Hertfordshire

Adoption Agency Annual Report 2017/18

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Section 1   Background Information

This is a report on the performance of the Hertfordshire Adoption Service in line with National Minimum Standards and Statutory Guidance.

1.1 Introduction

The work of Hertfordshire County Council Adoption Agency is governed by the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and associated regulations and guidance. The Adoption Service contributes to improving outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people in the county; the key priority is to achieve 'permanence' for Children Looked After, ensuring they can be brought up in loving, secure and stable families. Where the child's welfare requires a placement outside the birth family the Adoption Agency's paramount consideration is the child's welfare through his or her life. Permanence outside the birth family can be legally secured through adoption, special guardianship or Child Arrangement Orders.

This report provides details of the Adoption Service activity from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 and sets out plans for future development up to 31 March 2019.

1.2 National Context and Regional Adoption Agencies (RAA)

Hertfordshire County Council has remained fully engaged in the change agenda for adoption and sought to respond robustly to the challenge by central government to increase the effectiveness of adoption services as set out in; 'An Action Plan for Adoption: tackling delay' (March 2012), 'Further Action on Adoption: Finding More Loving Homes' in January 2013, and the adoption regionalisation agenda 'A Vision for Change' March 2016.

The Family Justice Review, introduced the 26-week timescale for care proceedings, has had a significant impact on the Adoption Service over the last few years. Local Authorities are required to develop permanence plans for children and place them in alternative family arrangements more quickly. There is a steady rise in the use of Special Guardianship Orders with family members as an alternative route to achieve permanency. Courts are increasingly reluctant to make a placement order, with Adoption being the last resort 'where nothing else will do. There is a reported national fall 25% in the number of children with a court approved plan for adoption (placement orders) granted by courts in England between 2013/14 and 2015/16. A further 15% decrease is reported in 2016/17.

The Education and Adoption Act 2016, provides the Secretary of State with the power to order local authority adoption services to combine services if they do not voluntarily do so. The expectation is that all local authority adoption agencies to join a Regional Adoption Agency [RAA] by March 2020.

In 2015, Hertfordshire became part of 'Adopt East' working with partners Essex, Suffolk, Southend on Sea, Luton Councils and Voluntary Adoption

Agencies Adoption plus and Barnardo's to establish a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA).

The development priorities of the Adopt East partners are those outlined in 'A vision for change':

- Decisions about placements are always made in the child's best interests;

- Service delivery has at its heart innovation and practice excellence;

- Social Workers are highly skilled professionals who make high quality evidence-based decisions and do not tolerate damaging delay for children in their care;

- Matches are made without unnecessary delay;

- Fostering for Adoption to offer children early permanence placements;

- Every adoptive family has access to an ongoing package of appropriate support with a high-quality specialist assessment of need;

- The voice of adopters and their children is at the heart of national and local policy making and delivery of services.

During 2017/18, work has continued around the formation of Adopt East as a proposed Regional Adoption Agency. The work has been overseen by a Project Manager, a Project Board chaired by an Assistant Director of Children's Services from Suffolk County Council and a governance board of the partner Directors of Children's Services.

In October 2017, the Directors of Children's Services [DCS] made the decision that an RAA [single line of accountability through host local authority and pooled budgets] is not a model that will promote optimal success for adoption services within the Adopt East partnership. This decision was reached due to matters relating to effectiveness of a single line of operational management, given geography and size of partners. As an alternative, the DCS governance board are committed to best outcomes for children and families to be achieved through a regional alliance model. The priorities for the alliance model remain the same as those of an RAA, without the single line of accountability.

There remains an ongoing discussion with the Department of Education as to how the alliance model will achieve the criteria and outcomes set for the development of RAA.

During 2017/2018 the following progress has been made by Adopt East to meet key priorities:

- The Regional Matching Co-ordinator role has continued to promote timely matching across the region with a number of matching events which have continued to activity across the Alliance.
- Link Maker System [UK wide pool of available adopters] development for Adopt East partnership to aid matching across the Alliance through more effective tracking systems.

- The Adopter Voice has remained a valued partner in the development of all Adopt East activity supported by Adoption UK.
- The proposed objectives set for the Adopt East *Adoption Support Centre of Excellence,* whilst not achieved due to DfE grant funding not being available, has informed the strategic planning for the alliance.

