

Central Bedfordshire  
Council  
Priory House  
Monks Walk  
Chicksands,  
Shefford SG17 5TQ



**please ask for** Leslie Manning  
**direct line** 0300 300 5132  
**date** 23 August 2012

## NOTICE OF MEETING

### CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Date & Time

**Monday, 3 September 2012 at 2.00 p.m.**

Venue at

**Room 15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford**

Richard Carr  
**Chief Executive**

## PLEASE NOTE THE START TIME

To: The Chairman and Members of the CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL:

### **Elected Members (voting)**

Cllrs M A G Versallion (Chairman), A L Dodwell (Vice-Chairman),  
Mrs A Barker, N B Costin, Mrs S A Goodchild, Mrs D B Gurney, N J Sheppard  
and B Wells

[Named Substitutes:

Cllrs: P N Aldis, D Bowater, I A MacKilligan, B J Spurr and A M Turner]

### **Officers (voting)**

Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services  
Director of Social Care, Health and Housing

**Carers (non-voting)**

Only two of the four foster carers' co-opted representatives will be expected to attend at any one meeting.

# AGENDA

1. **Apologies**

To receive any apologies for absence and notification of substitute Members.

2. **Minutes**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 2 July 2012 (copy attached).

3. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

To receive any announcements from the Chairman and any matters of communication.

4. **Members' Interests**

To receive from Members any declarations of interest.

## Reports

<b>Item</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Page Nos.</b>
5	<b>Quarter One Report on the Fostering Service - April to June 2012</b>  To consider a report outlining the activity in the fostering service during Quarter One, with a comparison to previous quarters.	* 11 - 18
6	<b>Children in Care Council - Presentation</b>  To receive a presentation by the Children in Care Council.	* 19 - 22
7	<b>Children in Care Council - Workshop</b>  To participate in a workshop with representatives of the Children in Care Council.	

This page is intentionally left blank

**CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Room 14, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 2 July 2012

**PRESENT**

**Elected Members (voting)**

Cllrs M A G Versallion (Chairman), A L Dodwell (Vice-Chairman), D Bowater, N B Costin, Mrs S A Goodchild, Mrs D B Gurney, N J Sheppard and A M Turner

**Officers (voting)**

Mrs J Ogle – Director of Social Care, Health and Housing

Apologies for Absence: Cllr Mrs A Barker  
Mrs J Crawford  
Cllr B Wells

Members in Attendance: Cllr P N Aldis

Officers in Attendance: Ms Y Corden – Interim Assistant Director,  
Children's Services Operations  
Ms F Mackirdy – Head of Adoption and Fostering  
Mr L Manning – Committee Services Officer  
Ms I Wilks – Team Manager, Conference and Review

**CPP/12/6 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 14 May 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**CPP/12/7 Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman praised the foster carer awards ceremony held on 25 May 2012. He stated that meeting the foster carers at the event had proved a humbling experience for him and he referred to the experience and length of service within their ranks. The Chairman then expressed his thanks to the Vice-Chairman of the Panel, the Chairman of the Council and the Head of Adoption and Fostering for their support.

CPP/12/8 **Declarations of Interests**

Member	Item	Nature of Interest	Present or Absent during discussion
Cllr A L Dodwell	6	Is a member of the Fostering and Permanence Panel.	Present
Cllr Mrs D B Gurney	6	Is a member of the Adoption Panel.	Present

CPP/12/9 **Independent Reviewing Officers' Annual Report 2011-2012**

The Panel considered a report by the Team Manager Conference and Review which outlined the team's activity in relation to the reviews of Looked After Children during 2011-12.

The Chairman queried what the Council's procedure governing the oversight of review management had been before the statutory requirement had been introduced. In response the Team Manager explained that the Quality Assurance Service within Children's Services Operations had held the same responsibilities but the data collected had been reported to central government. There had been no specific requirement to report findings to Members though it was acknowledged that some authorities did so.

