskforce which oversees performance on adoption and is an additional layer of scrutiny to ensure that there are no avoidable delays for children.

### 2. Ethnicity

The data below shows the significant improvement in timescales for children from almost all ethnic groups between 2010/11 and 2014/15\*. It also shows that despite this there continues to be a challenge in finding adoptive families for children from of black and mixed ethnicity backgrounds. When taking into account that some children are already living with foster carers who go on to adopt them the data shows more improvement, although, challenges remain.

The Adoption Service is continuing to develop and improve its practice model and managerial oversight to reduce delay in all areas to ensure there are no barriers to matching children with adopters. It is also focusing on improving its offer of support for adopters, as well as the recruitment of more adopters who will meet the needs of children who wait longer. This involves targeted recruitment campaigns, community

engagement work as well as developing partnerships with other adoption agencies across the South London region.

**Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family (days)**

| All children who were adopted between 1 April 2010 and 31 December 2014               |            |                 |               |             |
|---|------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|
| White   | Mixed      | Black Caribbean | Black African | Black Other |
| <b>530</b>  | <b>704</b> | <b>684</b>      | <b>791</b>    | <b>842</b>  |
| All children who were adopted this financial year - 1 April 2014 and 31 December 2014 |            |                 |               |             |
| White   | Mixed      | Black Caribbean | Black African | Black Other |
| <b>259</b>  | <b>494</b> | <b>340</b>      | <b>672</b>    | <b>864</b>  |

All children who were adopted between 1 April 2010 and 31 December 2014  
*Adjusted to include adoptions by foster carers when children placed for adoption*

| White      | Mixed      | Black Caribbean | Black African | Black Other |
|------------|------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|
| <b>423</b> | <b>496</b> | <b>427</b>      | <b>787</b>    | <b>608</b>  |

The current national timescale for children of all ages and ethnicities is 487 days. Although, Southwark does not currently meet this target, at 504 days we are close. This is a significant improvement compared to five years ago when our performance was 736 days.

As part of our quality assurance audit programme we will be undertaking a case audit of black African and Black other children in February to better understand the reasons behind delay, so that we can take steps to reduce the gap.

Out of the 33 children adopted in 2014/15\* nine (27%) were transracial adoptions. Eight of these nine were White adopters adopting BME children and one was a Black adopter adopting a White sibling group. This adopter had been their foster carer.

**3. Special needs / disabilities**

In 2014/15\* one child with a disability was adopted. He was a two year old Black African boy and he was placed with his foster carers who adopted him. Time from entering care to moving in with his adoptive family was 35 days which is the second best time for all children in 2014/15\*.

Another three year old White British boy with a disability has been placed for adoption with his foster carer who has also decided to adopt him. This child was one day old when he was placed with his carer and when he is adopted timeliness will be one of the best for all children adopted in the current financial year.

*\*2014/15 figures show results up to the 31st of December 2014*

## AUDIT TRAIL

|   |  |                          |
|---|--|--------------------------|
| <b>Lead Officer</b>   | Rory Patterson - Director, Children's Social Care, Children's and Adults' Services |                          |
| <b>Report Author</b>  | Sadie Dann - Policy Officer  |                          |
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| <b>Dated</b>  | 17 February 2015.  |                          |
| <b>Key Decision?</b>  | No   |                          |
| <b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b> |  |                          |
| <b>Officer Title</b>  | <b>Comments Sought</b>   | <b>Comments Included</b> |
| Director of Legal Services  | No   | No                       |
| Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services                    | No   | No                       |
| <b>Cabinet Member</b>   | Yes  | No                       |
| <b>Date final report sent to Scrutiny Team</b>                          | 17 February 2015   |                          |