

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

**This meeting  
may be filmed.\***



**Central  
Bedfordshire**

**please ask for** Sharon Griffin  
**direct line** 0300 300 5066  
**date** 12 July 2018

## **NOTICE OF MEETING**

### **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL**

Date & Time

**Thursday, 26 July 2018 2.00 p.m.**

Venue at

**The Rufus Centre, Steppingley Rd, Flitwick, MK45 1AH**

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.

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

# AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. **Minutes**

Note: The minutes of the meeting held on the 30 April 2018 will not be ready for approval.

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. **Impact of New Legislation on Young People Leaving Care**

To receive a report highlighting the impact of new legislation introduced by the Children and Social Work Act 2017 on young people leaving care.

6. **Children In Care Council and Participation 2017-2018 Annual Report**

To receive the Children in Care Council and Participation 2017-2018 Annual Report.

7. **Fostering Team Annual Report 2017-18**

To consider the 2017-18 Annual Report for the Fostering Team.

8. **Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2018- 2019**

To consider the fostering recruitment and retention strategy for 2018-2019 including an overview of key marketing initiatives and targeted campaigns.

9. **Adoption Agency Annual Report 2017/18**

To consider the 2017/18 Annual Report for the Adoption Agency.

10. **Adoption Recruitment Strategy 2018-2019**

To consider the adoption recruitment strategy for 2018-2019 including an overview of key marketing initiatives and targeted campaigns.

11. **Work Programme**

To consider the Panel's work programme.

12. **Exclusion of 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 paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

<b>Exempt Item</b>
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<i>Item</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Exempt Para.</i>
13.	<b>Children in Care Council Presentation</b>	* 1, 2
	To receive a presentation from the Children in Care Council.	

## Central Bedfordshire Council

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL**

Thursday 26 July 2018

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### **Impact of new legislation on young people leaving care**

Report of: Cllr Steve Dixon, Executive Member for Social Care and Housing  
([steve.dixon@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:steve.dixon@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

Advising Officers:

Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services;

Alex Coman – Head of Corporate Parenting

([Alex.Coman@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Alex.Coman@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

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### **Purpose of this report**

This report highlights the impact of the new legislation introduced by Children and Social Work Act 2017. In accordance with the Act the local authority has a duty to assist Care Leavers in, or preparing for, adulthood and independent living up to the age of 25.

The report also indicates the support provided to the young people leaving care and makes recommendations regarding exemption from council tax for Care Leavers in Central Bedfordshire

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Executive or Committee are asked to:

1. Note the impact of the new legislation
2. Approve the proposed solution and financial implication in addressing the impact of new legislation by increasing the Leaving Care establishment from 7 Personal Advisers to 9 with a total cost of £57k/year
3. Approve the implementation of Council Tax exemption (when appropriate) for Central Bedfordshire Council's Care Leavers up to the age of 25 living within Central Bedfordshire Council's borders.

## **Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations**

The report is planned to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### **Issues**

Appendix A is the report highlighting the impact of Children and Social Work Act 2017 on Central Bedfordshire Council's offer to young people leaving care

### **Options for consideration**

As detailed in the attached report

### **Council Priorities**

- Enhancing Central Bedfordshire
- Great resident services
- Improving education and skills
- Protecting the vulnerable; improving wellbeing
- Creating stronger communities
- A more efficient and responsive Council.

### **Risk Management:**

Child Protection Risks: the recommendations in the attached report are aimed at maintaining the level of service and safeguarding for our Care leavers

Financial Risk: The attached report highlights the financial implications of the proposals

### **Legal Implications**

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 is intended to improve the support for looked after children and Care Leavers, to promote the welfare and safeguarding of children, and to make provisions about the social work regulations.

The Council can exercise discretion to reduce council tax liability for individuals or prescribed groups in accordance with section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992

## **Financial and Risk Implications**

This report provides details of the financial implications

## **Equalities Implications**

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.

## **Conclusion and next Steps**

Note the impact of the new legislation

Approve the proposed solution and financial implication in addressing the impact of new legislation by increasing the Leaving Care establishment from 7 Personal Advisers to 9 with a total cost of £57k/year

Approve the implementation of Council Tax exemption (when appropriate) for Central Bedfordshire Council's Care Leavers up to the age of 25 living within Central Bedfordshire Council's borders.

## **Appendices**

**Appendix A:**           IMPACT OF CHILDREN AND SOCIAL WORK ACT 2017  
ON CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL'S OFFER  
TO YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

## **Background Papers**

**None**

Report author:

Alex Coman – Head of Corporate Parenting

[Alex.Coman@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Alex.Coman@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

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## Appendix A

### IMPACT OF CHILDREN AND SOCIAL WORK ACT 2017 ON CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE'S OFFER TO YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

A. Purpose of the report.....	4
B. Recommendations.....	4
C. National context.....	5
D. Support offered to young people leaving care .....	5
D.1. Personal Adviser support for young people leaving care .....	5
D.1.1. Local context of Personal Adviser support.....	6
D.1.2. Impact of new legislation on of Personal Adviser support .....	6
D.1.3. Recommendation regarding of Personal Adviser support .....	7
D.2. Financial support offered to Central Bedfordshire Council' young people leaving care .....	7
D.3. Council tax discretionary scheme .....	8
D.3.1. National context regarding council tax .....	8
D.3.2. Local context regarding council tax.....	9
D.3.3. The principles of the proposed scheme .....	9
D.3.4. Recommendation regarding council tax.....	9

#### A. Purpose of the report

1. This report highlights the impact of the new legislation introduced by Children and Social Work Act 2017. In accordance with the Act the local authority has a duty to assist Care Leavers in, or preparing for, adulthood and independent living up to the age of 25.
2. The report also indicates the support provided to the young people leaving care and makes recommendations regarding exemption from council tax for Care Leavers in Central Bedfordshire.

#### B. Recommendations

3. Note the impact of the new legislation
4. Approve the proposed solution and financial implication in addressing the impact of new legislation by increasing the Leaving Care establishment from 7 Personal Advisers to 9 with a total cost of £57k/year (Section D.1.)
5. Approve the implementation of Council Tax exemption (when appropriate) for Central Bedfordshire Council's Care Leavers up to the age of 25 living within Central Bedfordshire borders. (Section D.3.)

