

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



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

## NOTICE OF MEETING

### CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Date & Time

**Monday, 5 March 2012 at 2.30 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)**

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

[Named Substitutes:

CLrs: P N Aldis and I A MacKilligan]

#### **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 10 January 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 declarations and the nature thereof in relation to:-

- (a) personal interests in any agenda item;
- (b) personal and prejudicial interests in any agenda item.

## Reports

Item	Subject	Page Nos.
5	<b>Children in Care Council Annual Report for 2011/12</b>  To consider and comment on the Children in Care Council Annual Report for 2011/12 and the Looked After Children and Young People's Participation Work Programme for 2011/12. A presentation will be made outlining the key points contained in the Annual Report.	* 9 - 34
6	<b>Looked After Children Placement Strategy</b>  To consider and comment on the Looked After Children Placement Strategy for 2011/12.	* 35 - 50
7	<b>Quarter Three Report on the Fostering Service - October to December 2011</b>  To receive an outline of activity in the Fostering Service during Quarter Three, with comparison to Quarters One and Two.	* 51 - 58

**CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Room 14, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Tuesday, 10 January 2012

**PRESENT**

Cllr M A G Versallion (Chairman)  
Cllr Mrs A Barker (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs D Bowater  
Mrs S A Goodchild  
Mrs D B Gurney

Cllrs N J Sheppard  
B Wells

Apologies for Absence: Cllr N B Costin

Members in Attendance: Cllr P N Aldis

Officers in Attendance: Ms F Mackirdy – Head of Adoption and Fostering  
Mr L Manning – Committee Services Officer  
Mrs J Ogley – Director of Social Care, Health and Housing  
Mrs C Parry – Assistant Director (Acting), Children's Services Operations

Others in Attendance: Mrs C Freestone – Co-opted Foster Carer Representative  
Mrs H Phillips – Co-opted Foster Carer Representative

CPP/11/22 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 7 November 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CPP/11/23 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman stated that an invitation to attend one of the forthcoming briefing sessions on corporate parenting had been issued to Members. The sessions were scheduled to be held on 24 January 2012 at Priory House and 28 February 2012 at Watling House. The meeting was aware that all Members of the Council, as well as all officers, were corporate parents.

The Chairman circulated copies of the Council's 'News Central' magazine and drew Members' attention to the articles on the Looked After Children Achievement Awards ceremony on 27 October 2011 and on Sarah Blackford, one of the award winners.

**CPP/11/24 Members' Interests****a) Personal Interests:-**

None.

**b) Personal and Prejudicial Interests:-**

None.

**CPP/11/25 Review of Children's Services to Disabled Children, Young People and Their Families**

The Panel considered a report submitted to the Executive that morning which set out the findings and proposals of a review of services for disabled children, young people and their families living in Central Bedfordshire. The meeting noted that the review had been undertaken to ensure increased efficiency and value for money from the existing expenditure. Any monies released from the Early Intervention Grant element of the total budget would be reinvested to provide improved outcomes from children and young people. The meeting further noted that the review had taken into account the Department for Education requirement for all councils to prepare for all young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) to have a single assessment and single plan across health, education and social care by 2013.

The Chairman advised the meeting that the Executive had approved the recommendations on the future delivery of services and the closure of the Poppies building. The redesign of the service would ensure that there was no break in provision for children and families currently accessing them. Implementation would take place between April 2012 and March 2013.

The Panel was asked to discuss the implications of the new service model specifically in relation to Looked After Children and its aspirations for the children and young people arising out of the Executive's decision.

Discussion took place on the Kingfisher residential short break unit which provided a service for young people aged 8-18 years with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and associated challenging behaviours. The Assistant Director (Acting) Children's Services Operations advised the meeting that the unit was currently running at 56% occupancy and the occupancy rate had decreased over the last two years resulting in a high average cost per bed night. There was, therefore, a need to increase efficiency. To this end, children and young people currently accessing short breaks through a Bedford Borough Council provision would be considered for transfer back into Central Bedfordshire Council's residential accommodation. She stressed that officers were fully aware that many of the young people had used Bedford Borough Council's provision for a long period and any transfer would need, therefore, to be undertaken with sensitivity. In reply to a query as to whether the cost per bed night at Kingfisher could be expected to fall should occupancy rates increase the Assistant Director (Acting) stated that hoped such costs would be rebalanced.

In response to a query by the Vice-Chairman the Assistant Director (Acting) explained that it was not usually good practice to take children aged under 8 years old into residential care. Instead Community Home Care/Support, in the form of short breaks, were offered to parents to assist them. With regard to young people over the age of 18 she stated that a transitions plan was put in place when it was clear that an adult services package might be required.

Turning to residential provision in Biggleswade, and in response to a query, the Assistant Director (Acting) explained that the site of the Ivel Valley School had been identified for development as the 'hub' element of the 'hub and spoke' model of service provision in the east of Central Bedfordshire. The one in the west would be in Houghton Regis on the site of the Hillcrest School and nearby Glenwood School. In response to a further query she added that she believed the introduction of the 'hub and spoke' model on two sites, and the provision of respite services at a more local level rather than at the Poppies at Aspley Guise, would encourage more parents to access them.

Reference was made to the closure of, or transfer of children and young people from, various facilities identified in the report and the possibility of emotional upset for the young people as a result. However, comment was also made that all children would experience change in their lives as they became older and there were advantages in allowing them to learn to deal with this and to develop trust in strangers whilst still young. In so doing the children would become more independent.

#### **NOTED**

**the decision of the Executive to implement the following proposals for delivery of services to children, young people and their families living in Central Bedfordshire:**

- a) **that a 'hub and spoke' model be adopted for the delivery of services;**
- b) **that the Poppies be closed by no later than March 2013 and that the support to families arising from individual assessments be delivered within the proposed revised model as part of the 'hub and spoke' delivery.**

#### **RESOLVED**

**that a review of the above proposals be submitted to the Corporate Parenting Panel in the summer of 2013 following their implementation.**

CPP/11/26

#### **Quarter Two Report on the Adoption Service - April to September 2011**

The Panel considered a report that outlined activity in the Adoption Agency during April – September 2011. The meeting noted that the Children Act 2004, Care Standards Act 2000 and associated regulations and national minimum standards required local authority adoption agencies to report to Members at

six monthly intervals. The meeting further noted that this would be achieved by submission of a six monthly Quarter Two update to the Panel and a full annual report to the Panel and to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June each year.

The report covered the following matters:

- The recruitment of adopters
- Adoption panning and placements for children
- Special Guardianship and adoption support
- Adult adoption work
- Key events

In connection with the recruitment of adopters the Head of Adoption and Fostering stated that there had been a good level of public response to information evenings about becoming adopters subsequently leading to the approval of seven new adoptive households by the Adoption Panel. She added that adoption was not approved for all children and alternative options were also considered.

In response to a query the Head of Adoption and Fostering explained that she had made no reference to the Narey Report on adoption because the content of the Quarter Two report was dictated by regulation and it was therefore focused on quality monitoring.

Discussion took place on the inclusion of additional information, including comparative information, in future reports in order to emphasis the positive performance of the Adoption Agency. In response the Head of Adoption and Fostering explained that the overriding aim had been to present clear information to the Panel on the Adoption Agency's performance and the annual report would contain more information. Nonetheless, the meeting felt that additional information should be included in all future reports as Members could then chose to disregard it if they felt it was unnecessary.

#### **NOTED**

**the Quarter Two report on the Adoption Service for the period April – September 2011.**

CPP/11/27

#### **Quarter Two Report on the Fostering Service - July to September 2011**

The Panel considered a report outlining activity within the fostering service for the Quarter Two period July – September 2011 with a comparison with Quarter One.

The report covered the following matters:

- Recruitment of foster carers
- Placements for children
- Training for foster carers

- Key events
- Key issues

The Head of Adoption and Fostering drew Members' attention to the significant increase on the previous Quarter in the total number of children living with in-house foster carers. The meeting noted that this was the result of a number of factors including the Baby P. case, substance misuse by parents, general neglect and the effects of the current world economic situation on family relationships. The meeting noted that a high percentage of the Looked After population were children from families of white UK origin.

In response to comment the Head of Adoption and Fostering explained that the number of children living with independent foster carers had remained constant and it was the overall number of children requiring this service which had increased. She undertook to amend the report to ensure clarity. The Assistant Director (Acting) Children's Services Operations added that an in-house foster placement was always sought initially for any child or young person coming into care unless their specific needs could not be met in that environment.

The Head of Adoption and Fostering next referred to the marketing and recruitment key events which had taken place. In response to a query she stated that a cost analysis was always undertaken to establish whether a particular method of marketing or recruitment was cost effective. The Director of Social Care, Health and Housing commented that, whilst the content of the report was positive, it lacked supportive comparative information and failed to convey the importance of the service.

Turning to key issues the Head of Adoption and Fostering referred to changes to state benefits for housing and the unintended negative consequences for non-working foster carers or those living in social housing. As looking after young people post-16 could become more financially challenging the situation would be closely monitored.

