

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

**This meeting
may be filmed.***

The logo for Central Bedfordshire, featuring the text "Central Bedfordshire" in white on a black circular background.

please ask for Sharon Griffin
direct line 0300 300 5066
date 19 April 2018

NOTICE OF MEETING

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Date & Time

Monday, 30 April 2018 10.00 a.m.

Venue at

Room 15 - Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford, SG17 5TQ

Richard Carr
Chief Executive

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

Elected Members (voting)

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

[Named Substitutes:

Cllrs: R D Berry, D Bowater, Mrs D B Gurney, G Perham 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.**

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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 Monday, 5 March 2018. (copy attached).

3. **Members' Interest**

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

5. **Amendment to the Terms of Reference for the Corporate Parenting Panel**

To endorse the proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

6. **Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose 2018/19**

To receive the Adoption Service Statement of Purpose for 2018/19.

7. **Fostering Agency Statement of Purpose 2018/19**

To receive the Fostering Service Statement of Purpose for 2018/19.

8. **Results of Fostering Recruitment and Retention Survey**

To receive feedback on the results of the recent fostering recruitment and retention survey undertaken.

9. **Work Programme**

To consider the Panel's work programme.

10. **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 Item

<i>Item</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Exempt Para.</i>
11.	Final Report Virtual School for Looked After Children	* 2

To consider an updated report which provides information on the role of the Virtual School and the validated outcomes at Key Stages 1, 2 and 4 for Looked After Children (LAC) in Central Bedfordshire in the Academic Year 2016/17. It also includes data for the academic year 2017/18 and identifies the steps being taken to raise the achievement and progress of all LAC.

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Room 15 - Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford, SG17 5TQ on Monday, 5 March 2018

PRESENT

Elected Members (voting)

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

Officers (voting)

Mrs J Ogley, Director, Social Care Health and Housing

Apologies for Absence: Mr P Albon
Mrs J Edwards, The Virtual School
Ms S Rymell, Head of Service - Intake & Family Support,
Access and Assessment

Members in Attendance: Cllr R D Berry

Officers in Attendance:	Ms R Coals	Principal Social Worker and Head of Professional Standards
	Mr A Coman	Head of Corporate Parenting
	Mr N Costin	Head of Housing Service
	Ms S Griffin	Committee Services Officer
	Mrs S Harvey	Consultant Social Worker
	Mr G Jones	Deputy Director Safeguarding and Early Help
	Ms K Mathu	CYP Participation Officer
	Mrs J Ogley	Director of Social Care, Health and Housing
	Miss N Phillips	Practice Manager Adoption

CPP/17/38. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 15 January 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendments to the meeting attendance:

- Duplicate record of Cllr Dodwell's attendance to be deleted
- Councillor Mrs S Goodchild and Councillor S Dixon to be added
- Councillor Mrs T Stock to be added to the apologies received

CPP/17/39. **Members' Interest**

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/17/40. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The following announcements and communications were made:

In response to the query raised about webcasting Corporate Parenting Panel, meetings, the Chairman advised that the general consensus was that meetings should not be webcast due to the sensitivity and nature of discussions that took place.

Councillor Stock explained to the Panel that she had attended a Corporate Parenting Open Day on the 31 January 2018 following which she had accompanied a Personal Adviser on a visit to two young people who were currently being supported by the local authority. The visits highlighted the vital role of the Personal Adviser. The Head of Corporate Parenting said that the opportunity of other members visiting with a Personal Advisor could be explored.

In response to a question raised about Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) checks, the Principal Social Worker and Head of Professional Standards explained DBS checks were a requirement for continuous engagement with children and that there was not the requirement for checks for one off accompanied visits.

The Panel was advised that Mr Jones, Deputy Director Safeguarding and Early Help would be leaving Central Bedfordshire Council to take up the role of Director of Children's Services at Leicester City Council. In response, the Vice Chairman and Members of the Panel expressed their thanks to the Deputy Director for his hard work and dedication on behalf of Children's Services and for his contribution to Corporate Parenting Panel and wished him every success in his new appointment.

In the absence of the Children In Care Council Representative, the Children and Young People Participation Officer gave an update on work that had been undertaken.

Points and comments included:

- The first Children In Care Council meeting had taken place in January and went well. A lot of suggestions were made for future topics of discussion and activities. Discussions also took place about what areas were working well (working with Ofsted, presenting to others, being involved in the interview process and the Awards Ceremony) and ways to resolve issues such as not being able to contact a Personal Assistant. Feedback given at the meeting included praise for social workers and CiCC mentors and that the young people felt their opinions were valued.
- A WhatsApp group had been created as another avenue of communication. This had generated a lot of conversation and provided the opportunity to share opinions and views of other young people.
- Representatives from the CiCC had visited Luton Fire Station to learn about fire safety which was of social and educational value. One young person had subsequently expressed an interest in becoming a fire cadet.
- Future plans this term included continued working with the charity Frontline to provide training for social work students. A regional induction event was taking place on the 17 March with 90 social work students expected.
- CiCC representatives were also attending Warwick University in September to present to 300 students.

CPP/17/41. **Amendment to Terms of Reference for the Corporate Parenting Panel**

The Panel considered the report outlining the proposed amendment to the Terms of Reference to allow either the Executive Member or the Deputy Executive Member for Families, Education and Children to be the Chairman of the Panel.

Points and comments included:

- The Executive Member for Families, Education and Children explained that he would still attend Panel meetings in the capacity of Chairman but the Vice-Chair would take the role as Chairman.
- The proposed amendment provides continuity and flexibility and would not diminish the work taking place and value of the Panel.
- Should the Chairman of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee be a member of the Corporate Parenting Panel to ensure that there is oversight and scrutiny of the items being considered.

- Concern was expressed that the proposed amendment to the Terms of Reference was not in keeping with the principle that the Executive Member for Families, Education and Children would be Chairman of the Panel.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the proposed changes to the Terms of Reference be deferred to the April meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel.**
- 2. that the view of the Director of Children's Services would be sought on the proposed changes to the Terms of Reference.**

CPP/17/42. Meeting the housing and support needs of vulnerable young people

The Panel considered a report providing an update on meeting the housing and support needs of vulnerable young people.