#### C. National context

6. The Children and Social Work Bill was introduced in the House of Lords on 19 May 2016, completed its parliamentary stages on 4 April 2017 and received Royal Assent, becoming law, on 27 April 2017. (The full Act can be found here: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/contents/enacted> )
7. The elements of the Law related to Care Leavers became enacted in April 2018

8. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 (the Act) is intended to improve the support for looked after children and Care Leavers, to promote the welfare and safeguarding of children, and to make provisions about the social work regulations.
9. The Act sets out the Corporate Parenting principles for the Council as a whole to be the best parent it can be to children in its care. These are largely a collation of existing duties the local authority has (suggest singular) towards looked after children and those leaving care:
  - 9.1. to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
  - 9.2. to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
  - 9.3. to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
  - 9.4. to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
  - 9.5. to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
  - 9.6. for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work;
  - 9.7. to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living
10. Section 2 and Section 3 of the Act are directly relevant to young people leaving care.
11. Section 2 requires local authorities to publish information about the services it offers to Care Leavers which may assist them in preparing for adulthood and independent living. These services may include health and wellbeing, education and training, employment, accommodation, and participation in society.
12. Section 3 refers to the reactive duty of the local authorities to appoint a personal adviser for Care Leavers who request this up until the age of 25, regardless of whether the young person intends to pursue education or training. The local authorities also have a duty to carry out an assessment of the young person's needs and to provide the necessary advice and support.

## D. Support offered to young people leaving care

### D.1. Personal Adviser support for young people leaving care

#### D.1.1. Local context of Personal Adviser support

13. In Central Bedfordshire, all young people leaving care receive support and advice from a Personal Adviser (PA).
14. The Personal Adviser is the person appointed to work with the young person when they leave care and occupies a key role in providing support. They hold a pivotal role in the assessment, planning and review of services as set out in the Pathway Plan, The Pathway Plan sets out the ambitions and route to the future for the young people leaving care and states how their needs will be met in their path to independence, including what support is available to them from the local authority.
15. The extent to which the Personal Adviser becomes the main source of advice and support to the young person varies according to individual circumstances and the young person's wishes.
16. In Central Bedfordshire, all young people leaving care receive a multi-agency assessment of their needs including the need for advice, assistance and support they need when leaving care. This is in the form of a Pathway Plan.
17. All young people have a Pathway Plan in place by their 16th birthday.
18. The Pathway Plan is reviewed with the young person and relevant professionals at least every 6 months

### D.1.2. Impact of new legislation on of Personal Adviser support

19. Under previous legislation, local authorities were required to only provide Care Leavers with support from a PA until they reach age 21, with that support continuing up to age 25 if a Care Leaver was engaged in education or training. This support was not available to Care Leavers aged over 21 who were not in education, training or employment.
20. Section 3 of the Children & Social Work Act 2017 has changed this, introducing a new duty on local authorities, which requires them to offer PA support to all Care Leavers towards whom the local authority had duties under section 23C of the Children Act 1989, up to age 25 - irrespective of whether they are engaged in education or training. This includes Care Leavers who return to the local authority at any point after the age of 21 up to age 25 and request PA support.
21. The new duty that extends PA support where requested to all Care Leavers means that the local authority continues to exercise functions in respect of Care Leavers up to the age of 25 and should therefore apply the corporate parenting principles when exercising those functions
22. We estimate that approximately 25% of the young people over the age of 21 up to age 25 whose support has ended under the old legislation will return to the local authority and request support including dedicated PA support as per our local offer.
23. Central Bedfordshire's offer for young people leaving care is centred on the needs of young people and provides generous support to our Care Leavers. Nationally there is a direct link between the number of "returnees" and the quality of the local offer.
24. It is envisaged that the needs of the Care Leavers will vary considerably; some of them will, from time to time, require only limited support to resolve a relatively straightforward query or to be signposted to another specialist service; other young people will require more intensive support for a limited period of time when things go wrong, such as losing a job or receiving a benefit sanction – but then require only limited support once they are "back on track"; and there will be others who have complex needs and will need intensive ongoing support.
25. Taking into account the above, an analysis of our Care Leavers population indicates that in the next years the number of young people receiving support from a Personal Adviser will be as follows:

Date	Number of young people entitled to receive support
31/03/2018	159
31/03/2019	223
31/03/2020	251
31/03/2021	261

26. Currently the young people leaving the care of Central Bedfordshire Council achieve good outcomes as the Social Workers and Personal Advisers have manageable caseloads and they are providing relational social work and support to the young people. This resulted, for example, in May 2018, to 70% of our Care Leavers being in education, employment or training. This compares favourably with local (48.5%) and national (50%) figures
27. Central Bedfordshire Council is committed not to compromise on our offer to our Care Leavers and we will achieve this by keeping the caseloads and the support at the same level going forward to ensure the best outcomes for our young people. In the recent inspection OFSTED found that in Central Bedfordshire ***"Care Leavers are safe and feel safe. They are confident young adults who have pride in themselves"***. Furthermore, it was noted that ***"Personal advisers support Care Leavers very well and help them to understand their choices"***. The full OFSTED report can be found here:

[https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local\\_authority\\_reports/central\\_bedfordshire/052\\_Single%20inspection%20of%20LA%20children%27s%20services%20and%20review%20of%20the%20LSCB%20as%20pdf.pdf](https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local_authority_reports/central_bedfordshire/052_Single%20inspection%20of%20LA%20children%27s%20services%20and%20review%20of%20the%20LSCB%20as%20pdf.pdf)

28. In response to the new legislation, the Department for Education allocated new burden funding to Central Bedfordshire for the current financial year, a nominal amount of £10k, however, this will not fully cover the needs of the service

#### D.1.3. Recommendation regarding of Personal Adviser support

29. In order to meet the needs of our young people leaving care, Central Bedfordshire Council allocates a budget of just over £200k per year for the personal advisers. In order to meet the increase in demand and maintain the level of support to our young people, the base budget will need to increase by £57k per year. This is the total cost of 2 extra Personal Advisers.