In conclusion the Panel recorded its thanks for the action taken by the Assistant Director (Acting) Children's Services Operations and the Head of Adoption and Fostering.

#### **NOTED**

#### **the Quarter Two report on the Fostering Service for the period July - September 2011.**

#### **CPP/11/28 Work Plan 2011-2012**

The Panel considered its Work Plan for the remainder of the 2011/12 municipal year.

The Assistant Director (Acting) Children's Services Operations advised that she would submit a draft Work Plan for 2012/13, which would include statutory reporting requirements, to the next meeting of the Panel for consideration.

**RESOLVED**

**that the proposed agenda items for the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel in March 2012 be approved.**

CPP/11/29 **Awareness Raising Week**

The Chairman, by virtue of the authority vested in him in accordance with Section 100(b)(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, agreed to allow this item to be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency. Members were advised that consideration of this item could not be delayed until the next scheduled meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel in March because the event to be discussed would take place in February and any preparation would need to begin shortly.

The Acting Assistant Director Children's Services Operations informed the meeting that the Council had been contacted by New Family Social, an organisation that supported gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender foster carers and adopters. This body had sought the Council's support for an awareness raising week during 20-26 February 2012 when they would be encouraging fostering and adoption applications.

The Panel considered issues relating to this request in full. Following discussion the meeting was aware that its decision should be guided by the need to ensure that any statutory requirement was met, equal opportunities were applied and any action relating to placement for adoption or fostering was in the best interests of the child. The Panel was aware that any decision should be based on the applicant's ability to provide a caring, stable, home environment.

**RESOLVED**

**that support be given by the Fostering and Adoption Service to the New Family Social awareness raising week during 20-26 February 2012 through the provision of an information evening for prospective adopters or foster carers.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 2.00 p.m. and concluded at 3.15 p.m.)

(Note: Following the conclusion of the meeting the Director of Social Care, Health and Housing referred to the forthcoming briefing sessions for Members on corporate parenting (minute 11/23 above refers) and reminded the meeting of the need to ensure that the Council's officers, who were also statutorily responsible for corporate parenting, were offered similar training. In response the Assistant Director (Acting) Children's Services Operations undertook to discuss this matter with the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services.)



---

**Meeting:** Corporate Parenting Panel  
**Date:** 5 March 2012  
**Subject:** Children in Care Council Annual Report for 2011/12  
**Report of:** Cllr Mark Versallion, Executive Member for Children's Services.  
**Summary:** Attached at Appendix A and Appendix B is the Children in Care Council Annual Report for 2011/12 and the Looked After Children and Young People's Participation Work Programme 2011/12. The Committee is asked to comment on the reports.

---

**Contact Officer:** Catherine Parry, Assistant Director Children's Services Operations  
**Public/Exempt:** Public  
**Wards Affected:** All  
**Function of:** Council

#### **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

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

The reports support Priority 2 of the Central Bedfordshire's Strategic Plan 2009-11: Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people. The reports also support priority 2 of the Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014: Protecting children and keeping them safe.

##### **Financial:**

1. There are no financial implications for the Council.

##### **Legal:**

2. There are no legal implications for the Council.

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

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

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

4. Not Applicable.

**Equalities/Human Rights:**

5. There are no implications for the Council.

**Community Safety:**

6. Not Applicable.

**Sustainability:**

7. Not Applicable.

**Procurement:**

8. Not applicable.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**that the Corporate Parenting Panel comment on the content of the attached reports.**

**Appendices:**

Appendix A - Children in Care Council Annual Report 2011/12

Appendix B - Looked After Children & Young People's Participation Work Programme 2011/12

Appendix C – Children in Care Council - Presentation

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

## Appendix A

### **Children in Care Council Annual Report for 2011/12.**

#### **Priority Updates**

The Children in Care Council (CiCC) identified their priorities for 2011 and continue to work towards them. These are –

- Children in Care Council Meetings
- Links to Corporate Parenting Panel
- Consultation Events
- Central Bedfordshire Council Consultation
- Recruitment and training of Social Workers and Foster Carers
- Awards Evening
- School Holiday Activity Programme / Activity Based Participation
- Training for Social Work Students with the University of Bedfordshire and Step Up to Social Work Programme
- Information Packs for Looked After Children and Care Leavers
- Newsletter for Children in Care
- Website
- Fun Day / Consultation Day
- Residential Trip for members of the CiCC

#### **Children in Care Council Meetings**

The CiCC meet on a monthly basis and has seven core group members with a further four young people who will be attending future CiCC meetings and the away day, which will take place during February half term. The ages of these young people range from 15-22; they attend meetings as and when their personal circumstances allow.

The members of the CiCC continue to promote the work of the CiCC and continue to try to recruit more young people to attend the meetings.

#### **Activity based participation and consultation groups.**

Members of the CiCC attend activity based participation groups and facilitate informal consultations feeding back information to the Participation Officer or support workers. Recently, young people raised concerns with regards to semi independent accommodation options and the support that is offered. Through feedback to managers the Leaving Care Team are to meet with current providers, alongside the commissioning team, to consider the range of support for young people.

#### **The summer activities programme.**

One member of the CiCC supported the Summer Activities Programme; this enabled this member to be part of discussions with younger Looked After Children. During these activities there were a number of discussions around the adoption process and how it works. There were also discussions between young people about being in care and what their experiences are. The CiCC member has been able to feed this information back to the CiCC, managers and the Participation Officer.

### **Links to the Corporate Parenting Panel**

The CiCC meets with the Corporate Parenting Panel three times a year as agreed in the CiCC Priorities. The CiCC have presented their priorities to the new members of the Corporate Parenting Panel. During the last meeting members of the CiCC worked with members of the Corporate Parenting Panel to create kites to represent, 'What makes a good Corporate Parent?' and 'How can we improve the services for children and young people in care in Central Bedfordshire?' These kites were then displayed at the awards evening. This work is collated and will be used to influence service provision.

Members of the CiCC have met with Richard Carr, Chief Executive and Edwina Grant, Director of Children's Services. These meetings take place twice per year and are an opportunity for the CiCC members to share information on the work of the CiCC. The latest meeting took place during the February half term.

The CiCC have regular meetings with the Assistant Director to discuss their priorities and any issues that have been raised with the CiCC. Members of the CiCC are able to request additional meetings with the Assistant Director, for example, following a meeting with the Department for Education a young person representing the CiCC was asked to complete templates. The young person thought it would be helpful to go through this template with the Assistant Director and they worked through the templates together discussing each point.

### **Consultation Events**

Members of the CiCC attended the regional CiCC meetings organised by the Department for Education and gave feedback on what it is like to be a looked after child or a care leaver in Central Bedfordshire. These meetings are organised twice a year; one of the meetings was attended by the Children's Rights Director and a representative for the Children's Minister, Tim Loughton.

Eastern Region NHS organised a consultation event on Looked After Children (LAC) Health assessments, during the February half term and four young people from Central Bedfordshire Council's CiCC attended.

- Central Bedfordshire Council Consultation

Members of the CiCC have taken part in consultation events with workers from the NHS and the Fostering Team. They also took part in the consultation for the 'All Age Skills Strategy' and met with the Assistant Director and were consulted on the Leaving Care Financial Policy.

- Recruitment and Training of Social Workers and Foster Carers

CiCC members are part of the training programme for foster carers, attending one Saturday per month, to deliver training on 'What makes a good foster carer?' Members of the CiCC are then able to give feedback on the prospective foster carers attending the training. This information is then used within the prospective foster carer's assessment and during panel discussions.

CiCC members have been part of the recruitment process for Personal Advisers, Deputy Managers and the Participation Support Worker. Three young people were also part of the interview panel for the contract for Independent Visitors and Advocates.

Members of the CiCC will be developing a half day work shop for Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW), which will be delivered in March and will become part of the training programme.

### **Annual Awards Evening**

There were over 130 nominations for this year's Achievement Awards, 60 children and young people received their award at the event which was held on Thursday 27 October 2011. Councillor Mark Versallion, Executive Member for Children's Services, presented the awards to all the young people who attended. Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel, along with a number of social workers / personal advisers, foster carers and other professionals attended to celebrate the achievements of our looked after children and care leavers.

There were some overall winners at the event which included the Young Person of the Year, Special Awards for Educational Achievement and one for a young person with Outstanding Talent. A member of the CiCC also received an award for supporting other young people in care by volunteering her time to support the Summer Activities Programme.

The CiCC worked hard to organise the event and were pleased with the number of people who attended this year 'This is the second year that we have helped to organise the awards evening and it is really nice that we get to see so many children and young people receive their award.' CiCC Member.

Excellent feedback was received from young people, carers, CBC workers, Councillors and professionals from other agencies on the success of the event.

### **Activity Based Participation Groups**

There have been a number of activities organised for looked after children between the ages of 8 – 15. There were two days organised in the Easter holidays and then eight days of activities were organised during the summer holidays. There were thirty three children who attended at least one of the activity days. The activities allow children to socialise with other young people in care; there were a number of children who used the activities as a way of making friends and offering support to each other with regards to being in care. Discussions that took place were supported by workers; some of these discussions were around the adoption process, being in care, sibling contact and school.

