

Appendix 'A'

Adoption Scorecard 2014 (April 2011-March 2014)

The latest Adoption Scorecard was published in December 2014, covering adoption performance between April 2011 and March 2014. Lancashire's adoption performance has been mixed compared with the last published scorecard which covered the period April 2010 to March 2013.

The scorecard looks at three key indicators and aggregates performance across a three-year bracket. Due to this format, there is a delay in showing the impact of the most recent year's performance in the published figures.

	A1		A2		A3	
	Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted (days)		Average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family (days)		Children who wait less than x months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (%)	
	2010-13	2011-14	2010-13	2011-14	2010-13 (<20 months)	2011-14 (<18 months)
LA's 3 year average	786	779	254	272	43%	36%
Stat Neighbour 3 year average.	680	636	240	251	50%	49%
England 3 year average.	647	628	210	217	55%	51%

Comparing Lancashire's performance against both statistical neighbours and the national average does not position Lancashire in a good light with regards to the selected indicators. Lancashire mirrors the overall trends that have been noted across England and when compared with statistical neighbours, with improvements in indicator A1 and A3 and a decline in indicator A2. The use of a 3 year average for the indicators presents a challenge for the authority to redress performance immediately, as performance improvements in one year may be hidden by poorer performance in the previous two years. Conversely two years of good performance may hide one year of low performance. Performance changes may take more than one year to become apparent and will not be evident within the scorecards immediately.

A1: Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted (days)

Indicator A1 looks at the average time between a child entering care and the date that they moved in with their adoptive family over a three year period. The 2011/14 Lancashire scorecard reports this figure to be 779 days – a slight improvement from the previous three-year period of 786. Greater improvements were reported, most notably by Lancashire's statistical neighbours but also on average across England.

Performance aside, this indicator measures the whole care planning process rather than just the adoption placement process. The average length of care proceedings across the latest three-year period in Lancashire is 50 weeks, only slightly above the national average of 48 weeks across the same period, but this does influence the

timescales in relation to this indicator. Work has historically been undertaken jointly with Children and Family Court Advisory & Support Service (CAFCASS), Legal Services and the courts to address the length of care proceedings which has contributed to narrowing the gap between Lancashire and the national average.

In October 2013, Public Law Outline (PLO) reforms were introduced nationally which sought to reduce the length of care proceedings to 26 weeks. Adhering to this timescale has brought about a reduction in the length of this indicator. All cases in proceedings are tracked and monitored with respect to timescales to ensure that timescales are adhered to. The continued work of the Central Proceedings and Adoption Team, dedicated to working with cases that are considered to be at high risk of removal at an early level has also helped with reducing timescales of the new cases that they have worked with.

A2: Days between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family (Days)

Indicator A2 looks at the time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family. The published 2011/14 scorecard shows deterioration in Lancashire, with an increase to 272 from 254 days. As can be seen in the above table this deterioration is not specific to Lancashire, with durations also becoming increasingly longer, albeit not as severe, across England and by Lancashire's statistical neighbours.

Despite the increase, the family finding protocol developed within the Adoption Service is having a positive impact. The methodical approach which has been taken to link children with available adopters is resulting in more effective use of resources leading to faster placement of children. Unfortunately these will take time to influence the Adoption scorecard statistics due to the 3 year average format.

Anecdotally, many children that were categorised as hard to place have now been matched to adoptive families, which is a positive result for the children. The use of Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) and adoption activity days has been cited as having a positive effect on finding matches for these children, some of whom had been awaiting a match for several months. This indicator is therefore showing poor performance in Lancashire even though hard to place children have now found a match to a family and been adopted. As the above children have been adopted, their large timescales are realised within the scorecard, inflating the average for the indicator. This, therefore, appears to be poor performance when in actuality a child who has been awaiting a match for a considerable time has been adopted, due to initiatives above, which is clearly a success for the child.

