

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 27 April 2017

NOTICE OF MEETING

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Date & Time

Monday, 8 May 2017 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)

CLrs: 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:

CLrs: 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 two of the four 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 6 March 2017 (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.	Peer Review and Action Plan To receive a presentation on the above.	
6.	Update on the Transformation Plan To receive a presentation on the above.	
7.	Adoption Service Statement of Purpose 2017/18 To receive the Adoption Service Statement of Purpose for 2017/18.	* 15 - 32
8.	Fostering Service Statement of Purpose 2017/18 To receive the Fostering Service Statement of Purpose for 2017/18.	* 33 - 48
9.	Work Programme To consider the Panel's work programme.	* 49 - 52

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CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Room 14, Priory House, Chicksands, Shefford on Monday, 6 March 2017

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 T Keaveney, Assistant Director Housing Services

Carers (non-voting)

Mr P Albon

Apologies for Absence: Cllr N B Costin
Cllr B Wells
Mrs S Harrison, Director of Children's Services
Mrs J Ogley, Director of Social Care, Health and Housing

Officers in Attendance: Mr R Bharkhada – Interim Head of Corporate Parenting Service
Ms R Coals – Principal Social Worker and Head of Professional Standards
Ms A Craig – Practice Manager, Fostering
Mrs J Dickinson – Assistant Director Leisure, Libraries and Countryside
Ms S Griffin – Committee Services Officer
Mr G Jones – Assistant Director Children's Services Operations
Mr T Keaveney – Assistant Director Housing Services
Mr L Manning – Committee Services Officer
Miss N Phillips – Practice Manager Adoption
Ms M Short – Participation Officer, Professional Standards

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

CPP/11/27 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 14 November 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CPP/11/28 Members' Interests

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

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

CPP/11/29 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The following announcements and communications were made:

1. The Chairman welcomed Raj Bharkhada, Interim Head of Corporate Parenting Service to the meeting.
2. The Panel were advised that Edward Wong, Head of Corporate Parenting Service and Helen Redding, Assistant Director, School Improvements had left the Authority. Mr Wong was now employed by Southwark Council as the Assistant Director Corporate Parenting. The Panel expressed its thanks for the work they had undertaken on behalf of the Corporate Parenting Panel during their employment at Central Bedfordshire Council.
3. The Chairman welcomed Sharon Griffin, Committee Services Officer to the meeting who would be supporting future meetings of the Panel. Thanks were given to Leslie Manning, Committee Services Officer for the support he had provided to the Panel.
4. The Chairman expressed her thanks to all those involved in the interview process for the Peer Review. The initial response was very positive. At the request of the Chairman, an update on the feedback from the Peer Review and a spotlight session on care leavers and housing options would be given at the May meeting of the Panel.
5. The Chairman invited the CiCC Ambassadors to visit Priory View, an independent living development for older people in Dunstable, so that they could give their views on what Central Bedfordshire Council was doing for older people in terms of housing.
6. At the request of the Chairman, the Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help updated Members on the internal reorganisation of Children's Services as part of the Transformation Plan: the aim being to reduce the costs of senior management. An update on the Transformation process would be given at a future meeting of the Panel.

7. The Committee Services Officer undertook to provide a link to the job advertisement for the vacant post of the Assistant Director Transformation.
8. The Chairman advised the order of business for the meeting would be varied from the schedule shown on the agenda in order that the Children in Care Council's (CiCC) presentation at item 11 could be considered in conjunction with the CiCC Annual Report at item 5.

CPP/11/30 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

RESOLVED

that in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 2 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

CPP/11/31 **Children in Care Council and Participation 2016 - 2017**

The Panel considered the Children in Care Council's Annual Report for the period of 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 in conjunction with the exempt presentation.

Points and comments on the Report included:

1. Work was ongoing to raise the profile of the CiCC. Challenges included the number of young people attending CiCC events continued to fluctuate, changes in the service that could cause challenges for the young people and their involvement/commitment to the CiCC. The times of the CiCC meetings often meant that only certain young people could attend.
2. The difficulty of finding members from the younger age range had been resolved with a core group of CiCC members currently in place. The younger group included young people as young as 8 but the group was mostly 8-15 year olds.
3. Emotional wellbeing and building resilience was very important. Consultations on Personal Education Plans, Pupil Premium and the review of Looked After Children's Review documents were welcomed.
4. The CiCC would be delivering training to the 300 participants of the Summer institute, which this year would include those who would be working with CBC to complete training.
5. The Chairman advised that the initiative to provide young people with opportunities to find out more about chosen careers or experience new activities had been very well supported by members of the Panel. An Aspirations Wish List had been generated from the young people and their career aspirations.

6. In recognition of the work undertaken, a certificate had been designed for LAC Champions with the aim of certificates being awarded to Champions at future meetings of the Panel. The first certificate would be awarded to Councillor Chatterley for arranging a visit to Luton Town Football Club. Members of the Panel were asked to publicise the LAC Champion initiative and to bring forward ideas for opportunities not on the list which Members had access to and could facilitate.

Points and comments on the presentation included:

1. The membership of the CiCC currently consisted of 30 members with an age range of 8-16 years old. Succession planning was in place to ensure that the work undertaken so far by the CiCC would not be lost.
2. The approach to the use of a Life Story Book was currently inconsistent in terms of some young people being offered a Life Story Book, others not being offered this visual aid and also partial use throughout the journey of the young person. An area of work was being undertaken by the CiCC to ensure every young person is given the option of completing a Life Story Book and that this is a continuous process throughout their journey.
3. A CiCC Ambassador indicated that she would be willing to share her Life Story Book at a future meeting of the Panel.
4. The Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help undertook to provide a template Life Story Book for members of the panel to examine.
5. Many children in care and care leavers are not sure what benefits they are entitled to such as support with driving and university fees. Members of the CiCC have discussed the possibility of producing a booklet for young people and professionals which sets out what young people in care are entitled to at what age, including information about opportunities such as Further Education and employment.
6. With regard to increasing engagement and participation of children with disabilities and young people who are seeking asylum, there is now a link with Maythorn, a residential unit for disabled children and young people which enables ways of engagement to be explored and the venues for CiCC meetings are rotated and transport provided to facilitate attendance. Two members of the CiCC are also currently taking forward the equality assurance role with the commissioning team.

The Chairman thanked the CiCC Ambassadors for the work they had undertaken.

NOTED

the Children in Care Council's Annual Report 01 April to 31 March 2017 and the accompanying exempt presentation.

(Note:

- 1. Minute CPP/17/37 below also refers**
- 2. At the conclusion of this item the Panel moved into public session)**

CPP/11/32 **LAC Health Report - Six Monthly Update**

The Panel considered the report of the NHS Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group's Looked After Children Annual report for 2015/16 which outlined future developments and commitments from the Annual Report 2015/16.

Points and comments included:

1. A new Health Passport was being developed in conjunction with NHS England and the possibility of the use of a mobile app to access the passport. The health passport was a physical document which would be kept by the young person. A copy was also kept by the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG) and the individual's GP.
2. The Central Bedfordshire CAMHS team was now located at Stephenson Court, Bedford.
3. The East of England protocol for Looked After Children and Care Leavers would be rolled out in early spring. An update on the protocol would be given as part of the annual LAC Health Report.
4. South Essex Partnership Trust (SEPT) was commissioned to provide a service for Looked After Children in Bedfordshire and East London NHS Foundation Trust currently provided all mental health services including CAHMS.
5. Challenges in meeting the statutory guidance for the completion of Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) included late referrals from social workers and young people not attending their appointments. Following some challenges in summer around the IHA process for asylum seekers, resilience had been placed within the team to add extra clinics if needed. There was also the ongoing issue of trying to ensure that Looked After Children placed out of county attended IHAs.
6. The results of an examination of the health of local children in care had shown that their physical health was a mirror image of the health of children in the general population. However, their emotional health was not.
7. All GPs attended training for Looked After Children as part of level 3 of their safeguarding training and each GP surgery had a safeguarding lead which provided the link between the surgery and the Designated Nurse for Looked After Children. Health visitors should be aware of LAC on their case loads as the safeguarding needs of LAC were identified under the

Universal Partnership Plus offer. Work was ongoing to establish a link between School Nurses and Designated Nurses.

8. Initial Health Assessments for Looked After Children service currently covered the age range of 0-19 years. The possibility of extending the current age range and improving the transition from children's services to adult services was being looked at as part of the SEND agenda.
9. If a young person is still in education they can contact the LAC team for support around issues such as mental health or a change in lifestyle.
10. A project was taking place to look at the commissioning of health services for care leavers which would include consultation with commissioners and care leavers about possible improvements to the current process.
11. The Panel requested that a sub-section on carer leavers health be added to the CCG annual report.

