



# Adoption in Bolton

Presentation for Scrutiny Committee

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# The National Context

- *An Action Plan for Adoption Tackling Delay* and Adoption Scorecards (2012)
- Adoption Reform Grant (2013)
- Children and Families Act (2014)
  - Department for Education now able to require councils to outsource adopter recruitment
- Adoption Leadership Board (2014)
  - Regional Adoption Leadership Boards
- Regional Adoption Agencies (July 2015)
- Case Law – Re B and Re B-S (2013)



# The Regional Position

- 10% increase in numbers of Looked After Children from 2010 to 2014 (81 children per 10K of population)
- More children were adopted in the North West in 2013-14 than any other region
- Adoption 22 Regional Consortium
- Bolton works with Blackpool, Blackburn, Oldham, Bury and Rochdale on placement initiatives
- Adopt North West adopter recruitment project
  - Adopters outnumber waiting children by 2:1
  - Focusing on specific adopter shortfall for 2015-16



# Bolton's Position

- The Council's established Looked After Children strategy has long sought to promote consideration of permanence options from the beginning of a child's engagement with services.
- The LAC Strategy continues to prioritise early legal intervention with families where parents do not show the motivation or capacity to change, in order to care for their children safely.
- Bolton remains committed to pursuing a plan of adoption where this is in the best interest of a child, even when that child may be deemed harder to place as a result of age, special needs or being part of a sibling group
- *Adoption performance and support [in Bolton] is good overall, including the number of children and timeliness of achieving permanency. Some aspects are outstanding."* (Ofsted Inspection Report 2014)



