

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



please ask for Jonathon Partridge

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date 22 August 2013

NOTICE OF MEETING

CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date & Time

Tuesday, 3 September 2013 10.00 a.m.

Venue at

Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford

Richard Carr
Chief Executive

To: The Chairman and Members of the CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

Cllrs Mrs A Barker (Chairman), N B Costin (Vice-Chairman), R D Berry, D Bowater, Mrs G Clarke, Mrs R J Drinkwater, Mrs D B Gurney, P Hollick, D Jones and R B Pepworth

[Named Substitutes:

Mrs S A Goodchild, K Janes, B Saunders, A Shadbolt and N J Sheppard]

Co-optees: Mr Court (Parent Governor), Ms Copley (Parent Governor), Ms Image (Roman Catholic Diocese), Mr Landman (Parent Governor) and Mr Reynolds (Church of England Diocese)

All other Members of the Council - on request

**MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND THIS
MEETING**

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence and notification of substitute members.

2. **Minutes**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 23 July 2013 and to note actions taken since that meeting.

3. **Members' Interests**

To receive from Members any declarations of interest and of any political whip in relation to any agenda item.

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

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

5. **Petitions**

To receive petitions from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 2 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

6. **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

To receive any questions, statements or deputations from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 1 of part A4 of the Constitution.

7. **Call-In**

To consider any decision of the Executive referred to this Committee for review in accordance with Procedure Rule 10.10 of Part D2.

8. **Requested Items**

To consider any items referred to the Committee at the request of a Member under Procedure Rule 3.1 of Part D2 of the Constitution.

Reports

Item	Subject	Page Nos.
9	Executive Member Update To receive a brief verbal update from the Executive Member for Children's Services.	*
10	Consultation on School Funding Arrangements for 2014/15 To receive a report and presentation and to discuss the changes to the funding arrangements for schools for 2014/15.	* 13 - 20
11	Troubled Families Initiative To receive a presentation on the Troubled Families Initiative as requested by a Member.	* 21 - 30
12	Annual Report for the Adoption Service and Fostering Service To consider the annual reports for the Adoption and Fostering services.	* 31 - 88
13	Home to School Transport Policy Review To receive a presentation regarding a review of the Home to School Transport Policy.	* 89 - 94
14	Work Programme 2013 - 2014 & Executive Forward Plan The report provides Members with details of the currently drafted Committee work programme and the latest Executive Forward Plan.	* 95 - 122

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CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Tuesday, 23 July 2013

PRESENT

Cllr Mrs A Barker (Chairman)
Cllr N B Costin (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:	D Bowater Mrs G Clarke Mrs R J Drinkwater	Councillors:	P Hollick D Jones R B Pepworth
Parental Co-optees:	Mr S Court D Landman		
Church of England Co-optee:	J Reynolds		
Roman Catholic Co-optee:			
Apologies for Absence:	Cllrs	R D Berry H Copley Mrs D B Gurney	
Substitutes:	Cllrs	K Janes (In place of Mrs D B Gurney) B Saunders (In place of R D Berry)	
Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	P N Aldis Mrs S Clark A L Dodwell Mrs S A Goodchild M A G Versallion	Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services Executive Member for Children's Services
Officers in Attendance:	Mr P Dudley Mr J Partridge		Assistant Director Children's Services (Learning & Strategic Commissioning) Scrutiny Policy Adviser

CS/13/30 **Minutes**

The Committee noted that Cllr Aldis had been omitted from the attendance list of the previous meeting. A Member also queried whether the remit of Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) included encouraging parents not to take sick children to school. The Assistant Director for Learning, Commissioning

and Partnership commented that schools had their own policies and he had not previously been aware of this problem. The Assistant Director agreed to raise the issue with the Attendance Team and update Members.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 04 June 2013 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the addition of Cllr Aldis in the attendance list.

CS/13/31 Members' Interests

Councillor Costin declared an interest as Chairman of Barnfield College. Councillors Hollick and Bowater also declared interests as school governors and it was noted that other Members of the Committee had similar interests as declared in the register of interests.

CS/13/32 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman advised the Committee that an invitation had been sent to Members and Co-opted Members to attend the Social Care, Health and Housing OSC (SCHHOSC) meeting on 29 July 2013. SCHHOSC was scheduled to receive an update on interim changes to paediatric services at Bedford Hospital. The Executive Member commented that communication with Executive Members had been effective to date and asked that his thanks be recorded to all staff involved in distributing updates. The Health and Wellbeing Board and the Corporate Parenting Panel had also received updates and were reassured that the interim changes were being made for the right reasons.

CS/13/33 Petitions

No petitions were received from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Part D2 of the Constitution.

CS/13/34 Questions, Statements or Deputations

No questions, statements or deputations were received from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 1 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

CS/13/35 Call-In

The Panel was advised that no decisions of the Executive had been referred to the Panel under the Call-in Procedures set out in Appendix "A" to Rule No. S18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

CS/13/36 Requested Items

The Committee were informed that Cllr Aldis had requested an update in respect of the Troubled Families Initiative, which would be considered at the next meeting on 03 September 2013.

NOTED that an update on the Troubled Families Initiative would be received on 03 September 2013.

CS/13/37

Executive Member Update

The Executive Member for Children's Services provided the Committee with an update on the current activities pertaining to his portfolio, which were not already included on the agenda. This included the following:-

- A recent visit to Oakbank, Leighton Buzzard, the Executive Member asked that his congratulations for a recent award for quality of teaching, care and support outcomes be recorded.
- A topping out ceremony he had recently attended at Greenleas Lower School, the Executive Member requested that his thanks to all staff involved in the delivery of the new school be recorded.
- A recent conference he had attended at which Sir Michael Wilshaw emphasised the important role for local authorities in school improvement.
- The Assistant Director for Learning, Commissioning and Partnership and the Head of Adoption and Fostering were leaving the Council. The Committee requested that their thanks to the Assistant Director for Learning, Commissioning and Partnership be recorded and that an email be sent to the Head of Adoption and Fostering thanking her for her service.

In response the Committee raised several questions, to which the following responses were provided:-

- A slide show of photos could be provided to Members in October 2013 to show the development of the new Greenleas Lower School.
- An information sheet given to head teachers on the role of the local authority had been provided to head teachers because some schools had expressed concern that if, as outstanding schools, they were contacted by Ofsted and asked as part of the new inspection arrangements they were asked about the arrangements for school intervention and support, they would not know what to say. The Council had received thanks from head teachers for providing this information sheet.
- The recent spending round announcement had not been as bad as predicted for Central Bedfordshire, however the final budget was subject to change before December 2013.
- A Department for Education reform consultation on the local school funding formula would take place in September allowing schools and the Committee to be consulted in a timely fashion. A paper requesting delegation to carry out the consultation would be presented to the Executive in August 2013 and a detailed report of the consultation model will be brought to Overview and Scrutiny on 3 September. In the mean time, any questions from Members could be directed to the Children's Services Senior Finance Manager.
- Matters relating to small schools funding would also be included within this consultation.

CS/13/38

Changes to the School Curriculum

The Assistant Director for Learning, Commissioning and Partnership provided a presentation (**attached**) that included:-

- Changes to the school curriculum and examples of the aims of several specific subjects;
- Key changes to primary and secondary programmes of study;
- Reforms to assessment and accountability methods for both GCSE and secondary level education;
- Sector-led implementation of the school system.

Members of the Committee discussed the content of the presentation in detail and raised the following issues:-

- Whether there was time to influence attainment targets, particularly in relation to swimming. The Assistant Director for Learning, Commissioning and Partnership informed the Committee that swimming was statutory.
- Whether the changes in assessment and standards would help or hinder improvements in children's achievement. The Assistant Director responded that the new emphasis was on creating a curriculum which specified the expected outcomes within the programmes of study so clearly that they do not need a separate set of level descriptions. The new curriculum emphasised also the school curriculum and locally agreed approaches that would raise expectations.
- Concerns that whilst it was practical for Bedford Borough, Luton Borough and Central Bedfordshire Councils to collaborate on the development and delivery of religious education, having three individual SACREs may cause unnecessary duplication and delay.
- The importance of basic English language and literature. The Assistant Director commented that grammar was emphasised in the current curriculum and it could be strengthened further.
- The importance of pupils developing a solid foundation of knowledge before being taught to pass exams. The Assistant Director confirmed that it was not the stated curricular intention to create a test to which pupils would be taught.
- The benefit of teachers taking into account their local surroundings when developing the curriculum. The Assistant Director commented that the emphasis on the 'School Curriculum' provided the flexibility to enable schools to focus on their local surroundings.
- Whether sciences would continue to be taught as separate subjects or would be consolidated into one subject. The Assistant Director confirmed that the revised curriculum encouraged schools to teach science as single subjects and that there would also be a focus on teaching 'Computing' rather than ICT skills.
- Whether the emphasis on Key Stage 2 (KS2) was diminished as a result of the changes to the curriculum. The Assistant Director commented there was no intention to diminish the importance of the KS2 as a result of changes to the curriculum but that now overtly sets out to ensure children are 'secondary ready'.
- Concerns that there were insufficient funds to implement changes to the curriculum. The Assistant Director commented that the Government

- was developing additional web-based materials for teachers and a program of school to school support driven by Teaching Schools and therefore there would be no direct cost to the Council as a result of changes in the curriculum.

The Committee thanked the Assistant Director for his presentation and requested that a further update be provided in January 2015 once the changes to the school curriculum had been implemented.

NOTED the presentation and recommended that a further presentation on the changes to the school curriculum be provided in January 2015.

CS/13/39

Children's Trust Annual Report

The Executive Member for Children's Services presented the Annual Report of the Children's Trust Board, which provided an update on the progress of partners. The Executive Member drew the Committee's attention to performance relating to Key stage 4 (5 A*-C including English and Maths); and the percentage of looked after children (LAC) who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months and who had an annual health assessment during the previous 12 months. There were concerns regarding both of these areas that were being addressed by partners. The Executive Member also referred to challenges relating to the changes in local schools and the ongoing development of partnership arrangements to support improved attainment for children and young people. A consensus was being developed regarding the role of the local authority in school improvement.

In response, Members commented and discussed several issues in detail as follows:-

- The need to consider in more detail the gaps in achievement for vulnerable groups. The Assistant Director commented that there were concerns with regards to gaps in achievement of some groups and he agreed to circulate information about the achievement and progress of specific groups and to report in greater detail on the achievement of vulnerable groups in future reports and specifically how the Council supported improvement in this area.
- Whether the national target to achieve 426 days between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family by 2015/16 was achievable. The Executive Member commented this was less of a challenge for Central Bedfordshire Council although there were challenges regards working with the courts and our own social workers.
- Further clarity was required regarding targets in relation to domestic abuse referrals. The Assistant Director also agreed that in future data relating to youth crime would be reported as numbers rather than as percentages.
- A concern was expressed about why the Council area was ranked ninth out of 11 statistical neighbours in relation to the number of children who achieved a good level of development in early years. The Assistant Director commented that in the previous year the results at foundation stage had jumped in the right direction, it was hoped this would occur again thus improving the level of performance.

- Queries as to why there was no rating for performance relating to the percentage of economic activity. The Assistant Director commented that this was a very broad benchmark, he would look into this and provide an update for Members. The Executive Member also commented that whilst it was not rated here the issue was referred to elsewhere within the Plan so the target may exist elsewhere.
- Concerns that percentage figures relating to re-offending rates amongst young people and the number of first-time entrants to the youth justice system aged 10-17 did not appear to be correct. The Assistant Director commented that actual figures may provide greater clarity of performance in these areas as small numbers of cases could have a large impact on the percentages.

In addition to the specific comments raised above the Chairman raised several issues regarding the format of the Plan including concerns that the font size was too small and the need for greater clarity in the Plan to highlight the period of time that it covered. It was also requested that a link to the current Children and Young People's Plan be sent to all Members of the Committee.

RECOMMENDED

That the comments of the Committee as recorded in the Minutes above be provided to the Children's Trust for consideration.

CS/13/40

2012/13 Provisional Outturn Revenue Budget Monitoring

The Executive Member presented the provisional outturn revenue budget management report for 2012/13 and asked that his thanks be recorded for the hard work of the Children's Services Directorate during 2012/13. The Executive Member also commented that in light of the pressures on the Directorate the provisional revenue outturn position (before proposed new reserves) was positive. He also highlighted that without the use of reserves the Children's Services Operations budget would have been £3.3M overspent. It was commented that this situation would continue unless it was addressed during the budget setting process.

In response to the report the Committee raised several questions to which the following responses were provided:-

- The Directorate were addressing the pressures that had arisen from the re-commissioning of special education needs (SEN) transport contracts not delivering the expected savings. There were anticipated savings in relation to SEN transport and the Council continued to consider the use of taxis in appropriate circumstances.
- The Council continued to chase unpaid debts.
- There was a legal requirement to provide funding to Teachers' Unions and Professional Associations, although this level of funding is, in agreement with the professional associations, being reduced annually.
- The underspend in Learning, Commissioning and Partnership was being used to meet demand in Children's Social Care. The Assistant Director agreed to look into the issue of children's centres liability and discuss this further with a Member.

- The Assistant Director for Learning, Commissioning and Partnership was not aware of any issues relating to the governance of the Music Service but he invited Members to email any issues that they were aware of to him.

In addition to these questions, the Chairman raised several issues regarding the format of the report, which the Directorate were asked to consider addressing in the next budget report. It was also suggested that where possible the Council's staff recruitment adverts in local newspapers should be consolidated to save costs. Further clarity was also requested in future budget reports regarding the what constituted "other" expenditure types (Table B) and what constituted "miscellaneous" grants (Table C).

NOTED the report

CS/13/41 2012/13 Provisional Outturn Capital Budget Management Report

The Executive Member presented the provisional outturn capital budget management report for 2012/13 and drew the attention of the Committee to slippage in the programme, which he commented was to be expected.

NOTED the report

CS/13/42 Q4 Performance Report

The Executive Member presented the Q4 performance for the Children's Services Directorate and drew attention to positive performance relating to published Ofsted school and college classifications. The Executive Member also drew attention to the 'red' rated performance for the achievement of 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and Maths and performance relating to the number of education and training opportunities for young people made available in the Autumn, which were not meeting the national average.

In response to the report the Committee discussed in detail the importance of raising aspirations for those children and young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET). The Chairman requested that an update be added to the work programme on the outcomes for NEET children and young people who took part in education and training opportunities. It was suggested this could include the National Citizenship Programme. In response the Executive Member commented that the Council undertook a considerable amount of work to raise aspirations of NEET children and young people but there were lots of variables that needed to be addressed. The Assistant Director agreed to provide an update to a future meeting of the Committee, which if appropriate could also consider the use of the National Citizenship Programme as an education and training opportunity. The Chairman also requested that consideration be given to any opportunities that might exist for young people returning to Central Bedfordshire from university during the summer vacation which the Assistant Director agreed to follow up.

NOTED the report

CS/13/43 **Quarter 1 Risk Report**

The Executive Member presented a report that drew the Committee's attention to the strategic risk within the Children's Services Directorate and commented on how operational risk was managed. In response to a question the Assistant Director for Learning, Commissioning and Partnership commented that the annual report of the Local Safeguarding Children Board would be presented to the Committee in October 2013.

The Committee discussed the format of the report and the roles of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Audit Committee. The Committee agreed it was pertinent for the Audit Committee to make them aware of issues as necessary but the Committee should not seek to duplicate the role of the Audit Committee. It was agreed therefore that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would regularly review risks as recommended by the Audit Committee or the Children's Services directorate but requested that these be reported in a tabular rather than narrative prose format.

NOTED the report

CS/13/44 **Work Programme 2013 - 2014 & Executive Forward Plan**

The Committee considered its current work programme and the latest Executive Forward Plan. The Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Manager advised the Committee that following their previous meeting items had been added in relation to school funding and the Council's draft budget. A Member requested that the committee consider a wider debate on school improvement and the benefit of play in schools. The Assistant Director for Learning, Commissioning and Partnerships commented that there were proposals to increase direct instruction on play in schools and these could be considered separately at the consultation stage outside of the meeting.

NOTED the Children's Services OSC work programme.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.38 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated

Meeting: Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 3 September 2013
Subject: Consultation on School Funding Arrangements for 2014/15
Report of: Cllr Mark Versallion , Executive Member for Children’s Services
Summary: The report sets out the background to the September 2013 consultation on school funding providing the background to the consultation, its scope, purpose and timeframe. The report provides the background and essential knowledge on the consultation needed by members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for discussion on 03 September 2013. At the meeting the report will be supplemented by a presentation detailing the financial modelling that underpins the consultation and the consultation document itself.

Advising Officer: Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Children’s Services
Contact Officer: Helen Redding, Head of Learning and School Support
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS	
Council Priorities:	
This report supports the Council to deliver the following priority: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved educational attainment. 	
Financial:	
1.	The implications of this report are fully funded by Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) (ring fenced)
Legal:	
2.	Not applicable
Risk Management:	
3.	Not Applicable
Staffing (including Trades Unions):	
4.	Not Applicable.
Equalities/Human Rights:	
5.	The Schools Funding Formula takes account of deprivation indices to ensure that support is targeted at the most vulnerable groups. The High Needs Block supports those pupils who have identified additional special educational needs (SEN).

6. Schools additionally receive Pupil Premium funding which enables them to support pupils in receipt of Free School Meals, children who are 'Looked After' and children from Service Families.

Public Health

7. Not applicable.

Community Safety:

8. Not Applicable.

Sustainability:

9. Not Applicable.

Procurement:

10. Not applicable.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is asked to:-

- **Consider and comment on the content of this report which provides background information about the rationale and scope of consultation on school funding to be held between 4 and 27 September 2013 and details of aspects which are new to this consultation and not considered in the 2012 consultation.**
- **Receive and discuss a presentation which will explain the details of the consultation questions and the financial models that will be provided to schools to help them to understand the significance of the consultation for their 2014-15 budgets. The materials needed for this presentation will be available on the day.**
- **Consider and comment upon the timeline for the consultation process and its governance arrangements through Council.**

Background

11. Councils have received allocations of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) since the beginning of the financial year 2006/07 to finance the Schools Budget.
12. The process is that, following advice from the Director of Children's Services, two statements are signed annually by the Chief Finance Officer which confirms that the DSG has been fully deployed in support of the Schools Budget in accordance with the conditions of the grant and the current Schools Finance Regulations and in consultation with the Schools Forum.
13. The Schools Finance Regulations govern the distribution of school funding. In 2012/13 Councils were able to use up to 37 factors within their formulae. This was reduced to 12 factors in 2013/14.
14. Following three consultations held by the DfE in 2011 and 2012, the final arrangements for 2013/14 were announced on the 28 June 2012. These changes were the first step towards a national funding formula for schools.

15. These arrangements set out that the funding would be split into three blocks: i) Schools; ii) Early Years; and iii) High Needs and also that the entire School Block must be delegated to schools, with only a few exceptions. These changes represent a major reform of schools funding and so the DfE required Councils to consult schools on new schools funding formulae.
16. Only 10 of the 12 factors permissible for 2013/14 were applicable to Central Bedfordshire. 2 were mandatory (Basic Entitlement and Deprivation), and the following factors were optional:
 - Looked after Children
 - Low cost, high incidence Special Educational Needs (SEN)
 - English as an additional language
 - Lump sum
 - Split sites
 - Rates
 - PFI contracts
 - Pupil Mobility
17. The following funding formula factors were previously proposed by the Council, consulted on with schools in September 2012 and reviewed by the Schools Forum as required by the DfE. These have been included in the distribution of funding for 2013/14:
 - Basic Entitlement for Primary (£2,908), Key Stage 3 (£4,170) and Key Stage 4 (£4,879)
 - Deprivation based on weighted banded Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) data (The IDACI deprivation index is approved by the DfE for use in the distribution of dedicated schools grant (DSG) in 2013)
 - Lump Sum factor £120,000
 - Split Site factor £120,000
 - Rates based on actual cost
 - Exceptional Factor (joint use of buildings)
18. Following consultation the following factors were not included for 2013/2014
 - Looked After Children. The Schools Forum, after consultation with schools, took the view that this factor would be based on where Looked After Children were in school at the point of the Census in October, and would not necessarily be where the pupil actually was in the following financial year.
 - Low Cost High Incidence SEN. The Schools Forum agreed this could only be applied using assessment and test data at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2. The view was taken that this did not assess needs so would not necessarily target funding to the right pupils, and so more funding should be allocated through the pupil unit.

- English as an Additional Language. Last year there were only 55 pupils in Central Bedfordshire schools entering year 1 of compulsory school age. As the numbers were so small the value per school would be minimal so the decision was taken not to apply this for 2013/14.
- PFI Contracts. It was agreed to revisit this in 2014/15.
- Pupil Mobility. The data provided by the DfE in relation to Central Bedfordshire was based on 2012/13 data. It was decided not to include this factor in 2013/14 as it did not target particular groups of pupils where mobility might be an issue. It did not target Service Children, although the additional Pupil Premium received by schools does provide additional support for this group of pupils.
- DSG spent on Post 16 pupils. As Central Bedfordshire had not allocated DSG for this purpose in 2012/13, this was not permitted by the DfE to be utilised in 2013/14 or future years.