NOTED

the NHS Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group's Looked After Children Annual Report for 2015/16.

CPP/11/33 Update of the Adoption Support Fund

The Panel considered a report of the Director of Social Services which set out an update on the remit of the Adoption Support Fund and how the Council made use of the Fund.

Points and comments included:

1. From 1 April 2016 the Department for Education had extended the criteria for applications to include Intercountry Adoptions (once the placement had been made and the child was in England) and for Special Guardians who cared for children who were previously Looked After.
2. Following a budget review in October 2016, the Government had introduced the interim measure of a £5,000 'fair access limit'. This was followed by the announcement in January 2017 that the fair access limit of £5,000 per child for therapy accessed through the Adoption Support Fund (ASF), would continue into the next financial year (2017/18). There was also the requirement that local authorities share the costs of support above £5,000, through a match-funding approach.
3. Applications for £186k had been received and approved since the funding was made available in May 2015.
4. The Chairman queried the effectiveness of the Adoption Support Fund and its monitoring and expressed the need for additional information to be provided on this matter.

5. The Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help referred to the expansion of the original range of the Fund beyond Adoption. Concern was expressed over the possibility that Central Government could withdraw its funding post 2020 leaving local authorities to finance the provision of therapeutic support and intervention not only to adopted children and their families but to an expanded range of clients.

RESOLVED

that a regular annual update on the Adoption Support Fund be submitted to the Panel.

CPP/11/34 **Fostering Agency Report - Quarter 3 (1 October - 31 December 2016)**

The Panel considered the report of the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing which outlined the activity in the Fostering Service from October to December 2016.

Points and comments included:

1. The results from the quarter were very positive with the Service on target to meet the recruitment of 10 new fostering households for this financial year. The number of placements with in-house foster carers was also increasing.
2. The number of Special Guardianship Orders in place had remained static at 140 at the end of this quarter.
3. Following the introduction of a training policy and mandatory training for certain areas, the number of carers attending training opportunities had increased. The consequences of not attending were a potential drop in tier and associated fee level.
4. A small number of foster carers adopt children they had initially fostered which was significant for the child in terms of the stability of not having to move placement.
5. A lot of work had taken place with schools to try to gain access to promote the fostering service. Information leaflets had been made available in schools and visits to schools to explain the fostering process could be arranged if requested.
6. A lot of head teachers and governors attend the cluster groups to discuss School Improvement which would be a captive audience in terms of engagement with schools.
7. A review of training for Foster Carers was taking place at the end of March during which attendance of training course would be looked at.
8. The requirement to form Regional Adoption Agencies had not been withdrawn by government. A further review of regional adoption agency plan was going to take place which include the rebase of the grounds of

procurement by the commissioning authority and the local authority. The DfE had been advised of concerns about the regional approach and officers were currently working on more practical and realistic options for the process. There were some collaborative arrangements nationally good practice already in place which could be built upon. One of the concerns was the risk of the regional adoption service being more expensive and less effective than the current service which was not acceptable.

9. Work was taking place to look at whether the current process of using an adoption panel to match children to a family would remain or whether this decision would be delegated to professionals. From a local authority perspective, how matches are agreed was yet to be defined.

NOTED

the Fostering Agency Quarter report Quarter 3.

CPP/11/35 **Work Programme**

Members considered the report of the Committee Services Manager and Committee Services Officer which set out the Panel's proposed work programme for the municipal year 2017/18.

RESOLVED

that the Corporate Parenting Panel work programme for the municipal year 2017/18, as attached as Appendix A of the report of the Committee Services Manager and Committee Services Officer, be approved subject to the addition of the following items:

- 8 May 2017
 - Peer Review and Action Plan
 - Transformation Update
- 3 July 2017 - Spotlight Report on Leaving Care Housing

CPP/11/36 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

RESOLVED

that in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 2 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

CPP/11/37 **Children in Care Council Presentation**

The Panel received a presentation on the work that has been undertaken by the Children in Care Council during the year.

Note: Minute CPP/16/31 above also refers.

CPP/11/38 **Virtual School for Looked After Children - Interim Report**

Members were advised that the presenting officer was unable to attend the meeting. In the absence of the officer, the Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help responded to queries from Members of the Panel.

RESOLVED

that further consideration of the Interim Report on the Virtual School for Looked After Children be deferred until the May meeting of the Panel.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.13 p.m.)

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Central Bedfordshire Council

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Monday, 8 May 2017

Adoption Service Statement of Purpose 2017/18

Report of Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services Operations
(sue.harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Advising Officers: Nickie Phillips, Practice Manager Adoption
(nickie.phillips@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Purpose of this report

1. This Statement of Purpose has been produced in accordance with the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003 and the National Minimum Standards for Adoption 2011, Standard 18.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to:

1. Consider, comment and agree the Adoption Service Statement of Purpose 2017/18 attached at Appendix A to the report.

Issues

1. Standard 18 of the National Minimum Standards for Adoption 2011, Standard 18 and Adoption Regulations require an adoption service to produce a statement of purpose which contains a range of detailed information as set out in Standard 18.
2. Appendix A is the Adoption Service Statement of Purpose 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018.

Council Priorities

3. Improving education and skills; protecting the vulnerable; improving wellbeing.

Corporate Implications

4. Legal, financial and equalities implications were requested and are included in the report.

Legal Implications

5. Having considered the requirements under Standard 18 of the National Minimum Standards for Adoption Services and Regulation 2 of the Adoption Service (England) Regulations, the Statement of Purpose complies with the requirements set out therein. There are no other legal implications highlighted within the Statement of Purpose.

Financial and Risk Implications

6. The report is a statement of purpose and has no direct financial implications.

Equalities Implication

7. 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 belief orientation. The Statement of Purpose highlights the need to ensure that these requirements are reflected both in terms of meeting children's needs and recruiting adopters from diverse backgrounds.

Conclusion and next Steps

8. This Statement of Purpose consists of:

A statement of the aims and objectives of the Adoption Service, and the services and facilities provided by the Adoption Service.

9. If approved, the Statement of Purpose will be sent to Ofsted with 28 days of Approval by the Registered Provider, made available to all staff via the Council's Intranet and to members of the public via Central Bedfordshire Council. The Statement of Purpose will also be presented to the Adoption Panel for its consideration.

Appendices

Appendix A – Adoption Service Statement of Purpose 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018

Background Papers

None



Adopt
Are you ready
to decide?

APPENDIX A

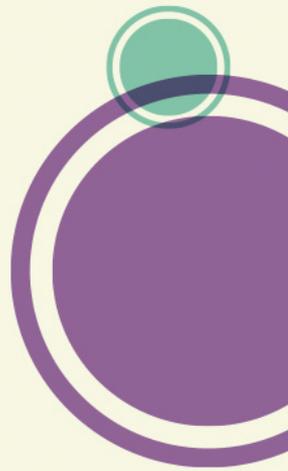
Central
Bedfordshire



great
prospects

Statement of purpose

Adoption Agency, Central Bedfordshire Council
1 April 2017 - 31 March 2018



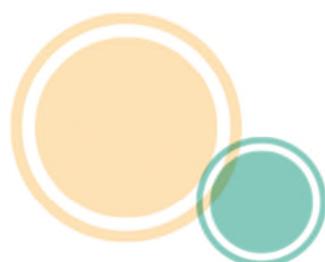
Children and families first
Working as one team close to our community
Being great corporate parents to children in care and care leavers
Much more than care
Being a well managed service and providing great public care

A great place to live and work.

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This statement of purpose has been produced in accordance with the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003, and the National Minimum Standards for Adoption 2011, Standard 18.