There were two days of activities which were funded through the Youth Support Team and three days funded through the British Horse Society who offered free pony days to looked after children aged between 8 and 12.

There have been a number of activity days organised for young people over the age of 16, which allow young people to take part in fun activities as well as giving members of the CiCC the opportunity to talk to other young people about the work of the CiCC. Members of the CiCC are then able to invite young people to be part of the CiCC. For example, following the Christmas meal that was attended by fifteen young people and supported by members of the Leaving Care Team, three young people have put their names forward to be part of the CiCC.

The Activity Based Participation Group also allows young people to develop relationships with their allocated worker in an informal setting and also with workers in the Looked After Children & Leaving and After Care Team.

The 'Aim Higher' team organised a residential trip which took place during June half term and two members of the CiCC attended. The focus of the residential trip was to develop independence skills and the feedback from young people was positive.

### **Work with the University of Bedfordshire & Step Up to Social Work Programme**

Members of the CiCC have worked with the University of Bedfordshire and developed workshops for social work students. Members of the CiCC attended a training day organised by the University. Feedback from the University has been very positive. Young people will also be part of the interview process for the degree programme.

Three members of the CiCC have also been part of the assessment centre and interviews for the Step Up to Social Work programme. Each young person received a certificate and positive feedback. The Step Up to Social Work programme coordinators have requested further input from the CiCC.

### **Information Packs for Looked After Children and Care Leavers**

The information packs for looked after children are now complete, the distribution of the packs has commenced. There have been a number of difficulties with the quality of the design of the packs which meant there was a significant delay in their production.

Members of the CiCC have now started work on the information packs for Care Leavers.

### **Newsletter to Children in Care**

The CiCC have started the newsletter for children in care, these newsletters will be sent out twice per year and will share information about the work of the CiCC.

### **Fun Day / Consultation Day**

Members of the CiCC have started to organise the fun day which will take place in the forthcoming summer holidays and the day will be open to all children and young people who are receiving a service from Central Bedfordshire Council.

### **Website for Children in Care**

Members of the CiCC have had a number of discussions around social networking sites and using these to promote the work of the CiCC. Representatives of the CiCC have stated that there is also a need for a specific web site where information about being in care in Central Bedfordshire can be found specifically for looked after children.

### **Residential Trip for Members of the CiCC**

The residential trip has not taken place, members of the CiCC will be discussing this further during their CiCC meeting. The original plan was for young people to take part in team building activities as well as CiCC activities. Some members may not be able to attend due to their personal circumstances. Team building days and days out have been organised to reward young people for their work with the CiCC.

### **Participation Support Worker**

An additional Participation Support Worker has recently been appointed, on a three month contract and has been in post since January. They are working two days per week in Participation focusing on the Participation Groups for children in need and children subject to a Child Protection Plan.

A programme has been developed with the Family Support Team in Biggleswade which will involve an activity based day followed by four separate focus sessions looking at the role of the social worker and the services the child or young person have received. Following the last session a presentation evening will take place which will include parents and social workers. Invites will also be sent to the Head of Service and Assistant Director. The programme will then be organised with the Family Support Team in Dunstable. Evaluations will be written following the programmes to assist with service development.

The Participation Support Worker has also been supporting the Participation Officer in consulting children and young people subject to child protection plans and the Looked After Child Review process.

The Participation Support Worker has also been involved in –

- CiCC support – during meetings, recruitment and training of new CiCC members and activity days.
- University of Bedfordshire / Step Up to Social Work
- Youth Support Meetings – support with Independent Living Skills workshop
- Foster Carer and Social work training – support with attending and development of the training programme.

### **Participation Officer Work Plan**

Included at the end of this report is the work plan of the Participation Officer which has the latest updates on the work being carried out with CiCC.

If resources allow, the Participation Service could develop focus groups offered to include Participation Groups for the following groups of young people:-

- CiCC for under 10s
- CiCC for age range 10 -15
- Children and Young People subject to Child Protection Plans

- Children and Young People who are in need of support and services.
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and Young People.
- Children with Disabilities

The CiCC and development of their priorities are the main focus of the Participation Officer. The CiCC Priorities for 2012-2013 have been agreed by a number of members of the CiCC and will be taken to the next CiCC meeting for all members of the CiCC to agree.

**Appendix B** summarises the work plan for 2011/12 and the outcomes achieved.

**Appendix C** is a powerpoint presentation outlining the key points contained in the Annual Report (Appendix A)

**Proposed priorities for 2012-2013.**

### **Children in Care Council Meetings**

- Monthly Meetings will be arranged for young people over the age of 16. These will be formal meetings and will allow us to work towards achieving the priorities identified by the CiCC.
- There will be two activity based Participation Groups, one for over 16 year olds and one for young people between the ages of 8 and 15. These activities will encourage the wider Looked After / Leaving Care population to attend informal consultation events whilst taking part in fun activities ensuring the views of looked after children are heard.
- Representatives to attend activities to act as peer mentors to younger children in care.
- Representatives of the CiCC to work towards gaining the views of the wider CiCC.
- Promote the work of the CiCC and recruit more young people to be part of the CiCC meetings and using other means of communication as requested by current members of the CiCC.
- Representatives of the CiCC will meet with workers and young people from the children with disabilities team to ensure their views are also heard.

### **Links to Corporate Parenting Panel**

- CiCC members to attend Corporate Parenting Panel three times per year.
- CiCC members to meet with Director of Children's Services and Executive Member for Children's Services twice a year.
- CiCC members to meet with Assistant Director and Head of Service three times per year
- Additional meetings can be arranged as and when required between CiCC members and members of the CPP
- Information will be presented to CPP from the CiCC on the work of the CiCC

### **Consultation Events**

- Work with Department for Education and The Children's Rights Director to ensure involvement in consultation events for Children in Care.
- Attend regional CiCC meetings and the annual National conference for CiCC organised by Children's Rights Officers and Advocates.
- Attend any other consultation events organised for children in care.

### **Central Bedfordshire Council Consultation**

- Monitoring and reviewing the Pledge to ensure that The Pledge remains up to date and meaningful.
- Consultation on the LAC Review Process to improve young people's involvement
- Consultation on Health Assessments to improve the process for young people
- Consultation on the Pathway Planning process
- Carry out surveys for Central Bedfordshire's looked after children and leaving care young people to give them the opportunity to give their views

## **Recruitment and Training of Social Workers and Foster Carers for Central Bedfordshire Council**

- Work with the Learning and Development team to develop an in house course for social workers and to be part of the NQSW programme of training
- Attend Information Evening for people interested in becoming a foster carer.
- Attend Skills to Foster training and facilitate workshops on 'what makes a good foster carer?'
- Member of the CiCC to be involved in the recruitment and selection process of new social workers and foster carers

## **Annual Awards Evening**

- Annual Awards Evening for Children in Care and Care Leavers.
- Arrangements for the awards evening will be discussed in CiCC meetings and agreed by members.
- Nomination forms, invitations, certificates will be designed by members of the CiCC.
- A member of the CiCC will also attend the briefing session with the Assistant Director or Head of Safeguarding.

## **School holiday Activities Programme / Activity Based Participation**

- A range of activities will be organised for younger children in care and could also include children on the edge of care.
- Consultation opportunities during the activities, representatives from the CiCC will attend the activities to support and encourage positive peer mentoring.
- Activity days for over 16 year olds to allow for their views to be heard whilst taking part in fun activities and socialising with other care leavers. The activities will also allow positive relationships to be developed with other social workers within the team.

## **Training for Social Work Students at the University of Bedfordshire and Step Up to Social Work Programme**

- Work with the University of Bedfordshire and become part of the 'Experts by Experience Group'.
- Engage in training opportunities organised by the University of Bedfordshire.
- Members of the CiCC will be part of the recruitment and selection process for social work students.
- Members of the CiCC to be involved in the training and assessment of social work students.
- Members of the CiCC to be involved in the recruitment process for the Step Up to Social Work Programme.
- Members of the CiCC to be involved in the training for the Step Up to Social Work students.

## **Information for Looked after Children and Care Leavers**

- Information to be put onto a web site so that it can also be accessible to all looked after children.
- Members of the CiCC to be involved in the design of an information pack for young people leaving care, ensuring it contains relevant information they need to help them make the transition to adulthood.
- Members of the CiCC to explore the use of social networking sites as a way to share information.

## **Newsletter to Children in Care**

- A regular newsletter to be sent to all looked after children on the work of the CiCC, future events, consultation etc.

## **Website Specifically for Children in Care**

- Website/page to be developed by the members of the CiCC
- Website/page to contain:
  - Information from LAC Packs.
  - Opportunity to promote consultation and feedback.
  - Contact information for teams within Central Bedfordshire Council.



- External agencies and other useful web sites.
- Information on the work of the CiCC including upcoming meeting dates.
- Information on the Activity Days.

#### **A Fun Day / Charity Day / Consultation Day**

- Consultation Day, to include fun activities with different services participating.
- To have the option of raising money for local charity.