These factors have been reconsidered by Schools Forum and will now be considered by schools in the consultation for 2014/15.

19. The Council's Executive approved the arrangements and distribution of the Schools Block for 2013/14 on 8 January 2013. The formula had not changed significantly in the past and therefore had not required Executive approval before January 2013. However, due to the significance of the changes in the formula for 2013/14 Executive Approval was sought.
20. The 2012 reforms of Councils' school funding formulae produced some unexpected outcomes across the Country. In response the government carried out a further review of schools funding formula in preparation for the 2014/15 school budget while continuing to move towards a national funding formula. This has triggered the consultation under discussion on 03 September 2013.
21. It should also be noted that six lower schools have extended their upper age-range to 11 years from September 2013, therefore keeping a year 5 cohort that might otherwise have transferred to middle school. The Individual Schools Budgets (ISB) issued for 2013/14 were based on the October 2012 Census in line with the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations which refers to the 4 October 2012 for ascertaining pupil numbers for the distribution of funding for 2013/14. The funding for these pupils has therefore been attributed to middle schools rather than these lower schools. These regulations do not allow for changes in the funding formulae after the funding period has commenced so the view of the Schools Forum was sought.
22. The Schools Forum agreed on the 24 June 2013 that these schools would be funded from School Contingency for the expected pupil numbers in Year 5 in September 2013 for the two terms affected.
23. The Revenue Funding Arrangements for 2014/15 now include guidance regarding schools that have changed or are going to change their age range by adding or losing year groups. This therefore provides a solution for future years to the issue on change of age range.

School Funding Reforms - 2014/2015

24. The 2014/15 Funding Arrangements were announced on 4 June 2013, which set out the proposed changes to funding formulae for 2014/15 upon which the Council must consult with schools. Operational Guidance for the consultation process was produced for Local Authorities. These changes are seen as a further development of the 2013/14 arrangements.
25. As in 2013, the Council is required to submit one draft and one final pro forma to the Education Funding Agency in October 2013 and January 2014 respectively.
26. The system for High Needs Block funding remains broadly the same as it was in 2013/14.
27. A new optional factor has been introduced to those allowable for the schools block formula. This enables the formula to make an allowance for 'sparsity'. It is aimed at supporting necessary small schools, mainly in rural areas. Specific criteria have been drawn up by the DfE to control how this factor operates. Where a sparsity factor is used by a Local Authority, the maximum allowable value is £100k per school. According to the data provided by the DfE, if this is applied, it only impacts on 4 schools in Central Bedfordshire. These are Holywell Academy (Middle), Wrestlingworth, Dunton and Haynes Lower schools.
28. The Local Authority can now choose to have different lump sums for primary and secondary (with middle schools getting a weighted average). This is capped at £175k per school. In the 2013 consultation process the maximum lump sum value was £200K. Central Bedfordshire approved a maximum of £120k.
29. Where schools are amalgamating, the amalgamated new school will receive 85% of the total of the combined lump sum but only for the following financial year.
30. If a factor for Looked After Children is applied in a Council's funding formula this must now apply to any child who has been in care for at least 1 day, whereas in the past this was set at 6 months.
31. The new guidelines change the way prior attainment factor is measured at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Key Stage 2 (KS2). The new measures are:
 - EYFS – not achieving a good level of development (2013 cohort)
 - KS2 – not achieving level 4 in English OR maths for all cohorts.
32. The mobility factor if used can now be applied when the number of 'mobile' pupils exceeds 10%. No threshold was set for 2013/14.
33. The basic entitlement for primary pupils (the Age Weighted Pupil Unit - AWPUP) must be at least £2000, and for secondary pupils (KS3 and KS4) at least £3000. Central Bedfordshire figures for 2013/14 were well within these parameters; £2,908 - Primary, KS3 - £4,170 and KS4 - £4,879. Central Bedfordshire split the secondary basic entitlement into KS3 and KS4 as this was the best way to reflect the primary and secondary aged pupils who are educated in Middle schools which are deemed as secondary schools.

34. Local Authorities must ensure that at least 80% of delegated funding is distributed via pupil led factors (in Central Bedfordshire in 2013/14 it is 87%). There are currently no constraints on the Primary/Secondary ratio proposed in the latest guidelines but limits may be introduced in years to come.
35. The 2013/14 guidelines required the creation of a Growth Fund to be used to resource demographic increases in basic need. This was agreed at £800,000. The new guidelines state that with the agreement of Schools Forum, Local Authorities can now create a fund to cover temporary falls in a school's roll. This can only be applied to schools that have been judged by Ofsted to be 'good' or 'outstanding'. Schools Forum must also agree the criteria by which this will be applied and be consulted on allocations. This factor can only be applied if it relates to local place planning decisions and is not to be used to support unpopular or failing schools.
36. There is a change to the membership in the Schools Forum Regulations. They now require 1 member from an institution that provides education to 16 – 19 year olds. This replaces the member from the 14-19 Partnership. The representative from the UTC can continue to fulfil this role.
37. The Operational Guidance for 2013/14 provides information regarding financing schools that are planning to change their age ranges. Councils are now able to request approval to vary the pupil numbers for specific schools where:
- there has been, or is going to be, a reorganisation; or
 - a school has changed, or is going to change, its age range either by adding or losing year groups.
38. In these cases, a weighted average of pupil numbers can be used, taking into account the changes in pupil numbers from the new academic year. Because of the 'school-driven' nature of the age range changes in Central Bedfordshire where numbers will continue to be affected by parental preference, the Council will need to apply for a variation in pupil numbers for specific schools for the funding period 2014/15. Councils' budgets will be adjusted to recoup budget so that the Education Funding Agency can fund affected Academies.
39. The Council is now also able to apply for exceptions from the finance regulations in relation to:
- Premises factors
 - Minimum Funding Guarantee
 - Changes in pupil numbers as a consequence of reorganisation or changes in years of admission
 - Sparsity calculation
 - Variation to lump sum for amalgamated schools.
- An application will be made in respect of changes in pupil numbers as a consequence of age range changes in schools.
40. Schools will be required to fund the first £6,000 for High Needs Pupils. Central Bedfordshire agreed this figure when it was recommended for 2013/14 following consultation with schools.

41. The DfE will be consulting on setting the place value at £10,000 for Special Schools and Academies with Post 16 pupils. This is currently split into 2 elements of £6,000 and £4,000. Setting the place value at £10,000 will make this consistent with the place element for pre-16 pupils.
42. All maintained schools and Academies must be treated equally when incurring central expenditure, with the exception of the figure that can only be de-delegated for maintained schools.

Consultation and Next Steps

43. The Council submitted an 'in principle' application for exclusions and variations by the 30 June 2013 to help inform the consultation process.
44. The Schools Forum Technical Funding Group reviewed the 2013/14 funding formula and the 2014/15 proposals during July. They have considered the impact of the proposed changes on schools' and academies' budgets (based on current pupil data) in order to inform the consultation proposals. (The consultation must include all schools and Academies)
45. Members of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee are discussing the model proposed for the schools consultation at their meeting on 3 September. They receive this report as individual consultees as part of the consultation process in view of the timescales, and they may also wish to submit a collective view.
46. The DfE recommends a consultation lasting between 2 weeks and no more than 4 weeks. The proposed consultation period in Central Bedfordshire is from 4 September to 27 September 2013.
47. The Schools Forum will be required to consider the responses to the consultation in October 2013. The provisional school budget pro forma for 2014/15 must be submitted to the Education Funding Agency by 31 October 2013.
48. The DfE will confirm the DSG Schools Block in December 2013.
49. Schools Forum will need to meet in January to approve the 2014/15 Funding Formula.
50. A further paper will come to the Council's Executive on 14 January 2014 seeking approval for the distribution of the Dedicated Schools Grant for 2014/15. The Final date for submission of Central Bedfordshire council's funding proposal to the EFA is 21 January 2014.
51. Local Authorities are required to issue schools budgets by 28 February 2014.

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Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee: Troubled Families Programme

Cllr Richard Stay

Executive Member for External Affairs

Lead Member for Troubled Families Programme

03 September 2013

Troubled Families – reminder of criteria

- Are involved in youth crime or anti-social behaviour
- Have children who are regularly truanting or not in school (including excluded pupils)
- Have an adult on out of work benefits
- Cause high costs to the taxpayer

Reminder of Our Approach

- Collaboration across Council and partners
- Maximising outcomes for families
- Maximising quality of life for communities
- Maximising efficiencies for all agencies
- Providing predictive data sets for sharper targeting
- Sustainable into the future

Government support for the programme and linked programmes

- Government estimates investing in a Troubled Family can save £29,000 per year out of the £75,000 they cost across agencies per year
- Money paid to Central Bedfordshire as a grant in 2013/14 is £485,400. In 2014/15 only £70,000 will be outside Payment by Results (PBR). We will work with 183 families to enable us to claim £194,500 as PBR on outcomes
- New incentive for local services such as Police, Health and Social Services to work more closely together to reduce costs and improve outcomes for families
- Central Bedfordshire submitted bid to Early Intervention Foundation for support. Did not achieve “Wave 1” but was allocated “Partner” status
- Bid placed with Department of Local Government and Transport to support a more integrated approach to Domestic Violence – bid not evaluated yet

Lessons Learned and emerging issues so far

- Domestic Violence / Abuse is present in all the family histories and a more joined up approach to this issue within the Council and Partners is required.
- Housing is a significant issue – broken tenancies, rent arrears and anti-social behaviour is prevalent
- Health needs are high and families pay little attention to preventative care – re-commissioning of health items to address mental health issues is continuing to be developed by way of a more partnership approach going forward
- Drug and alcohol use associated with mental health issues – these are key issues for preventative actions in Central Bedfordshire
- Truancy and exclusion are issues with these families and early signs are that families respond to practical help
- These families have been around and known to our services for generations

Emerging issues and impact of the models adopted – Family Intervention Factors

- A dedicated worker dedicated to the family really helps
- Who looks at what is really happening for the family as a whole is key – this began with Council staff and now with other agencies, e.g. Police Community Support Officers (PCSO'S) and the voluntary sector
- Practical hands on support is key, e.g. a skip to clear rubbish from the garden
- An assertive and challenging approach – staff are being re-trained or trained to work with families in a consistent way
- The approach needs to be backed by an agreed plan and common purpose amongst the relevant services

Next steps in Central Bedfordshire

- Increased focus of programme plan on interventions with families (early days lots of time spent on data capture across agencies)
- Review and refresh working with other partner agencies to deepen cooperative working and to start to map efficiencies
- Make maximum use of commissioned partnership arrangement with voluntary sector agency “4YP”
- Further develop consistency for families in interventions and sanctions applied to families
- Embed performance monitoring and reporting through scorecard approach (up to date copy to be circulated at the meeting)

Questions and Answers

Q: Are Looked After Children involved?

A: Very occasionally if they are placed with their families but most Looked After Children will be placed outside of their families

Q: Has there been success?

A: See balanced scorecard of up to date outcomes circulated at meeting

Q: Is there more than one worker per family?

A: There will be one family link worker but other staff, e.g. children's social workers may also be involved to do statutory work. Teachers etc., will also contribute

Questions and Answers

Q: Are other agencies involved?

A: Yes, and the more we learn as the programme develops, the more we involve other relevant agencies

Q: Are the families affected by welfare changes?

A: Yes, but this will vary according to families. Links are made to the programme of support to families experiencing welfare changes

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Meeting: Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 3 September 2013
Subject: Annual Report for the Adoption Service and Fostering Service.
Report of: Cllr Mark Versallion, Executive Member for Children's Services
Summary: The report outlines the Statutory framework regarding Annual Reports and summarises key points contained within the reports.

Advising Officer: Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive/ Director of Children's Services
Contact Officer: Gerard Jones, Assistant Director Children's Services Operations
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

Central Bedfordshire Council's Strategic Plan 2012-16 Priority 3 – Promote health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable

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

Adoption and Fostering are key statutory services to Looked After Children.

Financial:

1. Adoption and Fostering within Children's Services has an annual budget of £6.602 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 would be a breach of National Minimum Standard.

Child Protection Risks: Failure to assess risk may lead to unfavourable outcomes.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

4. There are no staffing issues.

Equalities/Human Rights:

5. Adoption and Fostering affects all sectors of communities.

Community Safety:

6. There are no community safety issues.

Sustainability:

7. There are no sustainability issues.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Committee comments on the statutory reports.

Background

8. The Children Act 2004, Care Standards Act 2000 and associated Relevant Regulations and National Minimum Standards require Local Authority Adoption and Fostering Services to report regularly on the operation of the services. The service specific regulations outline the frequency of reporting and to whom the reports must be submitted.
9. 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 Council

Adoption Services

10. The Adoption Service is required to report at six-monthly intervals. In Central Bedfordshire Council, this will be to the Scrutiny Committee. An Annual Report will be produced by the end of June each year covering the preceding April to March period. At the appendices is that report. In addition, a six-monthly briefing update will be produced by the end of October each year and presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel.
11. In 2012–13, there was again an increase in the number of children whose cases were presented for a recommendation as to whether adoption should be the plan for the child. This was for 41 children, an increase from 31 in the previous 12 months. 22 households were approved as adopters, an increase from 14 in 2011/12 and matches of 21 children to adopters were made.
12. 6 Adoption Orders were granted in respect of looked after children in Central Bedfordshire Council, with a further 12 being granted Special Guardianship. The number of adoptions was an increase from 4 the previous year, and the overall number of children where a permanent legal option was secured via adoption or Special Guardianship increased from 15 in 2011/12 to 18 in 2012/13.
13. As of the 31 March 2013, 32 adopted children and their families were in receipt of support. In addition contact plans were being made on behalf of 190 children. Each child placed for adoption is required to have a contact plan in relation to their birth family, which usually involves supporting the periodic exchange of letters or information between adoptive and birth families.
14. There were 37 referrals from adult adoptees and their birth relatives, a 58% drop from the previous 12 month period. Post Adoption support in the form of tracing birth records, counselling and practical advice during tracing, an intermediary service and pre- and post-reunion support was provided.
15. As part of the continued Government reform of adoption services, a range of measures is planned for implementation 2012 to 2015 to increase the number and speed of adoptions. Measures include addressing delay in Court Proceedings, the publishing of an adoption 'scorecard' on performance for each Council, changes to adopter recruitment processes and the setting of challenging targets to reduce delay. The Adoption Service is in a strong position to meet the requirements of the action plan, having robust performance monitoring and good practices in place in regard to planning for adoption.

Fostering Services

16. A report to Members is required at three monthly intervals. This is achieved by production of an Annual Report to this Committee in September each year covering the April to March period. In addition, three-monthly updates will be presented at the end of July, October and January each year to the Corporate Parenting Panel.
17. 49 new fostering households were approved during 2012-13, an increase on 41 the previous year.

18. 173 children were placed in full-time in-house foster placements at the end of March 2013, of whom 92 were looked after by Central Bedfordshire Council. This is an increase from the 162 who were in placement in April 2012. Across both Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council, there have been 476 referrals for new or a change of placement, a substantial increase from 376 in 2011/12. 127 children were placed with carers approved by Central Bedfordshire Council, 126 placed in Independent Fostering Agencies, 13 placed in residential units and the remainder did not become looked after by either Council and alternative arrangements were made to support those children and their families.
19. The number of enquiries from members of the public interested in becoming foster carers remained at similar levels to 2011/12. All enquiries received prompt information and a visit from a social worker. 103 households made formal application to become a foster carers either from a follow up enquiry as a member of the public or because they wished to care for a looked after child known to them as a family member or friend. This was an increase from the 84 applications received in 2011/12.
20. Over the course of the year 70 training activities were provided for foster carers on 38 topics. 550 delegates attended. A range of support is provided to foster carers, including regular supervision from a social worker, support groups, peer mentoring and out-of-hours telephone support.

Shared Service Arrangement

21. In March 2012 following the annual review of the Shared Service Level Agreement it was decided to end the Shared Service Arrangement. This decision was subsequently reviewed in detail in Autumn 2012 with the decision being made for the disaggregation of the service to be effective from 1 January 2014. A project board comprising staff in both councils has been established to plan the arrangements for January 2014 and beyond. This planning process will involve consultation with key stakeholders and staff to ensure that an effective fostering service that meets the needs of children can be maintained and developed. It has been agreed by both Councils that discussions will take place during the period of disaggregation about any plans each Council may have to change the structure of fees and allowances. Early work is on going to consider if the current fees and allowances structure is fit for purpose.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Adoption Agency Annual Report
Appendix B – Fostering Agency Annual Report
Appendix C – Private Fostering Annual Report

Location of papers: Priory House, Chicksands



Central Bedfordshire Council
and Bedford Borough Council
working together

Appendix **A**

Adoption Agency

Annual Report

For the period
2012/2013

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SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.0.1 This report describes the activity of Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils' Adoption Agencies during the period 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2013, noting their achievements, clarifying the remit and focus of their work and identifying recommendations for the development of the service.
- 1.0.2 This report is provided as part of the monitoring of the adoption agency required under the Local Authority Adoption Service Regulations 2003 and National Minimum Standards 2011. This report will be presented to the Central Bedfordshire Council Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and a six-monthly update report will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel. A copy of this report is provided to Bedford Borough Council for presentation to Elected Members.

1.1 STAFFING / SERVICE STRUCTURE

- 1.1.1 The Adoption and Permanence Support Team is made up of the following staff as of 31st March 2013:
- 1 x full time Team Manager
 - 1 x full time Deputy Team Manager
 - 4 x Senior Practitioners (3 full time equivalent)
 - 8 x Social Workers (6.78 full time equivalent)
 - 4 x Social Work Assistants (2 full time equivalent)
 - 0.5 x Administrator for Letter-box contact
 - 1 x Lifestory Senior Practitioner
 - 2 x Administrators
- 1.1.2 The service has remained largely fully staffed this year, with staff seconded from within the service to cover a secondment and agency staff cover for maternity leave and one vacancy.
- 1.1.3 Most staff have a number of years post-qualifying experience, and a programme of additional support is in place for those newly-qualified or in the early years of their social work career.
- 1.1.4 The adoption agency is supported by specialist staff who work across the Adoption and Fostering service area. These staff include a Business Support Officer with responsibility for adoption and special guardianship allowance payments, a Recruitment and Marketing Officer, a Training Officer and Training Coordinator, and the Panel Advisor and Secretaries who support the adoption panel.

1.2 THE ADOPTION PANEL

- 1.2.1 The Adoption Panel usually meets every month of the year, with extraordinary panels as and when required. There were three extra panels during 2012/2013 and the panel therefore met on 15 occasions.
- 1.2.2 The Adoption Panel considers applications from prospective adopters and makes recommendations as to their approval. Prior to September 2012 the panel also considered whether adoption should be pursued as the plan for all children. Panel also considers the proposed match between all children with adopters, making recommendations on any matters brought before them. On 1st September 2012 amended Regulations determined that where a child's case was before the Court in respect of Court Proceedings, the adoption panel would no longer consider whether adoption should be the plan for the child, and this decision would instead be made by the Agency Decision Maker without a recommendation from the Adoption Panel.

1.3 ADOPTION PANEL MEMBERSHIP

- 1.3.1 As at 31st March 2013 the Adoption Panel central list was as follows:

Panel Chair	Independent
Independent	Adoptive Mother
Independent	Adoptive Father
Independent	Birth Parent of an Adopted Child
Social Work Member	Fostering Team Manager
Social Work Member	Team Manager, Children with Disabilities Team (BBC)
Educational Psychologist (Vice Chair)	Educational Psychologist (BBC)
Medical Adviser	Consultant Community Paediatrician
Elected Member	Central Bedfordshire Council
Independent (Vice Chair)	Adopted Person
Elected Member	Bedford Borough Council

- 1.3.2 In attendance but non voting members are:

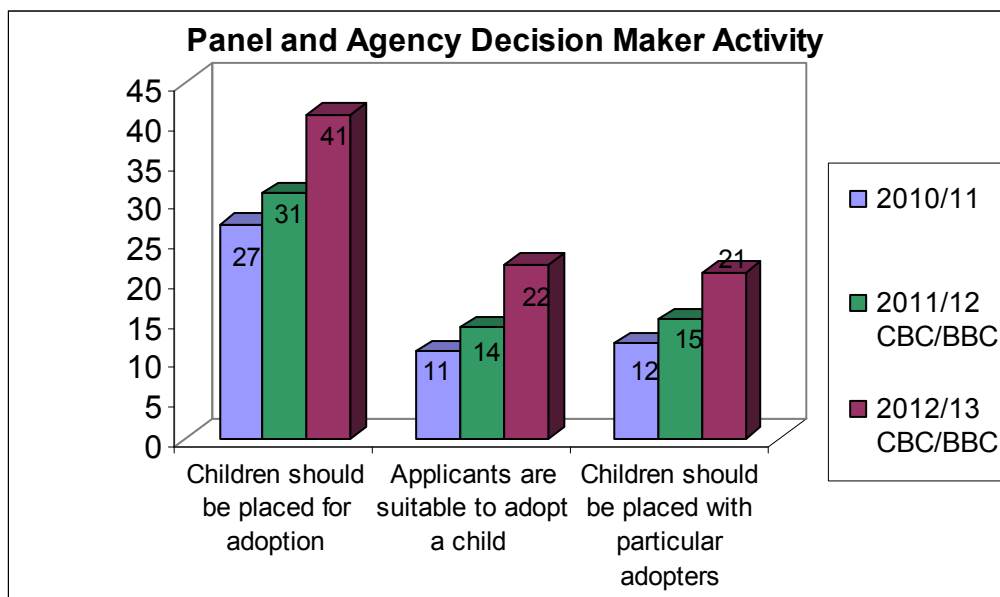
Professional Adviser	
Panel Secretary	

- 1.3.3 The Legal Adviser to the Panel gives advice in writing in advance of Panel meetings.

