

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

**This meeting
may be filmed.***



**Central
Bedfordshire**

please ask for Leslie Manning
direct line 0300 300 5132
date 3 November 2016

NOTICE OF MEETING

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Date & Time

Monday, 14 November 2016 at 10.00 a.m.

Venue at

Room 15, Priory House, Chicksands, Shefford

Richard Carr
Chief Executive

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

Elected Members (voting)

Cllrs Mrs C Hegley (Chairman), Mrs A L Dodwell (Vice-Chairman),
Mrs A Barker, N B Costin, Mrs S A Goodchild, Mrs T Stock, M A G Versallion
and B Wells

[Named Substitutes:

Cllrs R D Berry, D Bowater, Mrs D B Gurney and G Tubb]

Officers (voting)

Director of Children's Services
Director of Social Care, Health and Housing (or the Assistant Director
Housing Services or their representative if the Director is unable to attend)
Assistant Director Leisure, Libraries and Countryside (or their representative if
the Assistant Director is unable to attend)

Carers (non-voting)

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

***Please note that phones or other equipment may be used to film, audio record, tweet or blog from this meeting. No part of the meeting room is exempt from public filming.**

The use of arising images or recordings is not under the Council's control.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. **Minutes**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 5 September 2016 (copy attached).

3. **Members' Interests**

To receive from Members any declarations of interest.

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

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

Reports

- | Item | Subject | Page Nos. |
|------|--|-----------|
| 5. | Emotional Wellbeing of Children and Young People

To receive a presentation on the emotional wellbeing of children and young people in care. | |
| 6. | Fostering Agency Report - Quarter 2 (1 July - 30 September 2016)

To consider a report outlining the activity in the Fostering Service from July to September 2016. | * 13 - 22 |
| 7. | Six Monthly Report in Respect of the Adoption Service - 1 April to 30 September 2016

To consider a report outlining the activity in the Adoption Service from April to September 2016. | * 23 - 28 |
| 8. | Exclusion of the Press and Public

To consider whether to pass a resolution under section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the Press and Public from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that the consideration of the item is likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act. | |

Exempt Report

<i>Item</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Exempt Para.</i>	<i>Page Nos.</i>
9.	Interim Report - Virtual School for Looked After Children	* 2	29 - 58

To consider a report which provides information on the role of the Virtual School and the unvalidated outcomes at Key Stages 1, 2 and 4 for Looked After Children in Central Bedfordshire in the Academic Year 2015/16. It also identifies the steps the Virtual School is taking in the current Academic Year 2016/17 in partnership with other agencies, including schools and social care, to raise the achievement and progress of all Looked After Children.

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Room 15, Priory House, Chicksands, Shefford on Monday, 5 September 2016

PRESENT

Elected Members (voting)

Cllrs Mrs C Hegley (Chairman)
Mrs A L Dodwell (Vice-Chairman)
Mrs A Barker
Mrs S A Goodchild
Mrs T Stock
M A G Versallion

Officers (voting)

Mr H Griffin, Active Lifestyles Manager
Mrs J Ogley, Director of Social Care, Health and Housing

Apologies for Absence: Mr P Albon, Carer
Cllr N B Costin
Mrs J Dickinson, Assistant Director Leisure, Libraries and
Countryside
Mrs S Harrison, Director of Children's Services
Mr D Thorne, Carer

Members in Attendance: Cllr Mrs D B Gurney

Officers in Attendance:	Ms A Craig	– Practice Manager, Fostering
	Ms G Farmer	– Adoption Panel Advisor
	Mr G Jones	– Assistant Director Children's Services Operations
	Mr L Manning	– Committee Services Officer
	Miss N Phillips	– Practice Manager, Adoption
	Ms M Short	– Participation Officer, Professional Standards
	Mr E Wong	– Head of Corporate Parenting

Others in Attendance:	Ambassadors	– for Children in Care Council
	Representatives	– Children in Care Council
	Mrs T McDonald	– Designated Nurse, Looked After Children (NHS Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group)

CPP/16/9. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendment:

Minute CPP/16/5 – Agency Report Quarter 4 – Fostering 1 January-31 March 2016

Amend the first sentence of paragraph six by deleting the words ‘and the reasons for’ and inserting in their place the words ‘which would indicate if there was a’.

CPP/16/10. Members' Interests

Councillor Mrs A Barker declared an interest as a member of the Council’s Adoption Panel.