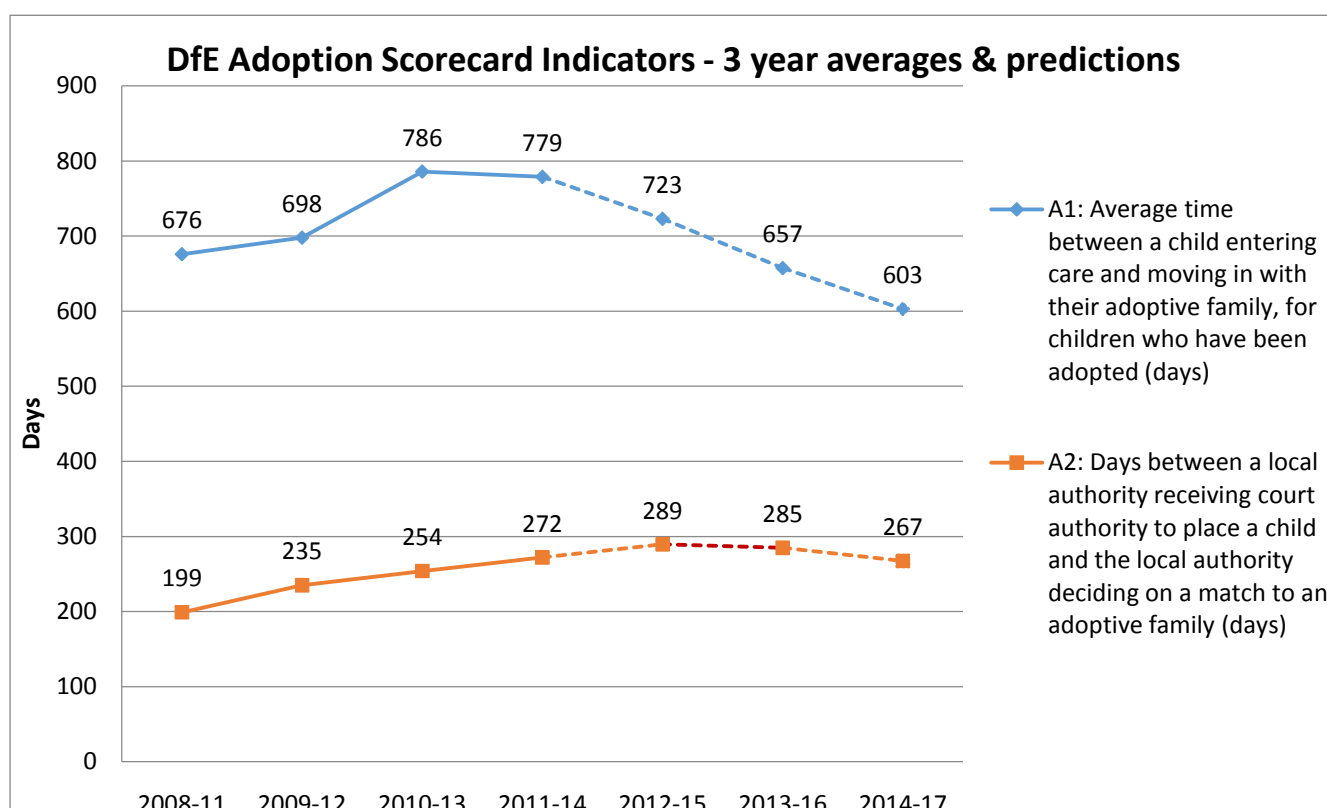
A2 has suffered due to the number of sibling groups that are looking to be placed together, resulting in increased timescales. In 2011/12 there were 6 sibling groups of 2 siblings including 1 group mixed heritage, in 2012/13 there were 14 sibling groups of 2 siblings including 2 mixed heritage sibling groups and 1 sibling group of 3 siblings and these children were of mixed heritage and in 2013/14 13 sibling groups of 2 siblings, including 1 group of mixed heritage and 2 sibling groups of 3 siblings.

A3: Children who wait less than 'X' months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (number and %)

Similar to indicator A1, indicator A3 shows the proportion of adopted children who waited less than 18 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family, as a percentage of the total adopted. 36% of adopted children met this criteria between April 2011 and March 2014. It must be noted that the timescale that the indicator was measured on in previous years was higher, falling to the 18 month target only in the most recent year. As a result, performance on this indicator has reduced across England. Lancashire performance is significantly below the national and statistical neighbour averages.