Turning to the timeliness of reviews the Chairman queried why five children and young people had experienced late initial reviews. In reply the Team Manager explained that several factors had been identified including that all five were late notifications from the operational teams and that in three cases there had been a lack of clarity and slight delay in notification in the notification of a change in the children's status to Looked After. She added that the issues had been raised with the operational teams to ensure future compliance with the regulations. She also stressed that the children and young people had not been disadvantaged in any way and that the performance target had of 95% had been met.

The Chairman next referred to the participation by children in their reviews. The Team Manager explained the procedure governing participation and the efforts made to ensure that child's views were made known. She added that participation was defined as a child having taken part at some point in the review and did not mean that he or she had been present throughout.

A Member referred to the rising number of Looked After Children and sought clarification on the reasons for this. In response the Interim Assistant Director Children's Services confirmed that the number was continuing to increase year on year but that the rate per 10,000 of population was still below the national

figure. The Interim Assistant Director advised that she was now responsible for determining which children would be taken into care to ensure consistency. She further advised that almost all of the later had come about as a result care proceedings and therefore was in line with national social care activity. In addition Central Bedfordshire had also been more stringent than the legacy authority in applying thresholds and intervening to protect children. The Panel considered the ethnicity statistics for Looked After Children and noted that the white ethnic group was largely made up of two or three extended gypsy and traveller families. It was further noted that, whilst some targeted work had been carried out with families in general that required special assistance, there had been no particular focus on gypsies and travellers. Further discussion followed during which the possibility of measuring and displaying the data in alternative forms, such as by cultural background or by age, was considered. During the discussion the Interim Assistant Director explained that the breakdown of data based on ethnic origin was a statutory requirement.

In response to a Member's query regarding the placement of children with a foster carer (non relative or friend) outside the Authority the Head of Adoption and Fostering stated that a few children had required placement at highly specialist carers some 50 miles away but the majority were placed within 20 miles of Central Bedfordshire.

Turning to parental participation in the review progress, and in particular that by fathers, a Member commented on the comparatively low level of participation by fathers. The Team Manager acknowledged the participation gap and the need to establish both why this had occurred and whether this was experienced by other local authorities. The Interim Assistant Director stated that unfortunately in many cases the father was no longer present. She stressed that a child's links with both parents was promoted if this was appropriate for the child's wellbeing.

The Chairman queried the current stability of the Review Manager establishment in view of the challenging staffing situation during 2010-11. In response the Team Manager confirmed that, over the past year, there had been very high continuity of employment and stability in the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) provision.

The Chairman next queried the stability of placements for Looked After Children. In reply the Team Manager commented that the recent Ofsted inspection had identified deterioration down from 74.2% to 63% in the number of Looked After Children remaining in the same placement but explained that this had arisen due to effect of a specific cohort of children on the statistics. With regard to Ofsted's concerns regarding placement availability the Head of Adoption and Fostering stated that work was being undertaken with colleagues in Housing to examine semi-independent provision and this would be reflected in the placement strategy contracting arrangements. In response to a query regarding the time and resources required she explained that the number of Looked After Children concerned was relatively small.

Following further discussion the Chairman expressed his thanks to Members and officers for their work.

**NOTED**

**the activity of the Conference and Review Service in relation to the reviews of Looked After Children during 2011-12 as set out within the Independent Reviewing Officers' Annual Report.**

CPP/12/10 **Annual Reports for the Adoption Service and Fostering Service**

The Panel received a report which outlined the statutory framework for the submission of annual reports on the adoption and fostering services and summarised the key points contained in the Annual Adoption and Fostering Service Reports for 2011-12. Copies of the Service Reports were attached as appendices to the report. The meeting was aware that the Adoption and Fostering Service was currently a shared service for Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils and that the reports contained information in respect of both Councils.

**a) Adoption Service**

The Head of Adoption and Fostering introduced the Adoption Agency Annual Report.

