

<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Decision Type:</b> Non-Key
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<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet	<b>Date:</b> 25 <sup>th</sup> September 2024
<b>Subject:</b>	Adoption Annual Report	
<b>Report of</b>	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People	

### Summary

1. This is the annual report from the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA): Adoption Now. Adoption Now acts as the adoption agency on behalf of six local authorities: of Bury, Bolton, Blackburn with Darwen, Oldham, Rochdale and Tameside.
2. The report highlights that a slightly higher number of Bury children have been made the subject to Placement Orders in the year 2023/24, compared to the previous year, but that there have been difficulties in matching children with prospective adopters.
3. The report suggests that the predominant reasons for difficulties in matching are two-fold. Firstly, several of the children waiting for matches had notable additional needs, sometimes with implications for their future well-being. Secondly, the report notes the increasing shortage of adopters which is affecting all family finding activity, with the 58 adopters recruited in 2023/24 being the lowest number of adopters recruited since the RAA began in 2017 and a lower figure than that achieved by the six constituent local authority adoption services in the year preceding the creation of the RAA. The report also shows a 3-year decline in the number of enquiries about adoption and applications to become an adopter.
4. The report notes that the decline in adopter approvals is a national trend and that the cost-of-living crisis is felt to be a contributor to the reduction in enquiries and overall reduction in adopters. Analysis of the RAA's own data around reasons for withdrawal from the approval process after application partly confirms the view, while also noting that financial stability is often one factor amongst others in the final decision not to proceed as an adopter.

### Recommendation(s)

5. Cabinet members should note the report and consider the key issues raised within the report.

### Reasons for recommendation(s)

6. 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 report must enable the executive to monitor the management and outcomes of the services in order to satisfy themselves that the agency is

effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or service users, Further the report should enable the executive to satisfy themselves that the agency is complying with the conditions of registration. The report should also address any previous issues raised that require action or remedy. The annual report seeks to satisfy this requirement.

7. Regional Adoption Agencies were formed from 2017 onwards with the aim of improving outcomes for children by delivering services at a larger scale and encouraging innovative practice. Local authorities retain a statutory responsibility for adoption, but delegate some or all this work to RAAs. On 1 August 2023, there were 32 RAAs delivering services on behalf of 149 local authorities. This means that RAAs are responsible for delivering most of the adoption practice in England.
8. Bury children are allocated to and held by Adoption Now social workers at the conclusion of care proceedings when a Placement Order is made authorising the placement of a child with a prospective adopting family.

### **Alternative options considered and rejected**

9. Not Applicable. Provision of this report to the council's executive is a statutory expectation for local authority-controlled adoption agencies.

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### **Background**

10. It is essential every year that an annual report highlighting the activities of the adoption service is provided to the Council.
  11. This report will be made available during any inspection of children's services.
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### **Links with the Corporate Priorities:**

*Please summarise how this links to the Let's Do It Strategy.*

12. Adoption is one of the clearest and purest expressions of commitment to others within your community. Adoption can be a transformative experience for both birth parents and children. It teaches patience, empathy, and selflessness and provides a loving family home for local vulnerable and needy children.
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### **Equality Impact and Considerations:**

Please provide an explanation of the outcome(s) of an initial or full EIA and make **specific reference regarding the protected characteristic of Looked After Children**. Intranet link to EIA documents is [here](#).

13. No EIA required.

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### Environmental Impact and Considerations:

Please provide an explanation of the Environmental impact of this decision. Please include the impact on both **Carbon emissions** (contact [climate@bury.gov.uk](mailto:climate@bury.gov.uk) for advice) and **Biodiversity** (contact [c.m.wilkinson@bury.gov.uk](mailto:c.m.wilkinson@bury.gov.uk) for advice)

14. No implications.

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### Assessment and Mitigation of Risk:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation

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### Legal Implications:

*To be completed by the Council's Monitoring Officer.*

- 14 Provision of this report is in line with obligations to provide an update to the Executive of the Responsible Body being Cabinet at the Council.
15. The report is for noting and considering only and does not require Cabinet to Make a decision.
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### Financial Implications:

*To be completed by the Council's Section 151 Officer.*

15. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.
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### Appendices:

*Please list any appended documents.*

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### Background papers:

*Please list any background documents to this report and include a hyperlink where possible.*

**Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.**

Term	Meaning