1.4 PANEL AND AGENCY DECISION MAKER ACTIVITY

- 1.4.1 In 2012/2013 the Adoption Panel met 15 times and recommended that 8 children should be placed for adoption in the six months when this was still the remit of panel. Of these, 5 were from Central Bedfordshire and 3 from Bedford Borough. The Panel also recommended that Placement Orders should be sought in relation to all 8 children.

- 1.4.2 Between 1st September 2012 and 31st March 2013 the Agency Decision Makers decided that adoption should be the plan for 33 children. Of these 17 were from Central Bedfordshire and 16 were from Bedford Borough. This takes the overall number of decisions about adoption for children to 41. This compares to 31 in 2011/2012 and is an increase for the third year in succession.
- 1.4.3 In relation to approvals, the Panel recommended that 22 households were suitable to adopt a child. This compares to 14 households in 2011/2012. All applicants attended the panel.
- 1.4.4 In terms of matching, the panel recommended that 21 children should be placed with particular adopters. Of these 13 were from Central Bedfordshire and 8 from Bedford Borough. This compares to 15 children in 2011/2012.



1.5 PANEL TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

- 1.5.1 The annual panel training day took place in July 2012 which considered the themes outlined in the Government's Action Plan for Adoption.
- 1.5.2 A full day's training is planned in September 2013 looking at the national reforms to adopter recruitment and planning for children.

1.6 PROVISION OF INFORMATION ON ADOPTION

- 1.6.1 Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils have a single point of contact to the service through a local rate telephone line. A regularly updated information pack outlining the services available and procedures for prospective adopters is sent within 24 hours to those expressing an interest in adoption.
- 1.6.2 Information Evenings are held by the Adoption and Permanence Support Team where current information on the needs of children requiring adoption and the process of assessment is given to those people who are interested in becoming prospective adopters. It is a legal

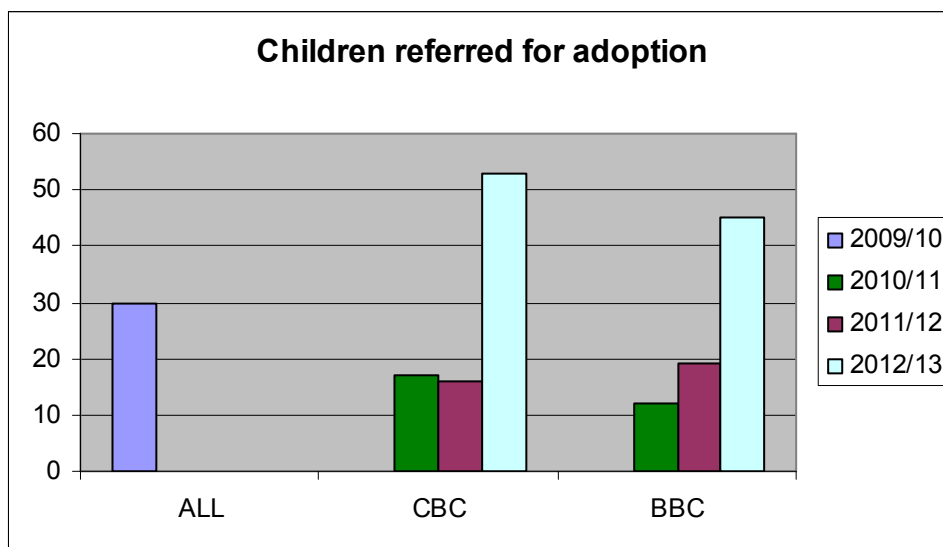
requirement for the agency to ensure that prospective adopters are offered the opportunity to attend an Information Evening within 8 weeks of their enquiry to the team. 7 such evenings were held in 2012/2013.

- 1.6.3 Preliminary counselling discussions in the form of an initial interview with prospective adopters are offered by Adoption Social Workers to enable enquirers to decide whether to pursue their enquiry. This counselling session also enables the Adoption Agency to decide whether to accept an application and whether this is an assessment which should be prioritised as a likely resource for children awaiting adoption.
- 1.6.4 Statistics in relation to enquiries received are included later in this report.

SECTION 2 – CHILDREN AND ADOPTION

2.0 – CHILDREN REFERRED FOR ADOPTION

2.0.1 In 2012/2013, there were 98 children referred to the service for adoption. Of these, 53 were from Central Bedfordshire and 45 from Bedford Borough. This compares to 35 children in 2011/2012 (16 of whom were from Central Bedfordshire and 19 from Bedford Borough) and is an increase of 280%, reflecting the significant changes in the number and age of children becoming looked after in both councils.

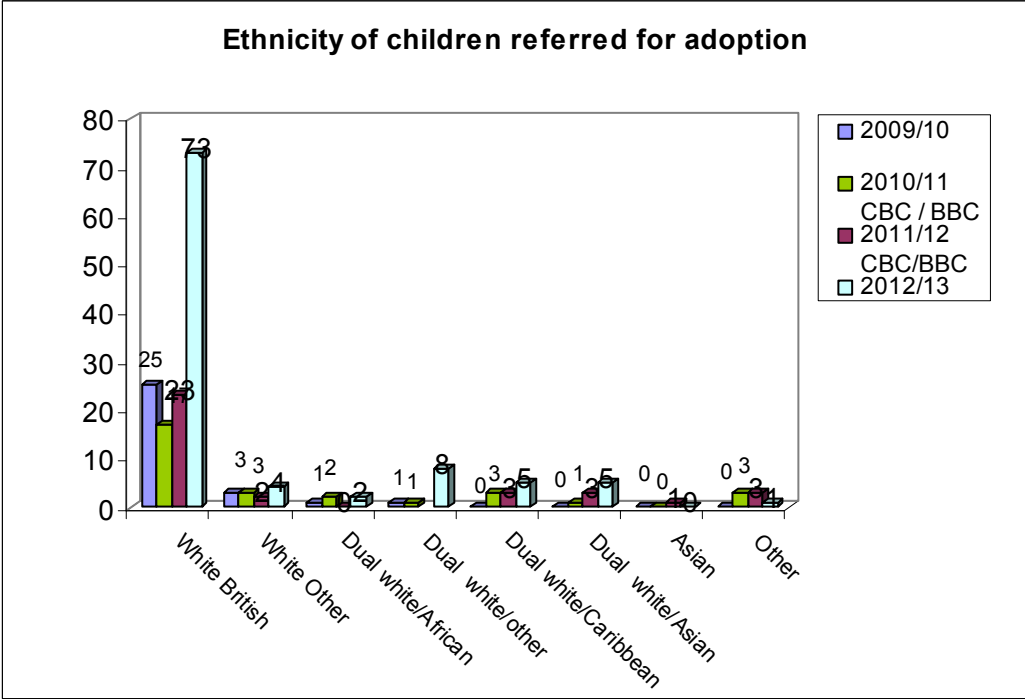
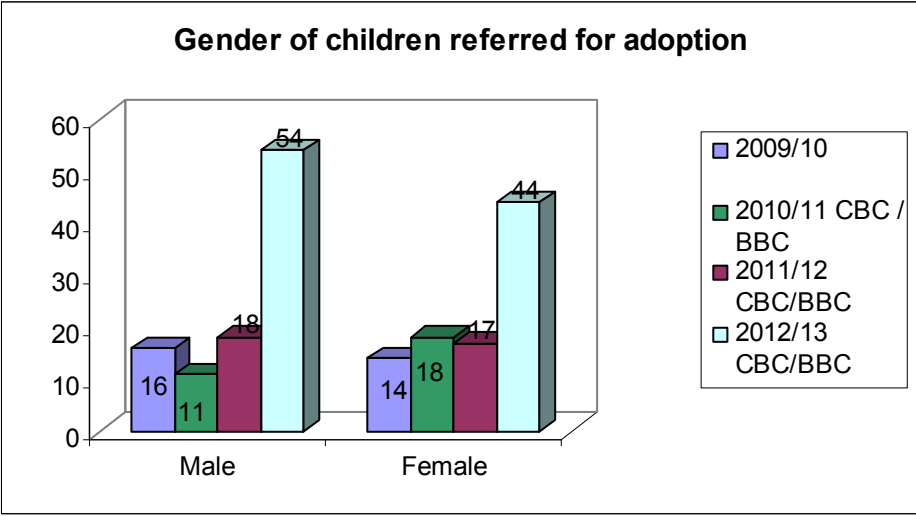
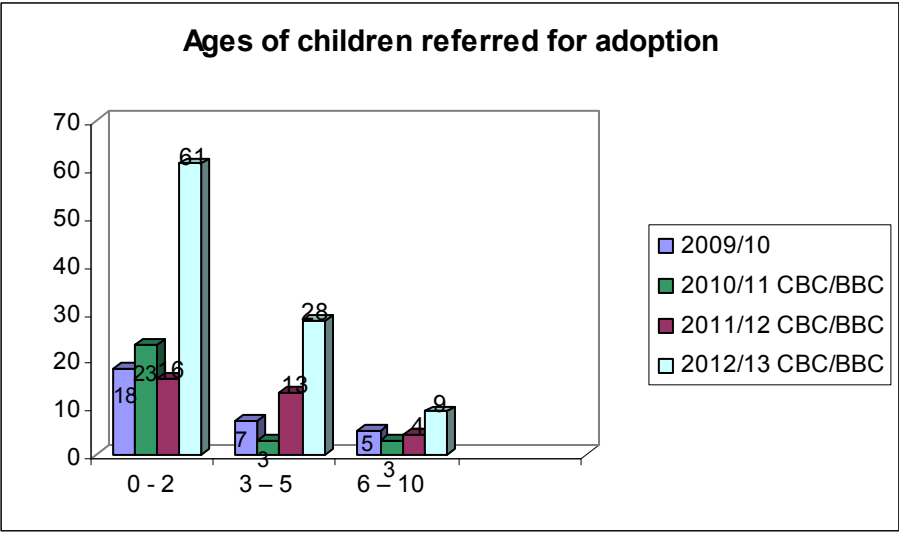


2.0.2 During 2012/2013 a further 56 looked after children were referred for permanence planning, where the primary plan was long-term fostering or permanency by way of a Special Guardianship Order or Residence Order. 30 children were from Central Bedfordshire and 26 children were from Bedford Borough. This is a reduction from the 75 referrals in 2011/2012.

2.1 – AGE, GENDER AND ETHNICITY OF CHILDREN REFERRED FOR ADOPTION

2.1.1 As can be seen from the figures below, the majority of children referred for adoption were under the age of 5 years. This has also been the case in previous years. More boys than girls were referred.

2.1.2 Of the 98 children referred for adoption 73 were from White British ethnicity, 4 were White other backgrounds, 5 were dual heritage White / Caribbean, 2 were dual heritage White/African, 8 were dual heritage White/Other, 5 were dual heritage White / Asian and 1 was African.



2.2 SIBLING GROUPS OF CHILDREN REFERRED FOR ADOPTION

- 2.2.1 The service received referrals for 25 sibling groups during the year 2012/2013. This compares to 8 sibling groups in 2011/2012. This included 4 sibling groups of three children.

2.3 – CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES REFERRED FOR ADOPTION

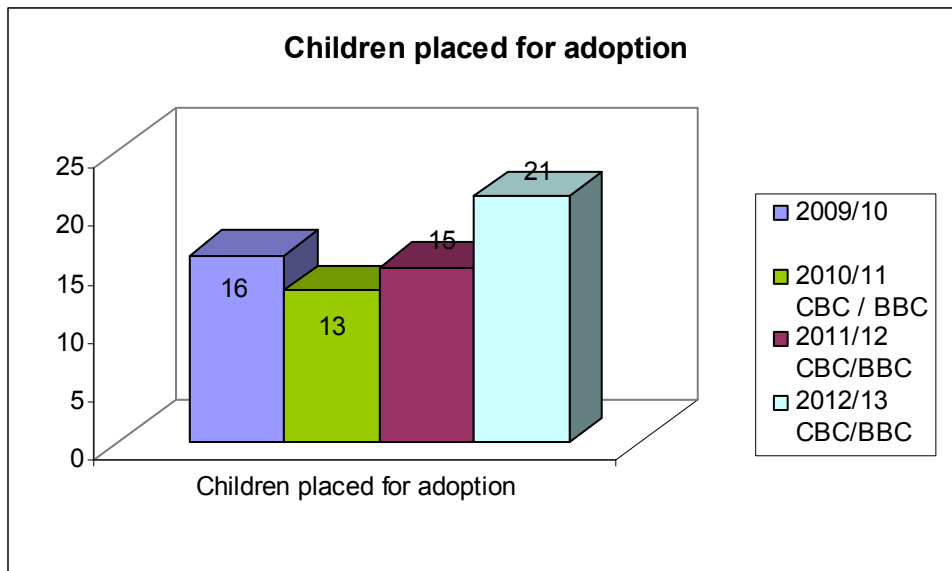
- 2.3.1 The service received 2 referrals for children with a disability during 2012/2013. It is of note that a number of children, although not having a diagnosed disability, will face uncertain futures due to substance misuse by parents in the ante-natal period.

2.4 OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN REFERRED FOR ADOPTION

- 2.4.1 Of the 98 children referred for possible adoption in 2012/2013, 2 had been matched with adopters by March 2013. In the case of 15 children the Adoption Agency Decision Maker had considered their case and a decision made that adoption should be the plan. For 16 children planning had enabled them to remain with relatives either under fostering arrangements or as a result of granting of a Special Guardianship Order. The remaining children were still subject to care proceedings as at 31st March 2013. Permanence planning was in place with potential adopters beginning to be identified in order to expedite placements once Placement Orders were granted.
- 2.4.2 In order to avoid case drift for children, social workers are asked to refer children for family finding when adoption is a possible outcome for that child. This does not mean that all children referred will subsequently be adopted, but ensures that robust planning is considered as part of a child's care plan. In many cases, children safely return to their families or are placed with extended family members under other Orders, such as Special Guardianship.
- 2.4.3 In the year 2012/2013 we have continued to see some cases where Care Proceedings have taken much longer than expected, often due to viability assessments of family members taking place consecutively. However, reforms to the Family Justice system are beginning to take effect with the average timescale for care proceedings to conclude showing a reduction in the last quarter of 2012/2013.

2.5 – PLACEMENTS OF CHILDREN

- 2.5.1 Members of the Adoption Team were active in facilitating the placements of the 21 children placed for adoption in 2012/2013. This compares to the placement of 15 children in the previous year.
- 2.5.2 There were 5 sibling groups placed for adoption during 2012/2013.



2.6 – TYPE OF ADOPTION PLACEMENT

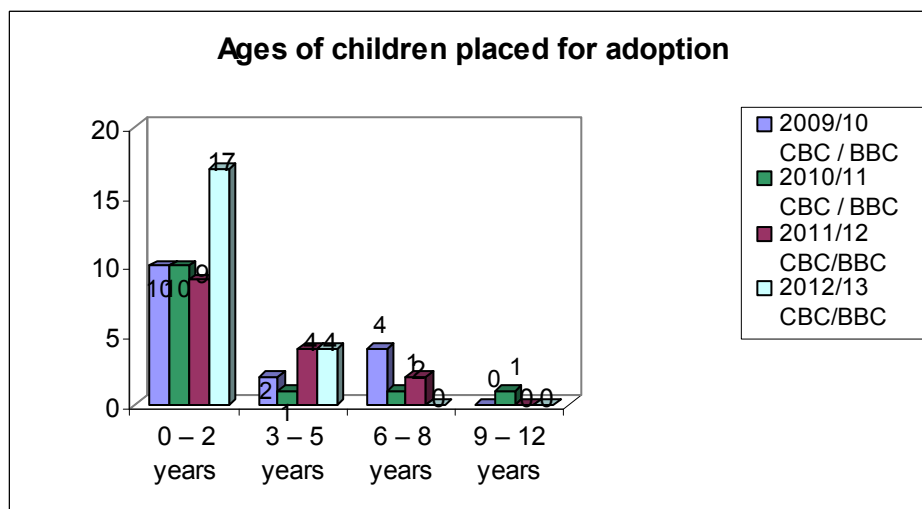
2.6.1 Of the 21 children placed for adoption in 2012/2013, 17 were placed with adopters assessed and approved by Bedfordshire. 1 sibling group was placed with adopters recruited by another local authority, and a second sibling group was placed with inter-country adopters assessed in their country of origin.

2.7 – ETHNICITY OF CHILDREN PLACED FOR ADOPTION

2.7.1 Of the 21 children placed for adoption in the year 2012/2013, 15 were White British, 3 were of White Other heritage, 2 children were of dual White/Black Caribbean heritage and one child's ethnicity was unknown.

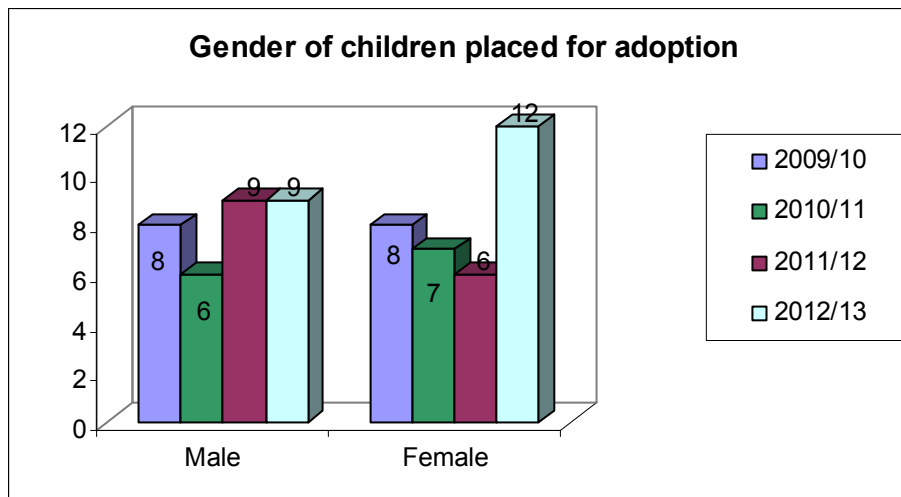
2.8 – AGES OF CHILDREN PLACED FOR ADOPTION

1.4.2 Of the 21 children placed for adoption in 2012/2013, 4 were aged three and above and 17 of were aged 2 years or under.



2.9 – GENDER OF CHILDREN PLACED FOR ADOPTION

2.9.1 Of the 21 children placed for adoption, 12 were female and 9 were male. Of these, in Central Bedfordshire there were 9 females and 4 males placed for adoption, and in Bedford Borough, there were 3 females and 5 males.



2.10 – ADOPTION ORDERS / SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP ORDERS

2.10.1 Adoption Orders were made in respect of 12 children during the period 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2013. Of these 6 were for children from Central Bedfordshire and 6 from Bedford Borough. This is the same number of orders as made in 2011/2012.

2.10.2 Special Guardianship Orders were made in respect of 22 children. Of these 12 were from Central Bedfordshire and 10 were from Bedford Borough. This is an increase in the total number from 12 Special Guardianship Orders last year.

SECTION 3 - ADOPTERS

3.0 – THE WORK OF THE ADOPTION AND PERMANENCE SUPPORT TEAM

- 3.0.1 Every child looked after who may need a new permanent family has a social worker from the Adoption and Permanence Support Team allocated to take lead responsibility for finding a suitable family. Family Finding Social Workers attend regular permanence planning meetings with other professionals involved with the child. For those children for whom a return to the care of his / her parents or a member of the extended family is not possible, adoption or long term fostering will be the plan. Family Finding Social Workers are active in identifying not just adoptive families, but also foster families, as appropriate to the needs of the child. This helps ensure that permanence is achieved for all children in a timely manner.

3.1 – RECRUITMENT OF ADOPTERS

- 3.1.1 In order to ensure a range of adopters are recruited for both Bedfordshire children and to meet the needs of children nationally requiring adoptive families a range of recruitment activity has taken place this year. Drop-in sessions were held in July 2012 and February 2013, as well as specific drop-in events during National Adoption Week in November 2012. A social media campaign using twitter and email alerts was tried for the first time this year. In addition the Adoption and Fostering service had stalls at Bedford Market, Picnic in the Park and Linslade Canal Festival and Bedfordshire Young Farmers Event during 2011. Advertising in local newspapers and magazines was used to publicise events, and a national advert recruiting for specific children was placed in March 2013.