A Member referred to the forthcoming end of the Shared Service Arrangement with Bedford Borough Council on 31 January 2013, expressed concern regarding the impact on panel workloads and the need to organise new panels and sought an update on developments. In response the Interim Assistant Director, Children's Services Operations explained that the Regulations set out the composition of the new panels. She added that officers from both authorities met every three weeks to consider aspects of the service disaggregation. The Interim Assistant Director stated that the cost of the replacement service would be relatively high but this increase had been anticipated. Further, it was felt to be more acceptable in relation to the quality of service provision than continuing with the existing Service Level Agreement.

The Head of Adoption and Fostering advised that Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Council were committed to working together to ensure the process of disaggregation was managed as efficiently as possible. Officers were also fully aware of the risk that foster carers or adopters could decide to leave the Council as a result of the changes. As a result a communications strategy had been drawn up and meetings were to take place with carers to explain the decision to disaggregate.

It was noted that draft staffing structures had been prepared in anticipation of the disaggregation and a staff consultation had been carried out.

The Interim Assistant Director, Children's Services Operations advised the meeting of the Borough Council's intention to substantially reduce its funding contribution towards the Shared Service and, in view of the



resulting impact on the quality of service, how this had led to the decision by Central Bedfordshire to disaggregate.

**b) Fostering Service**

The Head of Adoption and Fostering turned next to the Fostering Agency Annual Report.

Following a description of the process undertaken when appointing foster carers a Member advised the meeting of the heavy workload associated with the Fostering and Joint Permanence Panel and suggested possible means of overcoming this. In response the Head of Adoption and Fostering first stated that there would be a number of changes to the adoption service in the coming year which would lead to a reduction in the number of cases being considered by the Adoption Panel. She added that there was a possibility of the Fostering and Joint Permanence Panel adopting the same procedures and, if this occurred, it would lighten that Panel's workload.

With regarding the forthcoming end of the Shared Service Arrangement with Bedford Borough Council the Director of Social Care, Health and Housing stated that the disaggregation of the service would allow a greater focus on the children within Central Bedfordshire. Following a query by a Member the Head of Adoption and Fostering assured the meeting that the law was clear on the allocation of responsibilities between the two authorities and there should be no adverse issues arising for the service within Central Bedfordshire.

The Vice-Chairman referred to the Family Link Scheme, which offered short breaks to children who had a physical or functional disability, and queried whether there were sufficient Family Link carers to enable sufficient short breaks to be provided. In response the Head of Adoption and Fostering stated that the number of carers varied and any further expansion of the Scheme would require an examination of their capacity. She added that, fortunately, the Scheme enjoyed good links with staff in special schools who were able to undertake this role if required. In addition the short breaks themselves could vary from between an occasional few hours to whole weekends on a regular basis so carers could participate in the Scheme at a range of levels. The Interim Assistant Director, Children's Services Operations emphasised that carers could simply provide their service for a few hours to provide parents with an opportunity for a break. She stated that the Council had a reasonable capacity for this purpose.

A Member commented on the successful recruitment programme under the Youth Care Scheme to approve additional households to provide specialist care to young people over the age of 10 who had needs which were particularly challenging or complex and expressed her gratitude for this increase.

The Chairman thanked the officers for their efforts.

**NOTED**

**the content of the Annual Adoption and Fostering Service Reports for 2011/12.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 1.00 p.m. and concluded at 2.22 p.m.)

Chairman.....

Dated.....

---

**Meeting:** Corporate Parenting Panel  
**Date:** 3 September 2012  
**Subject:** Quarter One Report on the Fostering Service – April to June 2012  
**Report of:** Yolanda Corden, Assistant Director Children’s Services Operations  
**Summary:** The report outlines the activity in the fostering service during Quarter One, with comparison to previous quarters.

