



Leicester
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED
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FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:

**Children & Young People's Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet**

**8th January 2006
19th February 2006**

**INSPECTION BY THE COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL CARE INSPECTION OF
LEICESTER CITY COUNCIL ADOPTION SERVICE 2006**

Report of the Corporate Director of Children & Young People's Services

1. Purpose or Report

This report is to advise members of the Scrutiny Committee of the outcome of the Commission for Social Care Inspection of the Leicester City Adoption Service, which took place over 8 days in September 2006. (Report attached).

2. Summary

- 2.1 All Local Authority Adoption Agencies are inspected every third year, to ensure that they meet the requirements of the National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Adoption Services, the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, the Adoption and Children Act 2002, the Children Act 2004 and the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003.
- 2.2 The Leicester City Adoption Service, as a service provider, is expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. These standards provide the basis against which compliance by the service is judged.
- 2.3 Members will be aware that the Adoption Service is delivered as part of a joint arrangement with Leicestershire and Rutland County Councils. Although the CSCI inspection report relates to the Leicester City Council as an adoption agency, the inspectors actually treated the joint arrangement as a single agency and only drew distinctions where these related directly to each individual council. This approach better reflects the manner in which the joint arrangement operates. Therefore, for the most part the inspection report outcome was identical for all three authorities.

- 2.4 The relevant standards are clustered together to reflect the Every Child Matters Outcomes and the service is given an overall rating. Overall the service was judged as adequate. Six Statutory Requirements were made and these relate to the areas of service where it was considered that the relevant standards were not met.
- 2.5 The Adoption Joint Arrangement Liaison Group has met and all of the statutory requirements will be actioned within the required timescales. The improvement action plan is attached at appendix 1. In addition to the above requirements, twelve good practice recommendations were made, which are being considered by the service. Both Leicestershire and Leicester City wrote to CSCI to challenge the basis on which some judgements were made, but this did not result in any variation to the contents of the draft report.
- 2.6 There has been concern expressed recently with regard to delay in achieving the timely placement of children for adoption. This relates to two areas; court induced delays and the placement of babies who are voluntarily relinquished for adoption by their parents. Court delays can sometimes occur and these may be for a variety of reasons, but the underlying cause relates to the care courts must take in making what is a most final and irreversible order such as an Adoption Order. Not only must courts be satisfied that the child cannot be placed elsewhere within the birth family, but also that it is appropriate to permanently sever parental responsibility held by the child's parent(s). Changes in adoption and children's legislation does emphasise the need to avoid delay. At the same time, timescales are not entirely within the control of the Children and Young People's Service, others such as CAFCASS and the willingness of adopters to take children before legal matters have been finalised, can have a huge impact on when babies can be placed. These matters are constantly under review and delays are addressed with the appropriate bodies.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet & Scrutiny note the report of the Commission for Social Care Inspection into the Leicester City Joint Adoption Service.
- 3.2 That Cabinet & Scrutiny acknowledges the statutory Requirements and Good Practice Recommendations contained within the report.
- 3.3 That Cabinet & Scrutiny recognises the work of the Adoption Team and the commitment of the staff within the service in maintaining the service as among the highest performing services in the England and Wales.

4. Headline Financial and Legal Implications

- 4.1 There are potential additional resource requirements to implement some of the recommendations arising from the inspection. These

will need to be met by re-prioritising and reconfiguring existing budgets and other resources or by including them within future budget proposals. (Colin Sharpe, Head of Finance, Ext 8800)

- 4.2 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.
(Kamal Adatia, Barrister, Ext 7044)

5. Report Author / Officer to contact:

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Key Decision	No
Reason	N/A
Appeared in Forward Plan	N/A
Executive or Council Decision	Executive (Cabinet)