#### D.2. Financial support offered to Central Bedfordshire Council' young people leaving care

30. In addition to the PA support detailed above, for the Central Bedfordshire's Care Leavers, the council's offer is extensive and based on the individual needs and achievements of the young people. Support and allowances are based on an assessment of need and set out in the young person's Pathway Plan. The financial strategy document that details the current offer is currently under review. The current offer includes
- the possibility of financially supporting our young people with a weekly allowance when the Care Leaver has no income;
  - engagement incentives when they are undertaking a paid traineeship or apprenticeship;
  - when our young people attend university, if required, they are provided with a suitable laptop and relevant software alongside financial support towards transport when relevant, books and other equipment as needed for their course.
31. In preparation for independence and in support of independent living, a range of support is provided to young people leaving care from the age of 16 onwards: This includes
- Personal luggage allowance is offered to ensure the young person has a suitable luggage when they move from placement.
  - The cost of move is included in the up to £2k home setup allowance.
  - Once the young person moves in, one year content insurance up to £9k is available in some instances.
  - Clothing allowance, including support with winter clothing and interview clothes, if needed.
  - Birthday allowances are also provided as well as Christmas/festival allowances.
  - When appropriate, based on the young person's needs, financial support with Counselling, Health & Therapeutic Needs is available.
  - Support with the cost of a passport,
  - Winter heating allowance and
  - driving lessons, and the cost of taking the exam for the driving licence.
32. In addition to the above, this report recommends that in some instances the Care Leavers who live within Central Bedfordshire borders are exempted from Council Tax when recommended by their heir Personal Advisor and agreed by the Head of Service. (See para D.3 below)

## D.3. Council tax discretionary scheme

### D.3.1. National context regarding council tax

33. All Councils in the UK have the discretion to reduce council tax liability for individuals or prescribed groups. The Council can exercise discretion, in accordance with section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, in respect of local council tax support and for ad hoc cases of extreme financial hardship.
34. The last Children's Society's published information, lists over 70 local authorities who have decided to exercise their discretion relating to the Council Tax for Care Leavers.  
<https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-you-can-do/campaign-for-change/a-fairer-start-for-care-leavers#map>  
Based on the information available, in the region Milton Keynes are already exempting Care Leavers from Council Tax. In addition to this, Hertfordshire and Suffolk have committed to Council Tax exemption, however is not yet implemented.
35. When Care Leavers move from care to live independently they manage their own budget for the first time. They are, therefore, a particularly vulnerable group when it comes to council tax. The 'Wolf at the Door' report published by The Children's Society into council tax debt showed that the pace of escalation of debt could be frightening for Care Leavers - what can start out for many Care Leavers as falling slightly behind can very quickly escalate to a court summons and enforcement action being taken.
36. Care Leavers are eligible for a range of benefits, including Housing Benefit, Jobseeker's Allowance and Universal Credit. However, if Care Leavers fail to meet benefit regulations, such as being late for a meeting at the job centre or not updating their CV, they can be sanctioned and have vital benefits stopped. Many Care Leavers don't know that they can challenge these sanctions and as a result they are much less likely than other groups to appeal a decision.
37. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 places corporate parenting responsibilities on Councils for the first time, requiring them to have regard to children in care and Care Leavers when carrying out their functions:  
*"...will introduce a set of corporate parenting principles that will require all departments within a local authority to recognise their role as corporate parents, encouraging them to look at the services and support that they provide through the lens of what a reasonable parent would do to support their own children"*

### D.3.2. Local context regarding council tax

38. At the end of May 2018, 109 Central Bedfordshire Council's Care Leavers are living within the borders of the Council, of which 36 Care Leavers (between 18 and 25 years old) live in accommodations eligible for council tax.
39. Based on the current care leavers cohort the introduction of Council Tax exemption will lead to a yearly reduction of council's income between £30k - £40k.

### D.3.3. The principles of the proposed scheme

40. The discount will not be means tested, however, will take into account the individual circumstances of the young people and the outcomes of the assessments.
41. The exemption will be part of the Care Leavers' Pathway Plan alongside the expectation to take up the support offered by the Personal Adviser in meeting the outcomes set in the Pathway Plan.
42. The discount will apply to young people who leave the care of Central Bedfordshire and are between the ages of 18 and 25 and not exempted on any other basis;
43. Where a care leaver in Central Bedfordshire moves out of the local authority area the discount can be reclaimed should they return before their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.
44. Young people will be exempted from 100% of council tax after taking into account any other discounts/exemptions to which the young person may be entitled to.

45. The scheme would be administered by the Council's revenue department. Arrangements will be put in place to ensure that relevant Care Leavers are supported to apply for the discount.
46. These arrangements and the impact on the young people and the council will be kept under regular review.

#### [D.3.4. Recommendation regarding council tax](#)

47. It is proposed that, as part of the offer to Care Leavers, when appropriate to do so, the Council exercise its discretionary powers to award a 100% relief for Central Bedfordshire young people who are leaving care and reside within the borders of Central Bedfordshire.

## Central Bedfordshire Council

Corporate Parenting Panel

26 July 2018

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### Children in Care Council and Participation 2017-2018

Advising Officers: (Sacha Rymell), Assistant Director of Children's Services  
([Sacha.Rymell@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Sacha.Rymell@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

(Kam Mathu) Participation Worker, Professional Standards  
([kam.mathu@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:kam.mathu@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

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#### Purpose of this report

To update members on the activities of Children in Care Council Participation as detailed in the Children in Care Council and Participation Annual Report (Appendix A)

#### RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to:

- note the content of the Children in Care Council's Annual Report 01 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

#### Council Priorities

The Children and Young People's Plan March 2018-March 2021

- Identifying needs early and preventing needs from escalating - offering the right support at the right time
- Protecting vulnerable children and young people – including tackling bullying
- Supporting children and young people in their aspirations and goals in preparing for adulthood

#### 1. Corporate Implications

To ensure that the Council's Corporate Parenting responsibilities are met.

#### 2. Legal Implications

Statutory requirements in respect of corporate responsibilities for Looked After Children and care leavers are met.

### **3. Financial Implications**

The activities outlined were funded by the designated budget.

### **4. Equalities Implications**

The report acknowledges the need to increase the engagement and participation of children with disabilities and young people who are seeking asylum.

### **5. Conclusion and next Steps**

Present the report to the Corporate Parenting Panel on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2018. The Annual Report makes explicit the work plan for next financial year – 01 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Children in Care Council and Participation 2017/2018 – Annual Report  
Appendix B – List of Children in Care Council activities provided during school holidays 2017/2018

# **Children in Care Council and Participation 2017 - 2018 Annual Report**

**A great place to live and work.**

## **Aims and Objectives**

The aim of this report is to summarise and evaluate the work of the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Participation Officer for the period of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018. A special thanks to the CiCC who assisted with writing this report.