#### **Residential Trip for Members of the CiCC**

- A residential trip specifically for members of the CiCC as a reward for their work.
- This residential trip will allow all the members of the CiCC to take part in a number of sessions to complete the CiCC tasks as outlined in our priorities.
- Members would be able to take part in team building exercises and other fun activities to develop their life skills.

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix B

**Looked after Children and Young People's Participation Work Programme 2011 - 2012**  
**The active involvement of children and young people is a central commitment to the Children and Young People's Plan**

Theme	Action Plan	Timescale	Outcomes	Update – Feb 12
<b>Children in Care Council and Participation Groups.</b>	To work with managers and staff from LAC & LAAC to continue to support the CiCC for Central Bedfordshire	Ongoing	Opportunities for looked after young people.	CiCC work continues – working towards the priorities set by members of the CiCC.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To support the CiCC Monthly Meetings where members work to complete tasks identified in the Children in Care Council Priorities.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	To have a voice in relation to the planning and delivery of services they receive.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To organise and support activity based Participation Groups one for over 16 year olds and one for young people between the ages of 8 and 15.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Feedback will influence and improve services to LAC & LAAC.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To support representatives of the CiCC to meet with workers and young people from the children with disabilities team to ensure their views are heard.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	To develop a sense a belonging and shared identity with others who have similar experiences.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To promote the work of the CiCC and recruit more young people to attend the CiCC meetings</li> </ul>	Ongoing	To develop confidence & raise self esteem.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To work with &amp; support looked after children and young people in monitoring and reviewing the Pledge for Central Bedfordshire</li> </ul>	Ongoing	To develop transferable and valuable life skills.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To support members of the Children in Care Council meeting with the Corporate Parenting Panel three times per year.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Be part of the planning and operational process.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To support members of the CiCC in meetings with the Chief Executive, Director of Children's Services, Assistant Director and Head of Service.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	To engage with officers and elected members.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To work with &amp; support the young people involved in the participation groups to draw up agendas and work plans regarding participation and consultations</li> </ul>	Ongoing		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be actively engaged in planning future activity based participation events and the Annual Achievement Awards.</li> </ul>	Ongoing		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To deliver and contribute to presentations to members, managers &amp; staff within Central Bedfordshire.</li> </ul>	Ongoing			

Theme	Action Plan	Timescale	Outcomes	Update – Feb 12
<b>Children in need Participation Groups</b>	<p>To consider with managers and Participation support worker the need to support participation with children and young people who are in need or in need of protection either in response to specific consultations or as part of an ongoing process via the C&amp;YPP.</p> <p>Develop Consultation groups for young people subject to Child Protection Plans.</p> <p>Develop Consultation groups for Children in Need.</p>	<p>March 2012</p> <p>March 2012</p> <p>March 2012</p>	<p>Information gained from these young people is used to gain their views, inform managers about services &amp; is used in presentations</p>	<p>An activity day, followed by 4 focus groups has been organised. Young people will be consulted during the sessions on services they are receiving from CBC.</p> <p>Interviews with young people subject to CP Plans will take place during February.</p>
<b>Consultation/ Training/ Recruitment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To actively participate in consultation exercises across the service in line with local requirements, regional and National events.</li> <li>• Support members of the CiCC to develop a survey to gain feedback on services.</li> <li>• To support young people in delivering training for social workers and foster carers.</li> <li>• To support young people in the work with the University of Bedfordshire Social work programme recruitment and training.</li> <li>• To support young people to be part of recruitment process for social workers and foster carers for Central Bedfordshire Council.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>March 2012</p> <p>Meeting arranged with Ray Halford</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Oversight and responsibility for delivering services</p> <p>Employment and skill development opportunities for looked after children, building confidence &amp; self esteem, positive contribution to their CV's</p>	<p>CiCC members continue to be part of national and regional consultations.</p> <p>Meeting has been arranged for 9<sup>th</sup> February to discuss the issues around sending out surveys to LAC and parental consent.</p> <p>CiCC will be delivering an in house work shop for NQSW.</p> <p>CiCC members continue to be part of interview process.</p>

Theme	Action Plan	Timescale	Outcomes	Update
<b>Newsletters</b>	<p>To support young people in producing a newsletter giving information about the CiCC and participation groups</p> <p>Distribute Who Cares magazine</p>	<p>March 2012</p> <p>As required</p>	<p>Keep LAC informed of events and current opportunities</p>	<p>Work has started on the newsletter and will be sent out twice per year.</p> <p>Older members of the CiCC stated they did not like these magazines – a question will be added to the survey to get wider feedback.</p>
<b>LAC / Leaving Care packs</b>	<p>Produce a LAC pack for Central Bedfordshire children and Young people</p> <p>Produce a Leaving Care Information Pack</p>	<p>December 2011</p> <p>March 2012</p>	<p>To ensure that young people will have the appropriate information when they enter the care system.</p>	<p>The LAC Pack has been produced and will be distributed this month.</p> <p>Work has started on the Leaving Care Packs.</p>
<b>Web-site</b>	<p>Develop a web site for children and young people in care with which they are actively involved both in the production and ongoing maintenance</p>	<p>March 2012</p>	<p>To better enable young people to have the lead in developing the site and improving their own IT skills. Improved participation and consultation through a user friendly medium for young people.</p>	<p>CiCC members will be attending SMT to discuss.</p>
<b>Engagement in meetings/networks</b>	<p>To attend Regional Participation Leads meetings.</p> <p>To attend SMT to report on activity ( bi monthly basis)</p> <p>Attend LAC Education working group.</p> <p>To attend joint meeting with LAC&amp;LAAC and Youth Support.</p> <p>Attend joint LAC/LAAC team meetings and other service team meetings as appropriate.</p>	<p>Quarterly</p> <p>Six weekly</p> <p>Monthly</p>	<p>Maintaining the profile of participation work</p>	<p>Participation Officer continues to attend meetings / networks.</p>

Theme	Action Plan	Timescale	Outcomes	Update
<b>Training</b>	<p>Attend relevant external training courses on Participation.</p> <p>Explore opportunities for developing an in house course (s) for children and young people in care.</p>	Ongoing		
<b>Maintaining the profile of participation work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visiting residential units</li> <li>• Visiting selected newly accommodated children over 10 years</li> <li>• Supporting young people in associated work i.e. access to records</li> </ul>		Ensure engagement of young people as appropriate in planning/consultation	<p>Visits to residential units have been planned and will be shared between the Participation Officer and the Participation Support Worker.</p> <p>Support continues to be offered in associated work as requested by young people.</p>

## Appendix C



# The Children in Care Council



# The Work of the CiCC

- We as members of the CiCC continue to meet on a monthly basis to work through our priorities.
- We have had meetings with Richard Carr and Edwina Grant and discussed our work. We took the 'No Bin Bag Charter' to one of the meetings and asked for Central Bedfordshire to sign it.
- We continue to promote the work of the CiCC



# The Work of the CiCC

- We have taken part in consultations with the Children's Rights Director.
- We have attended the Regional CiCC meetings organised by the Department for Education. We have been able to share our work with other CiCCs and hear about the work of other CiCCs.
- Some of us attended the East Region NHS Consultation which looked at the process of Health Assessments.

# The Work of The CiCC

- We have been part of the consultation on Leaving Care Grants.
- The Looked After Children's Nurse has met us to discuss the LAC assessments and what information children and young people in care will need with regards to health services.
- We attend the foster carer information evening to present information about what makes a good foster carer.
- We have worked with the fostering team to develop work shops which are now part of the Skills to Foster Training. We then feedback to fostering social workers who include this feedback in the Training report.

# Awards Evening 2011

- The Achievement Awards was a successful event. There were over 130 nominations and 60 children and young people attended the event to receive their awards.
- There has been positive feedback on the event from children and young people, social workers, foster carers and residential workers.



# Awards Evening 2011

- Photographs of the Awards Evening have been removed.

# Activity Based Participation

- There have been a number of activity days organised for children and young people between the ages of 8 -15, including the summer activities programme.
- Members of the CiCC have attended events to act as peer mentors and to be part of informal consultation on services they receive.
- Over 30 looked after children attended at least one activity day.
- Activity days for over 16 year olds have also taken place.

# The Work of the CiCC

- We have been part of the assessment centre for the Step Up to Social Work Programme and part of the selection process.
- We have worked with the University of Bedfordshire to deliver workshops on ‘What makes a good Social Worker?’
- We have completed the Information Packs for Looked After Children which will be sent out to all Looked After Children between the ages of 8 and 15 and will be given to newly accommodated children and young people.
- We have started work on our first CiCC Newsletter.

# **CiCC Priorities 2012 - 2013**

- **Children in Care Council Meetings**
- **Links to Corporate Parenting Panel**
- **Consultation Events**
- **Central Bedfordshire Council Consultation**
- **Recruitment and Training of Social Workers and Foster Carers for Central Bedfordshire Council**
- **School holiday Activities Programme / Activity Based Participation**
- **Annual Awards Evening**
- **Information for Looked after Children and Care Leavers**

# **CiCC Priorities 2012 - 2013**

- **Training for Social Work Students at the University of Bedfordshire and Step Up to Social Work Programme**
- **Training for Social Work Students at the University of Bedfordshire and Step Up to Social Work Programme**
- **Newsletter to Children in Care**
- **Website Specifically for Children in Care**
- **A Fun Day / Charity Day / Consultation Day**
- **Residential Trip for Members of the CiCC**

*See Complete document for details of each priority.*



# Questions for Corporate Parenting Panel

- Awards Evening 2012
- We would like to hear your feedback on the Awards 2011 and what could be improved for 2012?
- When should the awards take place?
- Date for the Fun Day / Consultation Day?
- Where would be the best place to hold the event?