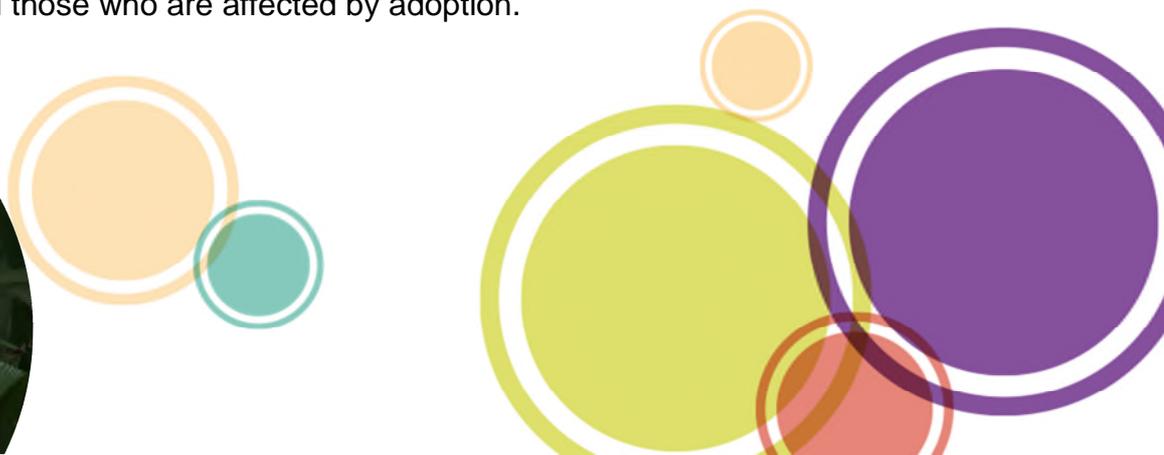


1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement of purpose has been produced in accordance with the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003, and the National Minimum Standards for Adoption 2011, Standard 18 and is reviewed annually.
- 1.2 It sets out the core aims and objectives of Central Bedfordshire Adoption Service and the range of services provided to children, prospective adopters, adoptive families, adopted adults and birth family.
- 1.3 The Adoption Service is an integral part of the Corporate Parenting Service in Central Bedfordshire Council.
- 1.4 Information about adoption can be obtained from www.direct.gov.uk/adoption. Further information can be obtained from www.first4adoption.org.uk. Detailed information about Central Bedfordshire's adoption procedures can be found via <http://centralbedfordshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com>

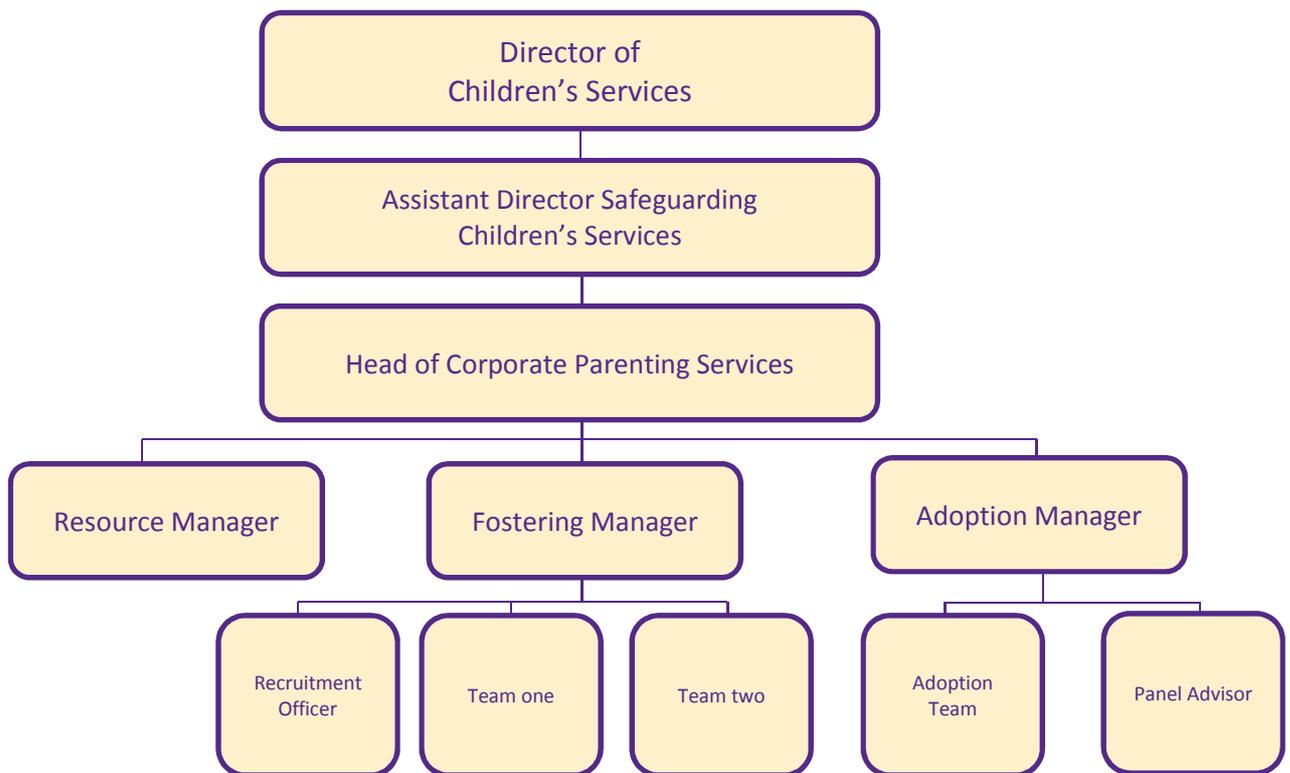
2. Aims and objectives

- 2.1 The Adoption Service recognises the life long nature of adoption with the following aims and objectives:-
- 2.2 Central Bedfordshire endorse the view that it is in a child's best interests to be brought up within their birth family where possible. Where this is not possible Central Bedfordshire are committed to finding a suitable adoptive family when adoption has been identified as the Care Plan for a child. Such placement will provide permanence and a safe and stable care to promote good outcomes and life chances.
- 2.3 Good Care planning is effective in achieving early permanence for children looked after. Central Bedfordshire Adoption Service will work in partnership with national and local organisations to achieve early permanence and avoid delay.
- 2.4 Central Bedfordshire will refer children to the Central East Regional Partnership and Adoption Match and advertise in adoption journals and the media, if unable to identify a suitable match within its own resources.
- 2.5 The child remains paramount throughout care planning and the rights, needs and welfare of the child are valued at all stages.
- 2.6 Central Bedfordshire aim to provide high quality adoption service that meets the needs of all those who are affected by adoption.



- 2.7 A core objective is to recruit and assess a diverse range of adoptive families who are able to meet the needs of children with an adoption decision. This includes the recruitment of adopters able to offer foster for adoption placements.
- 2.8 Placing children with adoptive families who can meet most of the child's identified needs including, ethnicity, culture and religion where possible. However each may be reconsidered if there is a delay in identifying a suitable match in which case a match with adopters who are able to meet most of the identified needs will considered.
- 2.9 Central Bedfordshire will provide a responsive adoption support service that is available to adopted children, adoptive families, birth families and prescribed persons and adopted adults. Children and families will be provided with a leaflet explaining adoption support.
- 2.10 Central Bedfordshire will offer timely information, advice and counselling to members of the public enquiring about adoption or affected by adoption.

3. Management and organisational structure



- 3.1 Ultimate responsibility for the Adoption Service rests with the Elected Members. The Adoption Service forms part of Central Bedfordshire Council's Children's Services for which the Director of Children's Services is responsible. The Assistant Director has overall management responsibility for the Adoption Service. Operational managerial responsibility sits with the Head of Corporate Parenting. The Practice Manager for the Adoption Team supervises the adoption social workers and the Agency Advisor for adoption.

4. Staffing

- 4.1 The current complement within the Adoption Service is:

- 1 Practice Manager (full time)
- 1 Senior Practitioner (part time)
- 4 Social Workers (3.5 full time equivalent)
- 1 Social Work Assistant (full time)
- 1 Business Support Officer (full time)

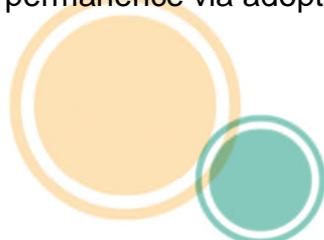
- 4.2 The Practice Manager and Social Workers are all professionally qualified with commensurate social work experience and are registered with the HCPC. All staff have a Personal Development Review (Your Year) and have an identified training plan from which training will be provided on a bespoke basis or from Central Bedfordshire's Learning and Development Programme.

- 4.3 The Practice Manager for Adoption provides operational management, quality assurance, performance and budget management for the team and panel and co-ordinates the work of the team. In addition to supervising the work of the staff the manager also supervises the Adoption Panel Advisor and reports to senior managers on service activities and issues of concern.

- 4.4 The Adoption Agency is supported by specialist staff who work across the Adoption and Fostering Service. These include a Recruitment and Marketing Officer, a Training Coordinator, a Professional Panel Adviser and Panel Secretaries who support the Adoption Panel and the Fostering Panel.

5. Services provided to children

- 5.1 Adoption will be considered as a positive first option for a child looked after who are unable to live with their birth family.
- 5.2 The particular needs of children with a disability and special needs will be recognised and positively valued in decision making and achieving permanence via adoption.