Points and comments included:

1. Operational collaboration had improved greatly since 2014 and a cultural shift in how departments worked together had resulted in a greater understanding of Corporate Parenting (Panel) responsibilities by housing colleagues. Improving access to social housing had been a key success since 2014.
2. The Head of Service, Social Care Health & Housing explained that new duties of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 included care leavers living in another local authority area who were at college or university and fell into difficulty with housing now having the choice of which local authority they were able to approach for support.
3. The Act also included the duty on statutory agencies such as social care providers to refer service users that may be homeless or threatened with homelessness to a local housing authority and the requirement for a personalised housing plan.
4. A requirement of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 was the development of a Leaving Care offer. A key target was the completion of the first draft in May 2018, and for the final document to be published in October 2018.
5. The guidance for local authorities on the local offer for care leavers had been published at the end of February 2018. Further detail of the offer was awaited.
6. The Head of Corporate Parenting advised that from April 2018 (through the Children and Social Work Act 2017), the new duty of the offer of Personal Adviser support was being extended to all care leavers to the age of 25 regardless of whether they were in education would come into effect. The support would also apply retrospectively to carer leavers who had previously ceased receiving support when they reached age 21.

7. Members of the Panel were advised that eligibility criteria was in place for the provision of accommodation for Care Leavers.
8. Next steps included Central Bedfordshire Council Housing being the main provider of supported shared housing for care leavers with the majority of the housing being from Central Bedfordshire Council stock.
9. The Head of Corporate Parenting explained that depending on the age of the Care leaver, various entitlements, grants and allowances were available from the Government to help with utility expenses such as electricity and water bills.
10. The Head of Corporate Parenting advised that an assessment of need was carried out for all unaccompanied young asylum seekers in order to gain an understanding of language and culture requirements. A pathway plan was then produced setting out the services required which was specific to each young person.
11. Support was available until a care leaver felt they were ready to move into independent living. Personal Assistants were key to the provision of support for the transition to adulthood and independent living. The possibility of supporting those with acute need from 25 years to 30 years of age where appropriate was being discussed. The support would be offered on a case by case basis.
12. In terms of those young people barred from the housing register, the key was to work with colleagues in Housing to prevent young people getting to the point where they could not access housing.

NOTED

- 1. the progress made since January 2016 towards an improved day to day experience of housing and support services by Care Leavers, and towards improved access to supported accommodation for those Care Leavers that are not ready for independent accommodation at the age of 18;**
- 2. the experiences and challenges of Care Leavers towards achieving suitable housing solutions;**
- 3. the proposed next steps and works in progress;**
- 4. the related developments in this area;**
- 5. the new responsibilities of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and how this would influence the development of the Leaving Care Offer.**

RESOLVED

- 1. that an update on the implications of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Leaving Care Offer would be given at the July meeting of the Panel.**
- 2. that a Care Leaver would be invited to attend a future meeting of the Panel to give their experience of the process.**

CPP/17/43. **Becoming an Adopter**

The Panel considered the report of the Director of Children's Services which provided an update on the pathway for becoming an adopter.

The Chairman welcomed an adoptive parent to the meeting who shared her own experience of the adoption process.

Points and comments included:

- The longest waiting period of the process was waiting for the Panel and for adopters who had been matched.
- The expectation of the length of the adoption process needed to be managed as the process can take 18 – 24 months not the 6 months advised.
- It would be helpful for the adoption booklet to explain how the court process worked and to make adoptive parents aware that the birth parents are able to contest the adoption until the court day.
- The value of having a psychologist to support the adoptive parents during the process needed to be considered.

NOTED

the report on Becoming an Adopter.

CPP/17/44. **Spotlight Report on the Walking Alongside You (WAY) project**

The Panel considered a report outlining the progress on the Walking Alongside You (WAY) project.

Points and comments included:

- It was planned that the initial cohort would be of 20 women who had children removed from their care, supported by two WAY workers.
- Following the initial scoping of the issue in Central Bedfordshire to analyse the current caseload in Court and Permanency Teams, five women had been identified who were going through court proceedings or had children

who had been removed from their care had agreed to be part of the project which would last up to 18 months.

- The WAY project could include teenage pregnancy as it did not have an age limit.
- Next steps included ensuring that the appropriate training had taken place for WAY workers and those involved with the project.

NOTED

the content of the report be noted.

RESOLVED

that a progress update would be given one year after implementation of the Project (May/June 2019).

CPP/17/45. **Short term placement stability**

The Panel received a presentation outlining the number of children who had experienced 3 or more placement moves in the past 12 months.

Points and comments included:

1. There is a nationally defined indicator to measure the percentage of Looked After Children who experienced three or more placement moves in the period of 12 month.
2. At the end of January 2018 the data for Central Bedfordshire showed that 6.6% (21 children) had three or more placement moves over the previous 12 months with two children having five or less moves.
3. The performance for Central Bedfordshire was very strong in both short term and long term placement stability and the authority was currently outperforming against target.
4. More work needed to take place around placement moves for adolescents.

NOTED

the contents of the presentation and addendum on Short Term Placement stability

RESOLVED

that benchmarking against other local authorities would be added to future reports to evidence performance and achievements.

CPP/17/46. **Agency Report Quarter 3 – Fostering 1 October – 31 December 2017**

The Panel considered a report outlining the activity in the Fostering Service from 1 October to 31 December 2017.

Points and comments included:

- The Fostering Service was advertised in various ways such as social media, press coverage of events, bulletins, newsletters and advertisements. Discussions took place with the Communications team on a regular basis to review ways of communication and the promotion of the Service.
- Suggestions on raising awareness of the Fostering Service in the community and expanding the diversity of foster carers were welcomed such as ward surgeries held by Councillors.
- The aging population of foster carers was both a national and local issue. Greater focus was needed on the recruitment of younger foster carers.
- The geographical areas in Central Bedfordshire where foster carers were required had been identified and targeted recruitment would take place.

NOTED

the Fostering Agency Quarter 3 Report.

RESOLVED

that Mr P Fraser, Partnership and Community Engagement be contacted regarding the promotion of the Fostering Service through town and parish council networks.

CPP/17/47. **Work Programme**

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

RESOLVED

that the Corporate Parenting Panel work programme, as attached at Appendix A to the report of the Committee Services Offices, be approved subject to the addition of the following updates:

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.50 p.m.)