In May 2017, Luton Borough Council expressed an interest in delegating functions of their adoption service to Hertfordshire County Council. Luton Borough Council presented a report outlying these intentions to the Borough Council Executive Board on 4th June 2018. This matter will be further considered by Hertfordshire County Council Cabinet on 24 September 2018.

Section 2   Service Structure

2.1 The Hertfordshire Adoption Service

The Adoption Service provides the following core services in accordance with statutory requirements:

- The recruitment and assessment of prospective adoptive parents.

- The selection of adoptive parents and matching of children to be for adoption.

- The management of the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) functions and adoption panels. The ADM approves both children's plans for adoption, matches of children to adoptive parents and approvals of adopters. The adoption panel makes a recommendation regarding matches of children and adoption assessments to the ADM.

- The provision of financial support in relation to adoption; special guardianship and child arrangement order applications where appropriate.

- The provision of adoption support services both pre-and post-adoption.

- The provision of inter-country adoption services – currently delivered through an arrangement with the Intercountry Adoption Centre (IAC). This arrangement is being delivered with regional partners Essex, Suffolk and Luton Councils and will continue during 2018/2019

- The provision to assess, supervise and report to Court for non-agency adoptive parents.

2.2 The Adoption Teams

The Adoption Service is comprised of 5 teams and supported by one Service Manager. The Adoption Service Manager also acts in an advisory role to the ADM regarding children's plans for adoption.

Recruitment activity is carried out by the joint adoption and fostering recruitment team. There are two assessment teams, which assess and support prospective adoptive parents and also match children with approved adopters. A single family

finding team is dedicated to identify families for older children, or those with more complex needs.

The adoption support team provides support to children and their adoptive parents prior to and post adoption. It also provides a counselling and advice service to adult adoptees who want to see their child care records or trace birth relatives. Services to birth parents [counselling] are also provided by this team.

A panel team supports the Agency Decision Maker process for children's plans and coordinates the work of the adoption panel, ensuring that statutory timescales regarding the production of reports and minutes of Panel meetings are met. The line management of the panel arrangements, is held by the Service Manager with responsibility for the fostering panel arrangements and the family and friends fostering teams

The teams are located in County Hall, Farnham House and Rainbow House, St Albans.

2.2.1.   *The Joint Adoption and Fostering Recruitment Team*

Hertfordshire operates a two-stage adoption recruitment process in line with statutory regulations. The stage 1 process is the initial checks and registration, is led by the applicant and usually takes no longer than two months. Stage 2 is the training, assessment stage lasting around four months and undertaken by a social worker. The joint adoption and fostering recruitment team manage the pre-stage enquiry and the stage 1 process. The adoption assessment teams are responsible for stage two. The final stage in the recruitment process is the adoption panel and the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) process.

During 2017-18 recruitment activity continued to focus on adoption applications for the profile of children waiting not matched, including sibling groups, those with more complex needs and applicants willing to be considered as dually approved to undertake an early permanence placement (*foster to adopt*).

At 31 March 2018, 53 Adopters were approved [including second time adopters and foster to adopt dual approvals]. The target for adopter recruitment [50] reflected the reduced demand of children requiring a plan for adoption and the pool of adopters already available for matching.

2.2.2.   *Adoption Preparation Training (APT)*

The joint adoption and fostering team, alongside the assessment teams also provide the preparation and training courses for prospective adoptive parents called Adoption Preparation Training (APT).

During 2017/18, one course per month has been offered to prospective adopters which take place over 3 days. Applicants complete the first 2

days in stage 1 and the final day and specialist dually approved/early permanency training in stage 2 of the process. The course is co-facilitated by an experienced adoptive parent and an experienced adoption social worker.

2.3 The Assessments Teams

The role of the assessment team is to progress applicants in stage 2 of the adoption process i.e. the home-study and present applicants to the adoption panel for recommendation for approval. The provision of independent social workers is available to be used if necessary.

2.3.1. Relinquished Babies

The assessment teams provide a service for birth parents that wish to voluntarily relinquish their babies for adoption. These assessments require intensive support by social workers. The Adoption Service managed two relinquished babies during 2017/2018, both returned to the care of the birth parents with support from Children's Services.