The CiCC continue to be involved in addressing policy decisions, contribute to consultations, support with recruitment and training and undertake presentations at various forums to improve the lives of children and young people in care.

## **CiCC Membership and Recruitment**

As of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018, there were 317 Looked After Children (LAC) in Central Beds Council (CBC). Many looked after children access the fun activities provided during the school holidays despite not being a CiCC member. The CiCC is a diverse group of 20 core group members and their ages range from 11 to 25. The profile of the current CiCC membership is as follows:

- 12 members are school aged children including 2 who are part of the Gifted and Talented Scheme, and 1 is an Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking child (UASC).
- 2 Ambassadors are studying university degrees (a CiCC Ambassador is a Care Leaver over the age of 16).
- 4 Ambassadors are attending local colleges studying ESOL, BTEC's and A Level courses. (2 are UASC's). One of the them hopes to go to East Anglia University in Sept 2018.
- 1 Ambassador is in her final year at 6<sup>th</sup> form and hopes to go to Brighton University in Sept 2018.
- 1 Ambassador works for a Gardening Landscape company.

One thing they have in common, is their experiences of being in care in CBC and their determination and commitment to make improvements. They really enjoy being part of the CiCC, as it gives them a voice, the opportunity to have fun and be listened to by elected members and the Children Services senior management team. They also know their work makes a real difference.

The recruitment of CiCC members comes from Social Workers, Personal Advisors, Foster Carers, through newsletters and through word of mouth.

## **CiCC Achievements in Influencing Change**

### **CiCC Pledge**

The Pledge is a set of promises that Central Beds Council makes to all looked after children and care leavers. The promises are based on what children and young people in care said was important to them. The Pledge was written by the CiCC and agreed by the Corporate Parenting Panel.

The new Pledge will be re-launched at the Children in Care Summer Ball and Awards Night on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2018. Leaflets will be designed for all staff to sign up and fully support the pledge.

### **Corporate Parenting Panel**

The CiCC work closely with the Corporate Parenting Panel, where ambassadors champion the voice of children in care and care leavers. Whilst presenting the Pledge, the CiCC said they wanted better support in exploring careers and hobbies. In response, the Councillors created the 'Aspirations Wish List' by using their links within the community to offer taster or work experience opportunities. The Councillors provided the following opportunities to young people:

- 2 Ambassadors showcased their talent at the Cheering Volunteering Awards at the Grove Theatre, Dunstable.
- 5 CiCC representatives visited Luton Football Club. One CiCC representative said, *'The Luton town mascot experience was brilliant, and it was a great day out, I really enjoyed meeting the players and staff, they made me feel very welcome. And if I could, I would do it again and again'*.
- 16 children and young people visited Beds & Luton Fire & Rescue Station and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. One of the young people then applied to become a Fire Cadet after the visit.
- The senior management team also arranged for 2 Ambassadors to shadow social workers in the Family Support team.

### **Leaving Care Peer Report**

This review was carried out by a Service Director from Suffolk and two Heads of Service from neighbouring local authorities. Discussions took place with the CiCC on their views about the support they receive. The CiCC also provided examples of what was good in CBC. They said; *'Having positive relationships with Sue Harrison (DCS) and Gerard Jones (AD), feeling that their voices are heard, and knowing that the CICC makes a difference to children in care.*

The CiCC also felt improvements needed to be made on the following:

#### *The Complaints Process*

We have been working with the Customer Service team to simplify the current process and to make it more accessible. The young person has the option to be fully supported by our Advocacy service, which is a service offered to all children and young people in care. We will also be asking the CICC to train managers in responding to young people. In addition, the Mind Of My Own App (MOMO) allows young people to send a message to the Customer Service team, should they wish to make a complaint.

*Written leaving care entitlement needs to be clear and accessible.*

The CiCC felt an App that has up to date information about their rights and entitlements would help to address this. The Care Leaver App has been purchased and will provide help and support for young people as they leave care. The App will also help to meet new duties from the local offer for care leavers.

*To develop Life Story Work.*

We will continue to build on this and ensure great life story books are created with young people and their carers, alongside sensitive and clear later-life letters to provide our children with a secure base to explore their past, present and future.

### **CiCC meetings with Head of Service for Corporate Parenting and Participation Officer**

The CiCC meet regularly to present issues they feel strongly about in an interactive way and influence change. They discuss; what's working well, what is not so good and what needs to change in CBC. There's been 3 meetings so far, with an average of 8 representatives attending every month.

The CiCC said '*The CiCC meetings provide a sense of belonging. And help us to know about our rights and entitlements*'.

The meetings also provide opportunities for colleagues to promote the services provided to looked after children. Colleagues from the Advocacy Service, Children's Commissioning, Virtual Schools and Fostering team have attended so far and have all said the meetings are '*valuable*'. Some colleagues have made changes to every day practice as a result of the meeting. Future meetings will have professionals from CAMHS, Alan Caton the LSCB Chair and Bedford Borough to plan joined up CiCC events.

CiCC representatives are beginning to challenge and hold services to account in areas that are not working so well, for example they said:

- *The CiCC didn't understand what the Advocacy Service do or provide.* In response, the manager from the Advocacy service attended March's meeting and is attending future meetings as well.
- *The Participation Officer needs to hold more CiCC activities in the South.* In response, the Participation Officer arranged two activities in the South in February 2018 and further activities will be planned in the summer.
- *More activities need to be arranged for older children.* Activities such as a 5 a side football tournament and BBQ have now been arranged for the summer.

Some of the CiCC representatives also spoke highly about the support they receive from their social workers. They said:

- *Our world is full of known heroes, Batman, Iron Man, The Doctor... but our world also has unrecognized heroes including my excellent social worker. She is funny, kind, calm, and humble!*
- *My social workers and personal advisor play a big role to change my life and education. I don't have enough words to explain all what they have done for me.*
- *Since I moved from my last Foster Carer, my social worker has always been there for me – making sure I was happy and safe. She cares about me and helps me to get things done for me.*

### **Children & Young People's Board (CYP) and Youth Parliament – Part of the Active Participation Strategy**

A new (CYP) Board was recently set up as a sub group of the Children's Leadership Board which CiCC representatives now attend. The board meets regularly with representatives from existing CYP bodies to ensure young people have a voice on; what is going well and what they would like to change to make their life better. The CiCC representatives also gain accreditation and qualifications.

