



Bi Annual Summary Report
1st May 2018 - 30th September 2018



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Index

		Page
1	Executive Summary	2
3	Summary: Plans for the next 12 months <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What has gone well• Plans for next 12 months	5
4	Appendix 1 – Staffing Structure	7

Executive Summary

Adoption Tees Valley began operating as a Regional Adoption Agency, as defined in the Education and Adoption Act (2016) on the 01.05.2018.

It brings together the former Local Authority adoption services of Darlington; Hartlepool; Middlesbrough; Redcar and Cleveland; and Stockton.

The contribution of the Elected Lead Members for Children's Services across the five Local Authorities and the five Children's Services Directors is recognised and valued within this first report of Adoption across the region. Without the courage, leadership and determination to ensure that the Tees Valley achieved a collaborative and well planned Regional Adoption Agency, through committing resources and support, this agency could not have enjoyed the successful start it has.

This report is a review of adoption activity, as defined by the Adoption Leadership Scorecard (ALB) measures for the first five months of operation of ATV and represents the bi annual reporting period of 01.05.2018-30.09.2018. In subsequent years the full half year report will be covered.

Adoption Tees Valley has enjoyed a successful start with a number of children achieving placements who had waited some time for adopters. Additionally, a significant number of adopters who were waiting at the time of transfer have now been matched with children, and in many cases the children have moved in.

A key aim of the RAA programme is to impact on timeliness of children waiting for adoption.

This report will show that it is early days to review and evaluate the impact of the move to the RAA on the Adoption Scorecard timeliness (A1, A2 and A3) measures as there is a time lag in adoption work, and scorecard measures reflect adoption matches and placements that are for children who are now adopted, but for whom the adoption journey started some time ago.

However, early indicators which are available are that timeliness is improving for children, and that with a greater "pool" of adopters more children, including "hard to place" children have achieved their permanent families through adoption. The time between Placement Order to match has slightly increased, and this is reflective of some of the early work that inevitably needed to take place, in managing the change process of five separate teams coming together as one.

Adoption Tees Valley has worked collaboratively with senior leaders, and social work teams across the Tees Valley, and there is now a well-developed mechanism for early referral of any child with an adoption plan. The impact of this is that ATV has been able to track and plan for these children, and

early permanence is being achieved for more children, and in many cases adopters are being identified at an early stage.

In the first six months, 24 children were placed for adoption.

The greatest need across Tees Valley is for adopters for siblings who are to be placed together.

A further aim of the RAA programme is to impact on the time that adopters wait for a match.

At the outset Adoption Tees Valley “received” 45 adoptive families who were approved, but not yet matched. Within the period of this report, 26 families were matched, either with children from within, or outside of the Tees Valley area.

ATV has had a significant impact on the pool of adopters waiting, and many have now have children placed with them. While the timeliness for this cohort of adopters is not as good as aimed for in the longer term, this is because many have these waited some time prior to regionalisation.

It would be fair to say that adopters have benefited from the RAA by having more children available, with whom they are well matched.

ATV has recruited a steady stream of new adopters, but within this period there were just three new approvals, with a further 20 prospective adopters in assessment at the period end. Again, the change process has impacted on getting prospective adopters to panel, however, this is an improving picture.

Adoption Support

The vision for Adoption Tees Valley is to be a centre of excellence and resource for adopted children and their families throughout the period of their childhood, and beyond where necessary. We know that there can be considerable support needs for children and families after the Adoption Order is granted, and sometimes even shortly after placement. Many adopted children have needs associated with early trauma; attachment difficulties; separation and loss; and may need some help with recovering and managing the long term impact of these issues.

Adoption Tees Valley is setting out to deliver a core offer to all adopters and children, through regular engagement events, activities, and then through training, workshops and informal support. The service is also the agency through which therapeutic support can be commissioned, funded by the Adoption Support Fund (ASF).

The first six months have been busy, active, and a time of huge development and change for staff and managers, as well as those who are in the adoption journey during the transition.

We are hugely proud of the achievements and this experienced staff team have recently agreed that this has been a positive move for adoption in Tees Valley.



The Lead Elected Council Members for Children's Services who have supported the planning, decisions and resource allocation to Adoption Tees Valley, within the five Tees Valley Councils.

Left to right: Anne McCoy, Stockton BC; Mike Carr, Middlesbrough BC; Craig Hannaway, Redcar and Cleveland BC; Cyndi Hughes, Darlington BC; Brenda Harrison, Hartlepool BC.

Summary and Plans for the next 12 months

The first half year has been an exciting period for those involved in adoption work across the Tees Valley. There has been a huge commitment, not only from the staff who have moved across into the new Regional Adoption Agency, but also from children's services leaders within the Tees Valley region, the councils, senior staff and social workers. Also, wider stakeholders, including multi agency partners, VAA's, and adopters and foster carers.

The new agency is now set up, and effectively doing what it is there for, which is to find families for the children with an adoption plan in the Tees Valley region. We have also placed a number of children from other Local Authority areas with adopters in the Tees Valley region, and are working with the national agenda of reducing delay for children who require adoption.

Most people reflect that the RAA is a success, when considering the numbers of children who have achieved a match within this first six month period. At the end of the first six months, the numbers of adopters waiting had dramatically reduced, and this is due largely to the success of matching children with those adopters. It is early days in terms of the lag effect to really know whether the timeliness for children has improved, as children adopted within this half year were mostly matched and placed prior to the RAA.

A summary of what is working well includes:

- The physical building is a great space for ATV, and has been widely used by team and by wider LA stakeholders;
- The team is co-located in this building and has unified as new team, which enables the service to be more effective;
- Engagement events have been positive, and well attended, with many adopters feeding back that they are pleased to be involved to a greater degree in the agency. Lots of children have already started to get to know the building and team, and each other;
- Early notifications to ATV of any child who may have an adoption plan;
- Permanence Champions provide close links with LAs;
- The Adoption Panel now implemented, and well chaired by two experienced chairs, and a strong central list;
- Matching within the available pool of adopters successful;
- A successful internal matching event, well supported by LA foster carers and social workers;
- Some children who have waited for some time are matched, and are now living with their new families;
- The first six months is indicative of reduced comparative costs in interagency fees;
- Good cross agency working, with all LAs committing to involvement and development; and

- Collaborative working with LA's tracking individual children's plans.

Plans for the next 12 months

- Development of Market Position Statement, and a Recruitment Strategy, to target recruitment of adopters to the needs of children waiting, and coming through the system;
- A recruitment campaign in January 2019;
- Clear targeted approach to family finding, which will include greater collaborative and strategic work within the NE region, and through the Regional Adoption Leadership Board;
- Development of Adopter Partnership Forum, to enable adopter influence in service development;
- A clear development of post adoption support services, through a tiered intervention model;
- Commissioning for therapeutic providers list, and for post adoption support services;
- Complete the transfer of post box, and contracts into Charms system;
- Collaborate with wider multi-disciplinary services within Tees Valley, for better support and outcomes to adopted children and their families;
- Start a Young People's group, to influence service design, and enable young people to access the right services; and
- Progress allocation of life story work, and a model of social worker contribution to the child's life story.

Appendix 1- Staffing Structure