---

Contact Officer: Fiona Mackirdy, Head of Adoption and Fostering  
Public/Exempt: Public  
Wards Affected: All  
Function of: Council

#### **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

##### **Council Priorities:**

Central Bedfordshire Council’s Medium Term Plan Priority C Promote Health and Well-being.

The Children and Young People’s Plan 2011-2014 Priority 2 – Protecting children and keeping them safe.

Fostering is a key statutory service to Looked After Children.

##### **Financial:**

1. Adoption and Fostering within Children’s Services has an annual budget of £5.015 million, including income from Bedford Borough Council under the Shared Service arrangement. There are no new financial considerations arising from the Annual Reports.

##### **Legal:**

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

##### **Risk Management:**

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

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

4. Not Applicable.

**Equalities/Human Rights:**

5. Fostering and services provided to Looked after Children affects all sectors of communities.

**Community Safety:**

6. Not Applicable.

**Sustainability:**

7. Not applicable.

**Procurement:**

8. Not applicable.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**that the Corporate Parenting Panel note and comment on the content of the report.**

**Background**

9. The Children Act 2004, Care Standards Act 2000 and associated Relevant Regulations and National Minimum Standards require Local Authority Fostering Services to report to Members at three monthly intervals. This will be achieved by presentation of quarterly updates to the Corporate Parenting Panel and a full year Annual Report to this Panel and the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June each year.
10. The Adoption and Fostering service is a shared service hosted by Central Bedfordshire Council. Annual reports contain information activity in respect of both Councils. This report will be provided to Bedford Borough.
11. This report covers activity in the period April to June 2012. Comparative data with previous quarters is summarised in the tables in Appendix A.

**Recruitment of Foster carers**

12. During the period 69 enquiries were received from members of the public interested in becoming foster carers. This is a 30% increase on the number received in the same quarter last year and reflects the high national and local profile that fostering is given in the media during Foster Care fortnight in May.
13. 28 assessments of new foster carers commenced, including 18 assessments of households caring for a child within their own family. This is a further increase in the number of assessments both from members of the public and family members. These family placements are assessed under regulation 24 of the Care Planning regulations and guidance of April 2011. These placements demonstrate the Council's commitment to retaining children and young people within their family environments where possible.

14. 12 new fostering households were approved by the Fostering and Permanence panels. Taken with changes to carers' approval and resignations there was a net increase of 20 fostering placements in Quarter 1.

### **Placements for Children**

15. In these 3 months there were 143 requests for new or change of fostering placements. This was an increase from 118 in the previous quarter and 78 in the same quarter in 2011-12. 60 of these requests did not materialise into placements as children did not become looked after or did not move placement.
16. 34 newly looked after children were placed with in-house foster carers of whom 24 were Central Bedfordshire children. 11 CBC children were placed in Independent Fostering Agency provision when becoming looked after.
17. At 30 June 2012, there were a total of 162 children living with in-house foster carers of which 91 were Central Bedfordshire children. This is a similar figure to the year end in March 2012.
18. The absolute number of looked after children from Central Bedfordshire living in Independent Fostering Agency provision was 74 at 30 June 2012, an increase from 69 in March 2012 and reflective of the increase in the number of looked after children over the period.

### **Training for Foster Carers**

19. 17 training courses took place involving 120 delegates. This included preparation training for prospective foster carers as well as short courses and workshops for approved foster carers.

### **Key Events**

20. Annual advertising commitments were renewed this quarter, including continuation of permanent adverts on 3 roundabouts (Leighton Buzzard, Chicksands and Bedford) and 14 A5 posters in Bedford Hospital. Recruitment events included two drop-in events, a fostering information evening and a recruitment stall at Picnic in the Park in Leighton Buzzard.
21. To coincide with Foster Care Fortnight from 12 to 15 May 2012 we embarked on an additional style of recruitment using adverts on social networking sites which linked to a video we produced on You Tube where foster carers and former looked after children talked about the difference fostering made to their lives. Over 16 days of our campaign 1128 people looked at the video. There were 1537 views of the fostering page on the Central Bedfordshire Council website. (Prior to this campaign the website was viewed 232 times in a similar 16 day period.) In May and June we had 20 enquiries from people who stated they had enquired specifically as a result of seeing the internet campaigns.
22. The annual Foster Carers Celebration and Awards event was held on 25 May in the Council Chamber. 14 fostering households were eligible for long-service awards, with 8 attending on the evening to receive their awards. Positive feedback about the evening was received from carers, children and invited guests.