- 5.3 A permanence plan will be considered at the second LAC review if a child remains looked after for four months and reconsidered at subsequent reviews.
- 5.4 Central Bedfordshire will assist children to understand about adoption and why they are unable to live with their birth family. The Children's Guide will be made available to age appropriate children to support their understanding.
- 5.5 All children placed for adoption will have a life story book completed within 10 days of the adoption hearing. They will also have a memory box from foster carers and will be supported to retain key mementoes from their past.
- 5.6 A later life letter will be written by the child's social worker and will be given to prospective adopters within 10 days of the adoption hearing.
- 5.7 Children will be placed with adoptive families that are best able to meet their needs and are able to share life story information throughout childhood and support the proposed contact plan to support the child's identity.
- 5.8 Where possible Central Bedfordshire will aim to keep siblings together and will place them together with an adoptive family.
- 5.9 The adoption service will consider Central Bedfordshire approved adopters, those within the Central East regional Partnership, linkmaker and Adoption Match (National Adoption Register).
- 5.10 The option of the child remaining with existing foster carers through adoption will be considered and explored if appropriate.
- 5.11 Children who do not have a match identified six months after the permission to place for adoption will be reviewed regularly to ensure that the care plan remains appropriate for the child.
- 5.12 Foster for Adoption placements will be provided for young babies where adoption is highly likely to ensure early permanence is achieved.
- 5.13 Adoption Support needs for the child will be identified in the Adoption support Plan and reviewed regularly or at the request of the adoptive family.
- 5.14 Children's adoption records will be carefully stored and archived and retained for 100 years.



6. Services to birth families

- 6.1 Birth parents will be referred to an independent agency, Adoption Plus, who are commissioned to provide independent counselling to birth parents. Birth parents will be provided with information about this service.
- 6.2 The views of birth parents will be recorded on the child's record and the Child's Permanence Report. The wishes and views of birth parents will be considered in the adoption planning process and they will be encouraged to contribute to the child's life story book.
- 6.3 Birth parents and/or appropriate relatives will be given the opportunity to meet with the identified adoptive parents unless this would pose risk or detriment to the child.
- 6.4 Central Bedfordshire maintain the contact plan for the child and provide a service to support the exchange and management of contact. A guide on letterbox contact leaflet will be provided.

7. Prospective adopters

- 7.1 Central Bedfordshire will recruit and assess a diverse range of adoptive families who are able to meet the needs of children with an adoption decision. This includes the recruitment of adopters able to offer foster for adoption placements.
- 7.2 The needs of looked after children in Central Bedfordshire will determine the priority given to progressing applications to adopt.

8. Eligibility criteria

- 8.1 The applicant(s) is single, married, in a civil partnership or an unmarried couple and is over 21 years old.
- 8.2 The applicant or one of the applicants is domiciled in the British Islands and have been habitually resident in the British Islands for at least a year.
- 8.3 Neither the applicant(s) nor an adult member of their household has been convicted or cautioned in respect of a specified offence.



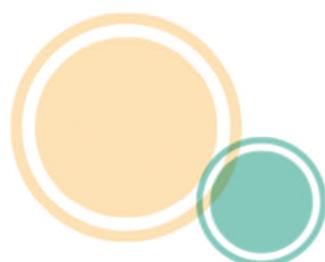
- 8.4 Enquiries can be received via the council website www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/adoption, telephone calls to the Adoption Duty Worker on 0300 300 8090 who is available on Monday, Wednesdays and Fridays or email to adoption@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

9. Preparation and assessment

- 9.1 Applicants will be offered to attend an information evening and those who wish to proceed with an application will be offered an initial assessment meeting. Applicants are expected to have childcare experience or to undertake such experience during assessment.
- 9.2 The two stage process will be fully explained to applicants and will be comprehensive, thorough and fair. The adoption service will work in partnership with applicants at all stages. Checks and references are undertaken in Stage 1. These include:
- Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service Checks (DBS)
 - Three written personal references, one family member and two friends
 - Employment references
 - Local Authority checks
 - Medical checks
 - School references (for children already in the family)
 - Pet assessment
 - In addition, DBS Checks are taken up on any other person in the prospective adopter's household aged 18 and over.
- 9.3 Preparation training is provided and all applicants are expected to attend and complete the required training programme. Further training can be accessed via an annual training programme.
- 9.4 If the Adoption service comes to a view that an application will not succeed applicants will be given reasons. Some information for the assessment is provided in confidence therefore there may be some occasions where it may not be possible for reasons to be fully explained.
- 9.5 The assessment is undertaken in compliance with the Adoption agencies Regulations and Practice guidance for the Preparation and assessment of Prospective Adopters.



- 9.6 Applicants will receive a copy of the completed assessment and have the opportunity to comment and sign it.
- 9.7 The assessment will inform whether the adoption service are able to provide a positive recommendation for approval as prospective adopters to the Adoption Panel. If recommendation cannot be agreed full reasons will be given to the applicants. Support and advice will offered to understand the recommendation.
- 9.8 If applicants do not agree a brief report will be presented to the Adoption Panel for consideration. The Agency Decision Maker will consider the panels recommendation and a written decision (a qualifying determination) will be provided to the applicants. Advice will be provided about the Independent Review Mechanism.
- 9.9 Applicants will be provided with information about the Adoption Panel and encouraged to attend.
- 9.10 Applicants will be informed of the panel recommendation on the day they attend. The decision of the Agency Decision Maker will provided verbally on the day it is received and followed up in writing.
- 9.11 Approved adopters will be linked with a Central Bedfordshire Child or their details will be circulated to regional partner members and Adoption Match. Approved adopters cannot self refer to Adoption Match within the first three months of approval without agreement from the adoption service.
- 9.12 If a match has not been identified within a year of the approval an annual review will be required to review the approval and determine if the applicants continue to be suitable to adopt.
- 9.13 Advice and Information will be provided if applicants are unsure as to whether they wish to consider inter-country or domestic adoption
- 9.14 The Adoption Service will manage and respond to enquiries and undertake assessments in respect of step-parent adoptions. Enquirers will be provided with a leaflet entitled step parent guide to assist them consider other options available.



10. Procedure for assessment

10.1 Central Bedfordshire Council has detailed policies and procedures for the recruitment, preparation, assessment and approval of prospective adopters. The following is a summary of the recruitment, assessment and approval process in Central Bedfordshire. This follows the two stage adopter recruitment and approval process as introduced by the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013 and Statutory Adoption Guidance 2013 which came into force in July 2013, as part of the Government's Adoption Reform.

- Enquirers can telephone the Service on 0300 300 8090, email their interest to adoption@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk or express an interest via an e-form on the councils website. Information brochures can be downloaded direct from the website. The Adoption Duty Worker will gather basic information about the enquirer and answer questions about adoption to assist them to consider whether adoption is the right choice for them.
- Prospective adopters contacting the Service are provided with information about adoption within 5 working days. They are given the opportunity to meet with a social worker and attend an information session.
- If the enquirer submits a registration of interest form, this is passed to the Adoption Manager, who will consider whether or not to accept the registration of interest within 5 days.
- If accepted the prospective adopter(s) are invited to attend training and a stage one plan will be completed to agree tasks and checks to be completed in this stage.
- The applicant should use this time to gain childcare experience and explore the extent of their interest in and capacity for adoption, including considering whether they could offer a fostering for adoption placement.
- Central Bedfordshire Council offer support to prospective adopters during stage one as appropriate, the process being monitored by a co-ordinator within the team.
- Towards the end of stage one, prospective adopters are offered an end of stage one Interview in order to consider the information gained during the period including the completed checks and whether the applicants have successfully completed stage one.



- Should the Adoption Manager decide that a prospective adopter is not suitable to adopt, either during stage one or at the end of stage one, they will provide the prospective adopter with a written explanation of the reasons, where possible.
- If the Adoption Manager decides that the prospective adopters can proceed to stage two, the case will be allocated to a Social Worker once the applicants are ready and want to proceed. Following notification a stage two plan will be completed and the Social Worker will be allocated to complete the assessment to consider the suitability to adopt. The report and the decision as to the applicants' suitability to adopt should be completed within four months.
- Once the assessment is completed this will be presented to the Adoption Panel for a recommendation. The recommendation is then presented to the Agency Decision Maker for a final decision on the applicants' suitability to adopt.
- The Adoption Team demonstrates a positive and supportive approach towards applications to adopt from previous adopters and foster carers wishing to adopt a child in their care. These assessments will be fast tracked.
- The Adoption Team aims to provide ongoing support to adoptive families, and an adoption support plan will be drawn up before placement which identifies the likely support needs of the placement. This is then reviewed prior to the Adoption Order being granted and annually thereafter as required.
- Children in adoptive placements are reviewed by the Independent Reviewing Officer. The Review helps identify when it is appropriate for an Adoption Order to be lodged by the applicants. In most cases, this would be decided by the time of the second Review. Adopters are supported by their Social Worker in making the application.

