

Cabinet

25 August 2026

Adoption Partnership South East – Annual Report – 2025/2026 – Addendum Report

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Adam Price, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services
(including statutory responsibility)

Report from: Dr Lee-Anne Farach, Director of People and Deputy Chief
Executive

Author: Amy Coombs, Head of Adoption Partnership South East

1. Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1.1. The report was considered by the Children and Young People Overview and scrutiny Committee on 12 August 2026, the draft minutes of the discussion are set out below.

1.2. The Head of Adoption Partnership South East introduced the annual report which detailed the service activity and practice development for the period April 2025 – March 2026.

1.3. Members raised several comments and questions which included:

1.3.1. The level of detail contained in the report was praised. The continued high level of progress made and support being offered to families despite challenges was commended.

1.3.2. **Sibling groups** – in response to a question on what was being done to recruit more adopters for siblings and what support was provided for those potential adopters, the Committee was informed that extensive information and support was provided to potential adopters. Monthly online marketing events took place with details on adoption and opportunities to attend meet and greet sessions. Sibling groups were more complex to place and there was targeted work being undertaken in that area as it was crucial to ensure that the right people were supported to take on caring responsibilities for siblings. There was additional preparatory training available for adopters to ensure that they understood the complex dynamics they may face and all adopters were encouraged to stay connected as they would require support at different stages of a child/ children's lives.

1.3.3. In response to a further question on data on harder to adopt groups, the officer said that all adopters were approved to take on any child. The focus and priority of the service was on having the right pool adopters and to support each individual through any preconceived ideas about the age of child they would like to adopt.

1.3.4. **Average wait time for adoption** – in response to a question on how long Medway children that had been waiting a long time, had to wait for an adoptive match and what the common characteristic were in relation to that cohort, the officer said that there were currently 10 Medway children with a placement order with no match. One of the areas of pressure was in placement of siblings. When children were granted placement orders, extensive work was undertaken both internally and externally to find a potential match.

1.3.5. **Average time between placement order and decision made** – it was asked what had changed in terms of the average days from placement order to matching decision and adoption order granted as the total average wait time had significantly reduced. The Committee was informed that the data presented was due to the significant work undertaken by the Assistant Director of Children's Social Care working with the judiciary to address issues with court timetabling and reduction in care proceeding timelines. There had also been extensive work undertaken on developing a robust and timely process to ensure that when a match was identified, they were progressed without delay. Tracking of those children had also contributed to reduction in timescales. Adopters were able to use the online portal to apply for an adoption order which reduced delay when they were legally ready to adopt.

1.3.6. **Feedback** – in response to a question on what adjustments were being taken to improve adopters experience at the end of the assessment process due to the negative feedback received, the officer said that this data was from 12 months ago. The data was presented to show transparency and evidence experiences after an adoption order had been granted and related to delays between stage 1 and stage 2 of the process. Following that feedback, mechanisms had been put in place to address those issues and ensure prompt assessment between stage 1 and stage 2. It was anticipated that this adjustment would translate to a difference in experience in next year's reporting.

1.4. **Decision:**

The Committee noted the Adoption Partnership South East - Annual Report - 2025/2026.