Councillor Mrs A L Dodwell declared an interest as a member of the Council’s Fostering Panel.

CPP/16/11. Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman advised the meeting that she and the Vice-Chairman had attended the opening of the care leavers’ hub at the Parkside Family Centre in Houghton Regis. A Member commented that she had also attended the opening and expressed the view that the hub complimented the other services available in the building as well as providing a sense of purpose. The Assistant Director Children’s Services Operations then commended the work undertaken on the hub project by the Head of Corporate Parenting and his team. He stressed that that there had been no additional accommodation cost incurred by the Council because the hub was based in the Family Centre. The Assistant Director added that the hub’s location in Houghton Regis was highly accessible care leavers in the south of Central Bedfordshire, in contrast to the existing hub which was based to the north in Bedford, and represented the ideal location for possible service expansion in the future.

The Chairman then referred to the forthcoming Children in Care Council awards in October and the possibility of obtaining sponsorship. She acknowledged that there was probably insufficient time to involve sponsors in these awards though she had emailed all Central Bedfordshire Councillors seeking their assistance and some form of contribution.

CPP/16/12. Central Bedfordshire Council Looked After Children Annual Report - 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016

The Panel considered a report from the Director of Nursing and Quality NHS Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG) which described the achievements, progress and challenges in meeting the health needs of Central

Bedfordshire's children and young people in care during the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

The Designated Nurse for Looked After Children introduced the Annual Report. She worked through the report highlighting particular issues for Members' information. However, the Chairman expressed concern that the report focused on the health care process and failed to provide information on what the health of the Looked After Children and young people was actually like. The Designated Nurse assured the meeting that most of the children and young people were in good physical health although, from the results of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs), it was apparent that some were experiencing emotional difficulties. Discussion followed on this issue during the meeting was advised that some children, including some unaccompanied asylum seeker children (UASC), had undergone traumatic experiences and the Head of Corporate Parenting explained that this had led to the distortion of the average score. The SDQ results therefore needed to be 'unpicked' to be fully understood. However, further Member comment followed during which it was commented that the number of unhappy children within Central Bedfordshire had been increasing before the growth of UASC. The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations explained that the growth could be due to a number of reasons and, whilst emphasising that the figures were not far from Central Bedfordshire's statistical neighbours, acknowledged that there was an underlying issue. He suggested that a 'deep dive' session be held which would include the experiences of individuals so Members would gain an insight into the scale of the matter.

Further discussion followed during which Members sought clarification and sought views on a number of points including the absence of GP representation at the Corporate Parenting Panel. In response the Designated Nurse first explained that all GPs operated on the same system and were aware through electronic means as to whether or not a child was a Looked After Child. The exception was an out of area Looked After Child where it was the child's social worker's responsibility to notify the GP. She added that all services, including GPs, attended operational group meetings and so were fully briefed.

Consideration was given to health assessments for out of County placements, and the delays experienced. The Designated Nurse explained the reasons for this and the measures taken to speed up the process, the success of which would hopefully be reflected in the next Annual Report.

NOTED

the Looked After Children Annual Health Report for 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

RESOLVED

- 1 that a 'deep dive' session on Looked After Children's and young people's health care provision with a particular focus on the issues arising from the results of the Strength and Difficulties**

Questionnaires be held at the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel on 14 November 2016;

- 2 that Looked After Children (LAC) nurses and representatives of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) be invited to attend the deep dive session.**

CPP/16/13. Fostering Agency Report - Quarter 1 (1 April - 30 June 2016)

The Panel considered the report of the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing which outlined activity in the Fostering Service during Quarter One (1 April to 30 June 2016).

The report contained updates on various issues including the following:

- Recruitment of Foster Carers
- Assessments
- Referrals/Placements
- Special Guardianship Orders
- Training
- Ofsted Notifications
- Allegations
- Complaints
- Compliments
- Staffing
- Conclusion and Next Steps

The Practice Manager, Fostering introduced the report drawing Members' attention to items of note. In response Members raised a number of queries relating to various matters in the report including the Council's responsibility and duty towards unaccompanied asylum seeker children (UASC). The Practice Manager Fostering outlined the action taken to protect UASC including measures to help prevent trafficking and exploitation. Another Member queried what countries the UASC originated from and the level of support offered to foster carers. In response the Practice Manager Fostering stated that the children were from Iran, Iraq and Eritrea. There were none from Syria. Resource packs providing background information on the children were provided to the foster carers

A Member queried what would happen if any fostering households failed to complete their mandatory training. In reply the Practice Manager Fostering stated that such households would receive encouragement to do so. For example if training was completed to the required standard, the household would be rewarded through the fee structure. She stated that there were no fostering households who had refused to undertake the training. The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations stated that most of the challenges in this area were generated by those foster carers who were also family members.