11. Adoption support services

- 11.1 The service is available to children, adopters, birth relatives and adopted adults living in Central Bedfordshire. The Practice Manager is the Adoption Support Advisor.



- 11.2 Central Bedfordshire recognise that support may be needed at various stages and the support required is varied and will differ from each person and family. The assessment process aids to identify support that may be required.
- 11.3 Central Bedfordshire Council provides a range of ongoing support to adoptive families, including family events and activity groups for adopted young people. In line with legislation, adopters for whom we are the responsible Adoption Agency can ask for an assessment of their adoption support needs.
- 11.4 Central Bedfordshire will offer a counselling service to adopted adults who live in Central Bedfordshire and wish to access their records. Intermediary services may also be available if there is capacity within the service, if not advice will be provided to individuals who wish to trace their birth relatives.
- 11.5 A post adoption contact service is available for all parties involved in ongoing contact
- 11.6 Central Bedfordshire will provide access to counselling services for birth family members affected by adoption.
- 11.7 Details of services can be found on Central Bedfordshire Council's website where an adoption support leaflet can be downloaded. A children's guide to adoption support is also available.
- 11.8 The Adoption service ensures that all those seeking to adopt are fully informed as to their entitlements in regards to adoption support, from the very beginning of the process. Updated information is provided upon request and via the periodic newsletters.

12. Adoption panel

- 12.1 The Adoption Regulations require the adoption panel to consider the case of every child, prospective adopter, and proposed adoption placement referred to it by the adoption agency for consideration, prior to making its recommendation as to:
 - a) Whether a prospective adopter is suitable to adopt a child
 - b) Whether a child should be placed for adoption with a particular prospective adopter
 - c) Whether on the information so far available a prospective adopter is unlikely to be suitable to adopt a child
 - d) Whether a prospective adopter, following review, is no longer suitable to adopt a child.



- 12.2 The adoption panel in Bedfordshire is a joint panel for Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils. It generally meets twice per month but can meet more frequently if required. The panel is chaired by an independent person who has considerable professional experience of adoption. The Agency Adviser and a Panel Secretary are in attendance but are non-voting members. Written legal advice is available to the panel from the Legal Adviser who on occasion may be present but is not a panel member.
- 12.3 Decisions about whether a child should be placed for adoption are made by the Agency Decision Maker without recourse to the panel. The exception of this are children relinquished by consent from the parent.
- 12.4 The Agency Decision Maker for Central Bedfordshire is the delegated Senior Manager Gerard Jones – Assistant Director of Children’s services.

13. Complaints

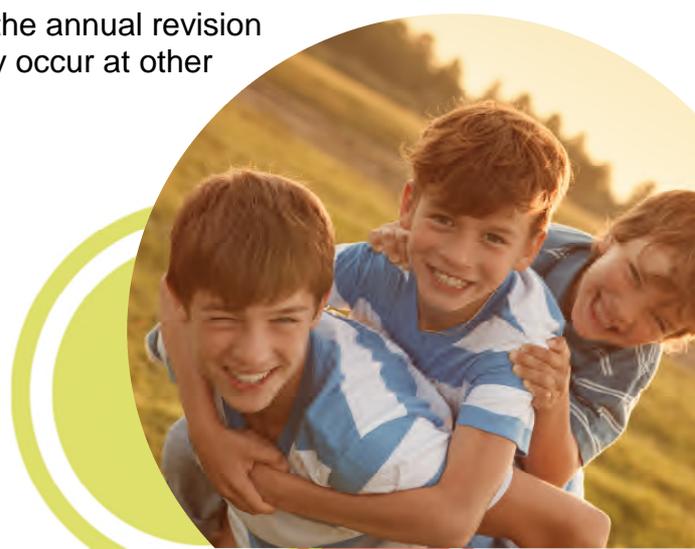
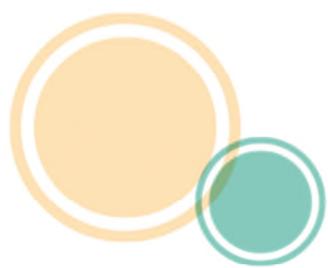
- 13.1 Complaints and queries will be dealt with in a manner that meets Central Bedfordshire local and national requirements.
- 13.2 Complaints by children are dealt with under the Children's Services complaints procedure, which means a shorter time for responding to children’s complaints and the provision of independent advocacy for complainants.
- 13.3 The complaints procedure has several stages: stage 1 applies to local resolution but if this is not achieved, there are 2 more stages. Information on these further stages is available from the Adoption Service or from Central Bedfordshire's Customer Relations Department.

14. Allegations in respect of children placed for adoption

- 14.1 Allegations in respect of children placed for adoption are dealt with in accordance with Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures and Central Bedfordshire procedures for managing allegations.

15. Arrangements for the revision and circulation of the statement of purpose

- 15.1 The registered manager is responsible for the annual revision of the statement of purpose. Revisions may occur at other times if necessary.



- 15.2 The revised statement of purpose will be presented to the adoption panel annually for their consideration.
- 15.3 The statement of purpose will be available to all staff via the councils intranet and to members of the public via Central Bedfordshire Council.

16. The Registration Authority

The Registration Authority is:
Ofsted
Ofsted National Business Unit
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

17. Contacts

For more information about Adoption in Central Bedfordshire please contact:

Adoption Team
Corporate Parenting Service
Central Bedfordshire Council
Unit 16, Stephenson Court
Fraser Road
Priory Business Court
Bedford, MK44 3WJ

Telephone: 0300 300 8090

For copies of the complaints procedure or further copies of this statement of purpose, please contact the Adoption Service on the contact details above.

If you wish to comment on this statement of purpose, on the Adoption Service or make a complaint, please contact the Head of Corporate Parenting service on the details above.

This document can be provided in large print and other languages.



Approved:

Signed:
Sue Harrison
Director of Children's Services

Date:

Signed:
Cllr Carole Hegley
Executive Member for Children's Services

Date:



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Central Bedfordshire Council

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Monday, 8 May 2017

Fostering Service Statement of Purpose 2017/18

Report of Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services Operations
(sue.harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Advising Officer: Annie Craig, Practice Manager, Fostering Team
(annie.craig@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Purpose of this report

Central Bedfordshire Council's Fostering Service Statement of Purpose is prepared in accordance with the requirement of the Care Standards Act 2000 for the conduct of Fostering Services. The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 governing the work of fostering services throughout England.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to:

1. Consider, comment and agree the Fostering Service Statement of Purpose 2017/18 as attached at Appendix A.

Issues

1. Standard 16 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and Regulation 3(1) of the Fostering Service (England) Regulations require a fostering service to produce a Statement of Purpose which contains a range of detailed information as set out in Standard 16.
2. Appendix A is the Fostering Service Statement of Purpose 2017/18.

Council Priorities

3. Improving education and skills; protecting the vulnerable; improving wellbeing.

Corporate Implications

4. Legal, financial and equalities implications were requested and are included in the report.

Legal Implications

5. Having considered the requirements under Standard 16 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and Regulation 3(1) of the Fostering Service (England) Regulations, the Statement of Purpose complies with the requirements set out therein. There are no other legal implications highlighted within the Statement of Purpose

Financial and Risk Implications

6. The report is a Statement of Purpose and has no direct financial implications.

Equalities Implications

7. 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 Statement of Purpose highlights the need to ensure that these requirements are reflected both in terms of meeting children's needs and recruiting Foster Carers from diverse backgrounds.

Conclusion and next Steps

8. This Statement of Purpose consists of: -
 - a statement of the aims and objectives of the Fostering Service and the services and facilities provided by the Fostering Service.
9. If approved, the Statement of Purpose will be sent to Ofsted with 28 days of approval by the Registered Provider, made available to all staff via the Council's Intranet and to members of the public via Central Bedfordshire Council. It will also be presented for the Fostering and Permanence Panel for their consideration.

Appendices

Appendix A – Fostering Service Statement of Purpose 2017/18

Background Papers

None

Foster
Do something incredible today!