This page is intentionally left blank

---

**Meeting:** Corporate Parenting Panel.  
**Date:** 5 March 2012  
**Subject:** Looked After Children Placement Strategy  
**Report of:** Cllr Mark Versallion, Executive Member for Children's Services  
**Summary:** Attached at Appendix A is the Looked After Children Placement Strategy 2011 – 2013. The Committee is asked to comment on the report.

---

**Contact Officer:** Catherine Parry, Interim Assistant Director Operations  
**Public/Exempt:** Public  
**Function of:** Council

#### **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

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

The reports support Priority 2 of the Central Bedfordshire's Strategic Plan 2009-11: Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people. The reports also support priority 2 of the Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014: Protecting children and keeping them safe.

##### **Financial:**

1. There are no financial implications for the Council.

##### **Legal:**

2. The Council has a duty to safeguarding and promote the welfare of the children it looks after.

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

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

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

4. Not applicable.

**Equalities/Human Rights:**

5. There are no implications for the Council

**Community Safety:**

6. Not applicable.

**Sustainability:**

7. Not applicable.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

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

**Appendices:**

Appendix A - Looked After Children Placement Strategy 2011 – 2013

**Background Papers:** None.

Appendix A

# Looked after children Placement Strategy

2011-13

## 1. Introduction

Section 22G of The Children Act 1989 requires a council to take steps, as far as reasonably practicable, that secures accommodation for looked after children within the authority's area and which meets the needs of those children. Councils should consider the number of accommodation providers in their area that is sufficient in the council's opinion, and take account of the range of accommodation in their area capable of meeting different needs.

In 2010 Statutory Guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children was published by the then Department for Children, Schools and Families. This outlined how councils should carry out their duty under The Children Act which came into force in April 2011.

This strategy therefore sets out the position in relation to placements for looked after children in Central Bedfordshire, including actions needed to ensure sufficient placements to meet future need.

## 2. Looked After Population Data and Trends

### Overall numbers

On 1 April 2009 when Central Bedfordshire Council became a unitary authority the LAC population stood at 132. This represented a rate of 24 per 10 000 population. Our statistical neighbour rate, per 10 000 population, was 38.

The numbers of looked after children have risen significantly over the past 2.5 years and the population at 30 September 2011 stood at 192. This represented a rate per 10 000 population of 34 and a percentage increase of 45%. Over the same period the statistical neighbour rate, per 10 000 population, has risen to 46.

The increase can be attributed to two main factors. Firstly, there has been a national increase in referrals to children's social care services, open cases and statutory intervention in relation to children as a result of the national awareness and response to the Baby Peter case. Secondly, Central Bedfordshire Council has applied more rigour than the legacy authority in applying thresholds and intervening to ensure children are protected from harm.

## Age and gender

The current age profile of the looked after population is as follows:

Age	CBC LAC population (%)			England LAC population (%)
	Male	Female	Total	Total
0-4	10	14	<b>24</b>	<b>23</b>
5- 9	5	8	<b>13</b>	<b>17</b>
10-14	18	7	<b>25</b>	<b>30</b>
15-17	23	15	<b>38</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100</b>	

In comparison with the England looked after population (2010) children aged 5 – 14 are under-represented and young people over 15 are over-represented. In respect of the older age group this may indicate good practice in not seeking to discharge young people aged 16 from care.

## Length of time in care

Data indicates no significant trends in relation to the length of time children remain looked after. In April 2010 59% of children had been looked after for one year or over. This increased to 63% in March 2011 and is currently at 62%.

## Ethnicity

Ethnicity data shows that children from all non-white black and minority ethnic groups are over-represented in the looked after population when compared to both census data and information from Central Bedfordshire Council maintained schools. 18% of looked after children are non-white compared to 8% in the council maintained school population and 4% in the general council population.

## Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

At 30 September 2011 11 of the 192 looked after children were unaccompanied asylum seeking young people. This number has fallen from a peak of 34 in May 2010 and there have been no new children claiming asylum since February 2011. However, it is difficult to predict trends in young people arriving in the council area and claiming asylum.

## **Placement Stability**

In relation to the two measures of placement stability, performance in Central Bedfordshire has improved over the two years. This reflects the national and statistical neighbour picture of overall improvement. Performance in Central Bedfordshire exceeds that of statistical neighbours and nationally. At the end of September 2011 12 children had had 3 or more placements in the previous 12 months. Whilst the percentage in relation to the overall looked after population was low, nevertheless there were a small number of children who had experienced a significant number of placements and/or unplanned moves. All young people were aged over 11, and 62% were male. Five of the young people's last move was into residential care as a result of their complex needs. In addition 3 of the young people were unaccompanied asylum seeking young people whose moves were in relation to their move to independence.

## **Distance from Home**

At March 2011 26 children were placed more than 20 miles away from their home address, representing 14.8% of the looked after population and above the national average of 13%. When analysed 16 of the 26 children placed more than 20 miles away were placed less than 40 miles away.

## **3. Current Placement Provision**

### **Fostering Provision**

Central Bedfordshire Council operates the 'in-house' fostering service providing placements for its own looked after population and to Bedford Borough Council under a service level agreement. At 30 September 2011 the service had 113 approved fostering households, including those caring for friends and family members under a fostering arrangement. 68 Central Bedfordshire looked after children were placed with in-house foster carers. This was an increase in absolute numbers from the 55 children that were placed in-house on 31 March 2010 and 59 that were in placement in March 2011.

The service was inspected by Ofsted in 2008 and judged to be outstanding.

In addition to mainstream foster placements, the in-house service runs a Youth Care scheme providing specialist placements for young people aged 10-18 who have additional or complex needs. In addition to the fostering allowance carers receive a weekly fee, and the service provides additional supervision and support to carers. 14 Youth Care placements are available when the full complement of carers is approved, however the scheme has not been at full capacity since January 2011. Recruitment is ongoing and the scheme will be at full capacity by December 2011.

The number of children in Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements has remained reasonably constant over the last 2.5 years. In April 2009 63 children were placed in IFA placements; in September 2011 the number was 57. Given the rise in overall numbers of looked after children this means that the proportion of children in externally commissioned foster placements has fallen. In the rolling 12 months to September 2011 38 new IFA placements were made. 19 of these were in order to keep sibling groups together, 12 were for children over 10, 3 were for children with particular needs.



The proportion of looked after children who are in foster placements (in-house or IFA) has fallen over the last 12 months from 72 % to 67%.

Places in IFAs are sought on a spot-purchase basis, although a Framework Contract has been developed which will come into effect on 1 November 2011. More detail about this is given below in section 8.

## **Residential Provision**

The legacy authority, Bedfordshire County Council entered into an agreement in 2007 for St Christopher's Fellowship to manage its three children's homes. This arrangement was continued by both new unitary authorities under a Service Level Agreement.

The arrangement provides for 12 places across 3 homes – one in the Bedford Borough Area and two in the Central Bedfordshire area. One home also has one emergency 72-hour bed. All provision is shared with Bedford Borough. The available number of beds has reduced during 2011 with the closure of a four-bed home in the Central Bedfordshire area following an adverse Ofsted inspection. All other provision is rated by Ofsted as outstanding or good with outstanding features. There are proposals to extend the provision offered in one of the homes by an additional two beds.

Overall occupancy in the homes remains high (ranging from 82% to 98% during 2010-11), Central Bedfordshire occupancy of places increased during that period from 47% to 54%. All young people placed at the homes by Central Bedfordshire Council were male.

At 30 September 2011 21 young people were placed in residential provision, including the St Christopher's homes. This is a 17% increase in the last 12 months. The overall proportion of looked after young people in residential provision has also risen steadily from 7% in April 2009 to 11% now.

The profile of young people living in residential care is 71% male; 62% of young people are aged over 15 years. A number of the young people placed in residential provision during 2011 have experienced multiple foster placements or present with behaviour that cannot be managed within a family setting.

Provision in private children's homes is sought on a spot purchase basis. There are no formal arrangements with providers for preferred rates or cost/volume contracts. All young people placed in residential provision other than the St Christopher's Fellowship provision are placed outside the boundary of Central Bedfordshire Council. 6 young people are in placements in neighbouring authorities, but 8 are a significant distance from their home address.

4 young people with disabilities are looked after in 52-week residential school placements. 3 are out of the Central Bedfordshire Council area and all are high cost specialist provision.

## **Secure Accommodation**

In each of the last 3 years Central Bedfordshire Council has sought secure accommodation for one young person for part of the year. There is no secure provision locally to Central Bedfordshire with the nearest provision in Peterborough or Essex.