The focus of work is developing a tool kit for schools around mental health. The group also raised concerns about the extensive waiting times to see professionals for Mental Health support.

From attending these meetings, 3 CiCC representatives signed up and actively involved in CBC's Youth Parliament. Angela Perry Youth Support manager said, *'the offer to include young people in care in Youth Parliament has been taken up and we now have 3 looked after children who are part of this. This is exciting because the Youth Parliament members work on national issues for young people as well as local ones. It is a great experience for the young people involved and good to know their voice is included in this forum'*. One of the CiCC Ambassador's said *'I went on the residential and learnt more about the Youth Parliament and met existing members. We had lots and fun and exchanged loads of ideas'*.

### **CICC working with Children's Commissioning**

Last spring, the CICC helped to develop a Young Peoples Quality Assurance role with Sharon Deacon, Quality Assurance Manager. This role was developed with Ambassadors who have experience of living in 16 plus accommodation. They completed the LSCB Safeguarding training and completed two visits (to test the inspection framework) with the QA Manager. The ambassadors were also invited to a national Children's Commissioning Conference in July to facilitate a workshop and share their good practice. Sharon said *'Gaining a young person's perspective was very helpful. I was*

*delighted by the interest and attendance at our workshop. The ambassadors were the stars of the show, as they participated with the audience and answered the many interested questions that were asked with total confidence’.*

Since February 2018, the CiCC have been involved to see how we can provide better, more integrated, locality-based support to children and families. Toni Badnall (Commissioning Officer) wrote, *‘Please thank the CiCC as it really means a lot to us to involve the CiCC, as their experiences can help shape the services we commission in the future and make sure that what we provide is the right thing for children and young people’.*

### **CiCC Representing Virtual Schools Governing Body**

The CiCC attended the Virtual Schools meeting to champion the educational needs of CBC Looked After Children. During the meeting, the CiCC representative asked, *‘if all schools could provide incentives for improving attendance (for LAC) in schools’*, as her school (Harlington Upper School) were operating successfully by using this approach’. This is currently being explored.

### **Meetings with the OFSTED, Senior Management team, Regional Meetings, Conferences and Award Ceremony**

#### **OFSTED’s Single inspection of CBC**

The CiCC met with the inspection team and were asked questions about their work and the support they are offered. The group worked together to give a real insight into the CiCC work and what they are most proud of. They talked about the Pledge, their work with Frontline, how they were involved to trial the MOMO App, ASYE Recruitment and Training, Children’s Commissioning and Life Story work. The Inspectors were so impressed with their responses they were described as *‘Awesome Children in Care Council’*. The inspection report also quoted *‘The impressive and influential Children in Care Council (CiCC) meaningfully participates in service developments and actively supports the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel’.*

#### **Meetings with Chief Executive, Councillor and Senior Management team**

The CiCC had the chance to talk openly about their experiences of being in care and the Pledge at a lunch planned in February half term. What was clear from the CiCC was how much they value their social workers and feel that their opinions are valued. *“One of the CiCC representatives said, “It was great fun and it was nice to have important people who listened to me.”*

#### **Eastern Regional Region CiCC Get together meetings**

CiCCs’ from the Eastern Region got together to discuss some minimum standards to bring positive change. These meetings also provided the opportunity to share examples of good practice and to raise any issues.

One of the CiCC representatives said *'I really enjoyed meeting other CiCC representatives and working with them on producing the 'Top Ten Tips for Social Workers. As a small group, we came up with the following Top Ten Social Worker tips:*

- Smile and be friendly.
- Tell us if you can't make appointments: be organised and be on time.
- Life story work is great – revisit it often.
- Be truthful even if it's bad news.
- Listen to the carer's views
- Talk in comfortable areas: children love doing activities.
- Get to know me: don't force me to talk if you don't want to.
- Show that you care and be respectful.
- See us more regularly.
- I'd like to keep the same social worker for as long as possible.
- Make sure they say goodbye if you have to leave.

### **CiCC Ambassador presented at the National Children and Adult Services Conference**

A CiCC Ambassador presented to a large audience of people in leadership roles with the senior management team last October. The CiCC Ambassador said *'The day was really good, and the audience were welcoming and gave their full attention in listening to the work of CiCC. I really enjoyed being part of this experience and would love the opportunity to do this again'.*

### **Celebrating the Achievements for Children in Care**

The Children in Care Achievements Awards took place on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2017, with nearly 250 people in attendance. Once again, CBC colleagues were encouraged to nominate young people for any achievement during the last year. We received over 220 nominations for reasons which included educational achievements and developing independence skills.

The event's theme was the Wild West which was chosen by the CiCC. There was a wide range of entertainment provided, such as; the Rodeo Bull, John Wayne Horse Shoe Challenge, an outstanding singing performance by a CiCC Ambassador. All the children and care leavers that attended were delighted to receive an award for their achievement.

This email was received by a colleague from CBC's Young Person Support team. *'Please let me take this opportunity to share my thanks and gratitude for being part of the LAC Awards. Equally I would like my gratitude to be shared with all the people who worked so hard to make this evening so special. For me it was a very humbling experience and proved that good things are being achieved by the various professionals across children's services and that young people's lives are being changed for the better.*

## **Virtual Apps to Increase Participation and Engagement**



The Mind OF My Own App (MOMO) gives children and young people an instant way to express their views, wishes and feelings – anytime and anywhere using a phone, tablet or computer.

The responsibility for overseeing MOMO and increasing its uptake is owned by the Participation Officer. Since going live (September 2017), there has been:

- 66 children and young people using the app.
- 87 children services colleagues using the app, whilst visiting the young person.
- 200 MOMO statements received sharing feedback, good stories, and asking for help to solve problems to move forward.

The evidence 'so far' indicates that we are responding positively to the voice of the child. The next steps are to:

- Attend team meetings to emphasise the benefits of MOMO for children and young people.
- Introduce the MOMO app at Children Services inductions.
- Promote MOMO at the Children in Care Summer Ball and Awards Night on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2018.
- Ask IT to connect MOMO to every Laptop, iPad and iPhone to ensure every children services front line colleague has access and is using the App.