In response to a query by a Member regarding the introduction of a national cap on Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations stated that the government was to hold a review of foster care and the possibility that, as already occurred in Scotland, IFAs in England and Wales would not be permitted to make a profit. If this restriction were introduced it would represent a major change especially given that some IFAs were owned by American banks. However, the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations added that this Council, as others, could not provide special care to all of the Looked After Children and young people who required it so the government might wish to consider retaining at least some IFAs. Further IFAs provided a useful pool from which the Council could recruit foster carers and a major decline in the number of IFAs could impact adversely on the total number of carers.

NOTED

the content of the Quarter One report on the Fostering Service for the period April to June 2016.

CPP/16/14. **Chairman of Adoption Panel - Annual Report**

The Panel considered the 2015/16 Overview Report of the Chair of the Joint Adoption Panel. The report was introduced by the Adoption Panel Advisor who worked through the report and highlighted points of particular interest including the resignation of three Panel members following the introduction of a new fee structure and the rolling out of 'paperless' Panels through the introduction of iPads for Panel members over September and October.

NOTED

the 2015/16 Overview Report of the Chair of the Joint Adoption Panel.

CPP/16/15. **The Pledge**

RESOLVED

that this item be deferred to allow its consideration in conjunction with agenda item 11.

(Note: Minute CPP/16/17 below also refers).

CPP/16/16. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

RESOLVED

that in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that consideration of the item is likely to

involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

CPP/16/17. Children in Care Council Presentation and the Pledge

(Note: Prior to consideration of this item representatives from the Children in Care Council (CiCC) joined the CiCC Ambassadors already present at the meeting).

At the request of the Chairman all attendees introduced themselves. Consideration was then given to the draft, updated Pledge which set out the Council's promise, as Corporate Parents, to help children in care to remain healthy, safe and happy and to have high aspirations. The Panel noted that the CiCC had led on the revisions to the document.

The CiCC Ambassadors introduced the Pledge and explained the process by which it had been revised and the contribution made by young people. The CiCC representatives then referred to parts of the Pledge and explained how the parts selected were of personal relevance and importance to them individually.

Discussion followed during which the Panel considered how the Council as a Corporate Parent could achieve its promise in the Pledge and assist young people in their goals. Members of the Panel also emphasised how they wished to become involved individually. The Chairman suggested that a list of issues that young people wished to explore be drawn up and the Council would try to help these take place. An immediate response was the offer of various work experience opportunities by the Director of Social Care, Health and Housing. The Chairman commented that by expanding the network of providers then a greater number and range of opportunities could be offered.

A Member of the Panel referred to that section of the Pledge on 'Future Aspirations' which dealt with leaving care. He referred to the useful guidance given to care leavers on the transition from foster home to independent living, which had been provided by a workshop organised to look at the Passport to Independence, and expressed the wish to see it held again. A CiCC Ambassador also commented on the value of the workshop's advice.

The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations thanked the CiCC and its Ambassadors for the work they had carried out on the Pledge. The Participation Officer, Professional Standards informed the Panel that a version of the Pledge for younger children in care would be developed.

RESOLVED

- 1 that the wording used in the draft, updated Pledge submitted to the Corporate Parenting Panel be approved for signing off subject to inserting the definition of 'Corporate Parenting';**

- 2 that the Participation Officer, Professional Standards draw up a list of Looked After Children and young people and the experiences that they have requested;
- 3 that the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations develop a system by which arrangements can be made for matching Looked After Children and young people with those individuals or organisations able to provide the experiences that they have requested.

(Note: At the conclusion of this item the Panel moved back into public session).

CPP/16/18. **Work Programme**

Members considered a report which set out the Panel's proposed work programme for the whole of the municipal year for 2016/17.

The meeting was aware that it had already been resolved to add a 'deep dive' session on the emotional wellbeing of children and young people in care (minute CPP/16/12 above refers) to the meeting scheduled for 14 November 2016. The Designated Nurse for Looked After Children stated that she would not be able to attend that meeting but she would liaise with LAC nurses and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAHMS) representatives to encourage their attendance.