## **Independent and semi-independent accommodation**

52 of the current looked after population are aged 16 or 17. Young people are supported to remain in foster care or in residential homes where this is consistent with their needs and wishes. However for those young people who wish to move towards independence or for those who become looked after at age 16 or 17 a range of semi-independent and independent living provision is required.

Central Bedfordshire Council operates a Supported Lodgings scheme offering 8 places spread geographically across the council area.

The council also works with two main providers of semi-independent provision, who offer young people housing tenancies and a package of staff support. There are no formal contracted arrangements with the two providers and placements are commissioned on a spot purchased basis.

There is little hostel provision within the Central Bedfordshire boundary. There is one small hostel offering approximately 12 beds located in the south of the council area, but no priority is given to looked after children and applications for places are considered on a needs basis, alongside applications from people from the general population. If hostel provision is needed/sought for young people, hostels in Bedford Borough Council and Luton Borough Council areas tend to be approached.

There is also limited provision for homeless young people in the area. Under the Southwark Judgement, these young people will be considered looked after and the responsibility for their housing and care will be held by children's social care services. There is some provision for homeless people of all ages located in the east of the council area but this is not appropriate for many of the 16 and 17 year old homeless young people who may have additional vulnerabilities. Provision in Luton Borough Council area is used, particularly that provided by one organisation that works with disadvantaged homeless 16-25 year olds.

## **Emergency placements**

Where a child is accommodated or needs a change of placement out of office hours the Emergency Duty Team have responsibility for making arrangements. They have access to the list of in-house carers who have vacancies and who are able to take emergency placements. They also have a list of independent fostering providers who can be approached if no suitable in-house placement is available. One of the St Christopher's Fellowship homes has a 72-hour emergency bed that can be used if available.

## **Provision for Children with Disabilities**

The in-house fostering service has some foster carers with the appropriate skills to care for children with disabilities. Similarly some children are looked after in independent fostering agency placements. The council also has a residential provision for children with disabilities who require shared care or full-time care. 5 places are available for children aged 8 to 18 years.

Whilst the number of looked after children with disabilities is low at 7% of the total LAC population they are more likely to live in residential care or independent provision. Whilst

this may be attributed to the more complex needs that some children present with, in some cases it is due to lack of availability of foster placements.

A review of Children with Disabilities services is taking place in the Autumn of 2011 and will consider placement provision as part of the remit of the review. The review is due to report in January 2011 and its recommendations will form the basis of the strategy for services to children looked after who have disabilities.

## Costs

The approximate unit cost of a mainstream in-house placement was calculated in January 2011 as £452 per week.

A youth care in-house placement was estimated at £837 per week.

The average cost of an Independent Fostering Agency placement is £820 per week – this masks the wide variation in individual placement costs depending on the age and needs of the young person.

The average cost of an independent residential placement is £3614 per week – this also masks a wide variation in placement cost.

The current cost of a placement in one of the St Christopher's Fellowship homes, including the specialist solo-placement home is less than independent provision.. When the planned additional beds come on line, the cost will fall further as the additional bed is being provided for very little additional cost. This assumes full occupancy of 7 beds.

## 4. Provision for children on the edge of care

Central Bedfordshire Council's aim is to support families to care for their own children wherever possible and where this is consistent with their welfare. This is what the majority of families want and will achieve the best for most children.

Where children are determined to be in need or in need of protection a range of support may be identified as needed during assessment to assist with meeting the child's needs or to prevent them from becoming looked after. In Central Bedfordshire requests for support or resources are presented to the Allocation Panel (CBAP), Children with Disabilities Allocation Panel (CDAP) or Joint Agency Panel (JAP) as appropriate. Support or resources may include:

- Services or payments to family members under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 to enable them to care for child who otherwise does not need to be looked after by the council
- Childminding or nursery provision
- Services from the Family and Adolescent Support Team (FAST)
- Services from the Family Intervention Service (FIS)
- Crisis or intensive support to assist parents – also known as High Level Family Support Services
- Short breaks or respite breaks for children and their families

The Family Group Meeting service provides assistance in facilitating family meetings where support for the family and arrangements to prevent a child becoming looked after can be agreed from within the family network. Similarly Family Group Meetings can be instrumental in supporting a plan for a looked after child to return to their family – either through identifying family support for the parents or by identifying family members who may be able to care for the child.

## **5. Adoption and Permanence**

The Central Bedfordshire Council adoption service has a recruitment strategy which identifies the number of adopters needed in the next 12 months to enable sufficient placements for children with a plan for adoption. It is anticipated that 26 new adoptive households will be needed to meet the needs of children in Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council.

The in-house fostering service seeks to recruit foster carers who can offer permanent or long-term placements, and in respect of some children has advertised for carers for specific children. The recruitment target for 2011-12 is 40 new households to enable a net increase of carers and range of placements available.

## **6. Principles of good placements**

Where children become looked after a placement within their family or friends network will be sought as a priority where this is consistent with their welfare. As a looked after arrangement, the carer will be assessed and supported as a foster carer.

Where a placement within the child's family or friends network is not available an in-house fostering placement will be sought. Unless it is not safe to do so it is expected that such a placement will be close enough to the child's community to enable them to remain at their school and involved in their networks. It is usual that a child will be placed with siblings wherever possible unless it has been assessed that this is not appropriate.

Where an in-house placement is not available a foster placement from an independent fostering agency will be sought. A placement closest to the child's community will be sought unless this is not consistent with their safety or welfare.

Where the needs of a young person cannot be met within a family environment a residential placement will be considered, with placement within the St Christopher's homes being considered first. Children aged under 12 will not usually be placed in residential homes unless it is clearly demonstrated that this is consistent with their welfare and the only way of meeting their needs.

Any placements will only be made in provision which has been assessed as good or outstanding by Ofsted or the appropriate regulatory body.

Where a highly specialist therapeutic placement or placement in secure provision is assessed as required, this will only be agreed after agreement from the appropriate Joint Agency Panel or Secure Accommodation Panel (and subsequent Court agreement.)

Where children and young people are not able to return to those with parental responsibility planning will take place in a timely way to enable them to move on to permanent families

who can offer them legal and emotional security. For younger children the placement of choice will be adoption. For older children who retain significant ties to their birth family, long-term or permanent fostering may be more appropriate if Special Guardianship is not suitable.

## 7. Assessing Demand

It is not anticipated that increases in national population or local population based on estimates of new local housing provision will make any significant statistical changes to the looked after population in Central Bedfordshire.

Whilst the LAC population rate per 10 000 in Central Bedfordshire Council is lower than the statistical neighbour and national rates it is not anticipated that there will be any significant increase in the LAC population. It should be noted that other factors can have influence on LAC population, such as high media profile cases, judgements in case law and national policy change.

No expansion of the overall placement provision is needed although some remodelling in types of placements will be required to meet need.

Our current LAC population data and placement provision tells us that:

- Older teenagers are over represented in the LAC population.
- Non-white children are over represented compared to the local population
- A higher number of children than the England average are placed more than 20 miles away
- Girls needing residential care are placed a significant distance away

Gaps in current provision are:

- The overall number and choice of in-house fostering placements
- Specialist in-house foster placements for teenagers who have complex needs
- Sufficient in-house foster placements for sibling groups and children with disabilities of all ages
- Provision in the local area for young people with complex needs – those needing therapeutic residential placements or who have experienced multiple placements
- A mix of local provision for 16 and 17 year olds, particularly hostel accommodation and emergency/homeless accommodation.

## **8. Planning for Change**

Key areas for development in 2011- 13 are outlined below with a detailed action plan outlined at Appendix One.

### **Independent Fostering Agency Framework Agreement**

During 2010-11 Central Bedfordshire Council has joined in partnership with Luton Borough Council and Bedford Borough Council to develop a Framework Agreement for the provision of independent fostering agency placements. It was recognised by the partners that a more systematic and holistic approach was required to provide a consistent quality assurance framework, reduce negotiation times, better understand and review pricing structures of placements.

The partnership has tendered a framework agreement with 18 independent fostering agencies. The contract will commence on 1 November 2011 and it is expected to improve the quality of provision and reduce costs of new placements made after that date.

### **Residential Provision**

The Service Level Agreement with St Christopher's Fellowship will continue until 2014. It is proposed to expand the provision offered by one home by two beds. The additional beds will be available to both Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council and as well as increasing available beds will serve to reduce the unit costs of this provision.

The Commissioning team in partnership with operational managers will consider whether formalised arrangements for the provision of local private sector residential placements, particularly for girls will be of benefit in widening choice, enabling young people to remain locally and in managing costs.

### **In house fostering provision**

The recruitment strategy for fostering identifies how in-house capacity will be maximised. This includes a recruitment target for 2011-12 with particular emphasis on attracting carers who can provide for sibling groups, older children and permanent placements.

Recruitment will continue to ensure the Youth Care scheme can offer the full 14 placements. A costed proposal to expand the scheme will be developed by January 2012 with a view to reducing the numbers of children placed in costly IFA or residential provision.

### **Semi independent and independent services**

Work will be undertaken with Housing, Commissioning colleagues and local providers in order to widen the housing and support options in the Central Bedfordshire area for 16 and 17 year olds.