2.3.2. Early Permanence (Foster to Adopt)

Foster to adopt places a child during the period of temporary local authority care with dually approved (for adoption and fostering) carers who intend to adopt allowing for continuity of care for the child. A *foster to adopt* placement will only be made where there is clear evidence to the local authority that there is very little likelihood that the birth parents can resolve their problems or that there are no other family members to care for the child. The evidence for considering such a placement needs to be substantial and this usually means that the parents have had other children placed for adoption in the past and their circumstances have not changed following for the birth of the new child.

The Adoption Service work closely with Children's Services colleagues to ensure that as many children as possible are considered for the option of an early permanence placement. Relinquished babies are always considered for such arrangements.

At 31 March 2018, 6 children were placed in early permanence arrangements. Dually approved foster carers and adopters now have access to a regular support group.

2.3.3. Hertfordshire Youth Panel

The Hertfordshire Youth Panel is a forum for adopted young people to contribute to the preparation of adoptive parents. This is an initiative that has been developed further in 2017/18. The forum meets with prospective adopters on a number of occasions throughout the year, with the purposes of young people being able to share with prospective adopters their insight and perspective of growing up as an adopted child. This is

well received by all parties and provides an opportunity for the experience of the adopted child to inform the preparation of adopters.

2.4 The Family Finding Team

Each child with a plan of adoption receives a family finding service. The family finding team primarily provide this service, although at times workers from the assessment service will also undertake this role. The family finding team (FFT) work to ensure that all children are placed without delay. Each child has a bespoke Family Finding Plan which is regularly reviewed. The team works with children's social workers to establish precise needs and identify possible placements.

Matching Coordinator: Since October 2017, Hertfordshire appointed a Matching Co-ordinator. The role of the Matching Co-ordinator is to support the timely matching of children and to ensure that planning for children, who are likely to require adoption, takes place as early as possible. The Matching Co-ordinator attends Legal Planning Meetings, promotes early care planning through early permanence arrangements where possible.

2.4.1. Matching Events

Since 2016, a comprehensive programme of regional matching events has been established. Children have been profiled as early as possible to secure a match and reduce time waiting not matched once placement order is granted. 2 regional matching events took place in 2017/18. Alongside this activity, other national family finding tools have been used such as the National Adoption Register, Exchange Events and the national Adoption Link Maker System.

During 2017/18, Hertfordshire arranged 6 in house *craft events* [adopter led matching], which has generated a number of successful matches for children waiting not matched. Such craft events were also made available for adopters from partner local authorities. Further craft events are planned to take across the Adopt East region in the coming months.

Further innovation around matching has continued in Hertfordshire, with Adopter Networking evenings. These events are established by existing adoptive families, for adopters waiting a match and promote both the strengths and opportunities of adopting older and harder to place children. These events have been well received by adopters and have led to a number of creative matching opportunities.

During 2017/18, we continued to welcome applications from foster carers to adopt the child or children placed with them, where the child has a court agreed plan for adoption. At 31 March 2018, 7 children were adopted by foster carers.

2.4.2. Ethnicity Match of Children

The practice in Hertfordshire is to recruit families who can support and promote a child's ethnic and cultural heritage. If there are no suitable families a referral is quickly made to the Adoption Register for England and Wales, Adoption Link and to our regional partners in order to identify families as quickly as possible.

Hertfordshire continues to work with the statutory guidance issued with regard the placement of black and minority ethnic children to avoid any delay in matching on the grounds of ethnicity. During 2017/18, the service worked effectively to ensure that children from a BME background did not experience any undue delay in matching due to their ethnicity, or any other background factors. 17 of the 53 children placed for adoption are from a BME background. 8% of Hertfordshire children adopted during 2014-17 were from a BME background, in line with the England average.

2.4.3. Transitions and Sibling Assessments

An additional role played by the Adoption Service is the expertise in working with children in transition (from fostering placements into adoptive placements) and in preparing children and adoptive parents to make successful attachments and relationships. The other area of expertise, is in sibling assessments ensuring there is a full understanding of children's needs, when matching children with adopters.

During this period, 7 sibling assessments were undertaken (involving 26 children, including a sibling group of 9 and 7). These assessments support key decision making in relation to family finding together or apart and in relation of therapeutic support that may be required to support an adoptive family.

2.5 The Adoption Support Team and the Adoption Support Fund

The primary role and function of the adoption support team is to provide the services in accordance with the ASR (2005) and as outlined in the Statutory Guidance (2014).