### **Key Issues**

23. Both councils continue to see a rise in the number of children becoming looked after. In this quarter, the number of looked after children in Central Bedfordshire Council has risen from 208 on 1 April 2012 to 229 on 30 June 2012. This has a significant impact on the fostering service in terms of placement demand and choice, the increased use of external agency placements and in the numbers of assessments required for family members and new mainstream carers.
24. Ofsted have published a consultation document on proposals to streamline the inspection processes for Looked After Children from April 2013. If adopted the proposals would see the inspection of the fostering service incorporated into the Council's wider inspection of services for Looked After Children. Inspection of the fostering service under the current inspection framework is expected by March 2013.
25. Work continues with colleagues in Bedford Borough Council on planning the ending of the shared service arrangement. Key milestones in the coming quarter are the consultation with staff on the proposed structures, and consultation with foster carers and adopters about which council they will work with in the future.

### **Appendices:**

Appendix A – Comparative Data

**Background Papers:** (open to public inspection) – None

Appendix A

Chart one shows the allocation of in house placements to Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) and Bedford Borough Council (BBC) during the last four quarters.

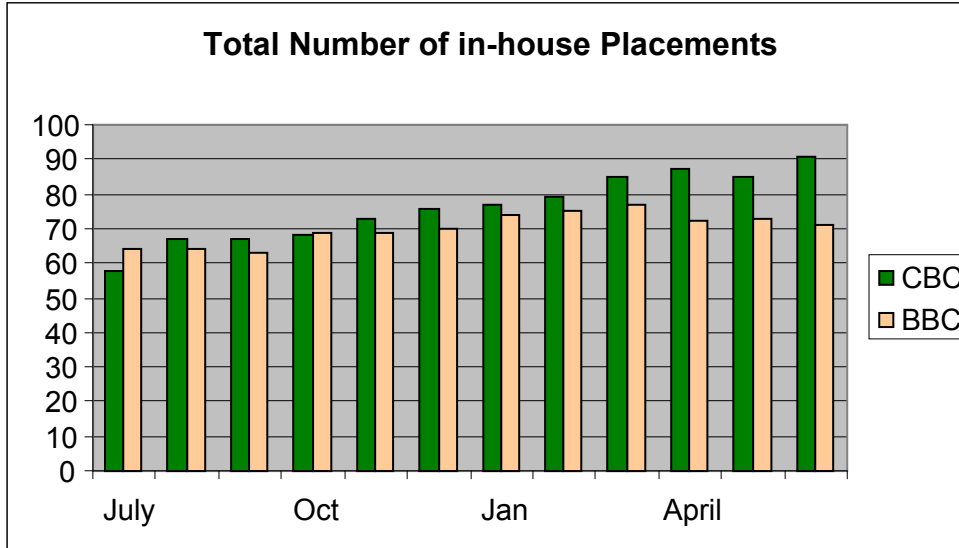


Chart two shows the proportion of new placements made in CBC and BBC in the last four quarters.

