

## Central Bedfordshire Council

### CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Monday, 13 November 2017

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### **Six Monthly Report in Respect of the Adoption Service 1 April – 30 September 2017**

Report of Cllr Carole Hegley, Executive Member for Social Care and Housing  
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Advising Officers: Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services; Nickie Phillips, Practice and Registered Manager – Corporate Parenting Service – Adoption  
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#### **Purpose of this report**

1. The Children Act 2004, Care Standards Act 2000 and associated Relevant Regulations and National Minimum Standards require Local Authority Adoption Agencies to report to Members at six monthly intervals. This will be achieved by presentation of a six monthly update to the Corporate Parenting Panel and a full year Annual Report to this Panel each year.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

This report, therefore, reports on these regulatory activities The Executive or Committee is asked to:

1. Consider, note and comment on the content of the report.

#### **Issues**

2. The Children Act 2004, Care Standards Act 2000 and associated relevant Regulations and National Minimum Standards require the Local Authority Fostering Service to report to Members regularly on the activities of the Service.
3. This report covers activities in the period 1 April 2017 to 30 September 2017

## **Recruitment of Adopters**

4. Information Evenings continue to be held on a monthly basis. Enquiries can be received from an online enquiry form on the Central Bedfordshire website, email to the Adoption Team, telephone call via a duty Social Worker service. The ability to enquire via social media has also been introduced in this period increasing the number of enquiries received.
5. We have had 90 enquiries in this period of which 5 related to Step Parent Adoption. Many are for the provision of advice and information only.
6. As of 30 September, 8 households were in stage one of the process and 14 in stage two.
7. 3 new adoptive households completed their assessment and were approved to adopt. The target for this year is 20 households approved to adopt so we envisage meeting this target within the next period based on the current number of applications in progress.
8. As of 30 September Central Bedfordshire had 3 approved adopters where no link had been identified and national searching was in progress.

## **Adoption Planning and Placements for Children**

9. Central Bedfordshire performance is as follows:

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18 April - Sept
Adult Approvals	29	22	18	17	3
Adoption Plans	48	26	30	18	12
Matched	20	29	22	15	5
Adoption Order	15	20	17	27	4

10. As of 30 September 2017, there were 10 children placed in adoptive placements pre the granting of an adoption order. 5 of which have an application to adopt submitted to court with orders expected to be granted in the next few months. This accounts for 3.3% of the total amount of LAC (303 children).  
In addition there was 1 child placed in a Foster for Adoption placement pending match approval.
11. Of the 5 matches made in this period 4 children were matched with Central Bedfordshire approved adopters and 1 with other Local Authority approved adopters. The 1 Foster for Adoption placement was with Central Bedfordshire approved adopters/carers.
12. 4 Adoption Orders were granted in this reporting period.
13. During this reporting period 9 children from other local authorities were placed with 5 prospective adopter households approved by Central Bedfordshire. This has a positive impact on national performance and reflects the successful recruitment of adopters for siblings. An Interagency fee is received for such placements.
14. Monthly Adoption tracking meetings continue to be held across children's services to track children who may be subject to a plan for adoption. This enables the council to plan for early permanence and inform our recruitment strategy whilst also enabling to prevent delay for children and promote early permanence.
15. There have been no adoption disruptions of children placed by Central Bedfordshire within this period.

### **Adoption Support**

16. 5 Adoption support assessments have been completed in this period. All have progressed to the implementation of an adoption support plan with 2 accessing funding for therapy from the Adoption Support Fund.
17. Applications to the fund have reduced in this period compared with the same period in 2016-17 with only 6 applications completed and agreed enabling the provision of therapeutic intervention to identified families.
18. Support also continues through post adoption contact arrangements (sometimes referred to as indirect contact) for each individual child placed for adoption. It seeks to ensure a secure and consistent record of contact between birth family and adoptive family. This often includes letters and occasional photographs that are often of high significance to the adoptee later in life.
19. Support events have continued to be held such as the annual summer barbeque which was attended by over 100 adults and children.

20. This period a CAMH consultant has been available to Social Workers to inform practice and deliver adoption support to families. Where appropriate parents have been included in the consultations to offer advice and guidance to address the presenting concerns.

### **Key Events**

21. Central Bedfordshire continue to be a partner within the Central East Regional Adoption Agency with six other Local Authorities. Quarter 1 of this period was a time of pause and reflection to consider the project which lead to Central Bedfordshire becoming the lead Local Authority. The Department for Education agreed the next stage of work to release funding to move the project forward with the first stage being to agree an Outline Business Case to take forward into design and implementation.
22. The Adoption Panel has continued to remain a shared service hosted by Central Bedfordshire

### **Annual Budget**

23. For the financial year 2017/2018 the Adoption Service within Children's Services had an annual budget of £ £532,574.

### **Reporting to Members – Legal Requirements**

24. Regulations, associated Statutory Guidance and National Minimum Standards outline the requirements to report to Members on the management and outcomes of Services provided, in order that they can satisfy themselves that the Services provided are effective and achieving good outcomes for children.

### **Risk Management**

25. Regulatory Risks: Failure to report to Members would be a breach of National Minimum Standard.

### **Staffing (including Trades Unions):**

26. Not Applicable.

### **Community Safety:**

27. Not Applicable.

### **Sustainability:**

28. Not Applicable.

**Procurement:**

29. Not applicable.

**Council Priorities**

30. Central Bedfordshire Council's Medium Term Plan Priority C Promote Health and Well-being and Protect the Vulnerable

Value – results focussed – we will focus on the outcomes that make a difference to people's lives.

Adoption is a key statutory service to Looked After Children.

**Corporate Implications**

31. Not applicable

**Legal Implications**

32. Regulations, associated Statutory Guidance and National Minimum Standards outlines the requirement to report to Members on the management and outcomes of the Adoption Agency, in order that they can satisfy themselves that the services are effective and achieving good outcomes for children.

The National Adoption Leadership Board continues to monitor performance and drive change. The quarterly survey reports on all significant data for children with a plan for adoption and adults who have expressed an interest in adoption.

**Financial and Risk Implications**

33. Adoption within Children's Services has an annual budget including costs of other Adoption Agency placements and provision on behalf of Bedford Borough Council under the Shared Adoption Panel.

**Equalities Implications**

34. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Adoption services provided to Looked after Children affects all sectors of communities.

**Conclusion:**

Since April 2017, 54 young people ceased to be looked after and of these 4 children were adopted – this shows that our year to date Adoption performance stands at 7.4% at the end of September 2017. This is below the set target of 20.0% as well as our 2016/17 and 2015/16 outturns of 23.9% and 17.7% respectively. In the 6 months since April 2017, we have been above target for this indicator for 2 months of the year.

Year to date performance is expected to improve due to the number of children currently placed for adoption and the timetable when adoption orders are expected to be granted.

Looking at the average time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family in days (Adoption Scorecard Indicator), the Q2 figure for July-September 2017 stands at 430 days (rolling 3 year average ending 30<sup>th</sup> September). This is an improvement when compared to our 2015/16 (504 days) and 2016/17 outturn (443 days). However we have failed to improve compared to Q1 (April to June) rolling 3 year average reported figure of 429 days. National average target for 2014-2017 is 425 days so we will continue to work towards improving this average. There is a cohort of children that will impact on performance in this scorecard indicator this year however there are positive reasons behind the performance such as being placed for adoption with their foster carer.

For the remainder of the year the service plans to review the adoption support offer to families. This will include consideration of the utilisation of the Adoption Support Fund, service user input and working with Regional Adoption Agency partners and CAMH.

**Appendices:**

None

**Background Papers:** (open to public inspection)

None