Central Bedfordshire Council

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Date 5 March 2018

Amendment to the Terms of Reference for the Corporate Parenting Panel

Report of: Cllr Steven Dixon, Executive Member for Families, Education and Children and Lead Member for Children's Services,
(steven.dixon@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Responsible Director(s): Charles Warboys, Director of Resources,
(charles.warboys@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Purpose of this report

1. To endorse the proposed amendment to the terms of reference of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panel is asked to:-

1. **approve the proposed amendment to the terms of reference of the Corporate Parenting Panel as set out at Appendix A.**

Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

2. The composition of the Panel does not form part of the business of the overview and scrutiny committees.

Terms of Reference

3. A request has been received from the Executive Member for Families, Education and Children to amend the terms of reference of the Corporate Parenting Panel to allow either the Executive Member or the Deputy Executive Member for Families, Education and Children to be the Chairman of the Panel.
4. A copy of the amendment to the terms of reference are set out at Appendix A.

Council Priorities

5. The appropriate structure of the Corporate Parenting Panel will contribute to the proper running of the Council, enabling it to meet its priorities and ambitions, as set out in the Council's 5-Year Plan:
www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/council/five-year/plan.aspx

Corporate Implications

Legal Implications

6. The Children Act 2004 and the Children Act 2009 set out the duty of a local authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of looked after children. This duty is exercised through the role of the corporate parent to children who are looked after.

Financial and Risk Implications

7. There are no financial and risk implications relating to the amendments to the terms of reference.

Equalities Implications

8. There are no equalities implications relating to the amendments to the terms of reference.

Conclusion and next Steps

9. This will allow either the Executive Member or the Deputy Executive Member for Families, Education and Children to Chair the Panel.

Appendices

Appendix A: Terms of Reference of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Background Papers

None

Report author(s): Sandra Hobbs, Senior Committee Services Officer,
sandra.hobbs@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Terms of Reference of the Corporate Parenting Panel

Purpose

1. To ensure that the Council effectively discharges its role as Corporate Parent of looked after children.

Membership

2. The Panel will be a working group of elected Members and senior officers, including foster carers' representatives.

Elected Members (voting):

- Eight elected Members, including the Executive Member for Families, Education and Children, ~~who will be the Chairman~~ and the Deputy Executive Member for ~~Families, Education and Children who will be the Vice-Chairman. Should the Chairman and Vice-Chairman not be present, then a Chairman will be elected to preside at that meeting only one of whom will normally be Chairman.~~

As far as is practicable the Members shall be appointed in proportion to the overall political composition of the Council.

Officers (voting):

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

Carers (non-voting):

- Foster carers' co-opted representatives, of whom only four will be expected to attend at any one meeting.

Officers to support the Panel (non-voting):

- As determined by the relevant Director on a meeting by meeting basis
- NHS Bedfordshire representative as required.

Quorum

A quorum of the Panel shall consist of three elected Members.

Frequency of Meetings

3. To meet approximately six times a year relative to the needs of the work programme.

Scope

4. To consider matters pertaining to the Council's role as a Corporate Parent to children looked after by Central Bedfordshire Council, in particular with regard to improving the health, education, employment, training and housing outcomes for children looked after by Central Bedfordshire Council through:

Improving outcomes for young people both in care and previously looked after by Central Bedfordshire Council and:

- (a) Ensuring integrated planning and activity for children looked after
- (b) Ensuring the Council actively promotes opportunities for children looked after by the Council.

To secure effective communication arrangements with the Children in Care Council to ensure the following:

- (a) That their views are listened to and reflected in service delivery
- (b) Monitoring that Central Bedfordshire's Pledge to all children in care is fulfilled.

To consider quarterly reports on progress of the Care Matters Implementation Plan.

To commission reports as necessary to ensure that Members of the local authority have the information that will enable them to fulfil their role as Corporate Parents.

Reporting

5. To provide a report to the Council on an annual basis outlining the work undertaken during the year and identifying a work programme for the following year.

Revised 05.03.18

Adopt
Are you ready
to decide?

great
prospects

Statement of purpose

Adoption Agency, Central Bedfordshire Council
1 April 2018 - 31 March 2019

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

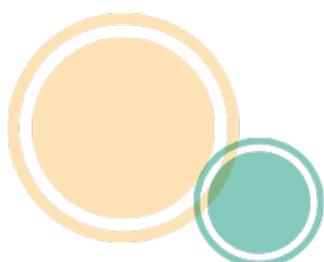
A great place to live and work.



Contents

	Page
1 Introduction	3
2 Aims and objectives	3
3 Management and organisational structure	4
4 Staffing	5
5 Services to children	5
6 Services to birth families	7
7 Prospective adopter	7
8 Eligibility criteria	7
9 Preparation and assessment	8
10 Procedure for assessment as prospective adopters	10
11 Adoption support	11
12 Adoption panel	12
13 Complaints	13
14 Allegations in respect of children placed for adoption	13
15 Reviewing the statement of purpose	13
16 The registration authority	14
17 Contacts	14