### **CiCC Virtual WhatsApp group**

This method of communication is another platform for the CiCC to voice their opinions and to be listened to. The WhatsApp group also reaches those who just want to dip in and out to find out what's going on and reaches to those who are placed outside CBC. The group consists of 25 participants, including the Senior Management Team. The group was created in January 2018 and nearly 350 conversations have taken place so far. There have been discussions around:

- Debate around the possible exemption of council tax for care leavers
- Requests for support with college and university assignments
- Help with childcare.
- Sharing videos to build confidence and self-esteem.

The CiCC said one of the reasons for its success is having senior leadership excited about being involved.

## **CiCC supporting with Recruitment and Training**

### **ASYE Recruitment and Training**

The CiCC were involved in the AYSE training and recruitment. They used their own experiences to develop the training to ensure that workers have skills and tools to work with our young people. Participants said the games and their advice was helpful in building meaningful relationships with young people.

The CiCC also sat on three interview panels for roles in Children's Social Care, including senior management posts.

### **Frontline Programme**

Last summer, the CiCC were approached for the fourth year running to deliver training to university social work students at Warwick University. The CiCC ambassadors designed the program which included ice breakers and games to introduce better direct work with children and young people.

They started by providing a presentation to 300 participants about their work. There were many questions from the students about being looked after in CBC. The CiCC spoke highly of the support they receive from CBC and gave the students some good tips on how to be a good social worker. Jo Williams (Practice Tutor, Frontline) said she was very impressed with CBC's CiCC and how the members spoke with honesty and enthusiasm when delivering the training.

Another opportunity arose in March 2018 when a group of 7 CiCC representatives were invited to speak at a conference in Hertfordshire. The youngest representative was 11 years old. Once again, they led exercises to 120 students to encourage and support them to think more about the needs and wishes of looked after children. This exercise also helped the student social workers to think beyond the theory and imagine how they would help children and young people in real life. Jo from Frontline said, *'The CBC CiCC have been supporting our teaching for the past 4 years and are always one of the highlights of the programme. This year, we invited them to come along and talk to students at the very start of their journey, as part of their induction. As ever, they were an inspiration and captivated the audience with their presentation and workshop'*.

## **Activities provided during school holidays**

144 Looked after children and care leavers accessed activities between April 2017 to March 2018. The list of activities and the number of children and young people are included in **Appendix One**.

The activities have been supported by members of the Corporate Parenting Panel, Independent Reviewing and Virtual Schools team. Through observation, the children and young people really valued the opportunity to interact and build meaningful relationships with their social workers. They feel that their social workers have invested in them by spending this time outside of their statutory duties.

### **Challenges**

The challenge remains in reaching out to children and young people whose voices are less easily heard, such as those placed out of county, those placed in children's homes and residential units for disabled children and young people.