3.2 – THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS: ENQUIRIES, ASSESSMENTS AND APPROVALS

- 3.2.1 All assessments are carried out in accordance with the 2011 National Minimum Standards for Adoption and the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 and their Statutory and Practice Guidance. All prospective adopters are required to undertake a training programme as part of the preparation and assessment process and have a review of their assessment conducted by a Manager or Senior Practitioner of the Adoption and Permanence Support Team.
- 3.2.2 89 enquiries from prospective adopters were received in 2012/2013 which was slightly fewer than the 104 enquiries in 2011/2012. All enquirers were invited to attend information evenings and sent information packs. 80 households attended. Applications were accepted from 25 households following an in-depth interview. 22 adoptive households were approved in 2012/2013, an increase from 14 in 2011/2012

3.3 – ETHNICITY OF ADOPTERS

- 3.3.1 Of those attending an information evening, 50 households described themselves as White British. 12 households described themselves as of a White British and other heritage. 3 households described themselves as of Asian heritage. 15 households did not state their background.

- 3.3.2 Of the adopters approved 17 households were White / British. In other cases the household was of White European heritage, or were of dual heritage where one partner was of White heritage and the other or either white non-British heritage, or Black African heritage.

3.4 – POST APPROVAL SUPPORT

- 3.4.1 All approved adopters are supported by a Social Worker from the Adoption and Permanence Support Team from approval, through the process of placement of children, to the making of an Adoption Order.
- 3.4.2 Once an Adoption Order has been made, adopters can continue to access support or request an assessment of their additional support needs through the Adoption and Permanence Support Team.

3.5 – TRAINING FOR ADOPTERS

- 3.5.1 Social Workers from the Adoption and Fostering Service provide the preparation training for adopters. Adopters also have access to the full training programme offered to the Agency's foster carers and adopters. This ongoing training is available to both approved adopters as well as to adoptive parents at any point after an Adoption Order has been granted.
- 3.5.2 During the year April 2012 to March 2013 a four day preparation training programme was held on three occasions and was attended by 22 households, compared to 19 households during 2011/2012.
- 3.5.3 The training covered a variety of topics and experiential exercises including:
- The Adoption Process
 - Agency Policy / Legislation
 - Valuing Diversity
 - Disability Awareness
 - Child Development
 - Attachment and Resilience
 - Health and Education
 - Abuse
 - Memories, Loss and Separation
 - Lifestory work
 - Adoption Support including contact
 - Matching
- 3.5.4 Training is evaluated at the end of each programme, and again when prospective adopters attend Adoption Panel. The feedback to Panel during the past 12 months has been universally positive.

SECTION 4 – ADOPTION SUPPORT SERVICES

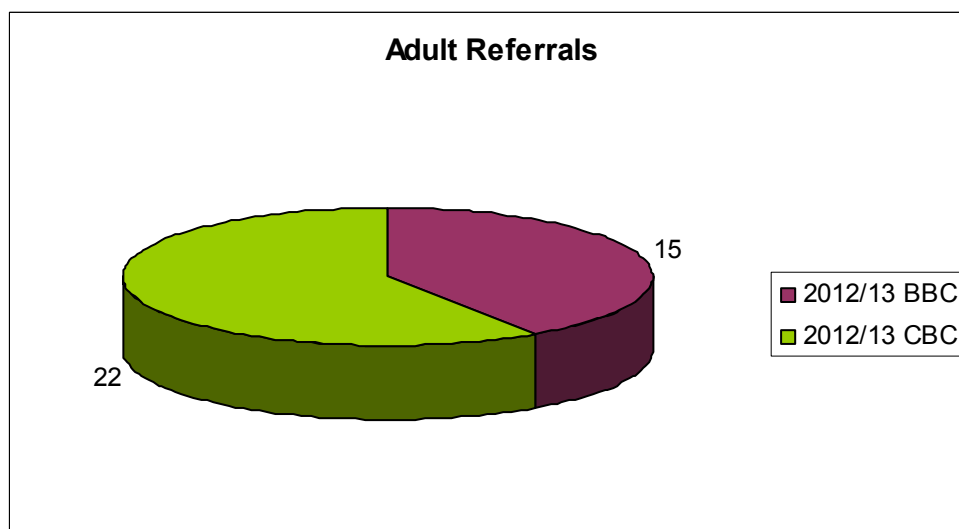
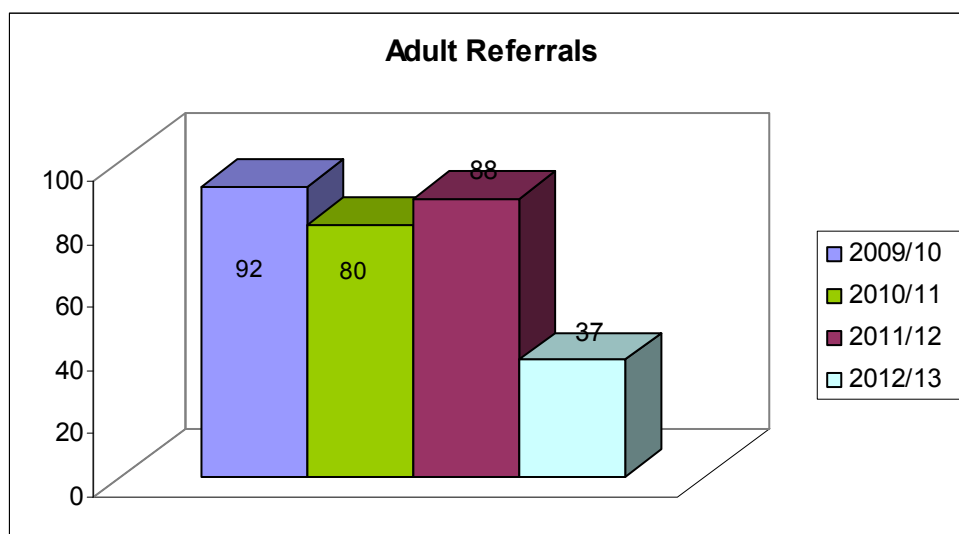
4.0 – POST ADOPTION SUPPORT TO FAMILIES

- 4.0.1 The Adoption and Children Act 2002 established the right of adopted families to request an assessment of their adoption support needs. These families either self-refer or come to the attention of the department via another agency. In such instances the team either provides direct social work support or where a specific need is identified, a specialist service may be commissioned.
- 4.0.2 As of the 31st March 2013, the team were working directly with 32 adopted children and their families who were in need of support. Of these 19 were from Central Bedfordshire and 13 from Bedford Borough. This compares to 25 children and their families in March 2012. Between 1st April 2012 and 31st March 2013 the team received a total of 13 new referrals for adoption support, 6 from Central Bedfordshire and 7 from Bedford Borough. As of 31st March 2013 the team was also supporting 26 children and families subject to a special guardianship order (14 from Central Bedfordshire and 12 from Bedford Borough.)
- 4.0.3 A number of adopted children and their families were assessed as being in need of therapeutic support. It is expected that this is provided by community Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). In a small number of cases this year CAMHS did not have the resources to meet the identified needs of children or deemed that children did not meet their referral criteria.
- 4.0.4 The team have a mailing list of adoptive families from Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough who are sent newsletters, invitations to support groups for adoptive parents and family days, some of which are provided by the service and some by Adoption UK. They are also sent information about training events provided by the Adoption and Fostering Service.
- 4.0.5 All new adoption support referrals are offered an Adoption UK Buddy and access to the above services. The Adoption & Permanence team also provide groups for adopted children and their families, including Talking About Adoption workshops. All adoption support referrals have an assessment of need and adoption support plan upon request.
- 4.0.6 Each child placed for adoption is required to have a contact plan in relation to their birth family. The service currently manages contact plans on behalf of 190 children (an identical number to 2011/2012), many of which have required direct intervention to support all the parties involved in the contact arrangements, i.e. adopted children and young people, their adoptive parents and their birth families. In addition the service currently manages contact plans in Special Guardianship cases on behalf of 21 children. In total the service supports letterbox contact in 116 Bedford Borough cases, and 95 Central Bedfordshire cases.

4.1 – SERVICES TO ADOPTED ADULTS AND BIRTH RELATIVES

- 4.1.1 Social Workers in the Adoption Support Team provide an advice and counselling service to adopted people seeking information and access to their birth records. For all residents of Bedfordshire, a counselling service is offered and information is provided to other councils who are supporting people in their areas who were adopted through Bedfordshire. Specific leaflets outlining this service are available to enquirers through the Adoption Duty Desk.

- 4.1.2 Not only is an initial counselling interview offered to those seeking birth records, but work is undertaken to locate records held by other Adoption Agencies. Counselling and practical advice during tracing, an intermediary service and pre and post reunion support are also available to adopted adults and their birth relatives.
- 4.1.3 Birth relatives seeking to make contact with adopted adults are offered information and advice and an intermediary service. In the case of birth relatives, they are not given any identifying information about the adopted person.
- 4.1.4 In the period 2012/2013 there were 37 referrals from adult adoptees and their birth relatives who were seeking Post Adoption counselling support. This was a significant decrease on the 88 referrals received in 2011/12 and may be indicative of the increase in use of the internet by individuals wishing to trace their heritage and find birth relatives
- 4.1.5 Of the adult referrals received during 2012/2013, 22 came from Central Bedfordshire and 15 were from Bedford Borough. .



4.2 – DISRUPTED ADOPTIONS

- 4.2.1 Nationally the disruption rate pre Adoption Order is considered to be in the region of 20%. There was one disruption in 2012/13 of children placed by the two councils, meaning that there had only been two disruptions in the last 4 years. This low figure reflects the care given to the matching process between children and adoptive families, the resilience and commitment of adoptive parents and the support given to them and the children in the critical early months of placements.

SECTION 5 – OTHER ACTIVITIES

5.0 – INTER-COUNTRY ADOPTION

- 5.0.1 Inter-Country adoption has become increasingly more complex in terms of the legal requirements of those countries that permit children to be placed for adoption outside of their country of origin. In recognition of this and given the specialist knowledge and expertise which this work demands, the Adoption Agency has a Service Level Agreement with a voluntary adoption agency based in Reading, Parents and Children Together (PACT), which is recognised as being a leading agency in this area of work, to provide this service on its behalf.
- 5.0.2 Families who are normally resident in Bedfordshire wishing to adopt children from overseas are referred to PACT who will provide information and preparation training and will assess and approve families wishing to adopt children from overseas.
- 5.0.3 Families are required to pay for their assessment in accordance with Regulations but Bedfordshire funds all of the initial counselling interviews.
- 5.0.4 During 2012/2013 PACT received 8 enquiries concerning inter-country adoption from residents of Central Bedfordshire or Bedford Borough. No enquirers followed up their enquiry with a request for an initial interview. For the second year running this is a decrease in activity in respect of inter-country adoption.

5.1 – THE ADOPTION CONSORTIUM

- 5.1.1 Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council Adoption Agency is a member of the local adoption consortium whose aim is to work in partnership to share information about children and approved adopters to make local matches and to share good practice. The other full members are:
- Buckinghamshire County Council
 - Hertfordshire County Council
 - Luton Borough Council
 - Milton Keynes Council
- Associate member: St Francis Children's Society
- 5.1.2 We are pleased to be able to assist other consortium members and in the year 2012/2013 3 children from within the consortium were placed with adopters trained, assessed and approved by Bedfordshire.

5.2 – BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR ADOPTION AND FOSTERING (BAAF)

- 5.2.1 Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council Adoption Agencies are full members of BAAF which is a leading national voluntary organisation working to promote best practice for children separated from their birth families. It is the leading organisation representing local authority and voluntary adoption agencies and provides training courses, practice guidance, research material, and a consultation and advice service to all its members.
- 5.2.2 Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council Adoption Agency is also a member of the BAAF Eastern Region, a group which meets quarterly to discuss and exchange best practice in the East Anglia region. Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough are represented by the Agency Adviser, Adoption and Fostering.
- 5.2.3 During the last 12 months the agency has continued its membership of New Family Social, a national charity supporting adopters and foster carers from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans-gender community. The organisation provides social events, a website and membership events for carers, and support and advice to adoption agencies.

5.3 – INDEPENDENT BIRTH FAMILY COUNSELLING

- 5.3.1 The agency provides an Independent Birth Family Counselling and support service. This service is provided by Adoption Plus Limited on behalf of Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council Adoption Agency. Adoption Plus is an independent adoption support agency.
- 5.3.2 The aim of the service is to provide birth relatives of children who might be adopted an opportunity to talk about their feelings. Although the agency are involved in commissioning this service, Adoption Plus will undertake all counselling work with the birth family members and the counselling will be confidential unless concerns arise about the safety or welfare of a child.
- 5.3.3 The contract with Adoption Plus was renewed in 2012/2013 with ongoing contract reviews to ensure there is maximum support for those accessing the service and to ensure optimum take up by birth parents.

5.4 – THE ADOPTION SCORECARD

- 5.4.1 In 2012 the Department for Education published 'An Action Plan For Adoption: Tackling Delay' in which they outlined the intention to publish Adoption Scorecards for each council outlining performance in relation to numbers and timeliness of adoptions.
- 5.4.2 The scorecard details the average length of time between a child becoming looked after and moving in with their adoptive family and the length of time between the council having court authority to place a child and them moving in with their adoptive family.
- 5.4.3 The scorecards published in November 2012 for both councils showed that performance in relation to timeliness of placements was in the upper quartile of all councils and better than the targets set by government.

SECTION 6 CONCLUSION

- 6.0.1 2012/13 has been the fourth year of the shared service for Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils. This has again been a successful year for the service and one in which we have continued to develop our practice and meet the challenges of increased demand, a national spotlight on adoption challenges of offering creative and quality services that are cost effective.
- 6.0.2 There has been a continued increase in activity across all aspects of the service. The increase in looked after children in both councils during 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 has resulted in a hugely increased number of referrals for permanence planning, both for adoption and for long-term fostering or for other legal alternative permanent options, such as Special Guardianship or Residence Orders.
- 6.0.3 In response, the service has increased the number of assessments of prospective adopters, resulting in increased numbers of approvals and adoption orders granted. In order to meet continued demand a recruitment target for adopters has been set again for 2013/2014, based on known and likely numbers and needs of children requiring adoption. The target has been set at 40 new approvals in 2013/2014.
- 6.0.4 The Government's national reform of adoption has continued during 2012/2013. In March 2012 the Department for Education published 'An Action Plan for Adoption: Tackling Delay' which outlines measures planned to monitor and improve performance. This was followed up by 'Further action on Adoption: Finding More Loving Homes' which was published in January 2013. This document outlined major changes to the adopter recruitment process, including a national recruitment gateway and improvements to adoption support. It also set out government plans to give the Minister reserve powers to take adopter recruitment away from local authorities if they were not able to rise to the challenge to recruit more adopters. The Adoption Service remains in a strong position to rise to the challenges outlined, having robust performance monitoring and good practices in place in regard to planning for adoption and adopter recruitment.
- 6.0.5 In March 2012 following the annual review of the Shared Service Level Agreement it was decided to end the Shared Service Arrangement. This decision was subsequently reviewed in detail in Autumn 2012 with the decision being made for the disaggregation of the service to be effective from 1 January 2014. A project board comprising staff in both councils has been established to plan the arrangements for January 2014 and beyond. This planning process will involve consultation with key stakeholders and staff to ensure that an effective adoption service that meets the needs of children can be maintained and developed

Report written by:

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Joint Service for Central and Bedford Borough Councils

Telephone: 0300 300 8090

This information can be made available in
Large print and in other languages if required

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Central Bedfordshire Council
and Bedford Borough Council
working together

Appendix **B**

Fostering Agency

Annual Report

For the period
2012/2013

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SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.0.1 Since Local Government reorganisation in April 2009 Central Bedfordshire has hosted the Fostering Service as a shared service on behalf of both new unitary councils. This report describes the activity of Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council's Fostering Agency during the period 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2013, noting its achievements, clarifying the remit and focus of its work and identifying recommendations for the development of the service.
- 1.0.2 This report is provided as part of the monitoring of the Fostering Agency required under the Fostering Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards 2011. This report will be presented to the Central Bedfordshire Council Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and three monthly update reports will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel. A copy of this report is provided to Bedford Borough Council for presentation to Elected Members.

1.1 STAFFING/SERVICE STRUCTURE

- 1.1.1 The Fostering Service is made up of the following staff as of 31st March 2013:
- 1 x full time Team Manager
 - 1 x full time Deputy Team Manager
 - 8 x Senior Practitioners
 - 10 x Social Workers
 - 2 x Social Work Assistants
 - 1 x Duty Worker
- 1.1.2 The service is supported by 2 full time and 1 part time administrators.
- 1.1.3 The workforce is diverse and includes staff of both genders, and from other European and black and minority ethnic groups. This level of diversity is valued when considering case allocation.
- 1.1.4 All staff have access to the Council's extensive learning and development programme, and can apply to attend external courses and conferences where appropriate. The service also provides diversity training for staff in order to improve its understanding of the needs of children from black and minority ethnic communities and enable them to meet their needs more appropriately.
- 1.1.5 Most staff have a number of years post-qualifying experience, and a programme of additional support is in place for those newly-qualified or in the early years of their social work career.
- 1.1.6 The fostering agency is supported by specialist staff who work across the Fostering and Adoption service area. These staff include a Business Support Officer with responsibility for foster care payments, a Recruitment and Marketing Officer, a Training Officer and Training coordinator, and the Panel Advisor and Secretaries who support the fostering and permanence panels.

SECTION 2 – THE PANELS

2.1 PANEL MEMBERSHIP

2.1.1 From 1 April 2011 the new Fostering Regulations 2011 introduced greater flexibility in relation to the membership of fostering panels, allowing for the use of a 'central list' of panel members from which attendees for any particular panel could be chosen in accordance with quoracy requirements. The fostering panel shares a Central List with the Joint Fostering and Permanence Panel.

2.1.2 As at 31st March, 2013 the Central List was as follows:

Panel Chair	Independent
Educational Psychologist	Educational Psychologist, Central Bedfordshire Council
Social Worker (Vice Chair)	Senior Practitioner, Adoption Team, Central Bedfordshire Council
Social Worker (Vice Chair)	Deputy Manager, Adoption Team, Central Bedfordshire Council
Social Worker	Deputy Team Manager, Looked After Children, Central Bedfordshire Council
Social Worker	Family Group Meeting Team Manager
Elected Member	Bedford Borough Council
Elected Member	Central Bedfordshire Council
Independent	Foster Carer – IFA
Independent	Health Visitor
Independent	Independent Social Worker
Independent	Adoptive Parent
Independent	Foster Carer – IFA
Independent	Gypsy and Traveller Education Consultant
Independent	Independent Family Group Meeting Coordinator
Independent	Independent Social Worker

2.1.3 In attendance but non voting members were:

Professional Adviser	Central Bedfordshire Council
Panel Secretary	Central Bedfordshire Council

2.4.3 A Medical Adviser to the Panel gives advice in writing in advance of Panel meetings, but may attend in person if requested.

2.1.5 A Legal Adviser to the Panel gives advice in writing in advance of Panel meetings and attends in person as requested.

2.2 THE FOSTERING PANEL

- 2.2.1 The Fostering Panel meets every month of the year, with extraordinary panels as and when required.
- 2.2.2 The Fostering Panel considers applications from prospective foster carers and makes recommendations as to their approval. The panel also considers the first annual review of foster carers, as well as any change or termination of approval. The Panel is advised of any exemptions or variations to a carer's existing terms of approval. Reviews following complaints or allegations are also presented to the Panel.