2.5.1. Adoption Support Regulations

A local authority must provide a range of adoption support services under Section 3(1) of the *Children and Families Act 2014*. The *Adoption Support Regulations 2005* (ASR) and the *Adoption Support (Amendment) Regulations 2014*, set out the detail of such provisions. In summary, these include:

- Counselling, advice and information;

- Therapeutic services;

- Financial support;

- Services to ensure discussion of matters relating to adoption;

- Services to ensure the continuation of adoptive relationship;

- Assistance in relation to arrangements for contact

2.5.2. *The Adoption Support Team*

The Adoption Support Team *provides a range of adoption support services, including access to counselling, information and advice for both adoptive parents and their children, who may have complex needs. There are around 40 individual requests per week for adoption support services.*

The range of services provided during this period include: adult records search and reunion, letter box service, support in complex family situations, assessments for access to the Adoption Support Fund [ASF], match funding for complex packages of interventions [sensory attachment therapy, therapeutic life story, Theraplay], peer support and group work. The most significant area of demand has been within the letter box service. This is a complex area of work, with nearly 1,000 individual arrangements of letter box contact taking place.

The Adoption Support Team works closely with Hertfordshire's Targeted Youth Support Services and Families First (Early Help) to ensure that adopted children, young people and their families are able to access a full range of support services.

In February 2018, Hertfordshire Customer Service Centre was commissioned by the Adoption Service to provide an initial triage of requests for advice, guidance and support regarding post adoption matters. This arrangement will be reviewed in June 2018, but indications are that the new arrangement is leading to quicker and more responsive service for enquires for Adoption Support.

Over the last 2 years an Advisory Teacher from the Virtual School, has been available to work directly with some individual families and a number of schools to promote better educational outcomes for adopted children. This arrangement [secondment from the Virtual School] has now ended, but feedback from adopters clearly indicates that this support has been very useful and helpful in managing the impact of school on an adopted child. Service development has taken place in partnership with adopters to ensure a more holistic approach to educational support for adopters, working alongside the Virtual School.

2.5.3. Adoption Support Fund

Demand continues for counselling and therapeutic services due to the complexity of children placed. These services are critical to support families who are experiencing challenges in meeting the needs of adopted children. The majority of these referrals are associated with behaviour linked to attachment and developmental trauma. The introduction of the Adoption Support Fund in March 2015 has enabled Hertfordshire to expand the range of therapeutic provision for adoptive families that is accessed through the Adoption Support Fund.

At the end of March 2018, 239 applications were made to the Adoption Support Fund, with a total of £445.058 K being received for a range of specialist provision and assessment, including DDP, sensory integration therapy and therapeutic play therapy.

Whilst demand for the fund is similar that in 2016/17 [£498,000], changes to the arrangements of the fund have required Hertfordshire to match fund any packages of support over the fair access limits of up to £2,500 for specialist assessments and up to £5,000 for therapy per child, per financial year. Hertfordshire match funded 4 packages of therapeutic support with a total spend of £ 7,674.05

2.6 The Adoption Panel

- Hertfordshire has an independently chaired Adoption Panel which considers the following: Assessments of prospective adoptive parents for approval;
- The assessment of dually approved carers (early permanence/foster for adoption);
- The matching of children to be placed for adoption with approved prospective adopters;
- De-registration of approved adoptive parents who no longer wish to progress or are assessed as being unable to have an ongoing approval.

The panel management team meets quarterly and an annual report is provided by the panel chair on the quality of the panel business. The outcomes and any improvement required are incorporated into the Adoption Service Plan.

Since September 2017, following a review of panel activity completed by two independent Adoption Consultants [February 2017], the following changes have been fully implemented

- That Hertfordshire Adoption Panel(s) has one central panel for consistent best practice and efficiency in the use of resources.
- The new central Hertfordshire Adoption Panel operates as a pooled central list of adoption panel members.

- New arrangements have been made to ensure that the valuable input and contribution of the Medical Advisor(s) is retained within this new model.

- That all Hertfordshire Adoption Panel members will be provided with a learning and development programme to support them with these changes and in their individual roles.

Section 3   <u>Finance</u>

3.1 Financial Support for Adopters

Financial support for adopters [adoption allowances] continues to be available to meet the needs of children and ensure the stability of the adoption arrangement. Further discretionary payments for support are available, where resource is not covered by allowances or the Adoption Support Fund.