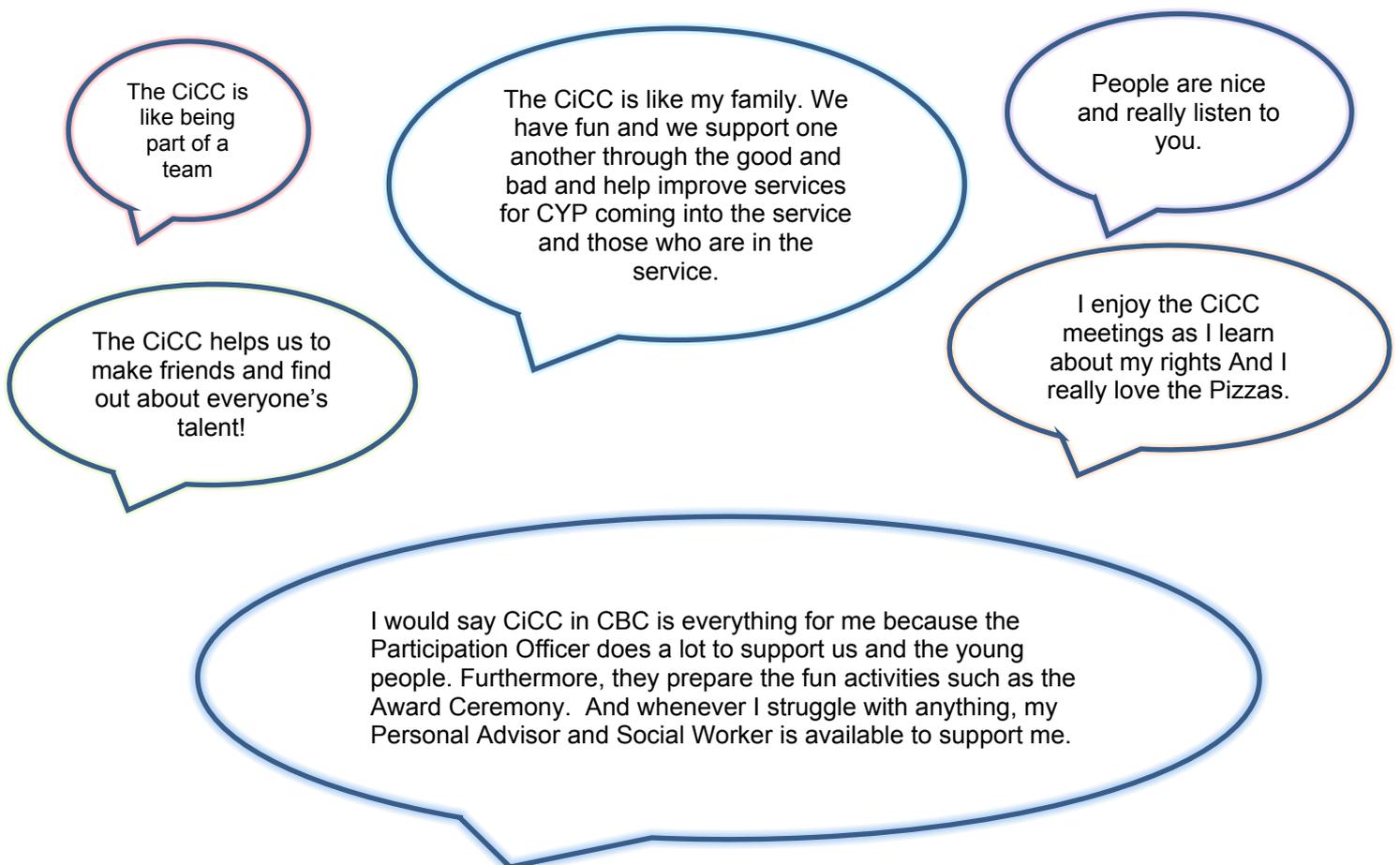
### **Future Priorities**

<b>Projects</b>	<b>Timescales</b>	<b>Who is involved</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
To update the CiCC Website	July 2018	CiCC, Participation Officer and Communication Team	<p>To find up to date information about being a looked after Child or a Care Leaver in Central Beds Council.</p> <p>To ensure that children and young people are aware of their entitlements during their time in care and when leaving care.</p> <p>To advertise future meetings and to have minutes of previous meetings.</p> <p>Have useful documents and links to other websites which can help children in care and care leavers.</p> <p>To ensure engagement with the CiCC with all looked after children.</p>
Organise a new Care Leavers Group	June 2018	CiCC and Head of Service for Corporate Parenting	<p>To discuss the;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care Leaver Offer - what it means to them. To find out about their rights and entitlements.</li> <li>• Introduce the new Care Leavers App</li> <li>• To ensure that young people are supported through transition to adulthood.</li> </ul>

Life Story Work For All	October 2018	CiCC Ambassador with support from identified social workers.	To develop Life Story Work to establish what is offered to young people and what could be improved.
Complete a video as a 'Guide to the CiCC' to recruit new members	November 2018	CiCC, Participation Officer and Communication team	To help new children and young people going into care. Help with training for new colleagues and Foster Carers'.

### Conclusion

The CiCC have achieved a great deal over the past twelve months through continuous work dedicated to improving services for children and young people in care in CBC. The report illustrates the growth and value of the CiCC, both at a local and national level. And finally, to finish on 'what the CiCC means to the them.



# **Central Bedfordshire in contact**

**CiCC Activities during school holidays 2017 – 2018**

Date	Activity	Objective	Attendance	Evidence of Outcomes or Desired Outcomes
August 2017	Summer activity days included visits to;  Box End Park, Leisure Day, Sporting activities, Cinema, Ice skating, and Gulliver's Land.  Supported by Independent Reviewing and Virtual Schools teams.	To increase participation for all looked after children or care leavers in the summer.  Activities were open for looked after children.	70 Children and Young People (CYP)  Ambassadors supported younger children and helped to complete evaluations	Themes that have come out of the summer activities were the Awards ceremony, Complaints, support for attending the activities, changes of social workers and teams
20th December 2017	Christmas Cinema Trip and Pizza Hut Meal  Supported by 4 Corporate Parenting colleagues.	To increase participation recruit new CiCC members	30 CYP 2 Care Leavers (CL) supported the activity by mentoring younger children and helping them choose their meal.	<i>I thought the atmosphere at Pizza Hut was calm and happy, and the interactions between staff and children indicated that you know your youngsters well and have a good relationship with them. It was a pleasure to meet you all. JF Foster Carer for F.</i>  <i>A said he loved it and wants more!</i>  <i>The film was great, as it showed you can be whoever you want to be. C</i>  Build rapport with 4 CiCC members and ambassadors – and Foster Carer's.
21 <sup>st</sup> December 2017	Supported the Care Leaver's Christmas Party – organised by Leaving Care team	To get to know Care Leavers, and recruit CiCC members		Recruited 3 CiCC ambassadors, of which 2 were UASC.  Build relationships with existing CiCC members.  Gather young people's perspectives on whether Care Leavers should be exempt from paying 'Council Tax'.  CiCC newsletter provided to all attendees.
<b>2018</b>				
Saturday, 13th January 2018	Backstage Theatre Tour  Joint event with Foster team with 'Kids who Share'.	To explore the arts and get to see behind the scenes.  Meet other CiC	9 CYP	The CYP said <i>'it was very interesting to learn about the production company, the theatre, the costumes (especially Gok Wan's) the different stage, and to learn all the work that goes on behind the scenes. NK</i>

		Members		<i>Hello Kam I'm, just emailing you to give you feedback about the panto tour I thought it was good I really enjoyed going on the stage and looking at the scenes and the props and looking at the artwork. DS</i>
15 <sup>th</sup> February 2018  10.30 to 3pm  <b>The trip was arranged because of a link was provided by Cllr John Chatterley (from the Aspiration List)</b>	Visit to Luton Fire and Rescue Station (Luton) - Home Safety Centre. 10:30am – 12:30pm  1-3pm -Jump Arena Indoor Activity Park  Supported by 2 members of the Corporate Parenting team (Business Apprentice and Student a Social Worker)	For CIC to learn about; the potential risks in the home, discussing ways in which they can be prevented and what to do in the event of a fire. Meet other children in care.  Arranged to have great fun and improve fitness too.	23 CYP (2 members were SEN child)	They all said they found the visit was very interesting! They all engaged well in the tour, and one of young people wishes to become a Fire Cadet' after this visit.  The trip was of <i>educational</i> and social value to all ages.  The trip was arranged because of a link was provided by Cllr John Chatterley (from the Aspiration List)
Easter Holidays	Ice Skating Activity to Planet Ice in Milton Keynes with lunch provided  Supported by 2 members of the Corporate Parenting team (Business Apprentice and Student a Social Worker)  Professional Feedback was completed to support the student social worker.		21 CYP. 1 CL supported the event	Everyone thoroughly enjoyed this activity.  Relationships were established with with 2 Foster Carers to promote and recruit CICC members.  One of Foster Carers supported the event by providing transport to 2 CICC members.  One of the new CICC member who was 11 was extremely quiet at the last CICC meeting. But during this activity she opened and made friends.  One of the members was on hand helping anyone that hurt themselves. That was lovely to witness, as I never seen her behave that way.  One of the children reported that she was being bullied at school, because she was a LAC. The team manager and the S/W were informed immediately and appropriate steps were followed.  There were discussions around the theme of the next CICC Awards Event. The large majority felt a Summer Ball would be good.