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>

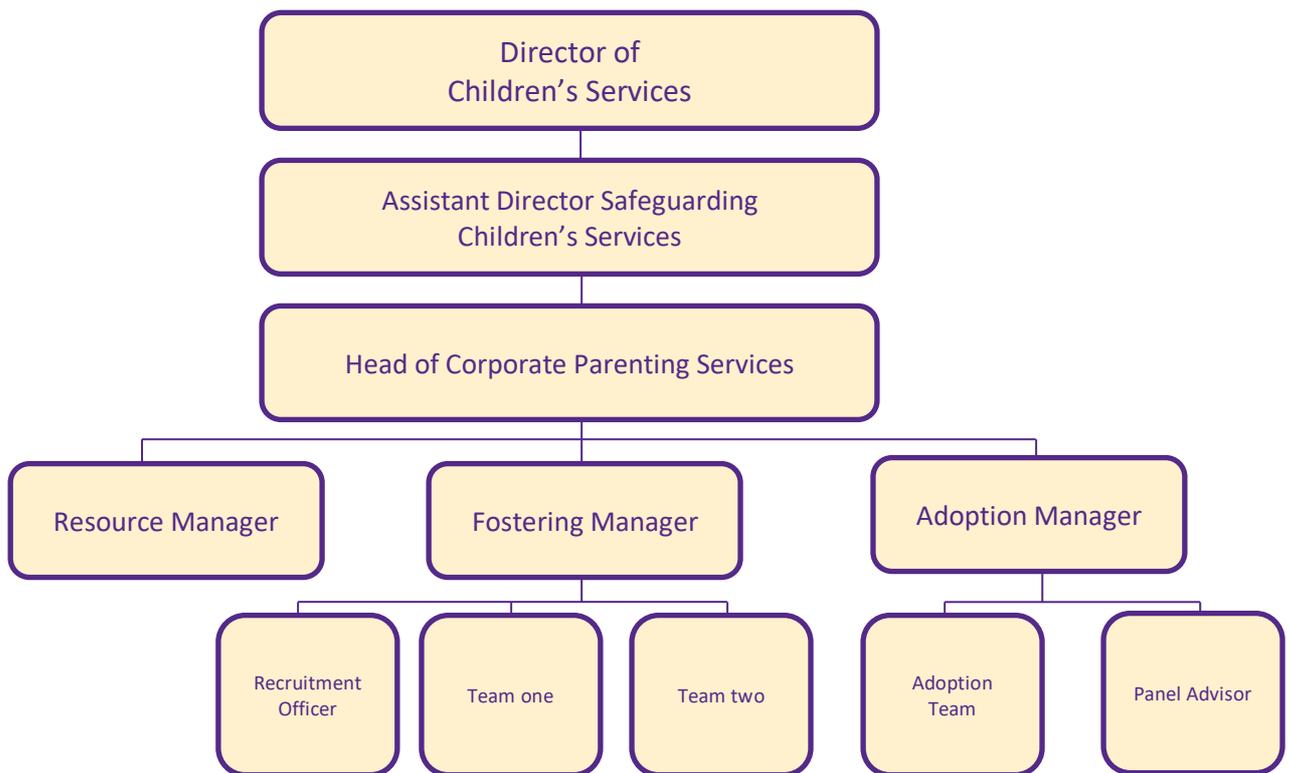
2. Aims and objectives

- 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)

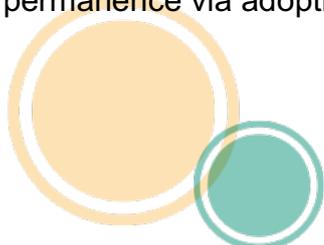
- 4.2 The Practice Manager and Social Workers are all professionally qualified with commensurate social work experience and are registered with the HCPC. All staff have a Personal Development Review (Your Year) and have an identified training plan from which training will be provided on a bespoke basis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

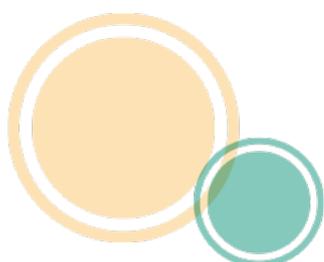
- 6.1 Birth parents will be referred to an independent agency, Adoption Plus, who are commissioned to provide independent counselling to birth parents. Birth parents will be provided with information about this service.
- 6.2 The views of birth parents will be recorded on the child's record and the Child's 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

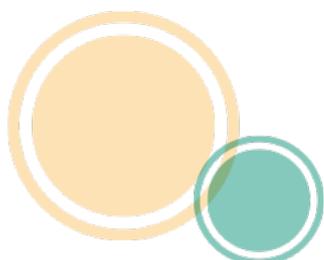
- 8.1 The applicant(s) is single, married, in a civil partnership or an unmarried couple and is over 21 years old.
- 8.2 To adopt in England you must be legally resident in the UK, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man, and have been so for at least 12 months. UK citizens living abroad cannot adopt from the UK.
- 8.3 Neither the applicant(s) nor an adult member of their household has been convicted or cautioned in respect of a specified offence.



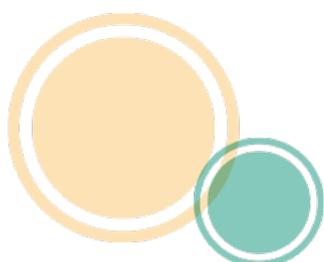
- 8.4 Enquiries can be received via the council website www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/adoption, telephone calls to the Adoption Duty Worker on 0300 300 8090 who is available on Monday, Wednesdays and Fridays or email to adoption@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

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 Assistant Director of Children's services.

13. Complaints

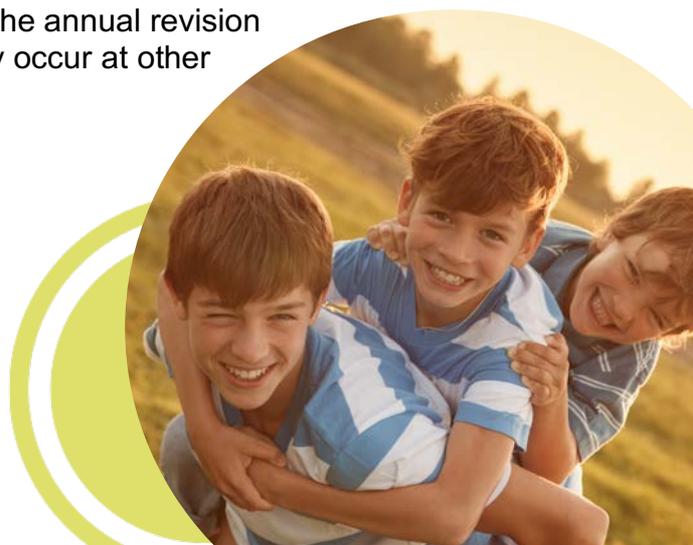
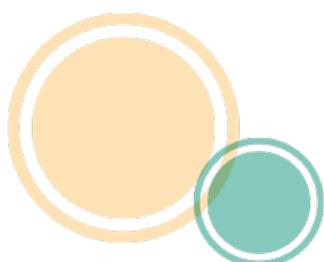
- 13.1 Complaints and queries will be dealt with in a manner that meets Central Bedfordshire local and national requirements.
- 13.2 Complaints by children are dealt with under the Children's Services complaints procedure, which means a shorter time for responding to children's complaints and the provision 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:

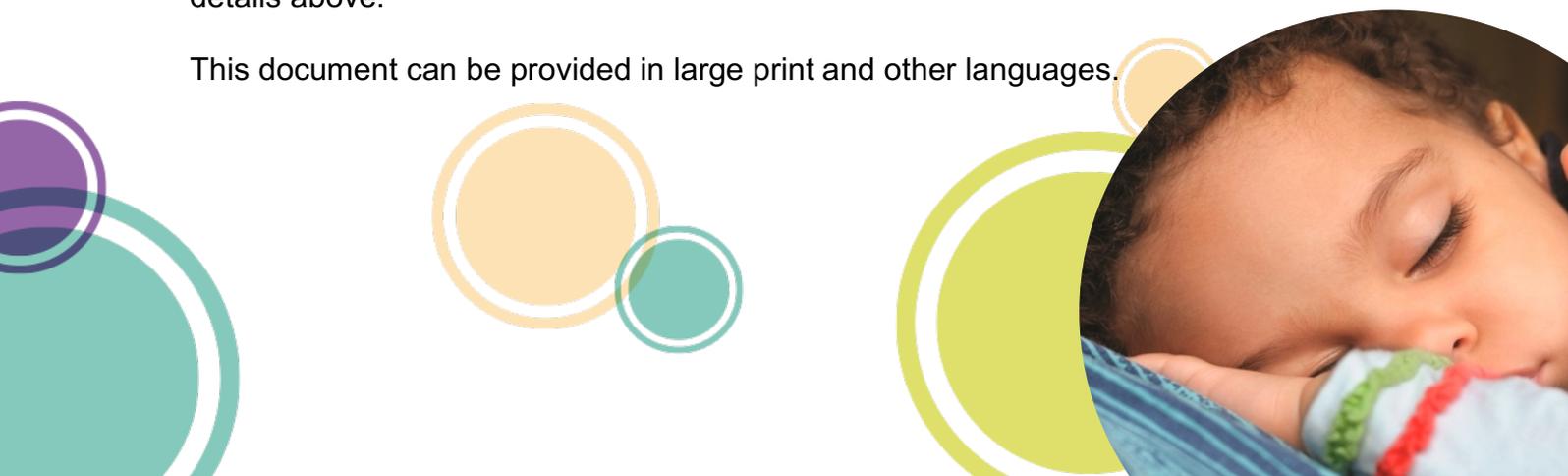
Adoption Team
Corporate Parenting Service
Central Bedfordshire Council
Priory House
Monks Walk
Chicksands
Bedfordshire
SG17 5TQ

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.



Foster
Do something incredible today!

great
prospects

Statement of purpose

Fostering Team, Central Bedfordshire Council

1 April 2018 - 31 March 2019

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.



Contents

1	Introduction	3
2	Aims and objectives	4
3	Management and staff structure	5
4	Our services to children	7
5	Matching process	7
6	Children's guide	7
7	Recruitment and assessment of prospective Foster Carers	8
8	The Fostering and Permanence Panel	10
9	The Foster Carer Charter	11
10	Support and supervision of Foster Carers	11
11	Reviewing the approval of Foster Carers	12
12	Training for Foster Carers	12
13	Complaints	13
14	Allegations	14
15	Quality monitoring	14
16	Arrangements for the revision and circulation of the statement of purpose	15
17	The Registration Authority	16
18	Contacts	16

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. Standard 1b of the National Minimum Standards and Regulation 3 and 4 of the Regulation 2011, require all fostering services to produce a statement of purpose detailing its aims and objectives, the services and facilities provided and to keep this under review.
- 1.2. In determining its aims and objectives, Central Bedfordshire Council has adhered to the following legislations and guidance:
 - The Children Act 1989
 - Care Standards Act 2000
 - The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011.
 - Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards
 - The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2:
 - Care Planning, Placement and Case Review 2010
 - The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4 – Fostering Service 2011.
 - Family & Friends Care Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities.
- 1.3. This statement of purpose has been produced in accordance with the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the Fostering services National Minimum Standards 2001.
- 1.4. It sets out the core aims and objectives of Central Bedfordshire Council's Fostering Service and the range of services provided.
- 1.5. 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.
- 1.6. Detailed information about Central Bedfordshire's Fostering procedures can be found via <http://centralbedfordshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com>.
- 1.7. The Fostering Service is an integral part of the Corporate Parenting Service in Central Bedfordshire Council.