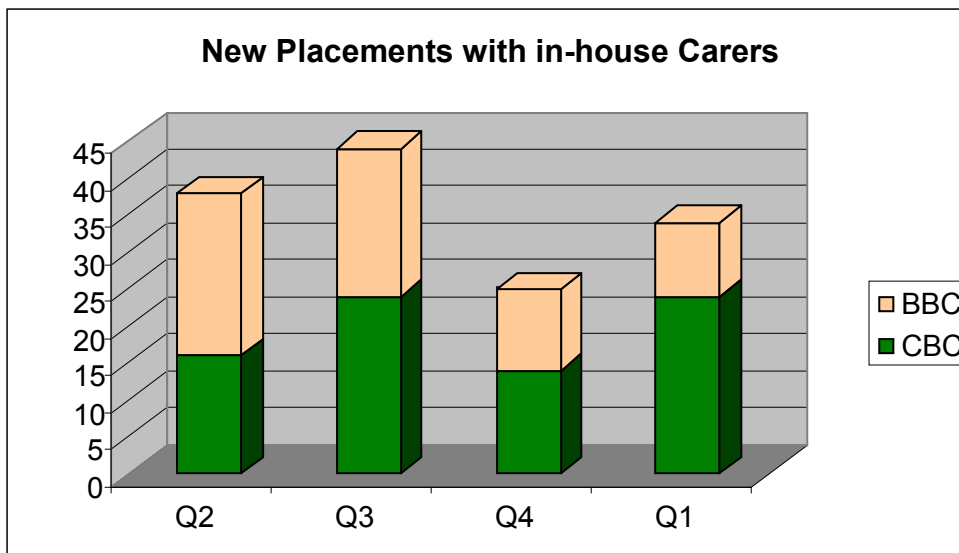


Chart three shows the number of foster carer assessments started in the last four quarters.

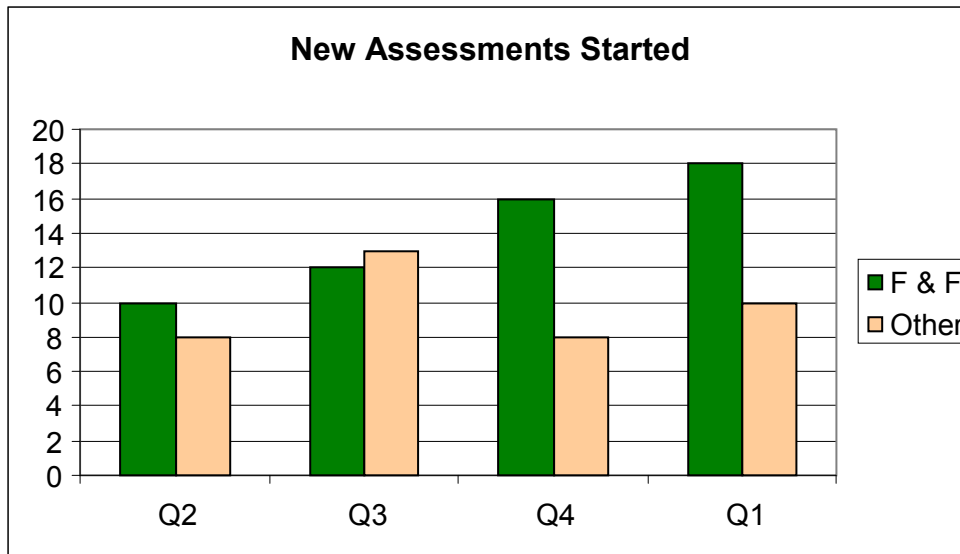


Chart four shows the total number of requests of both councils for new placements and a change of placement in the last four quarters.