The Panel was aware that the Pledge would require an update.

RESOLVED

that the Corporate Parenting Panel work programme for the municipal year 2016/17, as attached at Appendix A of the report of the Committee Services Manager and Committee Services Officer, be approved subject to the addition of the following items:

- **14 November 2016 – 'Deep Dive' Session on the Emotional Wellbeing of Children and Young People in Care (GJ/TMcD)**
- **16 January 2017 – Update on the Pledge (MS).**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.21 p.m.)

This page is intentionally left blank

Central Bedfordshire Council

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

14 November 2016

Fostering Agency Report - Quarter 2 (1 July - 30 September 2016)

Report of Cllr Carole Hegley, Executive Member for Social Care and Housing
(carole.hegley@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Advising Officers: Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services
(sue.harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Annie Craig, Practice Manager – Corporate Parenting Service – Fostering
(annie.craig@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk),

1. Fostering Services Regulations 2000 requires the Fostering Agency to monitor and control the activities of the Fostering Service and ensure quality performance. Quarterly reports are presented to elected members in order to outline the activities in the Fostering Service so that Members can monitor and feedback on the quality and performance of the Service.

RECOMMENDATION

Schedule 6 of the Fostering Regulations 2012 requires the Fostering Service to monitor and report on specific areas of the work it undertakes. This report, therefore, reports on these regulatory activities

1. The Panel is asked to consider and note the Fostering Agency Quarter 2 Report.

Issues

2. The Children Act 2004, Care Standards Act 2000 and associated relevant Regulations and National Minimum Standards require the Local Authority Fostering Service to report to Members regularly on the activities of the Service
3. This is the second quarter report for the financial year 2016/2017.

Options for consideration – Recruitment of Foster Carers

4. During July, August and September 2016, a variety of recruitment activities and events took place in line with the Fostering Services recruitment strategy.

5. In terms of outreach work 7 activities took place (2 in July, 3 in August and 2 in September). These included information stands at Ampthill Gala, Biggleswade and Leighton Buzzard Markets and at Asda, Dunstable, all with the Just Ask bus. 2 drop in events were held at the Ampthill office and 1 drop in was held at Chicksands Army Base.
6. In relation to advertising, throughout this quarter the Fostering Service had a page sponsor with East of England Online with an editorial in their digital magazine. A 7 foot poster promoting fostering was placed in Dunstable Shopping Centre; the image used was relevant to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). An A5 fostering advert was placed in 'Info Central; Your guide to Council Services, spending and key contacts for 2016/2017'. The Fostering Service continued to advertise on a roundabout in Flitwick outside Tesco's store and fostering adverts were still being used on the back of school crossing patrol staff for schools across Central Bedfordshire. Leaflet drops also took place in targeted postcode areas advertising forthcoming information evenings. A half page advert promoting fostering and a forthcoming information evening was also placed in the Times and Citizen. The Fostering Service has also started to undertake some targeted recruitment for specific children. During this quarter a newspaper advert for 1child was placed in the Northamptonshire Telegraph and Northamptonshire Chronicle and Echo as this was where the child needed to be placed.
7. Press coverage took place in various ways. An article highlighting our 'Great Dad' winners was placed in the Times and Citizen. Articles about the Celebration of Fostering event were placed internally on the Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) website and in Staff Central and in the Chief Executive's Blog. Press releases about the event and winners were also sent to all local media contacts.
8. Online posts have continued to be promoted during this quarter. Articles about CBC being a fostering friendly employer, the 'Great Dads' Awards and promoting fostering in general were posted in the Connect Newsletter which is sent to all staff in social care, health, housing and portfolio holders. An e-mail article about fostering UASC was sent to individuals who work for or volunteer for a refugee charity. An article about fostering was placed in the Staff Central Magazine. An on line advert about forthcoming fostering information events was placed in the Governors Essential Newsletter which is sent out to all governors of schools and academy's in the Central Bedfordshire area. Email articles/bulletins about the fostering drop ins were sent to various contacts including town and parish councils, community groups, health, police and fire services as well as approximately 1,916 residents who have signed up to receive bulletin alerts. An on line advert about fostering was also placed on CBC's Bank Holiday Services bulletin which is sent out to 36,000 residents who have signed up for alerts.