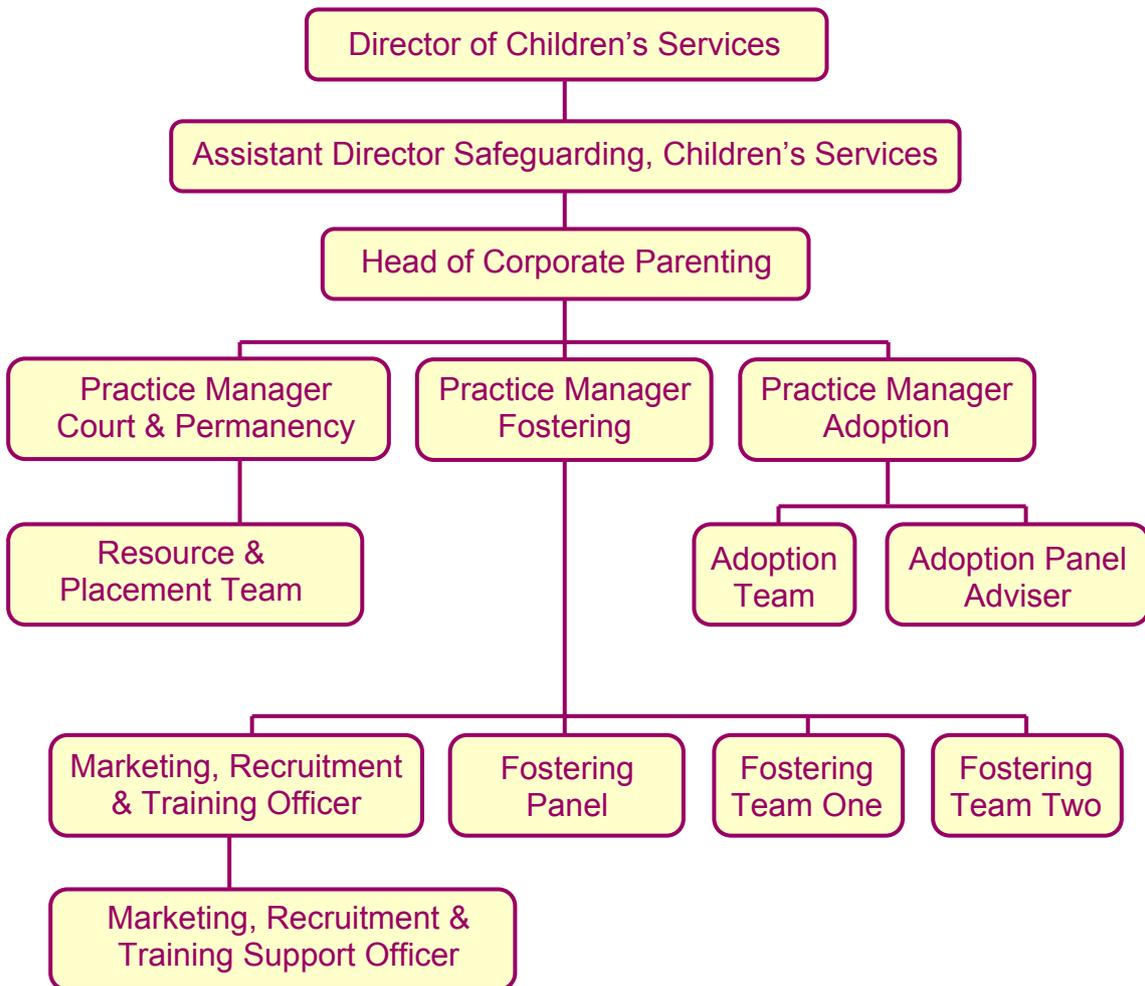


2. Aims and objectives

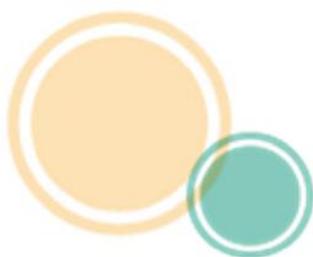
- 2.1. Recruit, assess and support a range of high quality foster carers to improve outcomes for looked after children and to make children and young people's stay in foster care a positive experience.
- 2.2. Services are offered for children on the principle that their needs and welfare are best met 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 meet 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 increase the number of Central Bedfordshire approved and trained foster carers while decreasing the number of external placements so that the majority of the Council's looked after children continue to be placed with Central Bedfordshire approved foster carers including family and friends carers.
- 2.8. To provide support services that promote and enable the retention of Foster Carers.
- 2.9. To ensure, that at all times, effective services are provided and that practices are clear, open, honest and fair to all services users.
- 2.10. To ensure that Foster Carers are supported in promoting 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. Psychologists are also commissioned, when needed, and are available to support children, foster carers and staff.

4. Our services 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 for the child. If agreed the match is proposed to the Foster Carer(s) and the Child’s Social Worker who will further consider the strengths and vulnerabilities of the placement, 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 given to children when placed, by their social worker. Foster carers are also provided with the children's gender which they can use to support the child during the settling in process. The guides are reviewed annually and a copy is sent to Ofsted and all the services Foster Carers.
- Children's guide to fostering:
<https://centralbedfordshire.box.com/s/3ly22nx5vpheg05bklq3h06ebcnesc0r>
- Young people's guide to fostering:
<https://centralbedfordshire.box.com/s/5ecdd85ykdg521diqdgobxxhnveygv3z>
- CICC information pack:
<https://centralbedfordshire.box.com/s/w7pf5v0wqrhf5tmam3uhwbwemcv67m10>

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, letter or online <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/children/fostering/foster.aspx> 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 and 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 occasions 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 Councilor, 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' is available at this link:
http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/foster-carer-charter_tcm3-2359.pdf
- 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 Awards ceremony is held to recognise the dedication and commitment of Foster Carers. Awards are given for foster carers long service. Carers are also nominated for various awards.
- 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. CBC will spot purchase Fostering Network's Advice and Mediation Service to provide additional independent support to foster carers when required.

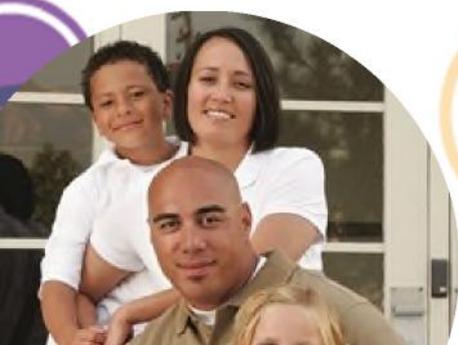
- 10.5 Foster Carers are currently provided with Max Cards which provide discounts on a range of attractions and family activities both nationally and locally.
- 10.6 Foster Carers have access to the Foster Carers Handbook which contains useful information for Foster Carers in relation to fostering issues.
- 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 reviews and those where there is a change in carers 'terms of approval or where there has 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 before approval.
- 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



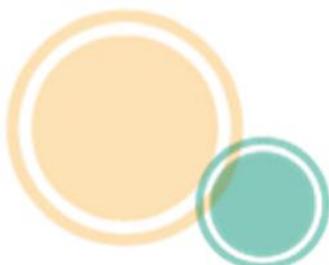
and be able to do. All Foster Carers are required to complete the Training, Support and Development Standards workbook within 12 months of approval (18 months for connected persons). The standards include:

- 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 Allegations

- 14.1 Allegations against foster carers are dealt with in accordance with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB), procedures for managing allegations/concerns about foster carers. All foster carers subject to any allegation are offered independent support from the Fostering Network's Advice and Mediation Service.

15 Quality monitoring

- 15.1 The Service is subject to inspection by Ofsted.
- 15.2 Regular quarterly reports are provided to the Corporate Parenting Panel providing the executive of the Council with information/data in relation to the activities of the fostering service. This information along with audits and customer feedback is constantly scrutinised/evaluated by the managers of the fostering service to judge its ongoing effectiveness and make changes where necessary.
- 15.3 The Panel Agency Advisor provides 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.

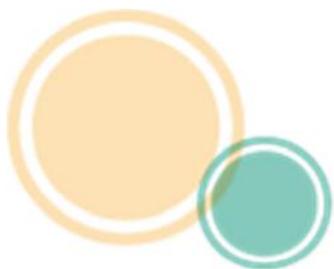


15.4 The quality of the work of the Fostering Service is monitored through Staff Supervision which is linked to an appraisal system, monthly recorded visits to Foster Carers including unannounced visits, annual reviews, feedback from training sessions, case recording and peer/management audits.

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

16.1 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.

16.2 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:
<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/>



17 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).

18 Contacts

For more information about Fostering in Central Bedfordshire please contact:

Fostering Service,
Corporate Parenting Service,
Central Bedfordshire Council,
First Central, Priory House,
Monks Walk, Chicksands,
Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ

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 30 April 2018

Results of Fostering Recruitment and Retention Survey

Report of: Cllr Steven Dixon, Executive Member for Social Care and Housing,
(steven.dixon@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Advising Officer(s): Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services,
(sue.harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk) and Annie Craig, Practice Manager,
Fostering Service (annie.craig@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Purpose of this report

1. The purpose of this report is to feedback to Corporate Parenting Panel on the results of the recent fostering recruitment and retention survey undertaken.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to:

1. Consider and note the report.

Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

2. This report has not been to or planned to go to Overview and Scrutiny as no recommendation/decisions are required. Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to consider and note the Fostering recruitment and retention survey.