Projections

In-house tracking of adoption indicators suggests that the next scorecard, anticipated for publication towards the end of 2015 covering April 2012 to March 2015, will show further improvement on A1 and improvement on the A3 indicator. However indicator A2 will continue to rise, despite strong in-year 2014/15 performance, due to poorer timescales achieved in the 2012/13 and 2013/14 financial years. Graphical representation based on data available in June 2015 is shown below. Please note the latter scorecards will obviously change, possibly considerably, as the cohort will grow the closer we get in time to those scorecards as the projections are based on current ongoing cases.



Single-year performance 2014/15

The following in-year performance information has been provided for the most recent financial year, taken from in-house tracking measures which have proved to be highly accurate. The application of rounding by the DfE is the major difference between expected performance and the published scorecard figures. This format clearly shows performance improvements year-on-year in a way that the adoption scorecard cannot and as such is a more useful indicator of recent performance.

	<u>2010/11</u>	<u>2011/12</u>	<u>2012/13</u>	<u>2013/14</u>	<u>2014/15</u>
A1: Average time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family, for children who have been adopted (days)	737	728	875	752	609
A2: Days between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family (days)	228	238	299	315	266
A3: Children who wait less than 18 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family %	54%	43%	37%	42%	53%
Number of Adoptions	52	69	75	83	121

Indicator A1: In 2014/15, performance on this indicator has improved greatly, with an average of 609 days recorded for the children adopted within the year, significantly better than the most recent England average of 628 days. However, this year's figures will make up just one part of the next scorecard and it will take both time and consistency across future years for this improvement to be fully reflected in a published scorecard.

Indicator A2 - Similar to the above, performance on this indicator has also improved greatly, with an average of 266 days reported for 2014/15. This is still higher than the most recent national and statistical neighbour figures, but is significantly lower than the two previous Lancashire averages of 299 and 315 reported in 2013/14 and 2012/13 respectively.

Indicator A3 - 53% of those children adopted in 2014/15 waited less than 18 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family - higher than the latest national three-year average of 51% and a huge increase from latest Lancashire published figure of 36%. Again, for the scorecard to reflect this figure Lancashire will need to continue to achieve this performance in future years.

Adoptions

More Lancashire children than ever were adopted in the last financial year. 121 children received an adoption order in 2014/15, over 50% more than in 2013/14 (83) which in itself was a further increase on 2012/13 performance of 75. Considering that timescales in the latest year are based on the biggest cohort of adopted children in years, the tracked improvements are even more impressive.

These successes are due to a culmination of efforts, such as the continued success of the Central Proceedings and Adoption Team, influence of adoption days, assistance from VAAs and improvements within the family finding process.

Further requested information, not linked to scorecard.

Lancashire has experienced little to no adoption breakdowns. In 2011/12 there was only 1 breakdown, 2012/13 there were no breakdowns and 2013/14 there were 3 adoption breakdowns. One of these breakdowns was an older child who presented with more challenging needs once they had been placed with the adopters and one was because of the needs of the male carer (a single carer) and he felt that it was raising issues relating to his own childhood. This carer had been assessed by a VAA.

Number and success of fostering to adopt placements and concurrent carers

Last year in Lancashire, 5 children were placed under concurrency.

Since the scheme was developed in Lancashire we have had 19 children placed for adoption; 18 of those have been adopted and 1 remains placed on a fostering basis. We have 3 more concurrent carers in assessment. We currently have 1 Fostering for Adoption placement that will be presented to panel this month.

No children have been placed so far this year in 2015/16. There are currently 3 families to be imminently approved. 4 children are awaiting adoption order hearings. However this is being delayed due to the Court scheduling a directions hearing regarding the 10 week rule. We have 1 potential Fostering for Adoption placement in the matching stage and awaiting a 'Should be Placed for Adoption' (SHOPA) process decision.

DfE visit

Dr Carol Homden from the national Adoption Leadership Board and North West lead, and the DfE recently visited Lancashire. Dr Homden reported favourably on the narrative put forward by the authority in getting 'behind the data' and the progress being achieved by the authority at both a region adoption conference and at the North West Adoption Leadership Board. Dr Homden and the DfE were impressed with Lancashire's multiple approaches to securing adoptive placements for some of the more difficult to place children. Dr Homden has suggested that as the authority with the largest number of adopters Lancashire would be a logical addition to the board.