### **Children with disabilities services**

The recommendations of the Children with Disabilities Review will be considered and implemented in line with the scope and reporting of that review.

### **Children from Black and Minority Ethnic groups**

We will continue to explore the reasons why the non-white LAC population is higher than that of the general population to ensure that the specific needs of BME communities are met and that children do not become looked after as the result of unconscious stereotyping, or lack of culturally appropriate support to families or communities. We will ensure that all our placement provision can meet the heritage, identity and cultural needs of children and will seek to increase the diversity of our foster carers and providers.

## Appendix One

Placement Strategy Action Plan						
	Identified Need	Action	Target Date	Lead Officer	Desired Outcomes	Progress
1.	Improve cost framework and quality of Independent Fostering Agency Provision	Implement and monitor Framework Agreement for new IFA placements	1/11/11- implementation 1/4/11 – review	Head of Children's Services Commissioning Head of Adoption and Fostering	Reduce costs on IFA budget Implement quality framework for IFA provision Ensure IFA provision can meet needs of CBC children	
2.	Review current provision of residential care, particularly placements outside of the St Christopher's Fellowship contract	Undertake further analysis of the need for local provision for children with complex needs and a commissioning model that could support identified need	31/12/11	Head of Children's Services Commissioning Head of Safeguarding and Children in Care	Identify whether commissioning activity is required to secure local provision at best value	
		Work with St Christopher's to realise the additional two beds	31/3/12	Head of Children's Services Commissioning Head of Safeguarding and Children in Care	Increase local residential provision	



		Review St Christopher's contract to ensure it remains fit for purpose and to inform planning for when the contract ends	30/9/12	Head of Children's Services Commissioning	Ensure future provision meets the need of CBC children	
3.	Increase number and availability of in-house fostering placements	Recruit 40 new fostering households in 2011-12 and achieve net increase in fostering placements available	31/3/12	Head of Adoption and Fostering	Increase availability and choice of foster placements Ensure foster placements can meet need	
		Review existing foster carers' approval to ensure maximum flexibility and capacity	31/3/12	Head of Adoption and Fostering	Increase foster care placements and minimise placement moves	
		Recruit to Youth Care Scheme to maximise placements	31/12/11	Head of Adoption and Fostering	Increase available placement to reduce number of placements in IFA or residential provision	
		Complete costed proposal to expand the Youth Care Scheme	31/12/11	Head of Adoption and Fostering	Invest to save – increase youth care placement to reduce IFA or residential placement demand.	

4.	Develop wider mix of provision for 16 and 17 years olds	Undertake liaison and work with housing on establishing homeless and hostel provision	31/3/12	Head of Safeguarding and Children in Care	Increase choice of placement for 16 and 17 years olds	
		Undertake analysis of the benefits of a different commissioning model for semi-independent provision	30/9/12	Head of Children's Services Commissioning Head of Safeguarding and Children in Care	Consider Identify whether commissioning activity is required to secure local provision at best value	
		Continue the expansion of the supported lodgings scheme	31/3/12	Head of Safeguarding and Children in Care	Increase choice of placement for 16 and 17 years olds	
5.	Consider outcomes of Children with Disabilities review	Implement the action plan arising from the review	31/1/12	Head of Children with Disabilities and Child Health	Ensure appropriate mix and choice of placement to meet need and reduce costs where possible.  Increase numbers of foster placements available in-house for disabled children	

Report title Quarter One fostering report v3  
Last saved by ManningL01  
22/02/12 10:33

---

**Meeting:** Corporate Parenting Panel  
**Date:** 5 March 2012  
**Subject:** Quarter Three Report on the Fostering Service – October to December 2011  
**Report of:** Catherine Parry, Assistant Director Children’s Services Operations  
**Summary:** The report outlines the activity in the fostering service during Quarter Three, with comparison to Quarters One and Two.

---

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 Strategic Plan 2009-11 Priority 2 – Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people.

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 October to December 2011. Comparative data with the previous quarters is summarised in the tables in Appendix A.

**Recruitment of Foster carers**

12. During the period 39 enquiries were received from members of the public interested in becoming foster carers. This number is lower than previous quarters due to fewer face to face recruitment events taking place in this quarter. We have identified the correlation between numbers of enquiries and the number of face to face recruitment events, and will ensure that regular events are held to ensure that we optimise the numbers of enquiries we receive.

Report title Quarter One fostering report v3  
Last saved by ManningL01  
22/02/12 10:33

13. 25 assessments of new foster carers commenced, including 12 assessments of households caring for a child within their own family. 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 11 fostering placements in Quarter 3. This brings the net increase in the year to 20.

### **Placements for Children**

15. In these 3 months there were 98 requests for new or change of fostering placements. 25 of these requests did not materialise into placements as children did not become looked after or did not move placement.
16. 44 newly looked after children were placed with foster carers recruited by the Council (in-house foster carers) of whom 24 were Central Bedfordshire children. 4 CBC children were placed in Independent Fostering Agency provision when becoming looked after and a further 2 children moved from in-house to Independent Fostering Agency provision in order to meet their needs.
17. At 30 December 2011, there were a total of 146 children living with in-house foster carers of which 76 were Central Bedfordshire children. This is, once again, a significant increase on the previous quarter.
18. The absolute number of looked after children living in Independent Fostering Agency provision was 57 in December 2011, a fall from 62 in April 2011. The proportion of children fostered with in-house carers rose from 50% in April 2011 to 58 % at the end of quarter 3. The reduction in overall numbers of these placements means that future costs to this budget will be reduced by approximately £220 000 per annum.

### **Training for Foster Carers**

19. 24 training courses took place involving 164 delegates. This included preparation training for prospective foster carers as well as short courses and workshops for approved foster carers.

Report title Quarter One fostering report v3  
Last saved by ManningL01  
22/02/12 10:33

### **Key Events**

20. A recruitment event took place at the Samuel Whitbread Upper School New Intake evening during this period. Evaluation identified that the New Intake evening was not highly productive in generating enquiries because parents were focussed on the needs of their own children, rather than consideration of fostering. However, positive links were made with this school and other local Upper Schools who would be willing to host future recruitment events.
21. During this period a radio interview took place with the Executive Member on Three Counties Radio to talk about the positive rewards of being a foster carer and to promote the need for more foster carers for children.
22. Advertising and press releases were placed in the local newspapers and publications, specifically seeking families who could offer long- term fostering, and to celebrate the contribution made by birth children of fostering families.

### **Key Issues**

23. Changes in regulations since April 2011 and case law has meant a significant rise in the numbers of children living with family or friends who are considered legally to be looked after. This has implications for the fostering service in as much as the family members have to be assessed as foster carers. Significant resources have been deployed since April 2011 on assessing these often complex arrangements and contributing to the associated court proceedings.
24. Both Councils have experienced an overall rise in the number of children becoming looked after during 2011. In this quarter, the number of looked after children in Central Bedfordshire Council has risen from 192 on 30 September 2011 to 197 on 31 December 2011. The number of looked after children in Bedford Borough Council rose from 182 on 30 September 2011 to 196 on 31 December 2011.

### **Appendices:**

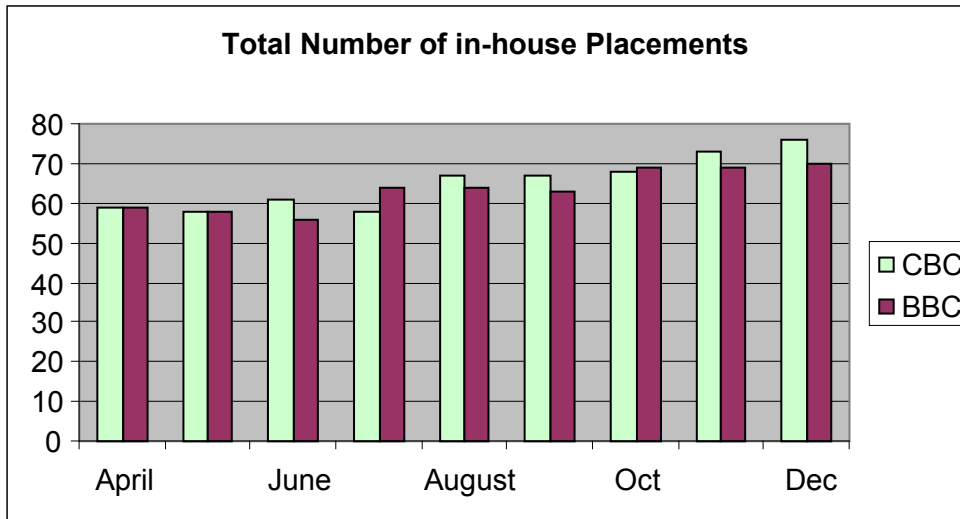
Appendix A – Comparative Data

**Background Papers:** None

Report title Quarter One fostering report v3  
Last saved by ManningL01  
22/02/12 10:33

**Appendix A**

**Chart one shows the allocation of in house placements to Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) and Bedford Borough Council (BBC) during Q1 to Q3.**