9. As a result of the recruitment that took place during this period we received a total of 12 enquiries, 3 in July, 2 in August and 7 in September (this is 13 less than in the last quarter). There were 10 Initial Visits during this period: 3 in July, 6 in August and 1 in September (this is 4 less than in the previous quarter). There were 5 application forms received during this period: 1 in July, 2 in August and 2 in September (this was 2 less than in the previous quarter). The best form of recruitment during this period was via the website. The number of enquiries etc. dipped in this quarter which is expected for this time of year. The previous quarter is always higher due to 'Foster Carers Fortnight' and all the recruitment activities surrounding this whereas this quarter is general lower due to it being the holiday period and potential carers are busy planning holiday activities etc.
10. In mid September the Service introduced a £2,000 'Golden Handshake' to be paid to those IFA carers with CBC children in place who then transfer to CBC. Whilst it is early days it is clear that this initiative has been well received and carers for approximately 15 children have already expressed an interest in transferring.
11. In September the Service also held their Celebration of Fostering event at Woburn Safari Park. Over 200 carers and children attended, 14 families received long service awards with one couple celebrating 30 years of fostering. Individual awards also went to a host of different carers and their children in recognition of the contribution they make to fostering. Chief Executive, Richard Carr and Cllr Carole Hegley were there to present the awards and the families that attended had the opportunity to see the animals, enjoy a barbecue as well as get involved in the games and entertainment provided.

Reason/s for decision - Assessments

12. During this period 19 new assessments were started: 4 career carer, 6 Regulation 24 (temporary approval), 5 Family and Friends and 4 Special Guardianship Order (SGO) assessments. As of the 30 September 2016 there were a total of 18 assessments in progress: 8 career carers, 1 Regulation 24, 7 Family and Friends and 2 SGO assessments.
13. During this quarter 3 fostering households were approved, 2 as career carers and 1 as a family and friends carer.
14. During this quarter there were 3 de-registrations of foster carers, 2 were Family and Friends carers (1 child returned to their birth father and a Special Guardianship Order was granted in relation to the other child). The other foster carer who resigned left for personal reasons.
15. As of the 30 September 2016 the Fostering Agency had a total of 105 fostering households (compared to 104 in the previous quarter), 82 of these were career carers.

16. In relation to the ethnicity of foster carers and children placed, there is a fair match of ethnicity with foster carers broadly reflecting the ethnicity of our children in care.

Ethnicity		
<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Foster Carers</i>	<i>Looked After Children</i>
White	92%	71%
Dual Heritage	1%	8%
Black or Black British	6%	5%
Asian	1%	5%
Other	-	11%
	100%	100%

17. As of the 30 September 2016 there were a total of 117 children placed with in house foster carers compared to 74 with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's). The number of children placed with in house carers is increasing year on year. At the end of March 2014 the percentage of children placed in house was 46% , by the end of March 2015 this had increased to 54%, by the end of March 2016 it was 59%, at the end of the last quarter it was 63% and at the end of September 2016 it was 61%. This increase has been achieved by the Service reviewing all existing foster carers to ensure we maximise their fostering offer. It has also been achieved by staff working with IFA carers to support and encourage them to think about transferring to foster for CBC and with work being done regarding our step down initiative to move children from residential care into a fostering placement where they have the chance to experience family life. Our aspiration is to increase this further to 70% as there will always be children that need to be placed out of the area or in IFA/residential placements. This will not only improve services to children in care and they will have local placements to better meet their needs but it will also decrease our reliance on more expensive IFA placements.
18. As of the 30 September 2016 there were 139 Special Guardianship Orders in place (compared to 133 at the end of the last quarter). Although Special Guardian Order (SGO) carers are generally expected to access universal services, they are entitled to seek support from the Local Authority as and when required. The Fostering Service continues to work with a small cohort of families who contact the service sporadically for support and advice. On average the service works with about 5 families a month and will undertake visits, or provide telephone support in order to meet the needs of individual carers. The main area Special Guardianship Order (SGO) carers seek support with is in

relation to contact, children's behaviour or support in financing respite or holiday activities.

Referrals/Placements

19. During July, August and September 2016 there were 21 new fostering placements made: 4 in July, 13 in August and 4 in September. This is a decrease of 33 new placements compared to the last quarter and this is largely due to the high number of UASC being accommodated in the previous quarter which was 31 in total. Out of the 21 new placements made, 10 were placed in house (all aged 9 and under), a sibling group of 4 were placed in an IFA placement, 6 were placed in semi-independent living (5 of whom were UASC) and 1 was placed in secure accommodation.