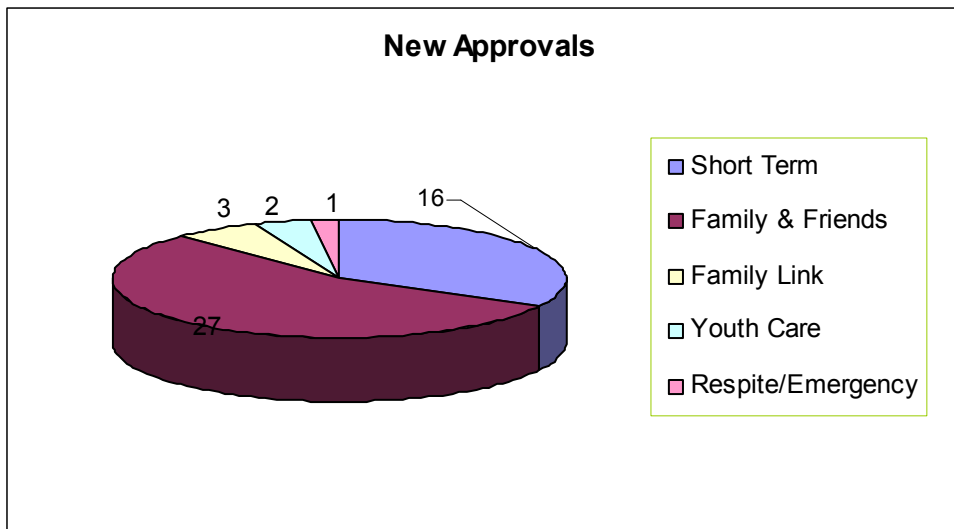
2.3 FOSTERING AND JOINT PERMANENCE PANEL

- 2.3.1 The Fostering and Joint Permanence Panel's primary activity is to deal with permanent fostering work and family and friends placements.
- 2.3.2 Up until 1 September 2013 the panel considered the plan for any child under the age of 13 for whom permanent or long-term fostering was proposed. The panel's remit changed from this date to bring practice in line with the changes in regulation in respect of Agency Decisions for adoption. Such plans are therefore now considered by the Agency Decision Maker without reference to the panel.
- 2.3.3 The panel considers matches with specific carers for children for whom permanent or long-term fostering is the plan.
- 2.3.3 This panel also considers applications by foster carers to be long-term carers for a particular child and applications by those who are family and friends foster carers. The panel also considers the first annual review of permanent foster carers and family and friends foster carers, as well as any changes to their approval. The Panel is advised of any exemptions or variations to a carer's existing range of approval.
- 2.3.4 Due to the volume of cases concerning short term fostering, the Fostering and Joint Permanence Panel also considers the approval and reviews of short term foster carers from time to time.

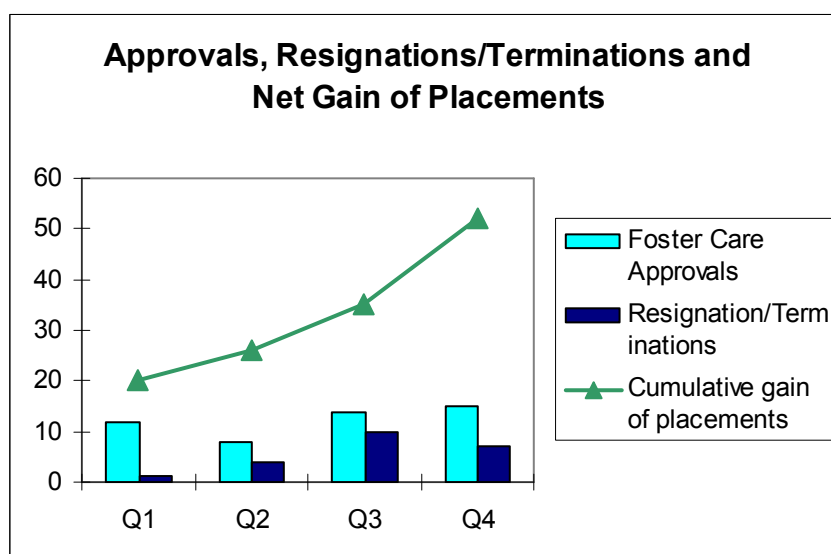
2.4 PANEL ACTIVITY

- 2.4.1 In 2012/2013 the Fostering Panel met 12 times and recommended that 20 households should be approved as foster carers. This is the same number of approvals as 2011/12.
- 2.4.2 Of the 20 carers newly approved by the Fostering Panel, 3 were approved for the Family Link Scheme, 12 as short-term carers, 1 for the Youth Care Scheme and 4 as family and friends carers.
- 2.4.3 The Fostering and Joint Permanence Panel met 15 times during the year 2012/2013. During this time, 29 households were approved as foster carers (which compares with 21 the previous year). Plans for 8 children for permanent or long-term fostering were recommended in the six months when this was the remit of the panel. 5 children were recommended for a match with foster carers. 4 households were approved as short term foster carers, 23 as family and friends carers and 1 as youth care respite foster carers.

The numbers of approvals of family and friends carers significantly increased in 2012/2013 with a total of 27 households approved, compared to 9 in 2011/12.



- 2.4.4 The Panels considered first annual reviews for 21 households, 3 reviews following concerns or allegations, 24 requests for change of approval and 1 termination of approval following allegations.
- 2.4.5 In total 97 fostering households attended one or other of the panels, a similar number to 2011/12.
- 2.4.6 22 fostering households resigned at their request in 2012/13 and 1 household had their approval withdrawn by the Fostering Agency. This total was similar to the 21 in 2011/12. The reasons for deregistration varied, but included personal circumstances, ill health, retirement, relocation, moving to another local authority and children in placement becoming permanent family members. Balancing new approvals against resignations there was a net gain of fostering placements of 52 during the year, a significant increase on the 30 net gain of placements in 2011/12.



2.5 PANEL TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

- 2.5.1 The Fostering Agency strives to ensure that there is a good level of training, appraisal and induction offered to Panel Members. This year, due to the number of cases and business on the agendas it has been a challenge to find time for the 'bite-size' training on panel days. All Panel Members had an annual appraisal where their personal training needs are discussed and considered.
- 2.5.2 A full day's training on fostering with Family and Friends was held in June 2012 for Panel Members and staff of the Fostering Agency.

2.6 PANEL DIVERSITY

- 2.6.1 The agency has ensured that both panels are diverse and includes members with different cultural backgrounds and lifestyle including professional and personal experience of disability. Panel members also bring particular expertise or experience, including a member experienced in working with gypsy and traveller communities, a member with personal experience of being looked after and of disruption. Both Panels have male and female panel members. There is also a diversity of age on both panels.

2.7 AGENCY DECISIONS AND INDEPENDENT REVIEW MECHANISM

- 2.7.1 If a foster carer is not satisfied with the Fostering Agency's decision about their approval or the terms of their approval, they have a right to make a request within 28 days for a review by the Independent Review Mechanism. The Independent Review Mechanism is a review process conducted by a review panel independent of the fostering service provider who hears the evidence presented to the Agency's own panel and then makes a recommendation to the Agency in respect of their decision. Whilst the Agency Decision Maker must take into account the recommendations of the IRM, the final decision remains with the Agency.
- 2.7.2 In two cases this year foster carers applied for a review by the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) for an independent panel view about their approval.
- 2.7.3 In one case the IRM recommended that the carers' approval should continue. In the other case, the IRM agreed with the agency decision to terminate approval.

SECTION 3 – SPECIALISED FOSTERING

3.1 THE FAMILY LINK SCHEME

- 3.1.1 The Family Link Scheme offers short breaks to children of all ages who have a physical or functional disability. Family Link carers are foster carers who are recruited, approved and trained in the same way as other foster carers. They receive regular support and guidance from a supervising social worker.
- 3.1.2 Family Link Workers can care for a child in their own home, the child's home or by taking the child to an activity. Periods of short breaks will be carefully planned and could be for a few hours occasionally or whole weekends on a regular basis.
- 3.1.3 Once agreement has been given for the care package from the resource panel, a careful process of matching takes place, taking into account the individual needs of the child and their family and the carer's abilities
- 3.1.4 On the 31st March 2013, there were 12 Family Link carers approved with a further 3 Family Link carers being assessed. Carers were supporting 19 children by providing regular short breaks.

3.2 THE YOUTH CARE SCHEME

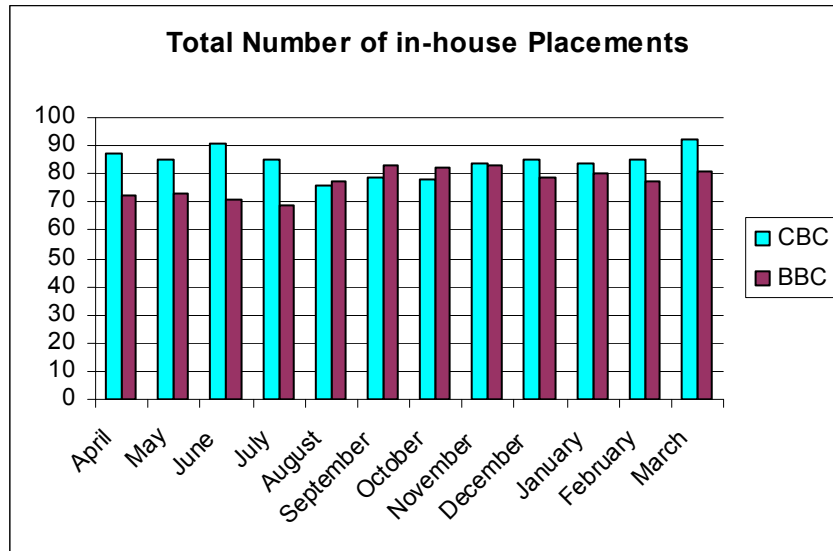
- 3.2.1 The Youth Care Scheme is a comprehensive, fee paid fostering scheme which provides specialist care to young people over the age of 10 years who have needs which are particularly challenging or complex.
- 3.2.2 As at the 31st March 2013, there were 13 approved Youth Care households with two households being assessed for the Youth Care Scheme.

SECTION 4 – CHILDREN AND FOSTERING

4.1 CHILDREN REFERRED FOR FOSTERING

- 4.1.1 During 2012/2013, the Fostering Service received a total of 476 referrals for foster placements of which 232 were for children becoming newly looked after. The remainder of referrals were for a change of placement. This is a significant increase on the total number of 375 referrals received in 2011/12 and 159 in 2010/11. This reflects the increase in both councils of social care activity and numbers of looked after children.
- 4.1.2 Of the referrals received 245 were Central Bedfordshire children and 231 were Bedford Borough children. 127 of the referrals for newly looked after children or for a change of placements resulted in placements with in-house carers. 13 young people were placed in residential units. 126 children (57 Central Bedfordshire and 69 Bedford Borough children) were placed in an Independent Fostering Agency placement as a result of becoming looked after or due to a change of placement. Some children did not ultimately enter foster care, but remained at home.
- 4.1.3 The referral for the child includes the matching criteria that are essential and preferable when looking for a placement for a child, and a risk assessment is also considered. This is crucial to identifying which carers may be able to support a child. Where a placement does not meet the essential criteria or where any identified risks cannot be managed an alternative placement is sought.
- 4.1.4 Respite placements were provided on 201 occasions, with 24 children having regular respite as part of their care plan.
- 4.1.5 Of the new referrals for foster placements, 11 came through the Emergency Duty Service, a reduction from 19 in 2011/12.

4.1.6 As at 31st March 2013 a total of 173 children were placed with in house foster carers, with 92 children coming from Central Bedfordshire and 81 children from Bedford Borough. This is an increase from the total number of 162 at 31st March 2012.



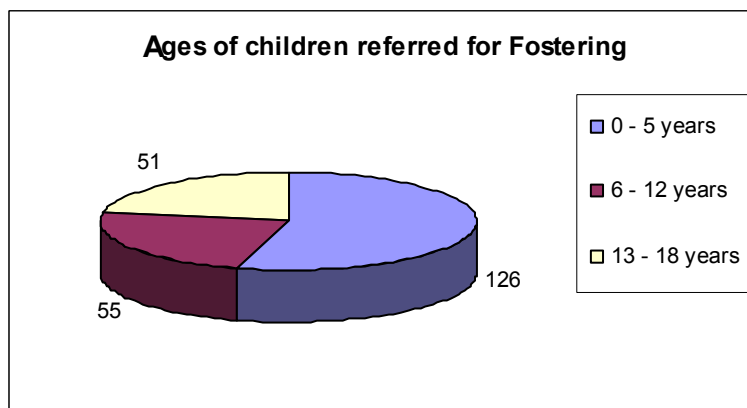
4.2 AGE, GENDER AND ETHNICITY OF CHILDREN REFERRED FOR FOSTERING

4.2.1 Nearly half the children referred because they were newly looked after were aged 0-5 years. From Central Bedfordshire the age distribution was as follows:

- 0-5 years 63 children
- 6-12 years 23 children
- 13-18 years 15 young people

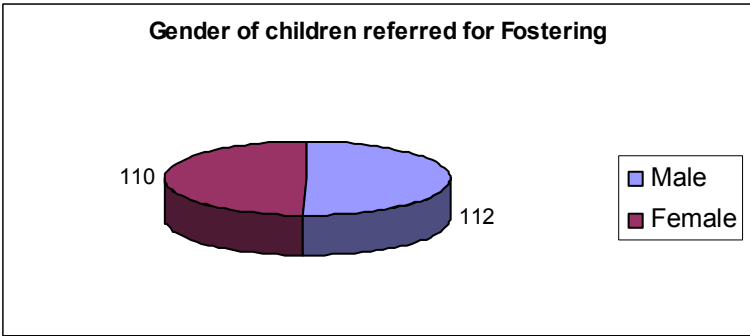
From Bedford Borough the age distribution was:

- 0-5 years 63 children
- 6-12 years 32 children
- 13-18 years 36 young people

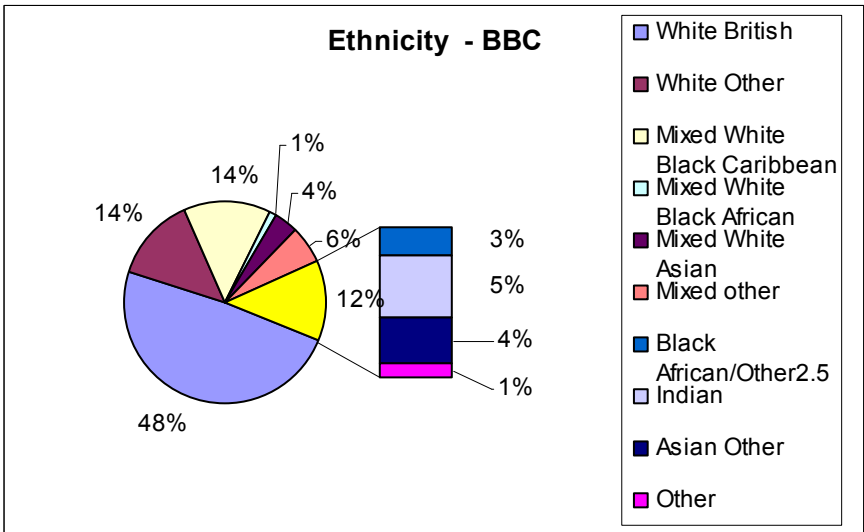
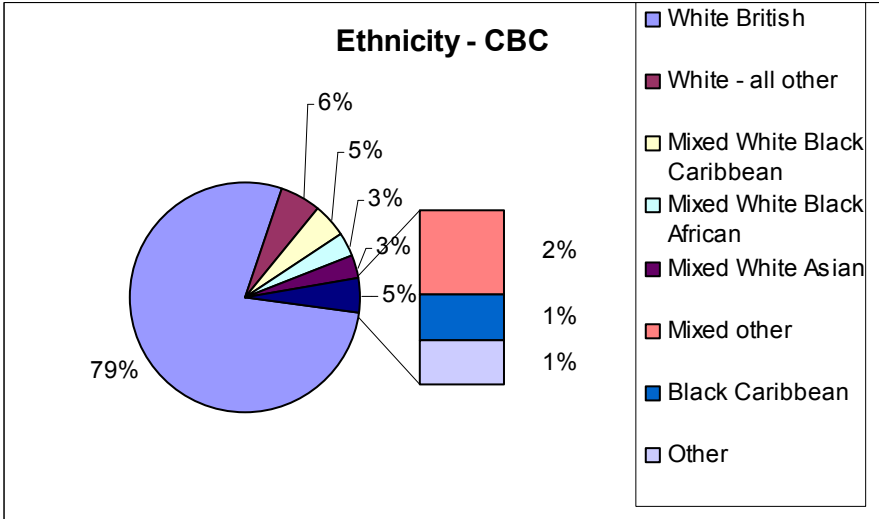


The age profile of referrals has changed significantly with 54% of children referred now in the 0-5 age group. In 2011/12 this proportion was 47%.

4.2.2 Of the 101 children referred from Central Bedfordshire, 47 were female and 54 male. Of the 102 children referred from Bedford Borough 73 were female and 58 were male.



4.2.4 The charts below show the ethnicity of children fostered by in-house carers at 31st March 2013.



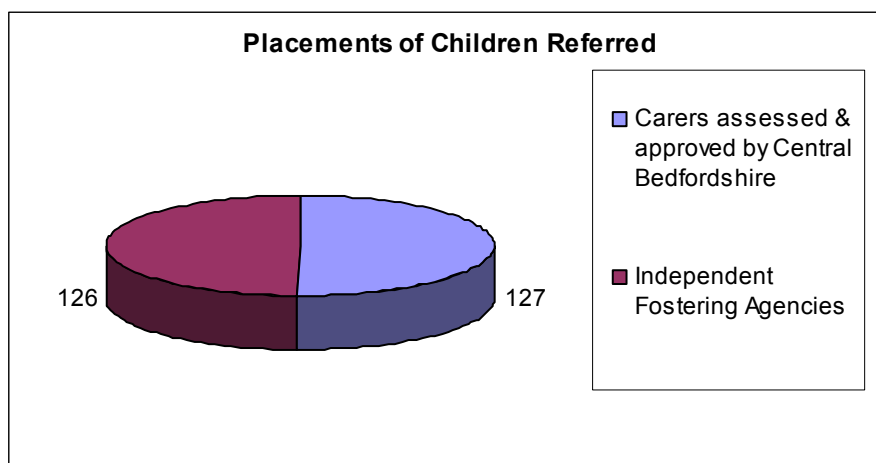
4.3 SIBLING GROUPS OF CHILDREN REFERRED FOR FOSTERING

4.3.1 There were 44 sibling groups within the children referred for fostering during the year. This comprised 19 sibling groups from Central Bedfordshire and 25 from Bedford Borough. One of the significant criteria for matching children with carers is enabling them to be placed with siblings wherever possible. 15 of the sibling groups comprised 3 or more children. Large sibling groups are more difficult to match with suitable foster placements, particularly when seeking to place them together, which is the aim wherever possible.

4.4 TYPE OF FOSTER PLACEMENT PROVIDED

4.4.1 Of the 253 children placed in foster placements this year, 127 were placed with carers assessed and approved by Central Bedfordshire Council on behalf of both Councils. The advantages of this are that the staff of the service have prior knowledge of the children and positive working relationships with the carers, thus enhancing fostering support for these placements.

4.4.2 126 of the children referred were placed externally with Independent Fostering Agencies (57 from Central Bedfordshire and 69 from Bedford Borough).



4.5 CHILDREN IN PLACEMENT AT 31ST MARCH 2013

4.5.1 As at 31st March 2012, there were 155 fostering households with full fostering approval, and a further 13 with temporary approval pending full assessment.

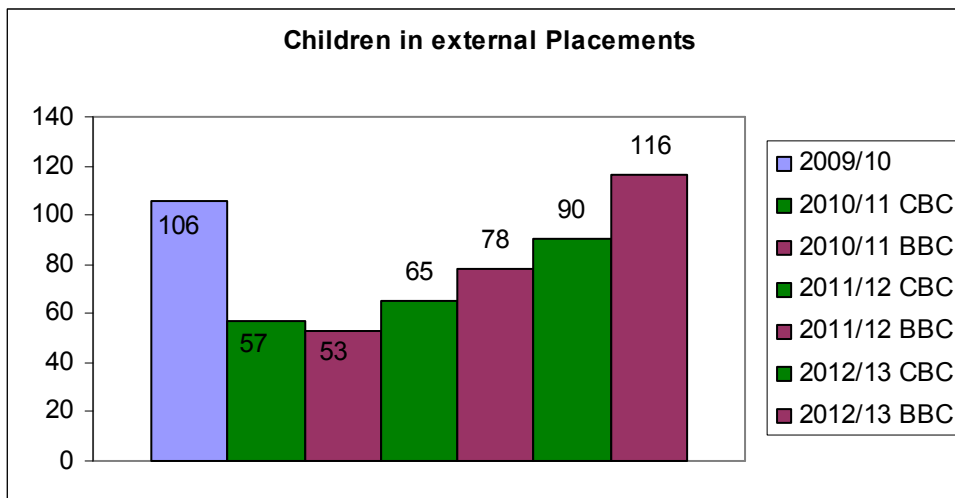
4.5.2 A total of 173 children were in these placements. Of these 92 were looked after by Central Bedfordshire Council and 81 by Bedford Borough Council

4.5.3 A total of 206 children were living in external foster placements provided by independent fostering agencies, as compared to 143 the previous year. Of these 90 children were from Central Bedfordshire Council and 116 from Bedford Borough Council.

4.5.4 In November 2011 both Councils entered into a regional Framework Agreement for the commissioning of placements in Independent Fostering Agencies. This agreement sets out quality and cost standards for placements with 18 preferred providers. After the first year of

this arrangement there was evidence that the average costs of placements had reduced and there were clearer expectations in respect of quality and outcome for children.