APPENDIX A



Statement of purpose

Fostering Team, Central Bedfordshire Council
1 April 2017 - 31 March 2018

Children and families first
Working as one team close to our community
Being great corporate parents to children in care and care leavers
Much more than care
Being a well managed service and providing great public care

A great place to live and work.



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This Statement of Purpose arises from Regulation 3 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and Standard 16 of the Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011.



1. Introduction

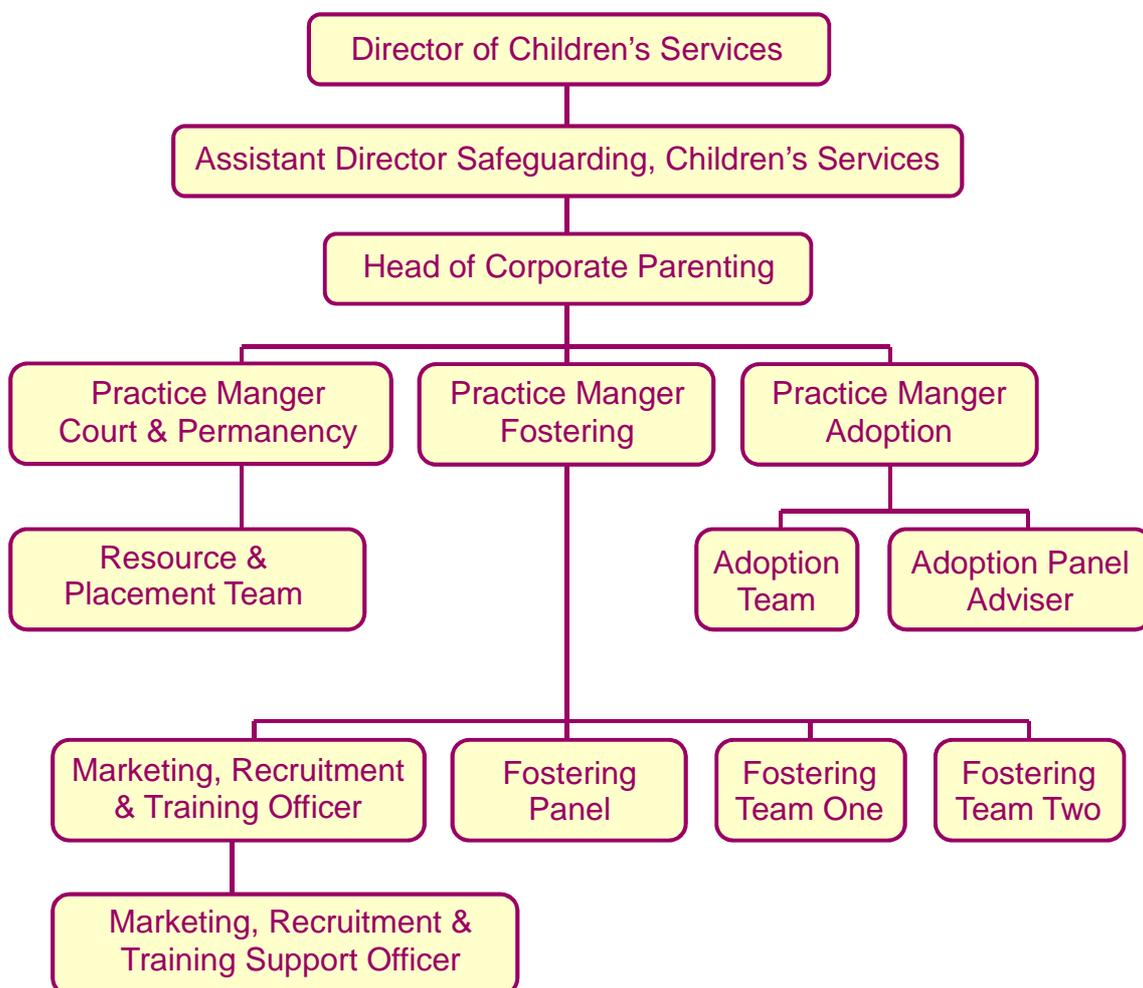
- 1.1. This statement of purpose has been produced in accordance with the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the Fostering services National Minimum Standards 2001.
- 1.2. It sets out the core aims and objectives of Central Bedfordshire Council's Fostering Service and the range of services provided.
- 1.3. It is intended as a useful source of information for Foster Carers, Fostering Social Workers, Child Care Social Workers, children, young people and any person with parental responsibilities.
- 1.4. Detailed information about Central Bedfordshire's Fostering procedures can be found via <http://centralbedfordshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com>.
- 1.5. The Fostering Service is an integral part of the Corporate Parenting Service in Central Bedfordshire Council.

2. Aims and objectives

- 2.1. To provide foster placements for children who need to be placed in a suitable home on an emergency basis, whether this is with career Foster Carers or family and friends (connected persons carers).
- 2.2. Services are officered for children on the principle that their needs and welfare are best met within a caring and nurturing environment.
- 2.3. To provide a high quality Fostering Service to children, their birth parents, Foster Carers and social work colleagues.
- 2.4. To provide foster placements that meets the needs of children requiring such a placement.
- 2.5. To ensure safe, stable and consistent care for every child placed in foster care.
- 2.6. To ensure that the ethnic origin, cultural background, religious heritage and language of children are fully recognised, valued and promoted.
- 2.7. To recruit a range of Foster Carers from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds to meet the needs of children needing placements.

- 2.8. To provide support services that promote and enable the retention of Foster Carers.
- 2.9. To ensure, that at all times, the teams provide services that are effective and that practices are clear, open, honest and fair to all services users.
- 2.10. To ensure that Foster Carers are enabled to promote positive outcomes for children placed with them.
- 2.11. To actively promote and support training opportunities for all Foster Carers.
- 2.12. To ensure that the Fostering Service meets Fostering Regulations, National Minimum Standards and best practice.

3. Management and staff structure



- 3.1. The ultimate responsibility for the Fostering service rests with Elected Members.
- 3.2. The Assistant Director then gives strategic leadership to Children's Services (Responsible Person).
- 3.3. The Head of Corporate Parenting Service co-ordinates the activities of the Fostering Service along with the Adoption Service, Resource Team and Children in Care Teams, and promotes partnership working across Children's Services and partner agencies.
- 3.4. The Practice Manager for Fostering (Registered Manager) provides operational management, quality assurance, performance and budget management and co-ordinates the work of the two Fostering Teams. In addition to supervising the work of the two Fostering Team Managers, the Practice Manager also supervises/manages the work of the Marketing, Recruitment and Training Officer, whose work covers both Fostering and Adoption as well as the Panel Adviser for the Fostering and Permanence Panel. The Practice Manager also reports to senior managers on service activities and issues of concern.
- 3.5. Team Managers are responsible for the day to day management of Social Workers, recruiting, assessing and supervising Foster Carers, matching of children to available carers, dealing with complaints and representations and producing activity reports and statistical returns.
- 3.6. Both Team Managers provide regular supervision to their respective team of Social Workers/Social Work Assistant. As part of the Corporate Parenting Service they work closely with the Marketing, Recruitment and Training Officer, Marketing, Recruitment and Training Support officer and other teams within the Corporate Parenting Service as well as liaising with the Children with Disability Team/Early Intervention Teams and partner agencies.
- 3.7. The Practice/Team Managers and all Social Workers are professionally qualified with commensurate social work experience. Staff have an annual Personal Development Review (Your Year) and Central Bedfordshire Council's Learning and Development Team provides bespoke training that meets the identified training needs of staff as well as providing more general corporate training. In addition to the Social Workers and Social Work Assistant the team is supported by two Business Support Officers who are supervised by the Team managers. A team of Psychologists are also based with the Corporate Parenting Service and are available to support children, Foster and staff.



4. Our service to children

- 4.1. The primary purpose of the Fostering Service is to provide high quality, safe, secure and caring foster families for children who are unable to live at home. Where ever possible and where safe to do so, children will be placed with someone from their extended family or a close family friend. These arrangements are recognised in legislation as ‘family and friends’ foster placements. When this is not possible, placements will be found with one of our approved Foster Carers or a suitable agency. We aim to clearly identify the particular emotional, physical, cultural and religious needs of a child and find a foster family who can meet their needs.
- 4.2. Except in emergencies we plan introductory meetings between the child and the Foster Carer in an effort to lesson the anxiety for the child of moving to a new family. Where a child is placed in an emergency the Child’s Social Worker or the Foster Carer’s Supervising Social Worker will give the child as much information about the Foster Carers and their household as possible. Profiles are kept on all Foster Carers and they can be used to help provide children with relevant information about the fostering household/area etc, even in an emergency situation.
- 4.3. Children will be visited in placement by both their own Social Worker and the Foster Carer’s Supervising Social Worker, children will be encouraged to express their wishes and view about their foster placement and will be invited to provide written feedback about their placement for the Foster Carer’s Annual Review. The children of Foster Carers are invited to provide written feedback regarding their parents Foster Carer’s Annual Review.