Issues

3. Nationally and locally there is a shortage of foster carers. Figures from a Fostering Network event held in March 2018 (national charity involved in fostering work) indicated that there are 64,000 children in foster care with 1 child entering foster care every 20 minutes. There are approximately 55,000 foster carers with a further 7,000 needed in order to ensure children can be placed with their siblings, close to their family, school and friends and with carers who have the right experience and skills to meet their specific needs.

4. Although CBC have done well in meeting its recruitment targets for foster carers over the last 4 years the question was raised at a recent Corporate Parenting Panel as to whether more could be done to retain the experienced foster carers we already have, for longer.
5. Following Corporate Parenting Panel's query, the Fostering Service undertook a survey with its 111 in house foster carers which focused on recruitment and retention and invited foster carers' feedback regarding different ways of working together to develop the service. The headlines from the survey are outlined below alongside some of the actions already taken or planned to be taken to address the feedback.
6. Details of the respondents
 - 21 foster carers responded to the survey
 - 52% of these have been fostering for more than 7 years
 - 43% indicated they had no plans to stop fostering and 19% indicated they intend to continue fostering for another 5 to 10 years
 - The respondents were all between 45 and 64 years old
 - 89% were White British
7. This cohort reflects the general age and ethnicity of CBC foster carers.
8. The respondents overwhelmingly stated that the best thing about fostering was the support foster carers valued the most and also making a difference to a child's life.

Fostering for longer

9. Nationally, the average length of a foster carers career is 7 years. We do not currently have the final figures for CBC and we are in the process of analysing the data. The findings of this exercise will form part of the yearly report on Fostering which will be presented at the next Corporate Parenting board in July '18.
10. The answers regarding the support that would encourage foster carers to continue to foster varied. Some foster carers wanted us to keep doing what we were doing and continue providing the support and respite we currently offered. Other carers wanted to be paid when they didn't have placements, to improve communication and listen to carers more.
11. Development areas foster carers wanted us to focus on included:
 - Giving better incentives to keep well qualified and experienced staff
 - Improving communication systems as they didn't feel the teams were as well connected since the introduction of hot desking
 - Taking children's savings from source rather than asking foster carers to set up savings accounts
 - Getting children's passports sorted quicker and
 - Better matching of carers first placement

Actions

12. Communication was raised as an area of focus by the foster carers during the Talk Time forum and, as a result, has been raised with team managers within the Corporate Parenting Service. They are working with their social workers in the teams to ensure they communicate effectively with foster carers and include them as part of the professional team around the child. In addition to this the Head of Service for corporate Parenting has started a series of regular meetings with the foster carers where they can feedback directly to the HoS and help in developing the service going forward
13. Carers feedback that it would be better for the children if the children's monthly financial savings are deposited in the children's bank accounts "from source" (this means the money is automatically deducted from the Foster Carers' allowance and deposited in an account for the child). This is due to the fact that the Foster Carers often had difficulties in setting up savings accounts for children without the required documentation banks needed i.e. passports and birth certificates. This has been responded to and as of 1st April 2018 all our children have their saving accounts maintained automatically by CBC.

Approvals

14. According to Fostering Regulations, foster carers are approved by the Fostering Panel for a specific number of children. We encourage our foster carers to be approved for up to 3 children as this is the maximum number they can be approved for, (they can care for more children if the children placed are a group of siblings). In this survey, we asked respondents if they would consider extending their approval and what would encourage them to do so.

Responses

15. 33% of the carers questioned were already approved to care for 3 children, 38% were approved to care for 2 children and 29% were approved to care for 1 child.
16. 60% of the carers surveyed stated that they were not planning to increase the number of children they were approved for, 20% **are** considering increasing their approval range and 20% stated that they **may** consider increasing their approval range.
17. Those carers who were not considering increasing their approval range stated this was because they either already had 3 children in placement, were fostering their grandchildren or didn't want to change their approval range unless it fitted with the current children in placement.

18. Foster carers were asked what CBC could do to support them to increase their approval range. Responses included
- Support to help carers adapt their accommodation
 - Approve foster carers for 4 children
 - “Stop saying no” (to potential matches)
 - ‘We may increase our approval if we know the support is there’

Actions

19. We believe that the foster carers need support and need to be able to communicate with their social workers, with the child’s Social Workers and with the service.
20. Increasing their approval is an individual decision for the foster carers. We will ensure that foster carers continue to be supported in their decision making and when carers do extend their approval, appropriate support is in place to ensure carers can manage the additional responsibilities they have taken on.
21. The Service will continue to review foster carers strengths and vulnerabilities through the matching process to ensure that when placements are made they are likely to succeed. This will, on occasions, mean that the Service does not recommend placing some children with some carers.
22. The Service is also currently looking at introducing an interest free loans scheme for foster carers who wish to adapt/extend their homes. This scheme will be introduced as a way of supporting foster carers increase their approval range.

Recruitment of Foster Carers

23. The Fostering Service is committed to recruiting, assessing and supporting a range of high quality foster carers to improve outcomes for looked after children and to ensure children and young people’s stay in foster care is a positive experience.
24. The Fostering Service works to a Recruitment and Retention Strategy which is updated each year. It is based on a needs analysis and is informed by what was successful and unsuccessful in the previous year’s recruitment strategy. Foster carers are consulted as part of the recruitment strategy and are encouraged and supported to help CBC recruit carers from within their own support network/community.
25. In terms of the survey foster carers felt the most effective way of recruiting foster carers was via word of mouth, radio ads, holding village fetes or having leaflets at scouts/church/school events.

26. 65% of foster carers questioned stated that they did not have links with the local community/work where they might recruit foster carers. 35% did have links and suggested the fostering service attended local fetes or contacted scouts/town councils/churches/ schools or put leaflets in shop windows.

Actions

27. The Recruitment, Retention and Training Officer is currently working on the Needs Analysis. This will be discussed with the Head of Service and Practice Manager at a meeting on the 17th April where there will be a review of the Recruitment and Retention Strategy.
28. The draft Recruitment and Retention Strategy will be presented at the next Foster Carers 'Talktime' to be held on the 11th June to ensure foster carers are consulted and supported in being part of the recruitment strategy themselves.
29. The Recruitment and Retention Strategy will then be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel to be held on the 2nd July so Councillors are aware of the Services Recruitment plans and can offer any further suggestions/support in terms of how the service can maximise on its potential to recruit more foster carers so that Central Bedfordshire Looked After Children can be placed in local placements that better meet their needs.