4.5.5

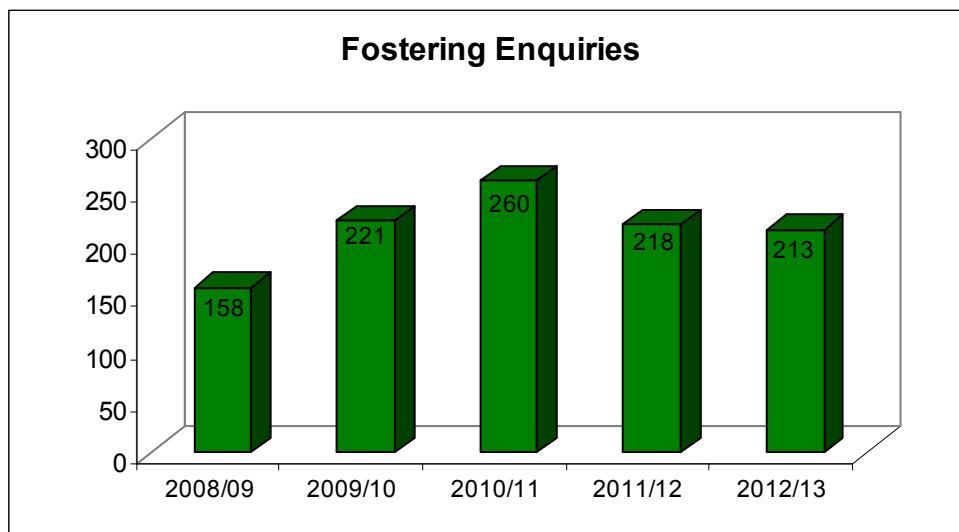


4.5.5 There has been a significant increase in the number of children in external placements as at 31st March 2013, which reflects the overall increase in numbers of looked after children.

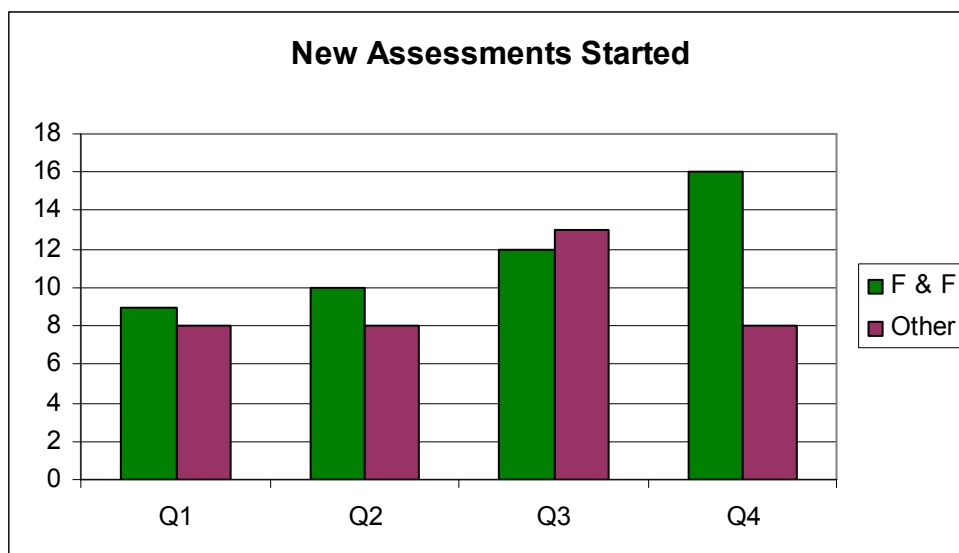
SECTION 5 – FOSTER CARERS

5.1 FOSTERING ENQUIRIES

- 5.1.1 All enquirers are sent an Information Pack within 24 hours of their enquiry. A social worker from the Fostering Service will then make a follow-up telephone call to the enquirer within 2 working days and carry out an initial visit within 7 working days if requested.
- 5.1.2 After the initial visit, and a formal application from the enquirer the decision will be made whether or not to complete the assessment or to defer the assessment process until the enquirer is in a better position to proceed.
- 5.1.3 There were 213 initial fostering enquiries from members of the public during 2012/13 compared with 218 the previous year.



- 5.1.4 Application forms were received from 37 households and in addition application was made by 66 households wishing to care for a child known to them as a family member or friend. This is an increase in the number of applications and in assessments of family and friends. There were 49 new fostering households approved, up from 41 in 2011/12.



5.2 THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR FOSTER CARERS: ENQUIRIES, ASSESSMENTS AND APPROVALS

- 5.2.1 All assessments are carried out in accordance with the National Minimum Standards and their Statutory and Practice Guidance. All prospective foster carers are required to undertake a training programme as part of the preparation and assessment process.
- 5.2.2 Implementation of new Regulations on 1st April 2011 changed the way in which family members or friends of looked after are assessed if the child needed to be placed with them prior to a full fostering assessment being completed. In this situation temporary approval may be granted under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning Regulations pending a full fostering assessment being carried out and presented to the Fostering Panel. This temporary approval lasts for 16 weeks in the first instance and can be extended for one period of 8 weeks. 23 such temporary approvals were granted in 2011-12.

5.3 ETHNICITY OF CARERS

- 5.3.1 At 31st March 2013, 21 out of 168 fostering households included carers from black or ethnic minority groups. At 12.5% this ratio broadly reflects the population in Bedfordshire.
- 5.3.2 Since 1st April 2012, the agency has given full approval to 4 fostering households from black and ethnic minority backgrounds. One households from a black and minority ethnic background had temporary approval enabling them to care for a child connected to them.

SECTION 6 – TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR FOSTER CARERS

- 6.0 All foster carers are expected to attend relevant training recommended by their supervising social worker. The service has a full and comprehensive training programme for carers, from preparation training, through induction and core training through to more complex post-approval training.

6.1 SKILLS TO FOSTER

- 6.1.1 New fostering applicants have many questions prior to and during the assessment process. As an essential part of the fostering assessment, the 'Skills to Foster' course examines issues that are relevant, such as what it will be like to have children placed with them, or working in tandem with the local authority in order to reach positive outcomes for children.
- 6.1.2 Spread over several dates, this course provides an opportunity for prospective carers to reflect on their values and attitudes to caring and learn more about the skills and attributes needed to become a foster carer.
- 6.1.3 During 2012/2013, the Fostering Service ran 4 of these courses and they were attended by 24 delegates in total. In addition, bespoke preparation training was offered to friends and family foster carers. 5 such courses were run attended by 36 delegates in total.

6.2 CHILD CARE EMERGENCY FIRST AID

- 6.2.1 As part of the application and assessment process, all applicants must complete an Emergency First Aid course. 7 courses were held during 2012/2013 and these were attended by a total of 80 delegates.

6.3 SONS AND DAUGHTERS

- 6.3.1 During 2012/13, the Fostering Service ran holiday activities for sons and daughters of foster carers which were activity based and aimed to support them with the impact of fostering in their family. Activities included drama workshops, first aid and activities alongside looked after children. The feedback from these activities was very positive.

6.4 INDUCTION

- 6.4.1 Following approval, foster carers enter their 12 month induction phase into the service and are required to complete the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care. The implementation of the new standards has been supported by ongoing workshops for carers alongside group supervision for supporting social workers. Aside from having the opportunity to meet members of the service who work with looked after children, there are also opportunities to ask questions and receive essential information about the agency's policies and procedures. In addition, carers are made familiar with the comprehensive training opportunities available throughout their fostering career.

6.5 THE FOSTERING TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

- 6.5.1 Each year, the service devises a comprehensive programme covering a wide variety of the skills and knowledge needed in order for carers to develop their careers in fostering. There were a total of 70 different courses on 38 subjects held over the year.
- 6.5.2 Each carer is required to have a record of their training and development needs, although other alternatives to formal training courses are encouraged in order to meet the minimum standards. This can include home study, training, reading and also on-line training. This can be especially helpful for carers who find it hard to attend training dates. There is also the opportunity for carers to complete an NVQ level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People or BTEC in Advanced Foster Care Skills.
- 6.5.3 In total, 550 delegates attended training courses held over the year, a similar number to the previous year. This demonstrates the commitment that the agency has towards training foster carers and illustrates the willingness of carers to develop their own knowledge and skill base.
- 6.5.4 75 households completed their CWDC workbooks in 2012/13.

SECTION 7 – SUPPORT FOR CARERS

- 7.0.1 Every foster carer from the agency receives regular supervision and support from a Fostering Social Worker. In addition, the agency provides foster carers with an Independent Advisor from the Fostering Network, a national organisation for foster carers. There are also local support groups of foster carers that meet regularly to discuss fostering issues and to enjoy occasional social events such as the annual awards presentation or a cheese and wine evening. Foster carers also have access to telephone support out of hours, and can access the Bedfordshire Foster Care Association, which is run by foster carers, for foster carers.
- 7.0.2 All new carers are also matched to a foster carer mentor who provides formal and practical guidance and support through the carer's first placement and beyond.

7.1 FOSTER CARERS' SUPPORT GROUPS

- 7.1.1 Foster Carers' Support Groups meet regularly in the north and south of the county. During the year, the Support Group North met 10 times and was attended by 122 delegates. During the same period, the Support Group South met 9 times and was attended by 62 delegates.
- 7.1.2 Some of the topics discussed included:- The Advice and Mediation Service, Mentoring, Payments and Allowances, The role of the Designated allegations Officer, and Internet Safety. There were also fun activities such as craft and opportunities to socialise informally.
- 7.1.3 A men's support group meets approximately every 4 months and was attended by 22 delegates throughout the year. The group enjoys an opportunity to socialise, with activities such as quizzes and one meeting this year covered the topic of Internet Safety.
- 7.1.4 The Family Link Support Group met twice during 2012/13 in the evenings attended by a total of 15 delegates. Some Family Link carers also attend the other support groups.
- 7.1.5 The support group specifically for family and friends carers has continued in 2012/2013. The group meeting quarterly and is open to foster carers, and those looking after related children subject to residence orders and Special Guardianship.
- 7.1.6 The support group for single carers has also continued, meeting 5 times and attended by 16 carers.
- 7.1.7 The annual Foster Carers Awards Ceremony and Social Event was held in May 2012 which was attended by 112 carers and 40 children over 2 years. Staff and elected members also attended, including the Directors of Children's Services from Bedford Borough and the Acting Director from Central Bedfordshire. 8 long service awards were given out on the evening for those achieving 5, 10, 15 and 20 years of service

7.2 THE MENTORING SCHEME

- 7.2.1 The Fostering Service offers peer mentoring to all new and existing carers. This service for carers, staffed by carers, offers encouragement, support, and opportunities for collaborative working. It also allows experienced foster carers the chance to develop professionally.
- 7.2.2 Carers who join the scheme are linked with a mentor who is an experienced foster carer themselves. Mentors are trained to support foster carers in their role. As well as offering

support to new carers, sometimes mentoring can be offered to experienced carers when they are undergoing a particularly challenging time. The service currently employs 6 mentors – who have varying experiences of fostering, including age ranges and types of approval. This year 3 new mentors have been recruited to the scheme, including a mentor for friends and family foster carers.

7.3 THE OUT OF HOURS SERVICE

- 7.3.1 Fostering Social Workers offer an 'out of hours' service for carers. A mobile telephone number has been dedicated to this service and all carers have access to the number. The service is available from 5.20pm – 11pm weekdays and from 9am-11pm during weekends and bank holidays. This service ensures that foster carers can readily access telephone support from an experienced fostering worker. Feedback from foster carers indicates that this service is highly valued.

7.4 THE FOSTER CARERS ASSOCIATION

- 7.4.1 The Bedfordshire Foster Carers Association is run by foster carers and provides local support and social activities for foster carers. Both Councils actively encourage and support the Association and provide financial support and services in kind to assist with producing and circulating a quality newsletter.

7.5 BAAF AND THE FOSTERING NETWORK

- 7.5.1 Both local authorities are full members of the British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) which is a leading national voluntary organisation working to promote best practice for children separated from their birth families. It is the leading organisation representing local authority and independent fostering agencies and provides training courses, practice guidance, research material, and a consultation and advice service to all its members.
- 7.5.2 The Fostering Service is a member of the BAAF Eastern Region, a group which meets quarterly to discuss and exchange best practice in the East Anglia region.
- 7.5.3 The Fostering Service is a member of The Fostering Network that works to promote fostering in the UK. All approved foster carers are also able to have individual membership funded by the service, as well as access to The Fostering Network Advice and Mediation Service.

7.6 OFSTED

- 7.6.1 Ofsted inspected the Fostering Service from 14 to 18 December 2012. The service was judged to be good overall.
- 7.6.2 Ofsted made 8 recommendations and an action plan to address the recommendations was drawn up. Action had been taken in respect of all recommendations by the 31st March 2013.

SECTION 8 - CONCLUSION

- 8.0.1 We have had another successful year, continuing to deliver a high quality service within a shared arrangement. The 4th year of this shared service has been positive and we continue to work in close partnership with both Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire to respond to the individual needs of each local council.
- 8.0.2 This year the service has continued to face the challenge from the significant increase in the referrals of children requiring a foster placement, due to the increase of looked after children in both councils. Whilst the overall number of children accommodated in in-house fostering placements has increased, the service has not been able to accommodate all children and the number of new placements made in Independent Fostering Agencies has significantly increased. In particular, both authorities have accommodated a number of sibling groups of three, four, five and six children, where we have struggled to find placements.
- 8.0.3 Our recruitment strategy continues to have a positive effect on our enquiry rate. The number of enquiries has been maintained and the number of applications from prospective carers has increased once again. The increase in the number of foster care approvals and a reduction in resignations of carers demonstrates the success of our recruitment and retention programme. We met our recruitment target of 50 new fostering households during 2012-13.
- 8.0.4 The increase in numbers of looked after children, and the change in regulations in 2011 concerning family and friends foster carers has continued to mean significantly more placements with relatives are subject to fostering regulations. The number of friends and family assessments has increased by 40%, and coupled with changes to the Family Justice system, the fostering service has had to increase the staffing resources to meet these requirements.
- 8.0.5 We again reviewed our advertising and marketing campaign to ensure maximum value for money and effectiveness. We have continued to develop our presence on social media as well as using local press advertising and some fixed venue adverts.
- 8.0.6 The service has to be able to respond to the identified need for more children from Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough to be appropriately placed with in house carers. Furthermore we need to ensure we replenish the number of approved carers who will resign or retire from fostering. . We therefore aim to recruit 70 new fostering households in 2013-14 including assessment of friends and family carers for children who otherwise would be placed outside their family network.
- 8.0.7 National reforms in Adoption and the Family Justice System will have an impact on the fostering service during 2013/14. Courts will require that fostering assessments of family and friends be completed in a much shorter timescale in order that care proceedings can be concluded within the 26 week statutory timescale. Developments in respect of 'Fostering for Adoption' will also require fostering services to assess and support carers who may go on to adopt children in their care. Plans are in place to respond to these developments in partnership with colleagues in the Looked after Children Teams and the Adoption Team.
- 8.0.8 In March 2012 following the annual review of the Shared Service Level Agreement it was decided to end the Shared Service Arrangement. This decision was subsequently reviewed in detail in Autumn 2012 with the decision being made for the disaggregation of the service to be effective from 1 January 2014. A project board comprising staff in both councils has been established to plan the arrangements for January 2014 and beyond. This planning process will involve consultation with key stakeholders and staff to ensure that an effective fostering service that meets the needs of children can be maintained and developed.

Report composed by:

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Central Bedfordshire Council
and Bedford Borough Council
working together

Appendix **C**

Private Fostering

Annual Report

For the period
2012/2013

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FOREWORD

For the year 2012-2013, Central Bedfordshire continued to host the Private Fostering Service as a shared service on behalf of both unitary authorities. This report describes the activity of Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council's Private Fostering Service during the period 1st April, 2012 to 31st March 2013, noting its achievements, clarifying the remit and focus of its work and identifying recommendations for the development of the service.

This annual report is part of the governance of the Private Fostering Provision required by Regulations.

It will be presented to the Directors of Children's Services in Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council. The Local Safeguarding Children's Boards in each authority will also consider this report in Summer 2013.

SECTION 1 - CONTEXT

1.0 DEFINITION OF PRIVATE FOSTERING

- 1.01 The Children Act 1989 (section 66) defines private fostering as occurring when a child under 16 (or under 18 if disabled) is cared for and provided with accommodation, for 28 days or more by somebody other than a close relative, legal guardian or someone with parental responsibility. Close relatives are defined in the Act as step parents, siblings, brothers or sisters of the parents and grandparents. A private fostering arrangement is one which is made privately, that is to say without the involvement of the Local Authority.
- 1.02 Private foster carers maybe within the extended family such as cousins or Great Grandparents, or they may be a friend of the family or other non relative such as the parents if a boyfriend or girlfriend of the child in question.
- 1.03 For the purposes of the Act, parent includes unmarried or putative father. Relative means as above stated, whether by full, half-blood or by affinity or step-parent. Affinity refers to the relationship resulting from marriage, between the husband and the blood relations of the wife and also between the wife and the blood relations of the husband.
- 1.04 Examples of private fostering arrangements are;
- Children sent from abroad to stay with another family, usually to improve their English or for other educational purposes.
 - Asylum seeking and refugee children placed with an adult known to them, their family or their community;
 - Teenagers who, having problematic relationships with their parents, are staying in short term arrangements with friends or other non relatives;
 - Children living with host families arranged by language schools or other organisations;
 - Local children living apart from their families;
 - Young people who have wanted to remain in this country to continue their education but whose parents have returned to their country of origin;
 - Young children whose birth families are struggling to cope and turn to a friend or distant relative to care for the child.

1.1 - BACKGROUND

- 1.1.1 The Private Fostering service, in line with the Adoption and Fostering service, is hosted in Central Bedfordshire Council but provides to both Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council under a Service Level Agreement.
- 1.1.2 Both Councils' Local Safeguarding Children's Boards received an annual report in Summer 2012 concerning private fostering activity in Bedfordshire during 2011-12.
- 1.1.3 The private fostering provision was inspected by Ofsted in each council in January/February 2012 as part of the Safeguarding and Looked After Children inspections. No concerns or actions were identified by the inspectors in respect of private fostering.

SECTION 2 – AWARENESS RAISING DUTY

2.0 – AWARENESS RAISING

- 2.0.1 The Council has continued to raise the awareness of private fostering within Children's Services, with fellow professionals, in partner agencies and within the community by a wide ranging and ongoing advertising and publicity programme. There has been a dedicated private fostering coordinator since 2010 initially covered by a locum worker and since March 2011 by a permanent worker.
- 2.02 The private fostering co-ordinator in conjunction with the Adoption & Fostering Service Recruitment Co-ordinator has continued to lead on the promotion of private fostering. Awareness raising activities have included;
 - Adverts in local papers and radio advertising took place.
 - Articles have been placed in "Primary Times" a publication distributed to families of school age children.
 - Presentation of the annual report to each council's Local Safeguarding board in Autumn 2012, for dissemination to all partner agencies, including the Police, Probation and Ambulance Service, Councils including Housing, Early Years Services, Youth Services, and Voluntary Organisations.
 - Update of Private fostering information on both Councils' websites.
 - LSCB training.
 - Information on both Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils' employees' wage slips
 - Information on "What to do when receiving a call or personal enquiry about private fostering" sent to all Customer First Points of Contact including reception staff and child care teams duty desks.