**Chart two shows the proportion of new placements made in CBC and BBC Q1 to Q3.**

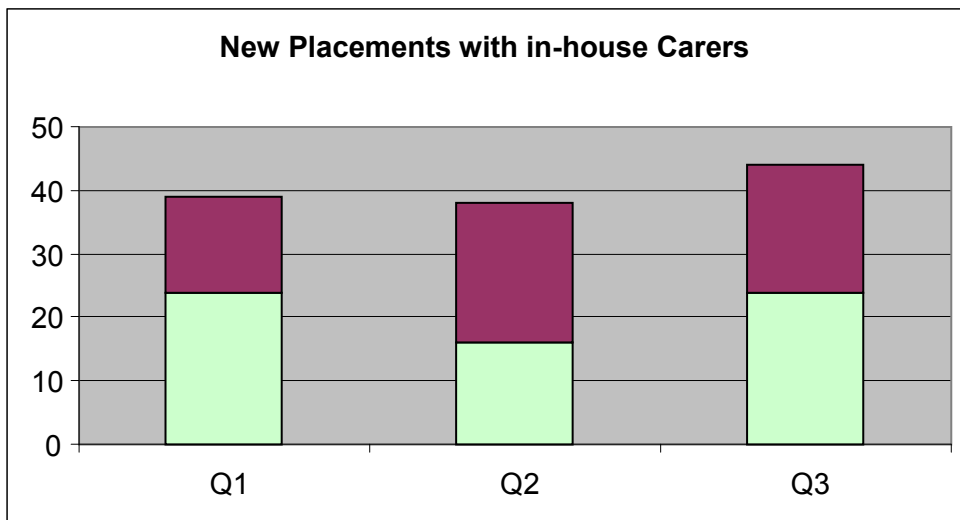


Chart three shows the number of foster carer assessments started in Q1 to Q3.

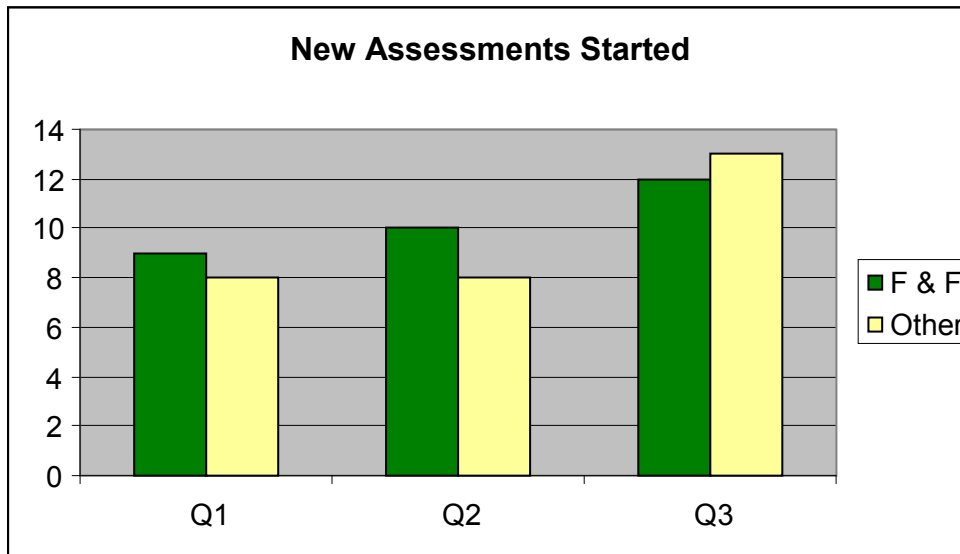
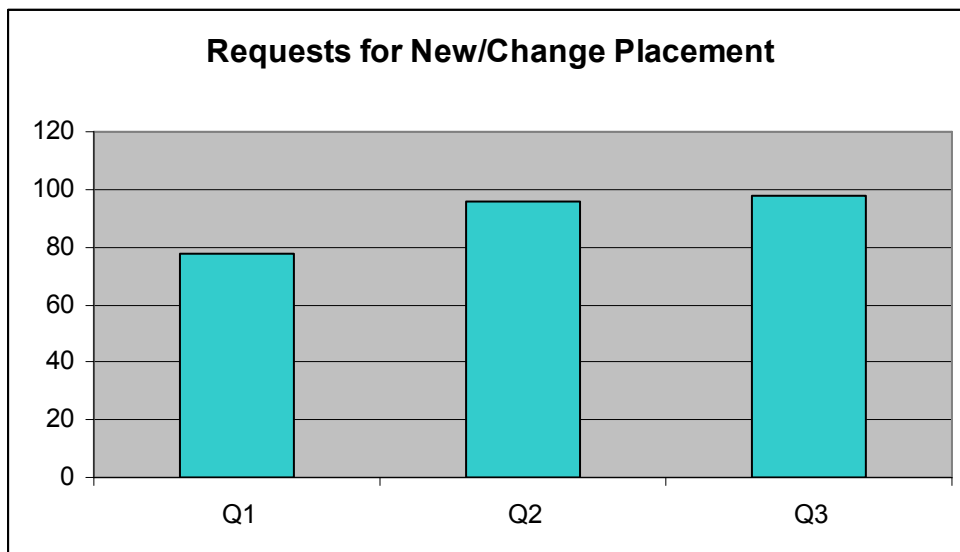


Chart four shows the total number of requests of both councils for new placements and a change of placement in Q1 to Q3.





Report title Quarter One fostering report v3  
Last saved by ManningL01  
22/02/12 10:33

Chart five shows the total number of enquiries made about fostering in Q1 to Q3.

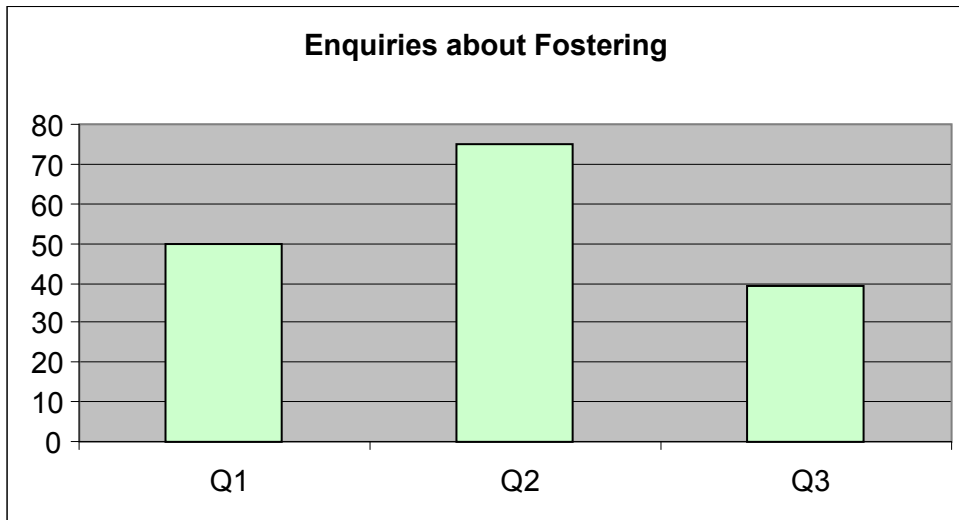
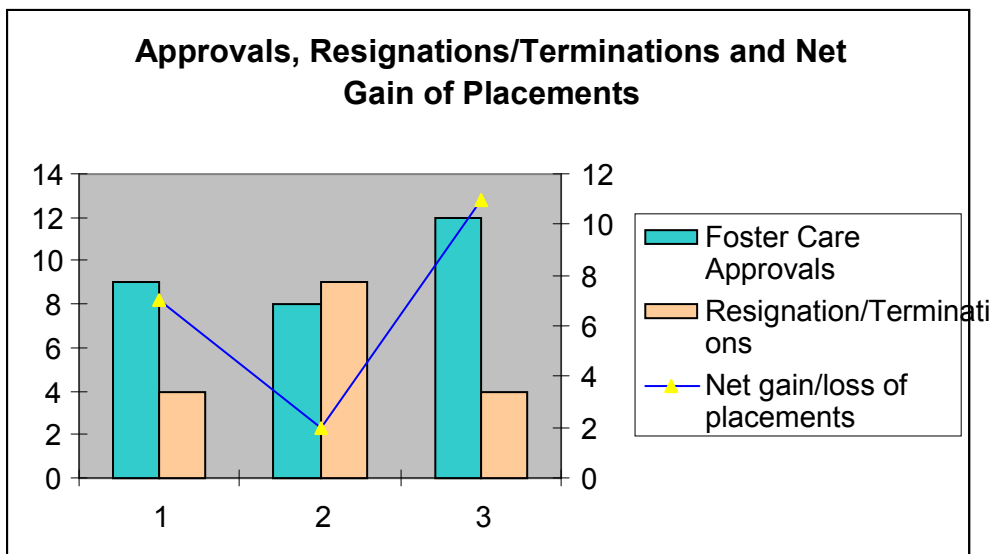


Chart six shows the total numbers of approvals, resignations/terminations and net gain of placements in Q1 to Q3.



This page is intentionally left blank