Training

20. During this quarter foster carers accessed a wide range of training opportunities to help them develop their knowledge and skills. The Fostering Service provided 8 specialist in house training courses which included: Childcare Emergency First Aid, Help for Carers of Troubled Teenagers, Allegations Awareness, Caring for UASC, Contact, PREVENT Radicalisation/Extremism and An Introduction to Theraplay. The Caring for UASC training which was facilitated by staff from within the Corporate Parenting Service and with UASC themselves received particularly good feedback.
21. Foster carers also accessed training from the Early Years programme, these included; Paediatric First Aid, Introduction to Mentoring others in the Workplace, Parental Substance misuse and the impact on babies, children and young people and a Practice Update on Youth and Neglect.
22. 43 foster carers also accessed e-learning training on the following subjects: An Introduction to Safeguarding Children, Awareness of Child Abuse and Neglect, Trafficking, exploitation and modern slavery, An Introduction to Autism Spectrum, Safe sleeping for babies, Early Child Development, Equality and Diversity in the Workplace (basic and foundation), Sexualised Behaviour, Attachment and Brain Development, Safeguarding Children from Abuse, Safeguarding refresher, Assessing and Managing Risk, Safer Caring, E-safety, Risk Assessment in Safeguarding, Keep them Safe from CSE, Behaviour and the physical environment, Child Development, Adolescence, Early Child Development, Basic Awareness of Child and Adult Sexual Exploitation, Foetal Exposure to Alcohol and Contact in Foster Care.
23. As of the 30 September 2016 there were 74 fostering households that had completed their mandatory Training, Support and Development Standards (TSD's); 23 households were yet to complete their portfolios but still had time to address within the required timescales. 5

households were overdue in completing their TSD Standards and were outside the required timescale. Supervising social workers and the Marketing, Recruitment and Training Officer were providing additional support to help these carers achieve the standards.

Ofsted Notifications

24. Whenever a significant event happens i.e. a child goes missing from placement or a serious incident/accident occurs the agency have to report these to Ofsted. During this period there was 1 notification to Ofsted regarding a young person who became verbally aggressive towards one of his foster carers. The police were called to the carer's home and the young person was taken to hospital, assessed and then returned to the foster carers. This young person was already known to CAMHS who were advised of the incident in order that they could talk to the young person in more detail in his work with them.

Allegations

25. During this period there were no allegations made regarding foster carers.

Complaints

26. During this period there were no complaints made against the Fostering Service.

Compliments

27. During this period there were 4 compliments received regarding the Fostering Service. One was from panel regarding the good quality paperwork presented by the supervising social worker to panel on a particular case. Two were from foster carers about the positive support their supervising social workers provided, with one family and friends foster carer stating 'thank you so much for all your help and support over the year, it has been a pleasure to work with you'. The final compliment was from the court and permanence team manager regarding the excellent joint working that had taken place between the childcare social worker and the supervising social worker. We often receive positive comments about training but this quarter it is worth noting the excellent feedback we received from several people in relation to the UASC training. Foster carers really appreciated the stories the young people brought with them and the invaluable knowledge of the staff who facilitated the training.

Annual Budget

28. For the financial year 2016/2017 the Fostering Service within Children's Services had an annual budget of £1,179,630.

Reporting to Members – Legal Requirements

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

Risk Management

30. Regulatory Risks: Failure to report to Members would be a breach of National Minimum Standards.

Staffing

31. The Fostering Agency comes under the umbrella of the Corporate Parenting Service and the Head of Service has overall management responsibility for Fostering. Under the Head of Service is the Practice Manager who is also the Registered Manager for Fostering. This person monitors and manages the activities of the Fostering Agency. She supervises 2 team managers who have day to day responsibility for management of 2 fostering teams. During this period there were no new starters and 3 staff members left the Service (2 senior social workers and 1 business support officer).

Council Priorities

The Children and Young People's Plan 2015-2017; Priority 2 Protecting children and keeping them safe.

Fostering is a key statutory service to Looked After Children.

Legal Implications

32. This report provides updating information to allow consideration of the activities of the Fostering Agency in the previous quarter as required by legislation, there are no further legal implications.

Financial and Risk Implications

33. This report provides updating information to allow consideration of the activities of the Fostering, there are no financial implications.