5. Matching process

- 5.1. Central Bedfordshire Resource and Placement Team identify Foster Carers who have vacancies and work with the Fostering Teams to assess if this is the most appropriate placement of the child. If they agree, the match is proposed to the Foster Carer(s) and the Child’s Social Worker who will further consider the match, involving the child as appropriate, and makes the arrangements for the placement, if agreed.

6. Children’s guide

- 6.1. A children’s guide is provided to all children in care, when placed, when they are of sufficient understanding to be able to benefit from the information contained in the guide.



- 6.2. The aim is to provide information about what it means to be fostered, what Social Workers do and what children can do if they are not happy in their foster home or if they have any worries or concerns. The guides are reviewed annually and a copy is sent to Ofsted and all the services Foster Carers.

7. Recruitment and assessment of prospective Foster Carers

- 7.1. The Fostering Service works to a Recruitment and Retention Strategy which is updated annually. The Strategy recognises the need to recruit local Foster Carers who will be able to meet the diverse needs of the children requiring foster homes.
- 7.2. Central Bedfordshire Council will recruit and assess a diverse range of Foster Carers who are able to meet the needs of children in care.
- 7.3. All members of the public who make an initial enquiry by phone, email or letter in relation to becoming a Foster Carer will be referred to the Fostering Service. All enquiries will be treated as a potential resource and given a prompt response. They will be contacted, to gather further information and for a general discussion about fostering.
- 7.4. An initial enquiry form will be completed gathering basic information about the applicant/household in addition a check will be carried out in relation to applicants and all members of their household on Children's Services records.
- 7.5. All applicants will be sent an information pack and letter. Where the applicant or a member of the household is known, the enquiry will be passed to the manager for a decision on how to proceed. At this early stage it may be appropriate to advise the applicants against pursuing fostering if they clearly do not meet the basic criteria to foster. The manager's decision will be communicated to the person concerned with reasons given and the decision recorded.
- 7.6. Where the decision is to proceed the applicant will be invited to any planned information events and an initial visit to the applicant's home will be arranged. The purpose of this visit is to discuss fostering in more depth and to allow the Social Worker to assess the suitability of their accommodation. An application form is left with the applicant to complete and once returned the assessment process will commence.



- 7.7. The two stage assessment process will be fully explained to applicants and will be thorough as fair. The Fostering Service will work in partnership with applicants at all stages. Checks and references are undertaken in Stage 1, these include:
- Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks (DBS) on applicants and all members of the household aged 18 and over
 - Written personal references
 - Employment references
 - Local Authority checks
 - Medical checks
 - School references (for children already with family)
 - Pet assessment.
- 7.8. Preparation training (Skills to Foster) is provided and all applicants are expected to complete the required training programme.
- 7.9. If the Fostering Service came to a view that an application will not succeed at stage 1 applicants will be given reasons. Some information for the assessment is provided in confidence therefore there may be some occasion where it may not be possible for reasons to be fully explained.
- 7.10. If the Fostering Manager decides that the prospective Foster Carers can proceed to stage 2, the case will be allocated to a Social Worker to complete the assessment and consider the suitability to foster. The report and the decision as to the applicant's suitability to foster should be completed within four months.
- 7.11. Once the assessment is completed this will be presented to the Fostering and Permanence Panel for a recommendation.

8. The Fostering and Permanence Panel

- 8.1. The Fostering Service has a fostering panel constituted in accordance with Regulations 23 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011. The Service maintains a 'central list' of panel members. The Panel Chair and Vice Chair are independent people with professional experience of fostering.



- 8.2 Other panel members on the 'central list' include a Social Worker with more than three years relevant post-qualifying experience, a Central Bedfordshire Councillor, independent members and the Agency Medical Advisor. The panel generally meets twice a month and detailed minutes are kept of all panel meetings.
- 8.3 The functions of the Fostering Panel are to consider:
- Each application and recommended whether or not a person is suitable to be a Foster Carer and the terms of their approval
 - The first Annual Review of each approved carer and any other review or requested by the Fostering Service
 - The termination of approval or change of terms of approval of a Foster Carer.
- 8.4 New applicants and existing Foster Carers are invited and encouraged to attend panel when their application or review is presented to panel.
- 8.5 The panel has a quality assurance role and monitors the standard of reports presented to it and feeds back any issues or concerns to the Registered Manager. The panel makes recommendations to the Fostering Service and these recommendations are referred to the 'Agency Decision Maker' for a decision.
- 8.6 If the panel or Agency Decision Maker is minded not to recommend approval, applicants are advised that they can request their case is reconsidered by the panel or apply to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) for a review of their case.

9 The Foster Carer Charter

- 9.1 Central Bedfordshire Foster Carer Charter 'Children Come First'.
- 9.2 The Fostering Service is committed to providing and promoting safe, stable and nurturing placements where the outcomes and life chances for looked after children are positive. In order to achieve this it is important to have a working relationship which is based on trust and respect between all those involved in the care of the child.

- 9.3 The Service has worked in partnership with Foster Carers to achieve the charter, which explains what the roles and responsibilities of the Service and the carers are towards each other and the children they care for.

10 Support and supervision of Foster Carers

- 10.1 Once a Foster Carer has been approved by Panel, they will be allocated their own Supervising Social Worker who will provide regular supervision and support. On approval and at any time during their fostering carer when Foster Carers require additional support a 'mentor' can be allocated. Foster Carers can also access telephone support out of office hours from the Fostering Duty Worker who is on call from 5.20pm until 10pm weekdays and throughout the weekends and bank holidays.
- 10.2 The Service holds quarterly Foster Carer Forums (Talk Time) where Foster Carers have the opportunity to meet and exchange views with senior managers, in addition the Fostering Service provides periodic social events for Foster Carers and their children.
- 10.3 An annual Celebration of Fostering and awards ceremony is held to recognise the dedication and commitment of Foster Carers. Awards are given to carers who have fostered at each 5 year stage e.g. 5 years, 10 years, 15 years as well as a nominations process for Foster Carers and other professionals working with foster carers to nominate for awards such as special sons and daughters, outstanding contribution to fostering.
- 10.4 Central Bedfordshire Council also pay for all its Foster Carers to have individual membership with Fostering Network, allowing them access to an unlimited and extensive range of independent support services.
- 10.5 Foster Carers are currently provided with Max Cards which provide discounts on a range of attractions and family activities both nationally and locally.
- 10.6 Foster Carers have access to the Foster Carers Handbook which contains useful information for Foster Carers in relation to fostering issues.
- 10.7 A regular newsletter is also provided for Foster Carers keeping them up to date on current issues, forthcoming training/events, new policies, etc.
- 10.8 The Fostering Service arranges various monthly support groups for Foster Carers and regular events for children of Foster Carers.
- 10.9 Foster Carers also run their own Foster Care Association which is supported by Central Bedfordshire Council.



11 Reviewing the approval of Foster Carers

- 11.1 The approved status of all Foster Carers is reviewed annually or whenever there is a change of circumstances or concern about the standard of care. First Annual review and those where there is a change in carers 'terms of approval or where there have been a complaint or allegation are presented to the Fostering and Permanence Panel for consideration. Foster Carers are invited and encouraged to attend panel for their Review.
- 11.2 All other Reviews are presented to the Agency Decision Maker for a decision about ongoing approval.
- 11.3 The Foster Carer Review Officer sits within the Professional Standards Service providing independent scrutiny and challenges to the Service.

12 Training for Foster Carers

- 12.1 As part of the assessment process Foster Carers are expected to attend the 'Skills to Foster' preparation training and complete safeguarding and First Aid Training.
- 12.2 Once approved all Foster Carers are expected to undertake a range of training to update their skills. The national Training, Support and Development Standards provide a framework for training for the first year of a foster care role and set out what Foster Carers should know, understand and be able to do. All Foster Carers are required to complete the Training, Support and Development Standards workbook within 12 months of approval (18 months for connected persons). The standards include:
- Standard 1: understand the principles and values essential for fostering children and young people.
 - Standard 2: understand your role as a Foster Carer.
 - Standard 3: understand health and safety and healthy caring.
 - Standard 4: know how to communicate effectively.
 - Standard 5: understand the development of children and young people.
 - Standard 6: safeguard children and young people (keep them safe from harm).
 - Standard 7: develop yourself.