2.1 – AWARENESS RAISING 1ST APRIL 2012 – 31ST MARCH 2013

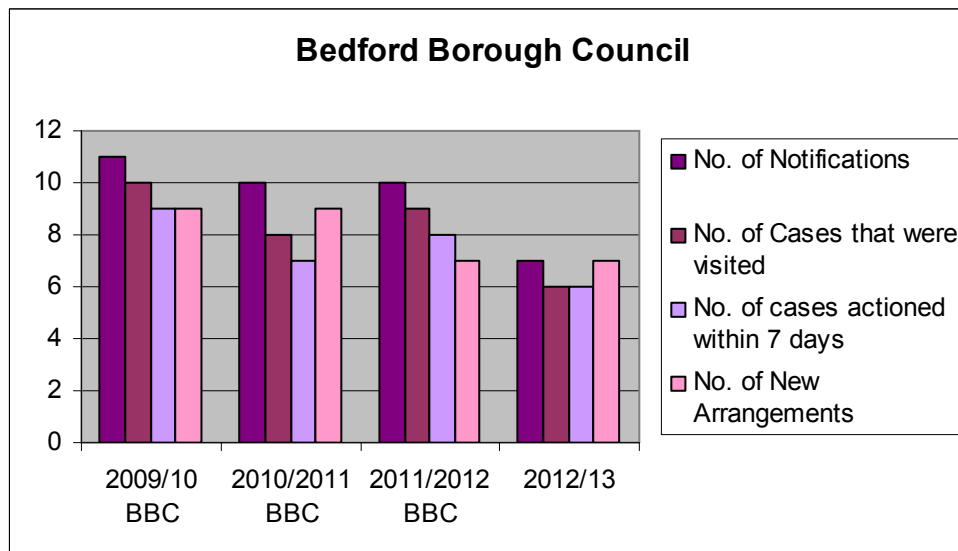
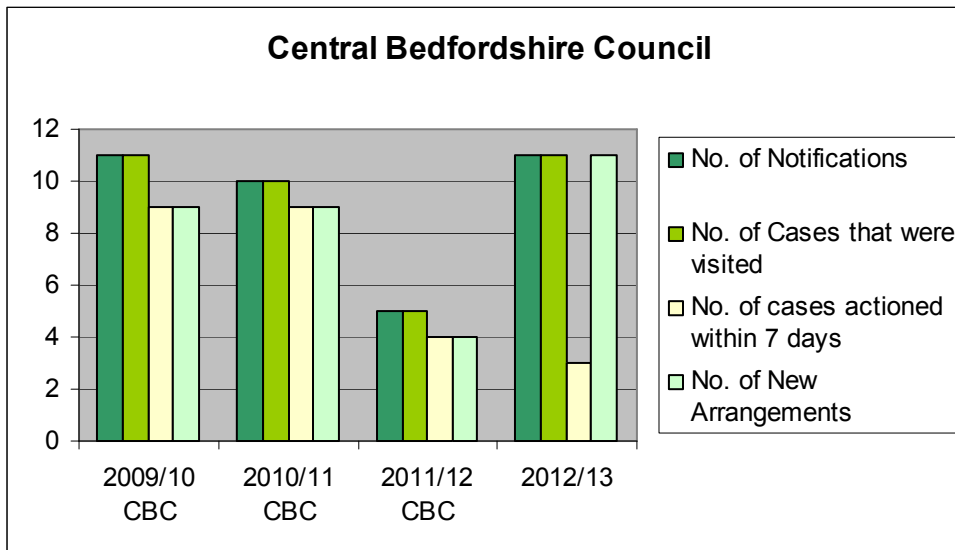
2.1.1 An annual plan is developed each year outlining activity to raise awareness amongst professionals and the local community

April 2012 – March 2012	Delivery of awareness-raising at 2-day safeguarding course run by LSCB. 16 courses in this period.
May 2011	Exhibition Stand – Canal Festival
July 2011	Exhibition Stand – Bedford Market
August 2011	Exhibition Stand – Bedford Market
January 2013	Reprinting and distribution of Private Fostering leaflet
February 2013	Private Fostering Campaign Week: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adverts in local newspaper, including in Punjabi and Polish • Press release • Editorials in both councils magazines • Articles in both councils' schools e-letters • Advert on both councils websites • Twitter and Facebook updates • Update in Members bulletin – Central Bedfordshire
March 2013	Advert in Bedford Hospital on location maps Distribution of posters and leaflets to GP surgeries, health centres, schools, council premises and faith organisations

SECTION 3 - PERFORMANCE

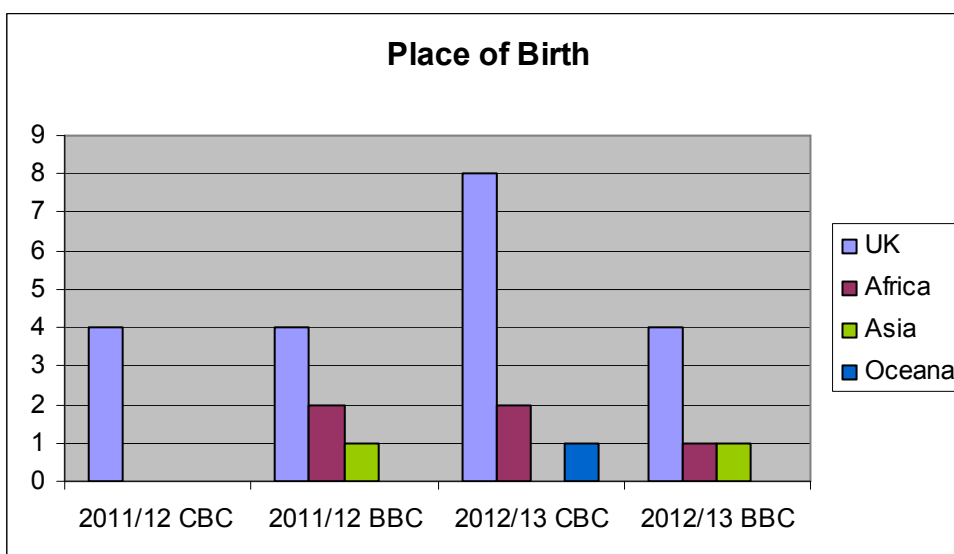
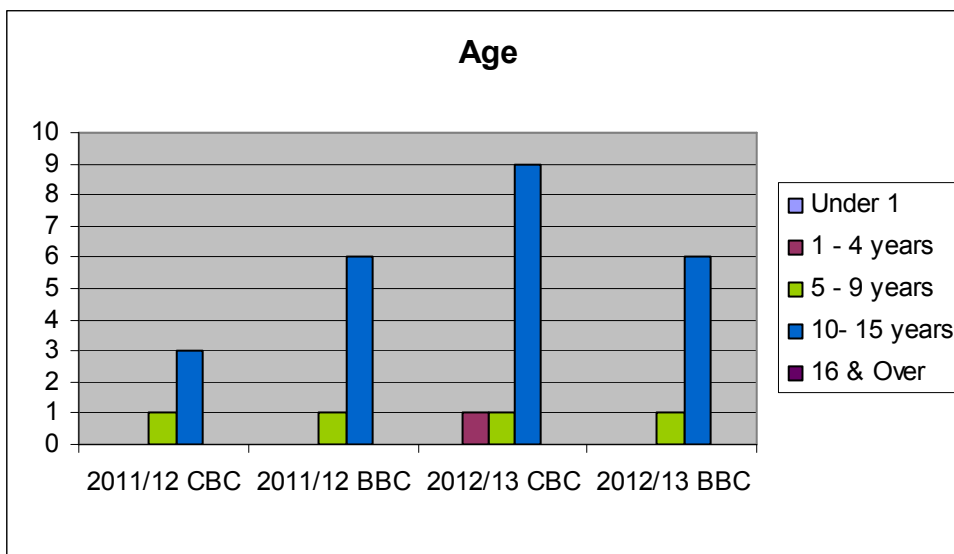
3.0 – STATISTICS

3.0.1 Each council has to submit data annually on the number of notifications received, how many of these notifications were responded to within 7 days, and how many of these cases were assessed as being a new private fostering arrangement.



3.0.2 Levels of activity across the councils increased overall with more notifications and new arrangements than in 2011-12. However activity in the Bedford Borough Council area declined and activity in Central Bedfordshire increased from the previous year. There is no identifiable reason why this should be the case. Overall numbers remain small, but in line with statistical neighbours.

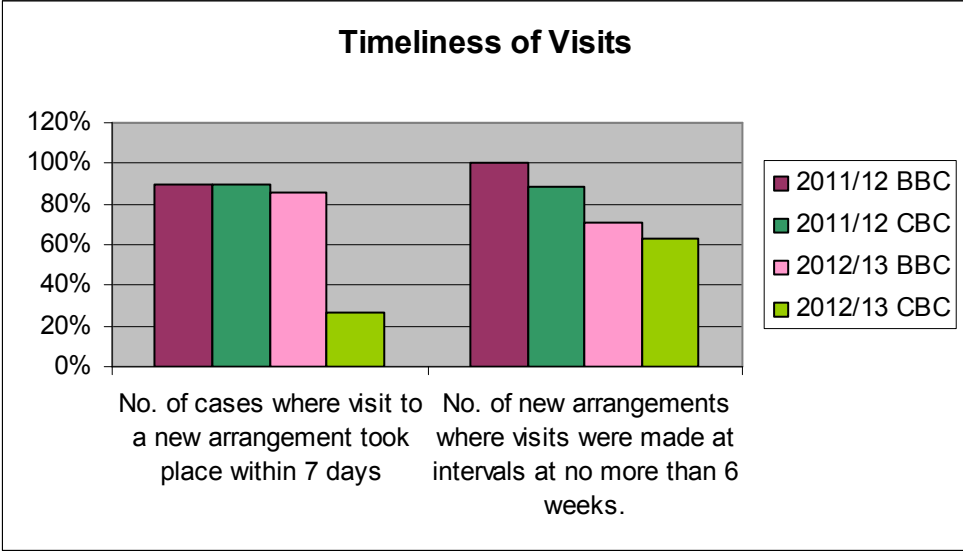
3.0.3 The councils also have to monitor the age and place of birth in respect of children in private fostering arrangements. The majority of children are white British and aged over 10 years at the time the private fostering arrangement commences.



3.1 – MEETING TIMESCALES

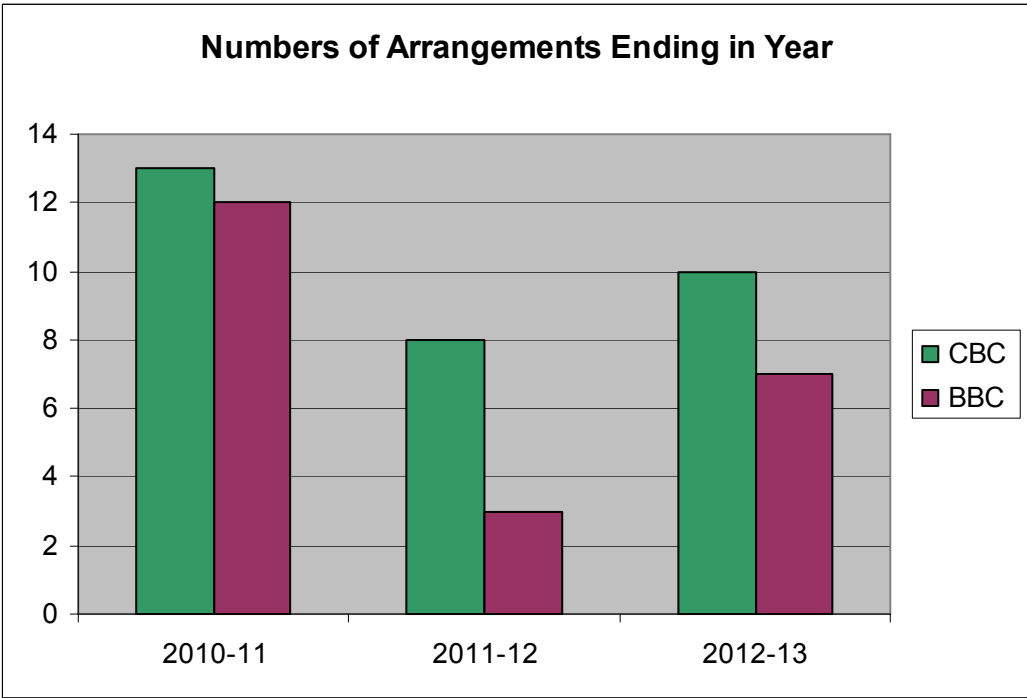
- 3.1.1 The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 outline statutory timescales for visiting new arrangements and subsequent visits. Following notification of a new or proposed arrangement, the council must visit within 7 working days. In regard to ongoing arrangements the council must visit a privately fostered child at least every six weeks in the first year of the private fostering arrangement, and at least every 12 weeks in the second or subsequent year.
- 3.1.2 Timeliness of visits has remained a challenge this year with performance falling in some areas. Initial visits within 7 days have been of particular concern and there have been a number of factors which have impacted on performance. In some cases there has been difficulty in contacting the family or finding them at home within the timescale. However the short notice but protracted sickness of a key member of staff, coupled with temporary

slippage attributed to difficulties experienced following the introduction of a new data system has also impacted.



3.1.4 Records are kept for the reasons that private fostering arrangements end. In 2012-13 the reasons were.

- 3 young people became 16
- 9 young people returned to care of their parents.
- 2 young people became looked after.
- 2 young person moved out of the area
- 1 young person moved to another relative



3.2 – SUITABILITY OF ARRANGEMENTS

- 3.1. All new private fostering arrangements have to be assessed and a report compiled as to the suitability to meet the needs of the child. The decision on suitability usually rests with the Head of Adoption and Fostering, with appropriate discussion or decision making from the Assistant Director in complex cases. In two cases there were some concerns about the arrangements could meet the needs of the children involved. This was resolved by the young people moving to more suitable homes without need to take formal action in respect of the private fostering arrangements.

SECTION 4 - SUPPORT TO YOUNG PEOPLE

4.0 – ADVOCACY SUPPORT

- 4.0.1 Upon visiting a child or young person in a private fostering arrangement for the first time the social worker gives the child a child friendly pack which explains about private fostering and gives information for the many services provided for young people across the appropriate council area and the contact details of NYAS should they need independent advocacy.

4.1 – SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE POST 16

- 4.1.1 The Leaving and After Care Teams in each council provide a service to all young people who are approaching their 16th birthday and beyond, and have been within the care system. This service is accessible for all young people in private fostering arrangements where they need accommodation or advice and guidance to make a successful transition to adulthood. This is important in private fostering as the legal age at which a child is no longer deemed to be privately fostered is 16 (18 if disabled) and for many young people their placement may end at 16 leaving them with little or no support.
- 4.1.2 A Supportive Lodging Scheme has been developed so that young people who have been in private fostering situations may be eligible for appropriate accommodation locally with carers who can offer them transitional support to help them learn to live independently.

SECTION 5 – SUMMARY & DEVELOPMENTS

- 5.1 The service continues to have a dedicated Private Fostering Coordinator which has enabled development and progression of the service, alongside the development of expertise in this practice area.
- 5.2 The number of notifications has gradually increased since 2006 when the requirement was first enacted and levels are now broadly similar to those of comparator authorities. Awareness- raising activities and advertising campaigns continue and there is a good level of awareness amongst local professionals. Neither council has any of the features that may impact on private fostering numbers, such as language schools, boarding schools, transient or migrant populations.
- 5.3 Action has been taken to address the issues which led to the poor performance in respect of timeliness of visits. The new client database in Central Bedfordshire has now been configured to enable referrals to be made easily and to give management information to support timely allocation of work. There are also contingency plans in place if the lead worker is absent for any unplanned reason.
- 5.4 Central Bedfordshire has continued on behalf of the two Councils to proactively promote private fostering awareness raising and to work with the children and young people in these situations to ensure they are safe, well cared for and reach their full potential to become positive citizens.
- 5.5 In March 2012 following the annual review of the Shared Service Level Agreement it was decided to end the Shared Service Arrangement. This decision was subsequently reviewed in detail in Autumn 2012 with the decision being made for the disaggregation of the service to be effective from 1 January 2014. A project board comprising staff in both councils has been established to plan the arrangements for January 2014 and beyond. This planning process will involve consultation with key stakeholders and staff to ensure that an effective private fostering service that meets the needs of children can be maintained and developed.

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Home to School Transport Policy consultation

Central
Bedfordshire

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny
Committee
3 September 2013

Cllr Sue Clark
Deputy Portfolio Holder Children's Services

Why change?

- New DfE guidance and best practice means we have to amend our policy
 - To change our appeals process
 - To reflect the evolving education landscape
- An opportunity to improve/clarify the policy
 - For parents/schools
 - For Council staff

Background

- The current Home to School Transport Policy was adopted in 2009
- The Council has a statutory requirement to meet the transport needs of eligible children
- Current budget £7.2m
- Achieved £2.25m efficiencies
- 6,267 pupils travel on 350 routes per day

Proposed changes/improvements

- Improved appeals process
- Clearer explanation of “*qualifying school*”
- Clearer definition of eligibility
- Clearer application/review process
- Focus on medical needs and SEN
- Align timescale for withdrawal of transport with best practice
- Support for 4 year olds

Consultation timescale

To ensure the Council complies with DfE guidance and timescales:

- Consultation to start 30 September 13
- To run for 28 school days
- Final policy to Overview & Scrutiny Dec 13
- Approval by Executive February 14
- Implementation September 2014

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Meeting: Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date: 03 September 2013
Subject: Work Programme 2013 – 2014 & Executive Forward Plan
Report of: Chief Executive
Summary: The report provides Members with details of the currently drafted Committee work programme and the latest Executive Forward Plan.

Contact Officer: Jonathon Partridge, Corporate Policy & Scrutiny Manager
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The work programme of the Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee will contribute indirectly to all 5 Council priorities.

Financial:

1. Not applicable.

Legal:

2. Not applicable.

Risk Management:

3. Not applicable.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

4. Not applicable.

Equalities/Human Rights:

5. Not applicable.

Public Health:

6. Not applicable.

Community Safety:

7. Not applicable.

Sustainability:

8. Not applicable.

Procurement:

9. Not applicable.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. **that the Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee**
 - (a) **considers and approves the work programme attached, subject to any further amendments it may wish to make;**
 - (b) **considers the Executive Forward Plan; and**
 - (c) **considers whether it wishes to add any further items to the work programme and/or establish any Task Forces to assist it in reviewing specific items.**

Work Programme

10. Attached at Appendix A is the currently drafted work programme for the Committee.
11. Also attached at Appendix B is the latest version of the Executive's Forward Plan so that Overview & Scrutiny Members are fully aware of the key issues Executive Members will be taking decisions upon in the coming months. Those items relating specifically to this Committee's terms of reference are shaded in light grey.
12. The Committee is now requested to consider the work programme attached and amend or add to it as necessary. This will allow officers to plan accordingly but will not preclude further items being added during the course of the year if Members so wish and capacity exists.

Task Forces

13. In addition to consideration of the work programme, Members may also wish to consider how each item will be reviewed i.e. by the Committee itself (over one or a number of Committee meetings) or by establishing a Member Task Force to review an item in greater depth and report back its findings.

Conclusion

14. Members are requested to consider and agree the attached work programme, subject to any further amendments/additions they may wish to make and highlight those items within it where they may wish to establish a Task Force to assist the Committee in its work.

Appendices:

Appendix A: Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2013/14

Appendix B: The latest Executive Forward Plan.

Appendix A

Work Programme for Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee 2013 - 2014

Ref	Indicative OSC Meeting Date	Report Title	Issue to be considered	Comment
1.	15 October 2013	Executive Member Update	To receive a brief verbal update from the Executive Member for Children's Services.	
2.	15 October 2013	LSCB Annual Report	To consider the Local Safeguarding Children Board's annual report for 2011/12.	
3.	15 October 2013	Disability Review Programme / Support and Aspiration	To receive a presentation regards the close down of the actions of the Disability Review Programme/ Support and Aspiration	
4.	15 October 2013	Annual Resilience Report		
5.	15 October 2013	Proposals for New School Places from Sept. 2016 (Dec. Executive) and refresh of School Organisation Plan	To receive a report regards proposals and the refresh of the Plan.	
6.	15 October 2013	Quarter 1 Budget Monitoring	To consider the directorate's capital & revenue budget monitoring information for the first quarter of 2013/14	
7.	15 October 2013	Quarter 1 Performance Monitoring	To consider performance monitoring information for the first quarter of 2013/14	
8.	13 December 2013	Executive Member Update	To receive a brief verbal update from the Executive Member for Children's Services.	
9.	13 December 2013	Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring	To consider performance monitoring information for the second quarter of 2013/14	

Ref	Indicative OSC Meeting Date	Report Title	Issue to be considered	Comment
10.	13 December 2013	Quarter 2 Budget Monitoring	To consider the directorate's capital & revenue budget monitoring information for the second quarter of 2013/14	
11.	13 December 2013	Consultation for Admissions Arrangement 2015/16		
12.	13 December 2013	Draft Capital Programme – 2014/15 to 2017/18	To consider the draft budget for the Directorate.	
13.	13 December 2013	Draft Revenue Budget and Fees and Charges 2014/15	To consider the draft budget and fees and charges for the Directorate.	
14.	21 January 2014	Executive Member Update	To receive a brief verbal update from the Executive Member for Children's Services.	
15.	21 January 2014	Customer Feedback Annual Report	To consider the Council's annual report regarding Children's Services complaints and compliments	
16.	25 February 2014	Executive Member Update	To receive a brief verbal update from the Executive Member for Children's Services.	
17.	01 April 2014	Executive Member Update	To receive a brief verbal update from the Executive Member for Children's Services.	
18.	01 April 2014	Quarter 3 Performance Monitoring	To consider performance monitoring information for the third quarter of 2013/14	
19.	01 April 2014	Quarter 3 Budget Monitoring	To consider the directorate's capital & revenue budget monitoring information for the third quarter of 2013/14	
20.	06 May 2014	Executive Member Update	To receive a brief verbal update from the Executive Member for Children's Services.	
21.	17 June 2014	Executive Member Update	To receive a brief verbal update from the Executive Member for Children's Services.	

Appendix B

Central Bedfordshire Council Forward Plan of Key Decisions 1 September 2013 to 31 August 2014

- 1) During the period from **1 September 2013 to 31 August 2014**, Central Bedfordshire Council plans to make key decisions on the issues set out below. “Key decisions” relate to those decisions of the Executive which are likely:
 - to result in the incurring of expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant (namely £200,000 or above per annum) having regard to the budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or
 - to be significant in terms of their effects on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in the area of Central Bedfordshire.