Equalities Implications

34. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex

and sexual orientation. The report highlights ongoing efforts to recruit foster carers from diverse backgrounds and to provide training and development in relation to equality.

Conclusion and next Steps

35. During this quarter the service continued to focus on recruiting and assessing more foster carers. 3 carers were approved this quarter and another 8 are in assessment which means the Service is on target to meet its recruitment target of 10 new fostering households for this financial year. The Service has a further ambition of transferring 25 IFA placements into in house ones. Progress in this area has been slow but with the introduction of the 'Golden Handshake' initiative in September it is hopeful that more carers will now consider transferring over to CBC. This will not only help the Service in exceeding its recruitment target but will create significant savings for the department in relation to placement costs as it is much cheaper to place children in house than it is with IFA placements.
36. As of 30 September 2016 61% of children were placed with in house foster carers compared to 39% with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's). The % of children placed in house has now stabilised between 61% and 65%. If the recruitment targets are met/exceeded this percentage is likely to increase further. Our aspiration is still to place 70% of our children with in foster carers as there will always be a number of children who need to be placed externally in residential carer or out of the area.
37. This quarter we have only had to report one incident to Ofsted following a young person in placement becoming verbally aggressive towards one of his carers. Whilst this incident was distressing for both the young person and the carers the young person returned to placement and support was put in place to stabilise the placement and the young person remains with these carers to date. During this quarter there were no complaints or allegations and the Service continued to receive compliments either about the foster carers or staff working in the Service. This is all very encouraging and indicates that carers are accessing relevant training and are generally well supported. Placement stability is good and the Service is quick to respond when placements become fragile or disrupt.
38. In conclusion this has been another positive quarter with the Service still on course to meet its recruitment target and the number of children in in house placements continuing to rise. This means that children's needs are being met in local resources that better meet their needs, where there is more choice in relation to placements and placement stability has been enhanced because foster carers are receiving the appropriate training and support to help them provide a high standard of care to the children placed with them.

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None

This page is intentionally left blank

Central Bedfordshire Council

Corporate Parenting Panel

14 November 2016

Six Monthly Report in Respect of the Adoption Service - 1 April to 30 September 2016

Report of Councillor Carole Hegley - Executive Member for Social Care and Housing (carole.hegley@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Advising Officers: Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services (sue.harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Nickie Phillips Acting Practice Manager – Corporate Parenting Service – Adoption (nickie.phillips@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Purpose of this report

1. The Children Act 2004, Care Standards Act 2000 and associated relevant regulations and National Minimum Standards require Local Authority Adoption Agencies to report to members at six monthly intervals. This will be achieved by presentation of a six monthly update to the Corporate Parenting Panel and a full year Annual Report to this Panel each year.
2. The report outlines the activities that the Adoption Service undertook throughout 1st April to 30th September 2016

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive or Committee

1. That the Corporate Parenting Panel notes and comments on the content of the report.

Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

3. This item is not planned to go to O&S as it is an update report providing an overview of the service.

Recruitment of adopters

4. Information Evenings continue to be held on a monthly basis. Enquiries can be received from an online enquiry form on the Central Bedfordshire website, email to the Adoption Team or telephone call via a duty Social Worker service.

5. We have had 43 enquiries in this period. As of 30th September, 2 households were in stage one of the process and 9 in stage two.
6. 8 new adoptive households completed their assessment and were approved to adopt. The target for this year is 20 households approved to adopt so we envisage meeting this target
7. Central Bedfordshire has 9 approved adopters waiting at present of which 3 could offer a foster for adoption placement.

Adoption planning and placements for children

8. Central Bedfordshire performance is as follows:

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17 April – Sept
Adult Approvals	29	22	18	8
Adoption Plans	48	26	30	11
Matched	20	29	22	5
Adoption order	15	20	17	11

9. 2 plans were rescinded relating to decisions made in the previous years.
10. As of 30th September 2016 18 children were placed in adoptive placements pre the granting of an adoption order. This accounts for 5.8% of the total amount of LAC (312 children). In addition there are 2 children placed in Foster for adoption placements
11. Of the 5 matches made in this period 3 were placed with Central Bedfordshire approved adopters including 1 Foster for Adoption placement. 2 children were matched with adopters from another agency.
12. 11 Adoption Orders were granted in this reporting period. This is an increase of 4 adoption orders within the same period the year before.
13. During this reporting period 9 children from other local authorities were placed with 4 prospective adopter households approved by Central Bedfordshire. This has a positive impact on national performance.
14. The council has focussed on recruiting applicants open to considering foster for adoption and embedding the practice and learning from such placements. There is an element of risk in these types of placements but the advantage is that a child is placed at a younger age and does not have to move placement if a placement order is granted. 2 children were placed in such placements within this reporting period with 1 being placed directly from hospital.
15. Monthly Adoption tracking meetings continue to be held across children's services to track children who may be subject to a plan for adoption. This

enables the council to plan for early permanence and inform our recruitment strategy whilst also enabling to prevent delay for children and promote early permanence.