Additional Feedback/conclusions

30. Lastly foster carers were asked for any additional feedback. This ranged from carers stating they were happy with the support received to carers feeling unhappy when their supervising social workers change. Other carers reiterated their wish to be treated as professionals and to be listened to.
31. The findings from this survey are not dissimilar to issues foster carers raise regularly at a national level. Research often highlights the need for foster carers to have access to good training, support and respite, that they want to be treated as a member of the team, have adequate information about children when they are placed and to receive a good level of remuneration with a well-managed payment system in place to ensure carers get paid on time.

Council Priorities

- Children and Families First
- Working as One Team close to our community
- Being great Corporate Parents to children in care and care leavers
- Being a well-managed service and providing great public care

Corporate Implications

32. Not applicable.

Legal Implications

33. This report provides the outcome of a recent fostering survey undertaken, therefore, there are no implications.

Financial and Risk Implications

34. This report provides the outcome of a recent fostering survey undertaken, therefore, there are no financial implications.

Equalities Implications

35. Central Bedfordshire Council have 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. This report highlights the support needs of foster carers and areas the fostering service need to work on to ensure foster carers feel included as professional partners where their views and opinions are taken into account when developing services for foster carers and looked after children.

Conclusion and next Steps

36. Undertaking this survey has been a useful exercise in many ways. It has confirmed the fact that our foster carers are generally happy with the support and services and plan to continue to foster for some time.

37. The results of this survey will be used to help review the fostering recruitment and retention strategy for 2018/19. The service will continue to consult with foster carers at the foster carers events to ensure Foster Carers contribute to supporting and developing the fostering service to be able to recruit, support and retain the additional carers needed to support looked after children in local placements that better meet their needs.

38. As detailed above, as a result of the feedback from the foster carers, we are in process of jointly reviewing the recruitment strategy, looking at even better ways of listening to each other ('Talktime' sessions and 'Tea with Alex' events) and working together and overall ensuring that great foster carers are recruited, supported and retained as they are key in delivering great outcomes to some of our most vulnerable children.

Appendices

39. None

Background Papers

40. None

Report author

Annie Craig – Practice manager, Fostering Service
annie.craig@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

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Central Bedfordshire Council

Corporate Parenting Panel

Monday, 30 April 2018

Work Programme

Advising Officer:

Sharon Griffin, Committee Services Officer
(Sharon.griffin@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

Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme

2017/18 Municipal Year	
3 July 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent Reviewing Officers' Annual Report 2016/17 (SK) • Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2017/18 (AC) • Investigating Concerns and Complaints against Foster Carers (AC) • Fostering Agency Q4 Performance Report (AC) • Fostering Agency Annual Report 2016/17 (AC) • Adoption Recruitment Strategy 2017/18 (NP) • Adoption Agency Annual Report 2016/17 (NP) • Work Programme (LM)
4 September 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fostering Service Q1 Report (AC) • Children in Care Council Progress Report (MS/CiCC) • MOMO App Demonstration (MS/CiCC) • Work Programme (LM)
13 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fostering Service Q2 Report (AC) • Adoption Agency Six Monthly Interim Report April-September 2017 (NP) • Virtual School for LAC Final Report for Academic Year 2015/16 (JE) EXEMPT ITEM • Virtual School for LAC Interim Report for Academic Year 2016/17(JE) EXEMPT ITEM • Work Programme (LM)
15 January 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAC Annual (Health) Report (NHS – Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group) (TMcD) • LAC Social Worker 'Churn' (RC) • Adoption Fund (NP) • Presentation on the PAUSE Programme (AC/GJ) • Action Plan arising from the Ofsted inspection • Work Programme (LM)
5 March 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaving Care Housing (spotlight report) (AC/NS) • Spotlight Report on the PAUSE Programme (AC/GJ) • Children with 3 or more placement moves in 12 months (including data about outliers) (AC/GJ) • Fostering Service Q3 Report (A Craig) • Spotlight report on how the adoption process works and how people become adopters (GJ) • Work Programme (SG)
30 April 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amendment to the Terms of Reference • Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose 2018/19 (ACraig) • Fostering Agency Statement of Purpose 2018/19 (ACraig) • Questionnaire for Foster Carers (ACraig) • Virtual School for LAC Interim Report (JE)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Programme (SG)
2 July 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of new legislation of Care Leavers (exemption of from Council Tax, Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Leaving Care Offer (AC/KM) • CiCC and Participation Annual Report 2017/18 (KM) • Independent Reviewing Officers' Annual Report 2017/18 (SK) • Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2018/19 (AC) • Fostering Agency Q4 Performance Report (AC) • Fostering Agency Annual Report 2017/18 (AC) • Adoption Recruitment Strategy 2018/19 (NP) • Adoption Agency Annual Report 2017/18 (NP) • Work Programme (SG)
3 September 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Unscheduled reports:

1. The appointment of a lay member/parent and the appointment of a substitute elected Member to the Joint Adoption Panel (author to be determined).
2. '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)
3. 'Spotlight Reports' on the following issues:
 - a. LAC with disabilities (KH)
 - b. Unaccompanied asylum seekers as LAC (AC)
 - c. The Virtual School (JE)
 - d. The reason for, and the impact of, the movement of LAC between different foster carers (AC)
 - i. (authors to be determined)
4. A report by the foster carer representatives (Central Bedfordshire branch of the FCA) setting out feedback on various issues of their choice.
5. 'Spotlight Report' on youth support and help for adolescents in gaining further education, apprenticeships or employment (GJ) (09.05.16)
6. 'Deep Dive Report' with presentation on care leavers' employment (including Aspirations Wish List) (GJ) (08.05.17)
7. How does the CiCC view Members? (04.09.17)
8. Questionnaire for Foster Carers (13.11.17) – *AC suggestion - to be timetabled for May 18*
9. Permanency Planning for Children including the process and early intervention (13.11.17) – *suggested a full report in line with OFSTED plan to be presented September/November 18*
10. CAMHS and data available
11. East of England Protocol

12. Update on the Health Passport for Looked After Children and how the Passport works would be given.
13. Report on the average number of social worker changes and the top 10 children affected (taking into account planned changes)
14. Peer review and the findings.
15. Care Leaver to be invited to a future meeting to share their personal experience of the process.
16. Progress report on the WAY project (May/June 2019)
17. Update on the Regional Adoption Agency
18. LAC Annual (Health) Report (NHS – Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group) (TMcD)
19. LAC 6 Month (Health) Report (NHS – Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group) (TMcD)

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