



Department  
for Education

# **From Adoption Scorecards to RAA Scorecards**

**March 2019**

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## Who is this publication for?

This guidance is for:

- Local authorities
- Regional adoption agencies

## Main points

In *Adoption: A vision for change* the Department for Education made a commitment to introduce Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) scorecards. We published a previous version of this policy paper in May 2018 which set out initial plans for introducing RAA scorecards.

RAA Scorecards will give RAAs increased knowledge about their performance and enable them to identify where they can learn from other high performing RAAs. They will also enable the performance of both local authorities (LAs) and RAAs to be understood and assessed.

This policy paper confirms the new indicators and other changes to the Adoption Scorecard which will be used from Spring 2020 when the 2016-19 Scorecard is published.

## From Adoption Scorecards to RAA Scorecards

In *Adoption: A vision for change* the Department for Education made a commitment to introduce Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) scorecards. The Department has been considering how best to deliver on this commitment and has spoken to a range of groups in order to gain views. This includes: the Adoption & Special Guardianship Leadership Board (ASGLB) Chair, ASGLB Professional Advisor, Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies data lead, Association of Directors of Children's Services, RAA leaders group and DfE local authority Children in Need/ Children Looked After focus groups.

Following that process, the Department published initial plans for RAA Scorecards in May 2018. We had further discussions with the sector about those proposals and are now confirming arrangements for RAA Scorecards which will be published for the first time in Spring 2020 and include data from 2016-19.

### Purpose of RAA Scorecards

RAA Scorecards will give RAAs increased knowledge of performance and enable them to identify where they can learn from other high performing RAAs. They will also enable the performance of both LAs and RAAs to be understood and assessed. RAA Scorecards will serve a variety of purposes, including:

**Knowledge** – gives RAAs increased knowledge of their own performance and demonstrates areas for improvement.

**Sharing best practice** – RAAs will be able to benchmark and identify areas where they can learn from other high performing RAAs sharing best practice.

**Transparency** – enables Ministers, LAs, the voluntary sector, prospective adopters and others to properly understand and assess the performance of RAAs.

**Accountability** – creates a system in which performance is scrutinised and addressed.

This should help RAAs to continually improve their performance and provide the best possible service to our most vulnerable children, their families, and prospective adopters.

## New indicators and other changes

The 2016-19 Adoption Scorecard will include indicators for both local authority and RAA performance, with an increased focus on recruitment, matching and adoption support.

Timeliness*	Local Authority	Matching (RAA)	Recruitment (RAA)	Support (RAA)
<p><u>LA and RAA</u> Average time (in days) between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family adjusted for foster carer adoptions. <b>(A.10)</b></p> <p><u>RAA</u> Average time (in days) between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family. <b>(A.2)</b></p> <p><u>LA</u> Average time (in days) between entering care and placement order. <b>(New)</b></p> <p><i>* Both a single year average and a three yearly average.</i></p>	<p>Number of ADM decisions. <b>(A.15)</b></p> <p>Number of new placement orders granted. <b>(A.16)</b></p> <p>Children for whom permanence decisions has changed away from adoption. <b>(A.5)</b></p> <p>Number of children in a Fostering for Adoption / Concurrent Planning foster placement. <b>(A.17)</b></p>	<p>Total number of children not placed after placement order after 3, 6, 12, 18 months. <b>(New)</b></p> <p>Number of approved adoptive families waiting to be matched after 3, 6, 12, 18 months. <b>(New)</b></p> <p>Percentage of adoptive families matched to a child who waited at least 3 months from approval to matching decision. <b>(A.12)</b></p>	<p>Number of applications to become an adoptive family still to be assessed (not yet approved or rejected). <b>(A.13)</b></p> <p>Number of adopter approvals. <b>(New)</b></p> <p>Number of applications commencing Stage 1. <b>(New)</b></p>	<p>Average time (in days) from request from adopter to assessment. <b>(New - subject to ASGLB data collection)</b></p> <p>Number of disruptions. <b>(New - subject to ASGLB data collection)</b></p>

In arriving at these new indicators, we have sought to directly address feedback from the sector. This includes:

- A preference for including indicators that cover both LA and RAA performance, reflecting that this is a partnership and that RAAs are often composed of LAs with varying levels of performance.

- Concerns that local authorities should not be penalised for outliers when measuring overall timeliness. One suggestion was to switch from mean to median average, but we were concerned this could introduce a potential perverse incentive in relation to a lack of ambition for some children, as well as inconsistency with other statistics published by government. Instead, we have moved from the current A1 indicator to the current A10. This is the same indicator, counting the average time in days between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, but adjusts for foster carer adoptions that can typically have longer timelines.
- A desire for a single year average, rather than the current three yearly average, due to potentially being disadvantaged by previous performance. A single year average would result in high levels of data suppression so, instead, we will include both a single year and three yearly averages for the timeliness indicators.
- Concerns about the time lag before publishing the Adoption Scorecard. Although we are limited by when the SSDA903 and ASGLB datasets are published, we have considered whether we could change the cohort counted for the timeliness indicators. However, given that there is such limited data available, most people we consulted preferred to retain the existing methodology. We will continue to explore ways of making the publication of the Scorecard more timely.
- A desire for the Scorecard to show how the system is performing as a whole. We have sought to do this in terms of: the children's journey; ratio of adopters to children; and the adopters journey. However, data availability has limited how much further we can go here, as we do not wish to add burdens by further expanding data collection.

We will provide information on how the indicators will be calculated in due course.

Along with revising the indicators, the visualisation will be refreshed to make it clearer and more user-friendly. We will work with the sector to develop and refine how the data is presented so it is helpful and easy to use. We will continue to publish the underlying data table.



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