

# Cabinet

## 7 December 2021

### Adoption Annual Report

#### For Decision

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr A Parry, Children, Education, Skills and Early Help

**Local Councillor(s):**

**Executive Director:** T Leavy, Executive Director of People - Children

Report Author: Sarah-Jane Smedmor/Michelle Whiting

Title: Corporate Director for Care and Protection

Tel: 01305 224511

Email: sarah-jane.smedmor@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

**Report Status:** Public

**Recommendation:** That the Cabinet note and consider the progress and performance of Aspire Adoption Agency.

**Reason for Recommendation:** Aspire Adoption is a registered Adoption Agency. Adoption agencies are subject to the Adoption Agencies Regulations (AAR) 2005 (updated 2011) and the Adoption Agencies (Panel and Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012; Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013 and are subject to the National Minimum Standards (2014) which accompany the Regulations. Standard 25.6 of the National Minimum Standards requires the Adoption Agency to produce a report to be received by the agency Executive.

#### 1. Executive Summary

Dorset Council has a duty under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 to establish and maintain an adoption service for its area and along with BCP Council discharges this duty through a delegation of functions to Aspire Adoption, a Regional Adoption Agency. Dorset retains overall responsibility for its adoption and special guardianship services, continuing to have parental responsibility for

its own Children in Care but most adoption and some special guardianship functions are delegated to Aspire Adoption.

The appended report is the fourth annual adoption report presented by Aspire Adoption, summarising the work of the agency in the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021. The report was presented to People and Health Scrutiny on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

It has been written to ensure and provides the Council with an opportunity to satisfy itself that the requirements of the Statutory Adoption Guidance 2013 and the Adoption Minimum Standards 2014 are met. This report provides a summary of the comprehensive self-evaluation of Aspire Regional Adoption Agency and provides an overview of the areas of strength and areas for development focusing on local authority statutory responsibilities in respect of adoption; division of roles and responsibilities between Aspire and the local authorities; headline activity data 01/04/20 to 31/03/21; Finance and Commissioning.

The 2020/21 Annual Report was written by the previous manager for the service and will be presented by the new service manager and Corporate Director for Care and Protection.

## **2. Financial Implications**

The total budget for Aspire Regional Adoption Agency is £2,103,700 jointly funded by the BCP Council (59%) and Dorset Council (41%). Dorset Council contribution is £857,840 per year. As a condition of the interagency agreements, any underspend is transferred to an ear marked reserve and any overspend is a shared risk and so would be split proportionately between the 2 local authorities.

There was an overspend in the service in 20/21 of £167,000. Following the appointment of a new manager, an extraordinary meeting in May and an improvement in trading income, this position has stabilised for the financial year 21/22.

## **3. Well-being and Health Implications**

Adoption offers an opportunity for children who cannot be cared for by their birth families the chance of securing a secure and loving home which provides an opportunity for long lasting health and wellbeing.

It is also important to note that although adoption is rewarding, it can also be challenging. It is important to provide effective matching and sufficient support to adoptive parents to meet these challenges in order to support their own wellbeing but also to avoid adoption breakdown which can have long lasting health and wellbeing implications for the child and the adoptive parents.

**4. Climate implications**

N/a

**5. Other Implications**

N/a

**6. Risk Assessment**

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: LOW  
Residual Risk: LOW

**7. Equalities Impact Assessment**

**8. Appendices**

Aspire Adoption Annual Report for the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021

**9. Background Papers**

People and Health Scrutiny Committee 8th June 2021: Aspire Adoption Annual Report

**Footnote:**

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.