The year-end spend of £2,402,551 [adoption allowances] was fully aligned to resource availability of £2,686,616

3.2 Inter Agency Arrangements

During 2017-18, 13 Hertfordshire children were placed in inter-agency arrangements. Hertfordshire adopters provided 21 placements for children from other Local Authorities generating an income of £346,145 from inter-agency fees.

Section 4   <u>Other Services</u>

4.1 Inter-Country Adoption

A Service Level Agreement is in place with the Intercountry Adoption Centre alongside Alliance partners Essex, Suffolk and Luton to manage this aspect of the agency responsibility. Regular monitoring meetings are held to ensure that this service is effectively meeting the needs of Hertfordshire, Essex, Suffolk and Luton residents.

4.2 Non-Agency Adoption (Step Parent Adoption)

During 2017/18, non-agency adoptions were all managed in-house.

Section 5   <u>Disruptions</u>

Hertfordshire has historically had a very low disruption rate, and this has been attributed to the ability to recruit and the quality of both preparation and adoption support services.

During 2017/18, there were 2 disruptions of arrangements pre-order, compared to 2 the previous year. The learning outcomes from the disruptions indicate the importance of ensuring that adopters fully understand a child's needs, the impact of adopting an older child on family life-style and have effective support around them. There is also the need to consider the arrangements for managing support expectations between adoption agencies, where the arrangement is with external adopters.

A new model for managing disruption meetings has been introduced using strengths-based approach. This has resulted in more child focused outcomes, social workers and adoptive parents have been more engaged in the process. This has supported the future care planning for the child.

Section 6   <u>Complaints</u>

The service received 6 formal complaints at stage 1 during this period, 6 of which were managed informally outside of the complaints procedures. The following key learning outcomes have helped inform service planning:

- The importance of working in an open and transparent way with adopters at all times.

- That potentially difficult information is shared face to face with adopters.

- In assessment, being open to potential issues right from the beginning during the recruitment and assessment process.

Section 7   Adoption Performance Indicators and the Adoption Scorecard

7.1 Performance Summary 2017/18

Hertfordshire makes use of the variety of performance indicators to triangulate evidence of outcomes (the Adoption Leadership Board (ALB) data, Hertfordshire performance monitoring and the Adoption Scorecard, see *Appendix B & C*).

Hertfordshire continues to promote adoption as a permanence plan for children where this best meets their needs and is on an improvement journey in relation to timeliness in matching for adoption. Performance reflects the reducing cohort of children with a plan for adoption.

Performance Summary at 31 March 2018:

- 53 adopters were approved (15 dually approved) [44 in 2016/17, 14 dually approved].

- 50 children were matched with adopters, 55 2016/17

- 53 children were placed for adoption, 6 in early permanence arrangements (*foster to adopt*) [54 placed in 2016/17, 5 in early permanence].

- 58 adoption plans were approved by the Agency Decision Maker. [70 in 2016/17, 75 in 2015/16].

- 46 children received a court approved plan for adoption during this period [60 in 2016/17].

- 57 adoption orders were granted [99 children adopted 2016/17].

- 13% of children leaving care were adopted, which is the average for the Eastern Region, but below the national average (14.9%). This is a reflection of the reducing cohort of children with a plan for adoption in Hertfordshire and the use of Special Guardianship Orders as an alternative permanence arrangement for children exiting care.

- During the rolling year 2017/18, 81% of children adopted spent less than 12 months from ADM decision to placement. This is a significant improvement on 2016/17 at 61.6%. Hertfordshire is also performing above the Eastern Region average of 79.9%.

7.2 The National Adoption Leadership Board data (ALB) and Hertfordshire Performance Monitoring

Over the last 3 years, the National Adoption Leadership Board data (ALB) (see *Appendix B*) highlights that Hertfordshire continues to manage a significant number of children with a plan for adoption. The Adoption Leadership Board data and local performance monitoring indicates an improving picture in the last 12 months in many areas.

Key highlights of the ALB data at 31 March 2018:

- Of the cohort of children with court approved plans for adoption, 37% were awaiting a match, slightly higher than the performance in 2016/17 at 34%, but an improvement on 2014/2015 where 44% were awaiting a match. Of the children awaiting a match, 10 were linked with adopters awaiting a panel date.