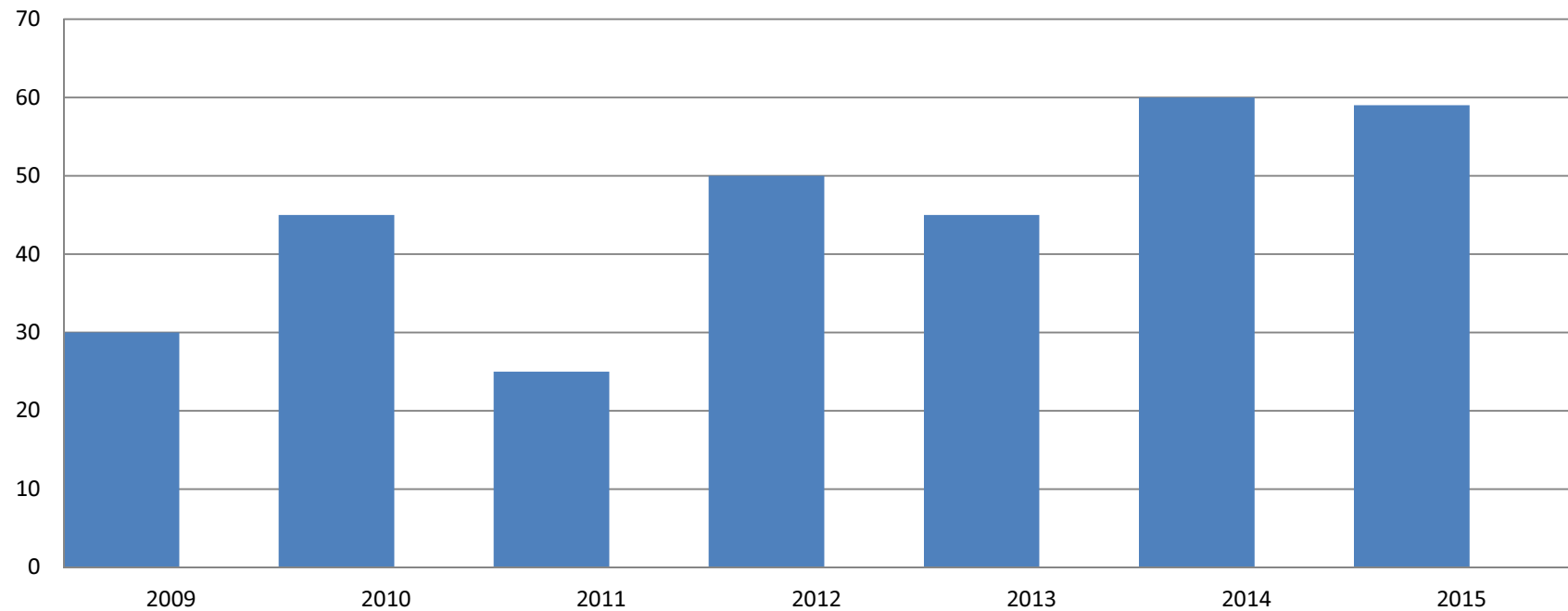
# Adoptions

- In 2013-14 the number of children who left care to adoption in Bolton was 59, equating to 35% of children who left care and this was the highest figure for any local authority in the country
- In 2014-15 adoptions have fallen to 54 (31%). Given recent court decisions it is felt this continues to represent positive outcomes and remains well above the national average but it is an area that will require continued monitoring
- 14 children were adopted within six months of placement and 38 within 12 months. Two children were in placement more than 12 months before adoption.
- During 2014-15, 48 children had an agency decision that they 'Should be Placed for Adoption'. This compares to 52 children in the previous year
- 52 children were *matched* with families. This compares with 61 children in the previous year and represents a 15% decline, reflecting the reduced number of agency decisions for adoption, and the national trend
- There were also 52 children placed for adoption in the year, compared with 57 for the same period last year. Inevitably given the reduction in agency decisions and children placed, a reduction in the number of children adopted in 2015-16 is anticipated.
- More cases are now being contested at Adoption Order application, and though all but one has thus far been known to be successful, the parental challenge at this late stage obviously causes great anxiety for prospective adopters