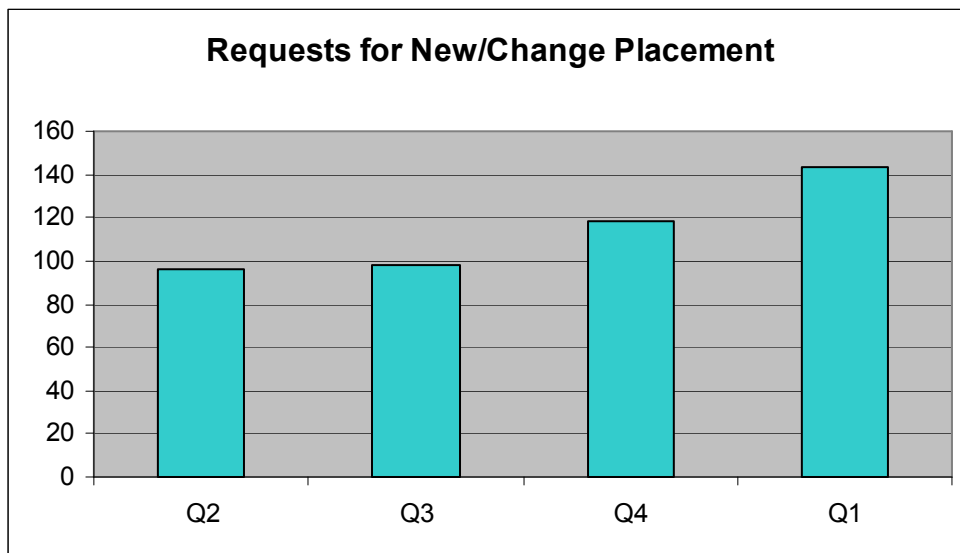




Chart five shows the total number of enquiries made about fostering in the last four quarters.

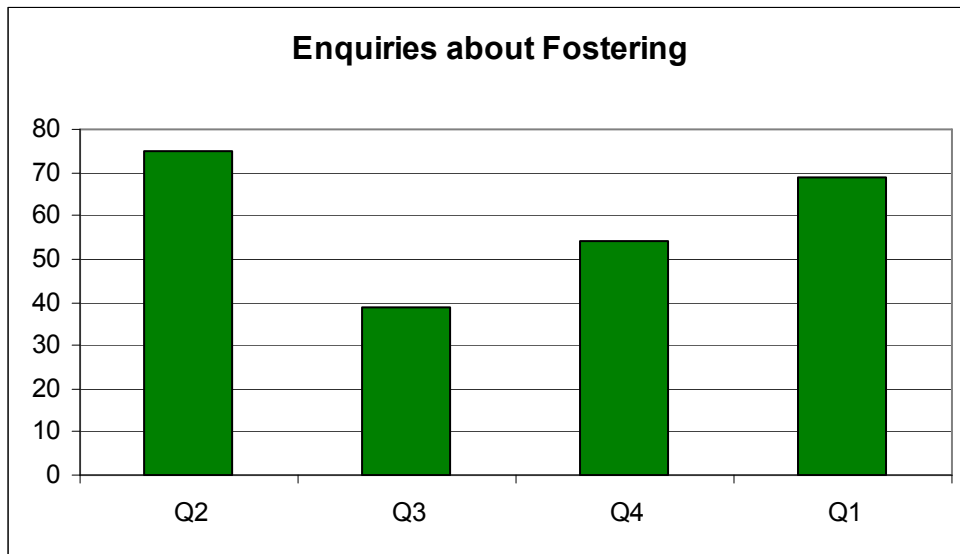
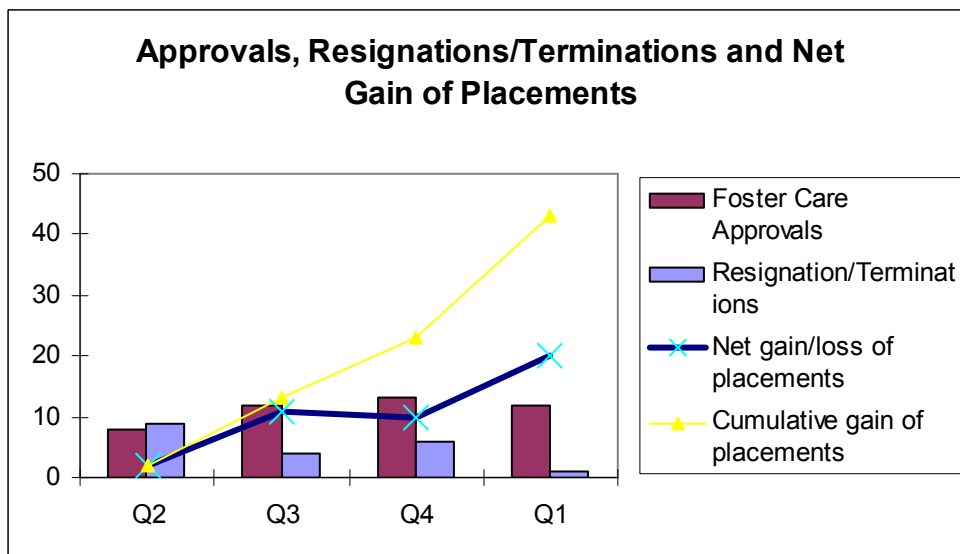