Adoption Support

16. The Adoption Support Fund was introduced in May 2015 and we continue to make applications on behalf of adoptive families. 16 applications to the adoption support Fund have been completed and agreed enabling the council to commissioning therapeutic services for the identified families.
17. Support also continues through post adoption contact arrangements (sometimes referred to as indirect contact) for each individual child. It seeks to ensure a secure and consistent record of contact between birth family and adoptive family. This often includes letters and occasional photographs that are often of high significance to the adoptee later in life.
18. Support events have continued to be held such as the annual summer barbeque which was attended by over 100 adults and children. This reporting period we also completed a drama workshop for adopted young people which is progressing to re establish the 'Teenage Adoption Panel' (TAP). Panel members are adopted Young people from the local area who pose questions to adopter applicants. This enhances the learning and preparation of prospective adopters and provides opportunity for the young people to contribute to the service and community.

Key Events

19. In July 2015 and again in 2016, the Department for Education (DfE) required all local authorities to join larger regional groups to radically redesign the adoption system in their areas and to provide excellent adoption services with a strong focus on innovation and practice. This was underpinned by the Children and Families Act 2014 and the recent publication 'Putting Children First: delivering our vision for excellent children's social care' (DfE) published in July 2016. All LAs are expected to become part of a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) by 2020. RAAs are required to have one pool of adopters and one pool of children and to ensure that Voluntary Adoption Agencies' are integral in their design and delivery.
20. In response to this Central Bedfordshire joined the partnership Central East with Coram-i as the project lead. Monthly project Board meetings are undertaken alongside the development of a Regional Shadow Hub with project leads to develop the workstreams such as permanence planning and adoption support. The Regional Adoption Agency continues to be within the design and develop stage with funding from DfE being secured to progress the development to the next stage.
21. The Adoption Panel has continued to remain a shared service hosted by Central Bedfordshire.

22. Since April 2016, 54 young people ceased to be looked after and of these 11 children were adopted – this shows that our year to date Adoption performance stands at 20.4% at the end of September 2016. This is above the set target of 17.0% as well as our 2015/16 and 2014/15 outturns of 17.7% and 16.7% respectively. In the 6 months since April 2016, we have been above target for this indicator for 5 months of the year.
23. Looking at the average time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family in days (Adoption Scorecard Indicator), the Q2 figure for July-September 2016 stands at 487 days (rolling 3 year average ending 30th September). This is an improvement when compared to our 2014/15 (539 days) and 2015/16 outturn (504 days). We have also improved compared to Q1 (April to June) rolling 3 year average reported figure of 488 days. National average target for 2014-2017 is 475 days so we will continue to work towards improving this average.
24. The next six months will continue to develop the Regional Adoption Agency and share learning and good practice across the partnership to improve practice and outcomes for children.

Council Priorities

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

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

Adoption is a key statutory service to Looked After Children.

Corporate Implications

Legal Implications

26. Regulations associated Statutory Guidance and National Minimum Standards outlines the requirement to report to Members on the management and outcomes of the Adoption Agency, in order that they can satisfy themselves that the services are effective and achieving good outcomes for children.
27. The National Adoption Leadership Board continues to monitor performance and drive change. The quarterly survey reports on all significant data for children with a plan for adoption and adults who have expressed an interest in adoption.
28. Regulatory Risks: Failure to report to Members would be a breach of National Minimum Standard.

Financial and Risk Implications

29. Adoption within Children's Services has an annual budget of £648170.00 including costs of other Adoption Agency placements and provision on behalf of Bedford Borough Council under the Shared Adoption Panel.
30. In this period the Government has provided a grant for all Local Authorities to apply to the Department for Education (DfE) for reimbursement of interagency fees for harder to place children.

Equalities Implications

31. Adoption services provided to Looked after Children affects all sectors of communities.

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank