

Meeting: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Board / Cabinet

Date: 27 January 2025/ 18 February 2025 /

Wards affected: All

Report Title: Adopt South West Annual Report 2023-24

When does the decision need to be implemented? For information.

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. Adopt South West is the Regional Adoption Agency which undertakes adoption functions on behalf of Torbay, as well as Devon, Plymouth, Somerset in addition now to Cornwall who joined this year. Whilst each local authority retains overall responsibility for their adoption services and for their cared for children, most adoption functions are delegated to Adopt South West.
- 1.2. The Adopt South West annual report 2023-24 outlines key data and information relating to these adoption functions, such as recruiting, assessing and supporting prospective adopters, non-agency adoption work including partner adoptions and for intercountry adoptions. It also outlines key performance in relation to family finding for all children with adoption plans in the Adopt South West region as well as the support Adopt South West provide to all parties affected by adoption, including adopters, adoptees, adoptive families, adopted adults and birth relatives.

2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

- 2.1. Under the national standards for adoption, all adoption agencies must provide to their responsible body, in this case the executive side of the local authority, a written report on the management, outcomes and financial state of the agency. The provision of an adoption service is a statutory requirement. The Adoption and Children Act 2002 provides the structure for an adoption service. Under the Adoption Act 2002 s3, each council must maintain within its area an adoption service designed to meet the needs of children who may be adopted, their parents, their natural parents and former guardians. These services are referred to as the Adoption Service, (Adoption and Children Act 2002 s2 (1)). An

adoption agency refers either to a local authority or to a registered adoption society under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 s2 (1).

- 2.2. Torbay's vision is one whereby its people are able to thrive, and our fostering community is an integral part of the service provided to our cared for children. As outlined within Torbay's Corporate Parenting Strategy, we want our cared for and care experienced young people to be safe, happy and healthy, in order that they can reach their full potential, and as corporate parents, we wish to give our cared for and care experienced children and young people access to all of the opportunities that good parents afford their children, including wherever possible and in line with a child's best interests the opportunity for permanence through a plan of adoption. The dedication and commitment of our adoptive families plays a critical role in how we are able to achieve this vision.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

1. That the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board note the report as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report; and
2. That Cabinet note and endorse the contents of the Adopt South West Annual Report 2023-24 as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report.

4. Appendices

Appendix 1: Annual Report 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 – Adopt South West

Also available as a web based report <https://www.adoptsouthwest.org.uk/document/annual-report-1-april-2023-to-31-march-2024/>

5. Background Documents

- [Adopt South West - Can you transform a child's future?](#)

Supporting Information

6. Introduction

- 6.1. The Adopt South West Annual Report 2023-24 provides an overview of the activity within Adopt South West as a regional adoption agency in the period from the 1st April 2023 to the 31st March 2024.
- 6.2. It includes an overview of Adopt South West's work with local authority partners, information relating to Cornwall joining, an outline of the governance and scrutiny of Adopt South West, data relating to children with a plan of adoption, family finding performance, performance relating to early permanence, an overview of adopter sufficiency and marketing and recruitment activity and an overview of adoption support, including maintaining relationships and birth relative support.

7. Options under consideration

- 7.1. N/A – No other options have been considered.

8. Financial Opportunities and Implications

- 8.1 The Adopt South West Annual Report includes details in relation to finance, including the 2023-24 overall budget, the funding formula, and the 2024-25 budget. The Adopt South West Strategic Board is responsible for setting the annual budget, informed by the financial sub-group which includes a representative from Torbay's finance team.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1. Under the national standards for adoption, all adoption agencies must provide to their responsible body, in this case the executive side of the local authority, a written report on the management, outcomes and financial state of the agency. The provision of an adoption service is a statutory requirement. The Adoption and Children Act 2002 provides the structure for an adoption service. Under the Adoption Act 2002 s3, each council must maintain within its area an adoption service designed to meet the needs of children who may be adopted, their parents, their natural parents and former guardians. These services are referred to as the Adoption Service, (Adoption and Children Act 2002 s2 (1)). An adoption agency refers either to a local authority or to a registered adoption society under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 s2 (1).

10. Engagement and Consultation

- 10.1. Adopted children and their families are encouraged to share their views regularly and in a variety of ways, and their voice is reflected throughout the Adopt South West Annual Report 2023-24.

11. Procurement Implications

11.1. There are no procurement implications as a result of endorsing this report.

12. Protecting our naturally inspiring Bay and tackling Climate Change

12.1. There are no relevant implications.

13. Associated Risks

13.1. Should this report not be endorsed Torbay and Adopt South West will not be compliant with the statutory requirements in line with the national standards for adoption. There will no change in terms of the fundamental function of the service however the report would not be published, and could not be transparently shared with adopted children and their families, which would limit the ability of the service to share learning in respect of patterns and trends, and achieve clarity with our fostering families about the priorities for improvement.

14. Equality Impact Assessment

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act and groups with increased vulnerability	Data and insight	Equality considerations (including any adverse impacts)	Mitigation activities	Responsible department and timeframe for implementing mitigation activities
Age	<p>18 per cent of Torbay residents are under 18 years old.</p> <p>55 per cent of Torbay residents are aged between 18 to 64 years old.</p> <p>27 per cent of Torbay residents are aged 65 and older.</p>	<p>The Adopt South West Annual Report 2023-24 outlines the strengths, areas of development and the priorities for the regional adoption agency, in addition to the vision and strategy to enhance the sufficiency of adoptive placements for children with this plan of permanence. It outlines the nature of the work undertaken to support all children with a plan of adoption, their adoptive families and their birth families, no matter their age.</p>		
Carers	<p>At the time of the 2021 census there were 14,900 unpaid carers in Torbay. 5,185 of these provided 50 hours or more of care.</p>	<p>The Adopt South West Annual Report 2023-24 outlines the services available to support adoptive parents in their parenting roles, to ensure that children's needs are met for their majority and to mitigate against family breakdown.</p>		

Disability	In the 2021 Census, 23.8% of Torbay residents answered that their day-to-day activities were limited a little or a lot by a physical or mental health condition or illness.	The report outlines Adopt South West's engagement in a specific project (the South West Permanence Project) which aims to increase and support adopters looking to care for children with additional needs.		
Gender reassignment	In the 2021 Census, 0.4% of Torbay's community answered that their gender identity was not the same as their sex registered at birth. This proportion is similar to the Southwest and is lower than England.	No differential impact.		
Marriage and civil partnership	Of those Torbay residents aged 16 and over at the time of 2021 Census, 44.2% of people were married or in a registered civil partnership.	No differential impact.		
Pregnancy and maternity	Over the period 2010 to 2021, the rate of live births (as a proportion of females aged 15 to 44) has been slightly but significantly higher in Torbay (average of 63.7 per 1,000) than England (60.2) and the South West (58.4). There has been a notable fall in the numbers of live births since	No differential impact.		

	the middle of the last decade across all geographical areas.			
Race	In the 2021 Census, 96.1% of Torbay residents described their ethnicity as white. This is a higher proportion than the South West and England. Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals are more likely to live in areas of Torbay classified as being amongst the 20% most deprived areas in England.	No differential impact.		
Religion and belief	64.8% of Torbay residents who stated that they have a religion in the 2021 census.	No differential impact.		
Sex	51.3% of Torbay's population are female and 48.7% are male	No differential impact.		
Sexual orientation	In the 2021 Census, 3.4% of those in Torbay aged over 16 identified their sexuality as either Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or, used another term to describe their sexual orientation.	No differential impact.		
Armed Forces Community	In 2021, 3.8% of residents in England reported that they	No differential impact.		

	had previously served in the UK armed forces. In Torbay, 5.9 per cent of the population have previously served in the UK armed forces.			
Additional considerations				
Socio-economic impacts (Including impacts on child poverty and deprivation)		The ambition of the regional adoption agency, as outlined in the report, is to ensure that any child, no matter their level of need or their socioeconomic status, is able to achieve a plan of permanence through adoption, should this be their agreed plan in line with their best interests.		
Public Health impacts (Including impacts on the general health of the population of Torbay)		The role of the regional adoption agency is to ensure that all cared for children with an identified plan of adoption are able to realise this plan of permanence, and are placed in a timely way with the right support; as such, the provision of the service functions of Adopt South West can have a significant, positive impact on the longer term health outcomes for cared for children and care experienced young people. The provision of high quality post-adoption support to adoptive families also impacts positively on their emotional health.		

Human Rights impacts		This reports links to Articles 8 and 10.		
Child Friendly	Torbay Council is a Child Friendly Council, and all staff and Councillors are Corporate Parents and have a responsibility towards cared for and care experienced children and young people.	The function of Adopt South West is critical to Torbay's child friendly ambition, in ensuring that children with plans of adoption realise permanence in a timely way in placements which are with the South West thereby supporting their regional identity and their access to post-adoption support.		

15. Cumulative Council Impact

15.1 None.

16. Cumulative Community Impacts

16.1. None.