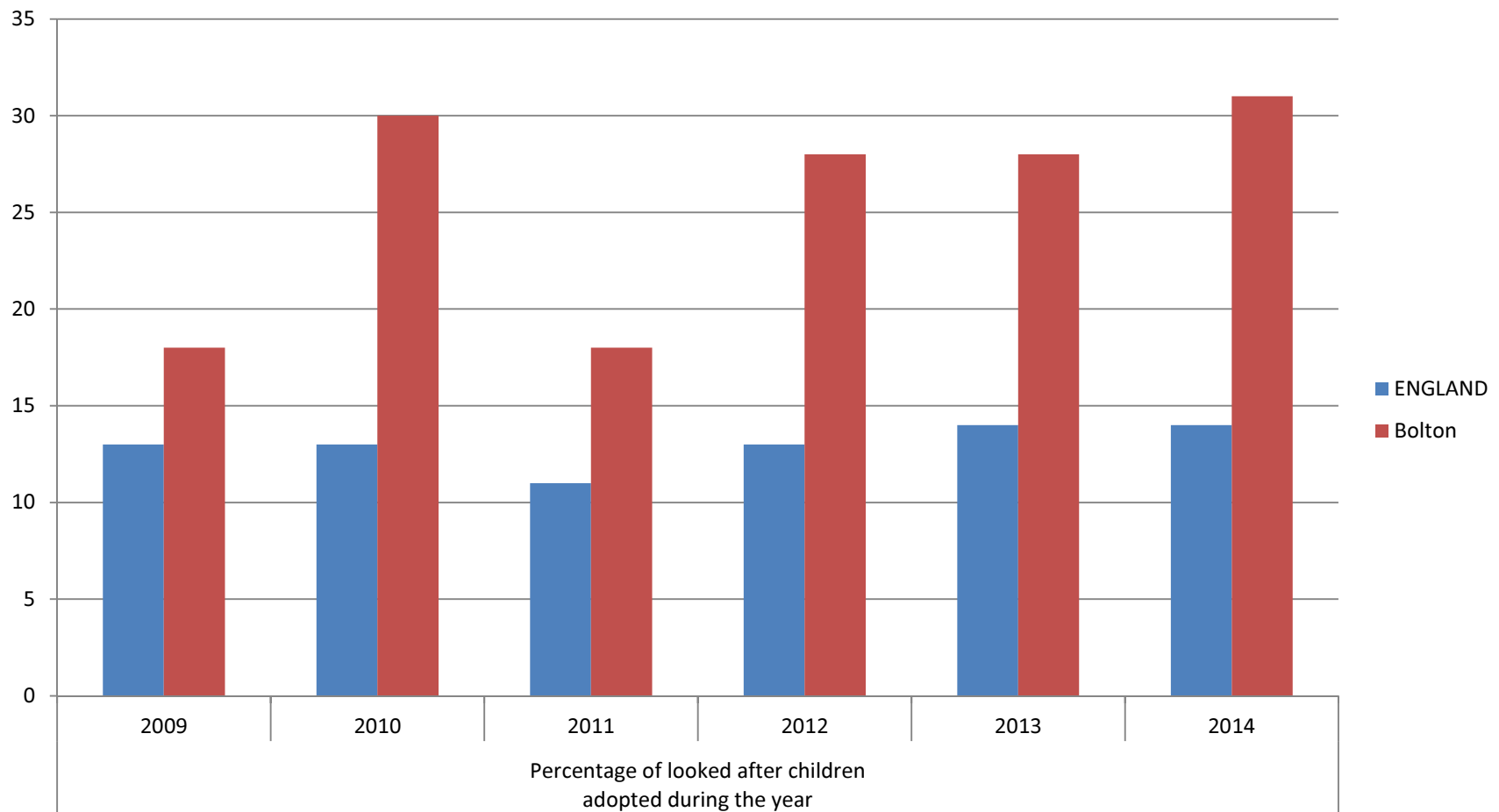
# Children Adopted

## Bolton Adoptions





# % of Children Leaving Care who were Adopted





# The Children

- Of the 48 children made subject to agency decisions in 2014-15; there were 5 sibling groups of 2, one group of 3 and one of 5
- The children were from one month to six years
- 22 were girls and 26 were boys
- 41 were White British
- On 31 March 2015 there were 62 children in the agency with Placement Orders compared to 88 the same time last year
- 39 of these children were placed with adopters with an Adoption Order pending
- Of the remaining 23, 14 of these were children for whom the care plan had changed away from adoption and were awaiting revocation of the APO. None of the children for whom we are family finding has waited more than six months





# Adopters

- Of the 52 children, 11 were placed with Bolton approved families, 19 were placed with other local authorities in the region, 1 was placed with an agency outside the region and 21 placed with VAA's.
- The interagency spend was £946,785. Recharges were £432,000
- 35 families were recommended for approval at Panel. This is the agency's highest approval figure ever and it compares well to our statistical neighbours.
- Of the 35 families approved, 29 were heterosexual couples, four were same sex couples and two were single applicants. 31 were white British and four were Black/Asian/Minority ethnic, dual or complex heritage.
- 15 of the 35 families approved in the year had children placed with them by 31 March 2015 and two were linked
- Including those approved in preceding years, 25 Bolton approved families had a total of 31 children placed with them in 2014/15



# Adoption Scorecard Timescales

- Bolton's A1 timescale (days between entering care and being placed) for the three year average (2012-15) was 508 days compared to the national average of 647 days
- Bolton's A2 timescale (days between placement order and being matched) for the three year average (2012-15) was 170 days compared to national average of 217 days
- Last year's scorecard indicated 56% of our children waited less than 18 months between entering care and moving in with their new families (three year average 2011-14). This year the target has reduced to 16 months but our percentage has increased to 59% for 2012-15
- A recent match of two siblings age eight years and six years, who had waited three years one month from Agency decision for adoption to match, having been subject to a placement disruption and rigorous family finding in the interim. Though celebrated in the agency, it is recognised that the perseverance to achieve adoption in this case, will adversely skew our performance indicators.



# Challenges Ahead

- Government expectations vs court behaviour
- Regional Adoption Agencies
- Rising numbers of Looked After Children
- Reducing numbers of Adoption Placement Orders
- Challenges recruiting adopters who will adopt harder to place children