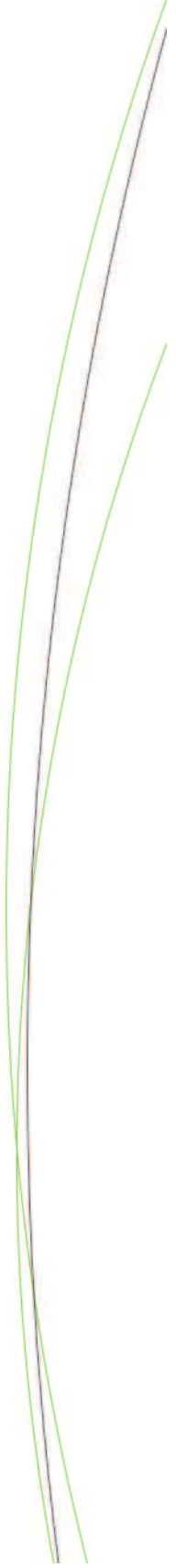
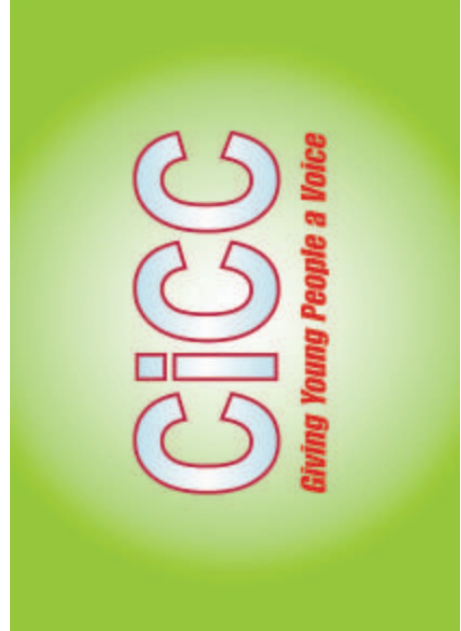
Chart six shows the total numbers of approvals, resignations/terminations and net gain of placements in the last four quarters.



This page is intentionally left blank



# The Children in Care Council



## The CiCC



- We as members of the CiCC continue to meet on a monthly basis to work through our priorities and continue to promote the work of the CiCC.



- We attended a CiCC open day where we took part in team building exercises and recruited more young people to the CiCC. We currently have 14 members who attend the monthly meetings.



- We will be organising another CiCC open day to recruit and develop a CiCC for younger children and young people.

- Members of the CiCC also attended the Foster Carer Awards to promote the work of the CiCC as well as help with the presentation of awards.



# The CiCC

- We have attended the Regional CiCC meetings organised by the Department for Education. At the last meeting Tim Loughton attended and we gave feedback about Central Bedfordshire's CiCC.
- We continue to attend Foster Carer Training and Information Evenings.

We will be working with the fostering team on developing this training further.

- Members of the CiCC have developed training for newly qualified social workers and will further develop the training for all social workers.
- The CiCC have been involved in interviews for a Personal Adviser and Independent Visitors with NYAS.



This page is intentionally left blank