- A1 timeliness (rolling 12 months) in 2017/8 is 448 days, an improving picture on 2016/17performance at 523 days.

- A2 timeliness (rolling 12 months) in 2017/18 is 183 days, a significant improvement on the 2016/17 reported figure of 265 days.

- Only 7 children [8% of the cohort with court approved plans] had an adoption plan changed by the Agency Decision Maker due to changing needs. This is very similar performance to 2016/17 and continues to indicate the progress made to identify families to meet the needs of children most likely to wait for a match.

7.3 The National Adoption Scorecard

7.3.1. The Adoption Scorecard Indicators

The Adoption Scorecard [*Appendix C*] was first introduced in November 2011, to measure local authority performance in relation to achieving permanence for children looked after; measured over a 3-year average and published 12 months after the reporting period has ended.

- A1: the average time it takes for a child who goes on to be adopted from entering care to moving in with his or her adoptive family.

- A2: The average time between local authorities obtaining a Placement Order for a child and matching that child with a prospective adoptive parent.

- A3: Children who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family.

7.3.2. The Adoption Scorecard 2014/17

The Adoption Scorecard (available in full in *Appendix C*), alongside the Adoption Leadership Board (ALB) (see *Appendix B*) provides an indication of the adoption performance by Hertfordshire. The most recent Adoption Scorecard 2014/17 was published in May 2018:

- A1 – At 533 days, Hertfordshire is 107 days from the target performance (426 days). This performance represents an improvement. There are significant improvements in the timeliness of this activity which has been achieved by proactive planning by

children's services and reducing court timescales. The 3-year average is shorter than that in 2013/16 and is just above the England average [520 days].

- A2 – At 247 days, Hertfordshire is 126 days from the target (121 days). The 3-year average between court agreeing adoption and LA approving a match is longer than in 2013-2016 and is below the England average [220 days]. This performance has been anticipated due to a cohort of 18 children, the majority aged between 4-11 with a complex profile, who waited a considerable period for a match. 9 of these children were adopted by their foster carers and 8 children were in sibling groups. Hertfordshire performs just above the England average with 6% of children 5 or over leaving care who are adopted. The timeliness of matching some of these children for adoption will remain a feature of this performance indicator until 2019/20.

- A3 – 50% of Hertfordshire children with a placement order are waiting less than 14 months from entering care to placement, this is an improvement on 2013/16 figure. Hertfordshire is slightly under performing in relation to the local authority average [53%].

Hertfordshire performs just above the England average having 6% of children 5 and over leaving care adopted

The proportion of adoptive families matched to a child, during 2016/17, who waited less than 3 months from approval is 79%, which is just above the England average.

Section 8   Key Service Developments 2017/18

The Key Service Developments for 2018/19 are:

- To recruit 50 adopters to match needs of children waiting not matched, including 10 dually approved adopters.

- To continue to contribute to the development of the Adopt East Alliance Model and regionalisation arrangements.

- To facilitate the delivery of Luton's Adoption Service by Hertfordshire by March 2019, subject to executive approval.

- To continue to drive forward the activity of all social workers to deliver timely matching for all children with a plan for adoption, especially those aged 5 and over.

- To establish an Adoption Support Improvement Plan focused on the following key areas; education, teenagers, therapeutic parenting, networking events and activities for families, birth relative support

Summary

The performance of the Hertfordshire Adoption Service is linked to the overall performance within Children's Services in relation to achieving good outcomes for permanency. Whilst there remains a challenge regarding the timeliness of matching on the three yearly score card, there are strong indications of improvements in timeliness for rolling 12 months. The Adoption Service remains committed to pursuing plans for adoption for children and sibling groups with complex needs. The Adoption Service is also committed to co-production of all service improvement plans with adopters and other key stakeholders (adopted young people and birth parents) and will continue to strengthen engagement during the next 12 months.

The Adoption Service has continued to make progress in terms of best practice and service development, through the Adopt East Alliance regional partnership. Hertfordshire. During 2017/18 a closer operational arrangement will be entered into with Luton Borough Council, subject to Executive approval.

The Adoption Service will also continue to work in close partnership with Children Services colleagues and with the local Family Justice Board, to consider all matters regarding timeliness in matching and placement of children with a plan for adoption to make further improvements.

Sue Lowndes
Head of Adoption & Fostering
May 2018