- 12.3 Approved Foster Carers eligibility for tier fees is linked to training attendance and the core training modules are outlined in the Foster Training Policy. This includes pre approval training, an induction and training expectations to be completed within their first, second and following years of their fostering career.
- 12.4 To enable Foster Carers to complete the core training they have access to a broad range of training which includes classroom based courses as well as e-learning. The classroom based courses are available during the daytime, evenings and weekends meaning those carers in employment can also attend. Via the CPD on-line training website they can access training from different streams within Central Bedfordshire Council including Multi-agency, Early Years, Local Safeguarding Board and the Domestic Violence Team. By having access to many specialist courses, Foster Carers can tailor their training to suit any specific requirements based on the needs of the child they have in placement, as well as attending the core training courses required by the national Minimum Standards of Foster Carers.

13 Complaints

- 13.1 All local authorities are required to ensure a complaints process is provided under the Children Act 1989.
- 13.2 All complaints and queries will be dealt with in a manner that meets Central Bedfordshire local and national requirements.
- 13.3 Complaints by children are dealt with under the Children's Services complaints procedure, which needs a shorter time for responding to children's complaints and the provision of independent advocacy for complaints.
- 13.4 The complaints procedure has several states; stage 1 applies to local resolution, but if this is not achieved, there are two more stages. Information on these further stages is available from the Fostering Service or from Central Bedfordshire's Customer Relations Department.

14 Quality monitoring

- 14.1 The quality of the work of the Fostering Service is monitored through Staff Supervision which is linked to an appraisal system, monthly recorded visits to Foster Carers including unannounced visits, annual reviews, feedback from training sessions, case recording and peer/management audits.



- 14.2 The Panel Agency Advisor provide scrutiny and feedback as does the Fostering Panel Chair person. Team Managers monitor data about incidents of concern in foster care including; restraint, allegations, complaints and unauthorised absence. The Registered Manager (Practice Manager) monitors the schedule 6 and 7 requirements of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011.
- 14.3 Regular quarter reports are provided to the Corporate Parenting Panel providing the executive of the Council with information/data in relation to the agency's activity.
- 14.4 The information gathered through quarterly and annual reports, audits, inspectors and customer feedback is constantly evaluated by the managers of the Fostering Service to judge its on-going effectiveness and make changes where necessary.
- 14.5 In addition the Service is subject to inspection by Ofsted.

15 Arrangements for the revision and circulation of the statement of purpose

- 15.1 The Registered Manager will keep under review, and where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose and will notify the Chief Inspector of any such revision within 28 days. Staff and Foster Carers will be consulted on proposed revisions as appropriate.
- 15.2 The statement of purpose will be available to all staff via the Council's intranet and to members of the public via Central Bedfordshire Council's website.

16 The Registration Authority

The Registration Authority is:

Ofsted,
Ofsted National Business Unit,
Piccadilly Gate,
Store Street,
Manchester,
M1 2WD
Telephone: 0300 123 1231
[Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)



17 Contacts

For more information about Fostering in Central Bedfordshire please contact:

Fostering Service,
Corporate Parenting Service,
Central Bedfordshire Council,
Unit 16, Stephenson Court,
Fraser Road, Priory Business Park,
Bedford, MK44 3WJ

Telephone: 0300 300 8090

For copies of the complaints procedure or further copies of this statement of purpose, please contact the Fostering Service on the contact details above. If you wish to comment on this statement of purpose on the Fostering Service or make a complaint, please contact the Head of Corporate Parenting Service on the contact details above.

This report can be provided in large print and other languages.



Central Bedfordshire Council

Corporate Parenting Panel

Monday, 8 May 2017

Work Programme

Advising Officer:

Leslie Manning, Committee Services Officer
(leslie.manning@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to assist the Corporate Parenting Panel in discharging its responsibilities by providing a proposed work programme for consideration.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Panel considers the proposed work programme attached at Appendix A.

1. To assist the Corporate Parenting Panel a work programme is attached at Appendix A to this report. The work programme contains the known agenda items that the Panel will need to consider.
2. Additional items will be identified as the municipal year progresses. The work programme is therefore subject to change.

Council Priorities

3. The activities of the Corporate Parenting Panel are crucial to ensuring that the Council effectively discharges its role as Corporate Parent of Looked After Children. By considering, approving and following its work programme the Panel helps support the Council's priorities of providing improving education and skills, protecting the vulnerable; improving wellbeing and being a more efficient and responsive Council.

Corporate Implications

Legal Implications

4. There are no legal implications.

Financial and Risk Implications

5. There are no financial and risk implications.

Equalities Implications

6. 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.
7. Report authors will be encouraged to work with the Corporate Policy Advisor (Equality & Diversity) in order to ensure that relevant equality implications are identified.

Conclusion and next Steps

8. This report will assist the Corporate Parenting Panel in discharging its responsibilities. Any amendments approved by the Panel will be incorporated in the work programme.

Appendices

The following Appendix is attached:

Appendix A – Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme

Background Papers

None

Appendix A

Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme

2016/17 Municipal Year	
6 March 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CiCC and Participation Annual Report 2016/17 (inc. Pledge update) (MS/CiCC) • Update of the Adoption Fund (NP) • Fostering Service Q3 Report (AC) • Virtual School for LAC Interim Report (JE) • LAC Health Report – Six Monthly Update NHS Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (TMcD) • Work Programme (LM) • CiCC Presentation (MS/CiCC) EXEMPT ITEM
8 May 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose 2017/18 (RB) • Fostering Agency Statement of Purpose 2017/18 (RB) • Peer Review and Action Plan (GJ) • Update on Transformation Plan (GJ) • Work Programme (LM)
2017/18 Municipal Year	
3 July 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report 2016/17 (SK) • Fostering Agency Q4 Performance Report (AC) • Fostering Agency Annual Report 2016/17 (AC) • Adoption Agency Annual Report 2016/17 (NP) • Leaving Care Housing (spotlight report) (TK) • Work Programme (LM)
4 September 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAC Annual (Health) Report (NHS – Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group) (TMcD) • Fostering Service Q1 Report (AC) • Chairman of Adoption Panel – Annual Report (NP/GF) • Work Programme (LM)
13 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fostering Service Q2 Report (AC) • Adoption Agency Interim Report (NP) • Virtual School for LAC Interim Report (JE) • Work Programme (LM)

Unscheduled reports:

- Options for the funding of long term family care (GJ)
- Challenges experienced with the adoption process – discussion with carers (GJ)
- The appointment of a lay member/parent and the appointment of a substitute elected Member to the Joint Adoption Panel (author to be determined)
- Video presentation on the work of the CiCC (GJ)

Appendix A

- Foster care leavers be invited to attend and describe their experiences in care and raise any issues (GJ)
- Looked After Children's Health Care Provision 'Deep Dive' Report (by March 2016) (GJ)
- 'Spotlight Report' on the current process which applies to young people as they move into adult social care and what additional action can be taken to improve support for them during this phase (young people to be invited to attend and talk about their experiences) (GJ)
- 'Spotlight Report' on how the adoption process works and how people become adopters (GJ)
- 'Spotlight Reports' on the following issues:
 - a. LAC with disabilities
 - b. Unaccompanied asylum seekers as LAC
 - c. The Virtual School
 - d. The reason for, and the impact of, the movement of LAC between different foster carers
(authors to be determined)
- A report by the foster carer representatives (Central Bedfordshire branch of the FCA) setting out feedback on various issues of their choice
- Corporate Apprenticeship Scheme and LAC (EW)
- 'Spotlight Report' providing examples of young people in different types of accommodation situations and what their experiences and outcomes were (18.01.16)
- Statistical information be provided on the number of young people, how they move on and what type of housing offers they receive (18.01.16)
- Given the perceived demand for foyer type accommodation, information be supplied on what is currently available within Central Bedfordshire and what the aspiration is for future provision (18.01.16)
- The impact of the government's policies towards the adoption process, including the changes to the family court system (18.01.16)
- Proposal on how to co-ordinate information relating to the Council's role as corporate parent (18.01.16)
- Accuracy of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (EW) (14.03.16)
- Academic progress made by children since becoming Looked After (14.03.16)
- Personal Advisor to attend Panel to explain measures taken to raise LAC expectations (JE) (14.03.16)
- Regular Update reports on the establishment of a regional adoption agency (GJ) (09.05.16)
- 'Spotlight Report' on youth support and help for adolescents in gaining further education, apprenticeships or employment (GJ) (09.05.16)
- Corporate Parenting Action Plan – Annual Review