- 2) The Forward Plan is a general guide to the key decisions to be determined by the Executive and will be updated on a monthly basis. Key decisions will be taken by the Executive as a whole. The Members of the Executive are:

Cllr James Jamieson	Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Executive
Cllr Maurice Jones	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources
Cllr Mark Versallion	Executive Member for Children’s Services
Cllr Mrs Carole Hegley	Executive Member for Social Care, Health and Housing
Cllr Nigel Young	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities – Strategic Planning and Economic Development
Cllr Brian Spurr	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Services
Cllr Mrs Tricia Turner MBE	Executive Member for Partnerships
Cllr Richard Stay	Executive Member for External Affairs

- 3) Whilst the majority of the Executive’s business at the meetings listed in this Forward Plan will be open to the public and media organisations to attend, there will inevitably be some business to be considered that contains, for example, confidential, commercially sensitive or personal information.

This is a formal notice under the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Meetings and Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012 that part of the Executive meeting listed in this Forward Plan will be held in private because the agenda and reports for the meeting will contain exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

- 4) Those items identified for decision more than one month in advance may change in forthcoming Plans. Each new Plan supersedes the previous Plan. Any person who wishes to make representations to the Executive about the matter in respect of which the decision is to be made should do so to the officer whose telephone number and e-mail address are shown in the Forward Plan. Any correspondence should be sent to the contact officer at the relevant address as shown below. General questions about the Plan such as specific dates, should be addressed to the Committee Services Manager, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford SG17 5TQ.
- 5) The agendas for meetings of the Executive will be published as follows:

Meeting Date	Publication of Agenda
14 May 2013	2 May 2013
25 June 2013	13 June 2013
13 August 2013	1 August 2013
24 September 2013	12 September 2013
5 November 2013	24 October 2013
10 December 2013	28 November 2013
14 January 2014	02 January 2014
4 February 2014	23 January 2014
18 March 2014	6 March 2014
22 April 2014	10 April 2014
27 May 2014	15 May 2014

Central Bedfordshire Council

Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1 September 2013 to 31 August 2014

Key Decisions

Date of Publication: 01.08.13

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
1.	Framework Agreement for Care Homes With and Without Nursing in Central Bedfordshire -	To ask the Executive to: - authorise the arrangements for entering into the Framework Agreement for care homes within Central Bedfordshire which was approved on 6 November 2012; - approve the successful providers to be accepted onto the Framework Agreement (if available); and - agree the approach to ensuring the quality of care homes by implementing the new Quality Monitoring System in conjunction with the Framework Agreement.	24 September 2013	Care home providers at the meeting of the Provider Forum in December 2012 and the special meeting of care home providers on 28 May 2013.	Report	Executive Member for Social Care, Health and Housing Comments by 23/08/13 to Contact Officer: Elizabeth Saunders, Assistant Director Commissioning Email: elizabeth.saunders@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 6494

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
2.	Planning Enforcement Plan -	To adopt the Planning Enforcement Plan.	24 September 2013		Planning Enforcement Plan	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Strategic Planning and Economic Development Comments by 23/08/13 to Contact Officer: Sue Cawthra, Enforcement & Appeals Team Leader Email: sue.cawthra@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 4369
3.	Community Infrastructure Levy -	To approve the consultation and subsequent Submission of the Community Infrastructure Levy draft charging schedule.	24 September 2013		Report	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Strategic Planning and Economic Development Comments by 23/08/13 to Contact Officer: Jonathan Baldwin, Senior Planning Officer Email: jonathan.baldwin@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 5510

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
4.	Joint Venture Proposal -	To receive a report on the proposals for joint ventures.	24 September 2013		Report	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources Comments by 23/08/13 to Contact Officer: Nick Kealey, Head of Property Assets Email: nick.kealey@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0330 300 5769
5.	Leisure Strategy -	To adopt the Leisure Strategy: Chapter 4: Physical Activity Strategy.	24 September 2013	All Member Presentation of Draft Strategy on 10 July 2013. Draft Strategy to Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 July 2013. Draft Strategies to Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5 September 2013.	Chapter 4, Physical Activity Strategy	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Services Comments by 23/08/13 to Contact Officer: Jill Dickinson, Head of Leisure Services Email: jill.dickinson@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 4258
6.	Capital Programme Review 2013/14 -	To receive the outcome of the Capital Programme 2013/14 review.	24 September 2013		Report	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources Comments by 23/08/13 to Contact Officer: Charles Warboys, Chief Finance Officer Email: charles.warboys@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 6147

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
7.	Revenue, Capital and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Quarter 1 Budget Monitor Reports -	To consider the revenue, capital and HRA quarter 1 budget monitoring report.	24 September 2013		Report	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources Comments by 23/08/13 to Contact Officer: Charles Warboys, Chief Finance Officer Email: charles.warboys@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 6147
8.	Award of Preferred Bidder status to the selected contractor under the BEaR Project -	The report will be seeking the Executive to endorse the selection of the preferred bidder made by the BEaR Project Board to allow the Project Team to finalise and award the Contract.	24 September 2013	Consultees and dates to be confirmed, however this item will go through Overview and Scrutiny at the beginning of September.	A full report and presentation will be provided alongside the Executive report.	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Services Comments by 23/08/13 to Contact Officer: Ben Finlayson, BEaR Project Manager Email: ben.finlayson@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 6277
9.	School Funding Reform -	To consider the School Funding Reform: 2014/15 Revenue Funding Arrangements.	24 September 2013	In conjunction with the Schools Forum all schools in Central Bedfordshire will be consulted on any changes to schools funding. Date and method to be agreed shortly.	DfE - School Funding Reform: Findings from the Review of 2013/14 Arrangements and Changes for 2014/15 DfE - 2014/15 Revenue Funding Arrangements	Executive Member for Children's Services Comments by 23/08/13 to Contact Officer: Dawn Hill, Senior Finance Manager - Children's Services Email: dawn.hill@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 6269

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
10.	Green Garden Waste -	To approve spend relating to the procurement of treatment and disposal services for green garden waste collected within Central Bedfordshire.	24 September 2013		Report	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Services Comments by 23/08/13 to Contact Officer: Tracey Harris (Waste), Head of Waste Services Email: tracey.harris2@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 4646
11.	Award of Responsive and Programmed Electrical Maintenance Contract 2014 to 2017 to Council Housing Properties -	To award the Contract to the preferred contractor for this service.	5 November 2013		Report with exempt appendices	Executive Member for Social Care, Health and Housing Comments by 04/10/13 to Contact Officer: Basil Quinn, Housing Asset Manager Performance or Peter Joslin, Housing Asset Manager Email: basil.quinn@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 5118 or peter.joslin@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 5395

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
12.	Flitwick Leisure Centre Feasibility Study -	To consider the Flitwick Leisure Centre Feasibility Study.	5 November 2013	Members, local community and key stakeholders.	Flitwick Leisure Centre Feasibility Study	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Services Comments by 04/10/13 to Contact Officer: Jill Dickinson, Head of Leisure Services Email: jill.dickinson@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 4258
13.	Admissions Arrangements and Co-ordinated Scheme 2015/16 -	To approve commencement of consultation on the Council's Admissions Arrangements and co-ordinated scheme for the academic year 2015/16.	5 November 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Governing bodies of Local Authority schools. b) All other admission authorities within the relevant area. c) Parents of children between the ages of two and eighteen. d) Other persons in the relevant area who have an interest in the proposed admissions. e) Adjoining neighbouring authorities. f) The Church of England and Catholic Diocese. <p>Method of consultation: Website. In addition: Letter to a, b, e and f. Information distributed to academies/schools and nurseries, notice in the local media to consult with c and d.</p>	Report	Executive Member for Children's Services Comments by 04/10/13 to Contact Officer: Pete Dudley, Assistant Director Children's Services (Learning & Strategic Commissioning) Email: pete.dudley@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 4203

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
14.	Dukeminster Extra Care Housing Scheme, Dunstable -	To seek Executive approval to award the build contract.	5 November 2013	Consultation with stakeholder groups (such as the Older Peoples Reference Group and Sheltered Tenants Action Group) previously undertaken as part of initial scheme proposals presented to the Executive on 5 February 2013. Further consultation with these stakeholders, relevant technical officers and Heads of Service continuing as part of the detailed design phase.	Report - may contain exempt appendices	Executive Member for Social Care, Health and Housing Comments by 04/10/13 to Contact Officer: Bernard Carter, Client Manager, Extra Care Expansion Project Email: bernard.carter@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 4175

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
15.	Arlesey Nursery School and Childcare Centre -	To seek approval to commence statutory consultation and to publish statutory notices on the proposal to close Arlesey Nursery School and Childcare Centre to enable it to merge with Gothic Mede Academy with effect from September 2014.	5 November 2013	Statutory consultation between 11 November and 20 December 2013. Representation period to a statutory notice between 13 January and 28 February 2014. Method of consultation: Consultation documents, school and Academy website, notices in local press, public meetings with: Teachers and other staff at the school and Academy Unions. Families of children at the school. Local Schools in the area. Central Bedfordshire Council. Church of England Diocese. Constituency MP. Arlesey Town Council.	Report	Executive Member for Children's Services Comments by 04/10/13 to Contact Officer: Pete Dudley, Assistant Director Children's Services (Learning & Strategic Commissioning) Email: pete.dudley@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 4203

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
16.	Central Bedfordshire Council's Equality Strategy -	To approve the Council's Equality Strategy which sets out the Council's vision and approach to ensuring all sections of the community get high quality services appropriate to their needs and also sets out how the Council will meet its legal responsibilities to ensure consideration of equality is integrated in to its service planning, delivery and human resource systems.	5 November 2013	Public Consultation, Equality Forum and Overview and Scrutiny Committees.	Draft Equality Strategy 2013-16	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources Comments by 04/10/13 to Contact Officer: Clare Harding, Corporate Policy Advisor (Equality & Diversity) Email: clare.harding@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 6109
17.	Land East of Biggleswade Phase 4 -	To consider land East of Biggleswade Phase 4.	5 November 2013		Report - Exempt	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources Comments by 04/10/13 to Contact Officer: Nick Kealey, Head of Property Assets Email: nick.kealey@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 5769

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
18.	Proposals for Commissioning of New School Places for Implementation in September 2015 and Proposals for Commissioning of New School Places for Implementation in September 2016 -	1) Determination of proposals for commissioning of new school places for implementation in September 2015; and 2) to approve commencement of consultations for proposals for commissioning of new school places for implementation in September 2016.	10 December 2013	<p>For proposals for New School Places for implementation in September 2015:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the governing body of the schools which are the subject of proposals; • families of pupils, teachers and other staff at the schools; • the governing bodies, teachers and other staff of any other school that may be affected; • families of any pupils at any other school who may be affected by the proposals including families of pupils at feeder schools; • trade unions who represent staff at the schools and representatives of trade unions of any other staff at schools who may be affected by the proposals; • Constituency MPs for the schools that are the subject of the proposals; • the local parish council where the school that is the subject of the proposals is situated <p>Consultation period between May and November 2013 including press releases, public meetings, statutory notices.</p>	Report and Outcome of Consultation	<p>Executive Member for Children's Services Comments by 09/11/13 to Contact Officer: Rob Parsons, Head of School Organisation and Capital Planning Email: rob.parsons@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 5572</p>

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
19.	Draft Capital Programme - 2014/15 to 2017/18 -	To consider the draft Capital Programme for 2014/15 to 2017/18.	10 December 2013		Report	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources Comments by 09/11/13 to Contact Officer: Charles Warboys, Chief Finance Officer Email: charles.warboys@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 6147
20.	Draft Revenue Budget and Fees and Charges 2014/15 -	To consider the draft revenue budget for 2014/15, including the draft fees and charges.	10 December 2013		Report	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources Comments by 09/11/13 to Contact Officer: Charles Warboys, Chief Finance Officer Email: charles.warboys@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 6147

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
21.	Draft Housing Revenue Account Budget and Business Plan 2014/15 -	To consider the draft Housing Revenue Account Budget and Business Plan 2014/15.	10 December 2013		Report	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources, Executive Member for Social Care, Health and Housing Comments by 09/11/13 to Contact Officer: Charles Warboys, Chief Finance Officer Email: charles.warboys@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 6147
22.	Revenue, Capital and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Quarter 2 Budget Monitor Reports -	To consider the revenue, capital and HRA quarter 2 budget monitoring report.	10 December 2013		Report	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources Comments by 09/11/13 to Contact Officer: Charles Warboys, Chief Finance Officer Email: charles.warboys@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 6147

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
23.	Determination of the Statutory Proposal of the Governing Body of Pulford CoE VA Lower School, Leighton Buzzard -	Determination of the statutory proposal of the Governing Body of Pulford Church of England Voluntary Aided Lower School, Pulford Road, Leighton Buzzard, to enlarge the permanent capacity of the school from 150 places to 225 places with effect from September 2014.	10 December 2013	<p>Statutory consultation between 13 May and 17 June 2013. Representation period to a statutory notice between 19 September and 17 October 2013. Method of Consultation: Consultation documents, school website, notices in local press, public meetings with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and other staff at the school • Unions • Families of children at the school • Local Schools in the area of Central Bedfordshire Council • The Pulford Trust • Church of England Diocese • Constituency MP • Leighton Buzzard Town Council. 	Report and the report of the Governing Body. Consultation documents produced, statutory notices served, representations received.	<p>Executive Member for Children's Services Comments by 09/11/13 to Contact Officer: Pete Dudley, Assistant Director Children's Services (Learning & Strategic Commissioning) Email: pete.dudley@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 4203</p>

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
24.	Central Bedfordshire's Flood and Water Management Act 2010 Duties -	To approve a local flood risk strategy for Central Bedfordshire and to create a Sustainable Urban Drainage Advisory Board.	14 January 2014	<p>CBC is required under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 to produce a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. The draft strategy will be subject to public consultation. Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee will consider the draft strategy and the public consultation response to the strategy in August/September 2013.</p> <p>Following Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs confirmation of the mandatory sustainable drainage application processes, CBC will also be required to establish a SUDS Approval Board to evaluate, approve and adopt suitable SUDS measures for all new developments.</p>	Summary of Flood and Water Management Act Draft Local Flood Risk Management Strategy	<p>Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Services Comments by 13/12/13 to Contact Officer: Iain Finnigan, Senior Engineer - Policy and Flood Risk Management Email: iain.finnigan@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 4351</p>

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
25.	Consultation on School Funding 2013 -	To consider the changes to the funding arrangements for schools for 2014/15, which have come about as a consequence of the national review of the changes made in 2013/14.	14 January 2014		Report	Executive Member for Children's Services Comments by 13/12/13 to Contact Officer: Pete Dudley, Assistant Director Children's Services (Learning & Strategic Commissioning) Email: pete.dudley@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 4203
26.	Leisure Strategy -	To adopt Leisure Strategy: Chapter 2 - Recreation & Open Space Strategy, Chapter 3 - Playing Pitch Strategy, Overarching Leisure Strategy.	18 March 2014	Draft strategies to Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 January 2014.	Chapter 2: Recreation & Open Space Strategy Chapter 3: Playing Pitch Strategy Overarching Leisure Strategy Document	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Services Comments by 17/02/14 to Contact Officer: Jill Dickinson, Head of Leisure Services Email: jill.dickinson@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 4258
27.	Revenue, Capital and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Quarter 3 Budget Monitoring Reports -	To consider the revenue, capital and HRA quarter 3 budget monitoring report.	18 March 2014		Report	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources Comments by 17/03/14 to Contact Officer: Charles Warboys, Chief Finance Officer Email: charles.warboys@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 6147

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
28.	Admission Arrangements and Co-ordinated Scheme 2014/15 -	Determination of the Council's Admissions Arrangements and co-ordinated scheme for the academic year 2014/15.	18 March 2014		Report	Executive Member for Children's Services Comments by 17/02/14 to Contact Officer: Pete Dudley, Assistant Director Children's Services (Learning & Strategic Commissioning) Email: pete.dudley@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 4203
29.	Arlesey Nursery School and Childcare Centre -	Determination of the statutory proposal to close Arlesey Nursery School and Childcare Centre to enable it to merge with Gothic Mede Academy with effect from September 2014.	22 April 2014	Statutory consultation between 11 November and 20 December 2013. Representation period to a statutory notice between 13 January and 28 February 2014. Method of consultation: Consultation documents, school and Academy website, notices in local press, public meetings with: Teachers and other staff at the school and Academy Unions. Families of children at the school. Local Schools in the area. Central Bedfordshire Council. Church of England Diocese. Constituency MP. Arlesey Town Council.	Report Consultation documents produced, statutory notices served, representations received.	Executive Member for Children's Services Comments by 21/03/14 to Contact Officer: Pete Dudley, Assistant Director Children's Services (Learning & Strategic Commissioning) Email: pete.dudley@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 4203

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
NON KEY DECISIONS						
30.	Minerals and Waste Core Strategy -	To recommend to Council the adoption of the Minerals and Waste Core Strategy.	24 September 2013	A wide range of stakeholders were involved in consultations undertaken from 2006 to 2012, using methods which include an internet portal, deposit of hard copies at points of presence, and displaying the Core Strategy on the Council website. Consultees included the Parish Councils, statutory bodies, special interest groups, minerals industry, waste management industry, and individuals who had expressed an interest at previous consultations.	Minerals and Waste Core Strategy and the Inspector's report following the Examination in public.	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Strategic Planning and Economic Development Comments by 23/08/13 to Contact Officer: Roy Romans, Minerals and Waste Team Leader Email: roy.romans@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 6039
31.	Quarter 1 Performance Report -	To consider the quarter 1 performance report.	24 September 2013		Report	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources Comments by 23/08/13 to Contact Officer: Elaine Malarky, Head of Programmes & Performance Management Email: elaine.malarky@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 5517

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
32.	Quarter 2 Performance Report -	To consider the quarter 2 performance report.	10 December 2013		Report	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources Comments by 09/11/13 to Contact Officer: Elaine Malarky, Head of Programmes & Performance Management Email: elaine.malarky@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 5517
33.	Capital Programme - 2014/15 to 2017/18 -	To recommend to Council the proposed Capital Programme for 2014/15 to 2017/18 for approval.	4 February 2014		Report	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources Comments by 03/01/14 to Contact Officer: Charles Warboys, Chief Finance Officer Email: charles.warboys@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 6147
34.	Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Strategy 2014-2018 -	To recommend to Council the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Strategy 2014-2018 for approval.	4 February 2014		Report	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources Comments by 03/01/14 to Contact Officer: Charles Warboys, Chief Finance Officer Email: charles.warboys@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 6147

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
35.	Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan 2014/15 - 2017/18 -	To recommend to Council the Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial, including the fees and charges, Plan 2014/15 - 2017/18 for approval.	4 February 2014		Report	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources Comments by 03/01/14 to Contact Officer: Charles Warboys, Chief Finance Officer Email: charles.warboys@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 6147
36.	Housing Revenue Account Budget and Business Plan 2014/15 -	To recommend to Council the Housing Revenue Account Budget and Business Plan 2014/15 for approval.	4 February 2014		Report	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources, Executive Member for Social Care, Health and Housing Comments by 03/01/14 to Contact Officer: Charles Warboys, Chief Finance Officer Email: charles.warboys@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 6147
37.	Community Safety Partnership Plan and Priorities -	To recommend to Council to approve the Community Safety Partnership Plan and Priorities for 2014 - 2015.	18 March 2014	Strategic Assessment & Partnership Plan will be considered by the Community Safety Partnership Executive, the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Local Strategic Partnership.	Strategic Assessment Priorities & Community Safety Partnership Plan 2014 - 2015	Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Services Comments by 17/02/14 to Contact Officer: Joy Craven, CSP Manager Email: joy.craven@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 4649

Ref No.	Issue for Key Decision by the Executive	Intended Decision	Indicative Meeting Date	Consultees and Date/Method	Documents which may be considered	Portfolio Holder and Contact officer (method of comment and closing date)
38.	Quarter 3 Performance Report -	To consider the quarter 3 performance report.	18 March 2014		Report	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources Comments by 17/02/14 to Contact Officer: Elaine Malarky, Head of Programmes & Performance Management Email: elaine.malarky@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 300 5517

Postal address for Contact Officers: Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford SG17 5TQ

**Central Bedfordshire Council
Forward Plan of Decisions on Key Issues**

For the Municipal Year 2012/13 the Forward Plan will be published on the thirtieth day of each month or, where the thirtieth day is not a working day, the working day immediately proceeding the thirtieth day, or in February 2013 when the plan will be published on the twenty-eighth day:

Date of Publication	Period of Plan
02.04.13	1 May 2013 – 30 April 2014
01.05.13	1 June 2013 – 31 May 2014
31.05.13	1 July 2013 – 30 June 2014
02.07.13	1 August 2013 – 31 July 2014
01.08.13	1 September 2013 – 31 August 2014
30.08.13	1 October 2013 – 30 September 2014
02.10.13	1 November 2013 – 31 October 2014
31.10.13	1 December 2013 – 30 November 2014
28.11.13	1 January 2014 – 31 December 2014
02.01.14	1 February 2014 – 31 January 2015
30.01.14	1 March 2014 – 28 February 2015
28.02.14	1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015

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