## Central Bedfordshire Council

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL**

**Thursday 26 July 2018**

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### **Fostering Team Annual Report 2017-18**

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

Advising Officer: Annie Craig, Practice Manager, Fostering Team  
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### **Purpose of this report**

1. This report introduces the Fostering Agency Annual Report for Members to consider and note.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to:

1. Consider and note the Fostering Agency Annual Report including the Fostering and Permanence Panel Annual Report and the Foster Carers Charter.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations**

1. The annual report for fostering will need to be presented to Overview and Scrutiny to note the contents and provide feedback.

### **Background**

2. The Council has a duty to provide a range of types of placements for looked after children which meet their needs. In most cases a child needs should be met by living in a family setting, either with someone known to them (knowns as friends and family or connected person foster placement) or with foster carers.
3. The Council recruits its own foster carers, known as 'in-house' foster carers and also has the legal responsibility for assessing and approving friends and family foster carers. In order to meet the demand for placements for children in care, foster placements are also sourced from Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's). Central Bedfordshire Council,

in conjunction with Luton Borough Council and Bedford Borough Council has a Framework Agreement with 18 such agencies to offer suitable and sufficient IFA placements within a tight cost and quality framework.

### **Council Priorities**

- Improved educational attainment and progress
- Protecting vulnerable children and young people
- Early help and improving life chances
- Being healthy and positive

### **Corporate Implications**

4. Legal, Financial and Equalities implications were requested and are included in the report.

### **Risk Management**

5. Regulatory Risks: The provision of sufficient and suitable foster placements is a key activity monitored by Ofsted during inspection, forming part of their judgement about services for Looked after Children.
6. Child Protection Risks: Failure to recruit or retain sufficient foster carers would be a child protection risk.
7. Reputational Risk: Recruitment of foster carers is a competitive market activity and has a high media profile.
8. Financial Risk: Looked after Children placements is a demand led activity. Independent Agency Placements are high cost, and variations in the proportion of independent versus in-house placements can have significant and immediate impact on forecast spend.

### **Legal Implications**

9. This report provides updated information to allow consideration of the performance of the Fostering Agency in the previous year as required by legislation. As the report is provided in accordance with timescales and does not highlight any issues, there are no further legal implications.

### **Financial and Risk Implications**

10. This report provides updating information and does not included any financial decision/implications.

### **Equalities Implications**

11. 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.
12. The Fostering Annual Report highlights the efforts that are made to recruit a diverse range of foster carers and to ensure that they are appropriately trained to meet the diverse needs of the children in their care.
13. The Fostering and Permanence Panel Annual Report highlights success in terms of securing a diverse mix of panel members and the steps taken to ensure that the processes of the panel reduce the anxiety of carers and enable an open discussion to take place.

### **Conclusion and next Steps**

14. The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to consider and note the Fostering Agency Annual Report (Appendix 1) including the Fostering and Permanence Panel Annual Report (Appendix 2) and the Foster Carers Charter (Appendix 3).

### **Appendices**

**15. Appendix 1 - Fostering Agency Annual Report 2017/18**

**16. Appendix 2 - Foster Carers Charter**

### **Background Papers**

None

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**Foster**

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# Annual report

Fostering Team, Central Bedfordshire Council

For the period: 2017 – 2018

Appendix 1

**A great place to live and work.**

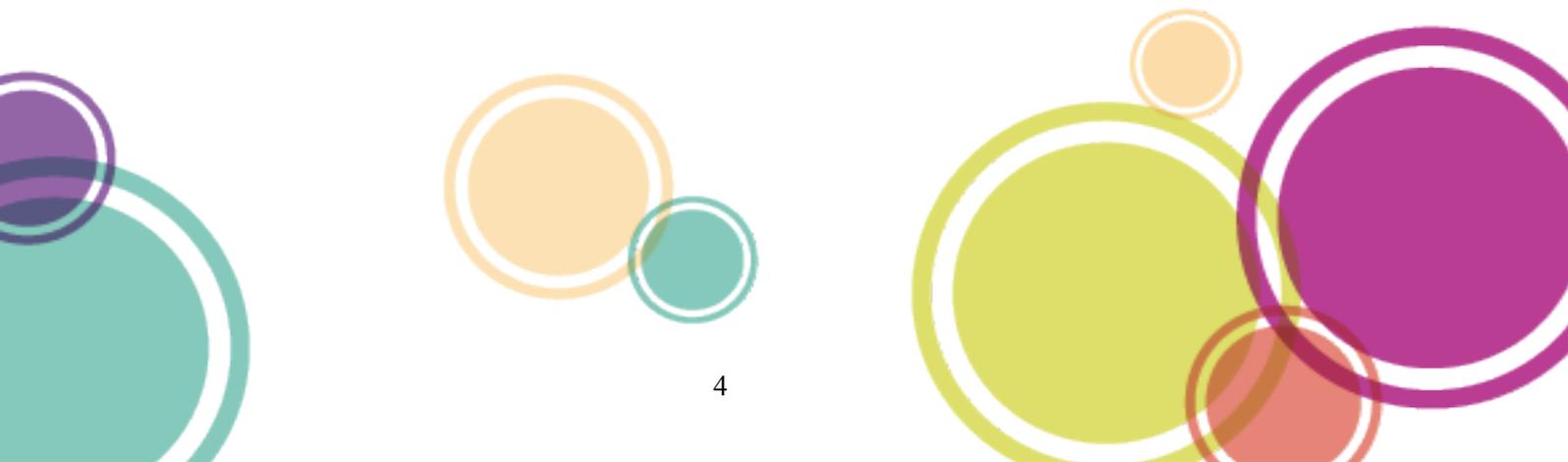


# Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Section 1: The Fostering Service</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1) Service Overview	5
1.2) The Fostering and Permanence Panel	6
1.3) Provision of information on fostering	7
<b>Section 2: Children and Fostering</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1) Children accommodated	7
2.2) Age of Children Accommodated	8
2.3) Gender of Children Accommodated	9
2.4) Ethnicity of Children Accommodated	10
2.5) Sibling Groups of Children Accommodated	11
2.6) Placement Stability	11
<b>Section 3: Foster carers</b>	<b>12</b>
3.1) Recruitment of foster carers – enquiries through to approval	12
3.2) De-registrations/terminations of approvals	13
3.3) Ethnicity of foster carers	13
3.4) Age of Carer in Fostering Household	14
3.5) Length of service of foster carers	15
3.6) The Intensive Support Fostering Scheme	16

3.7) The Family Link Scheme	16
3.8) PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence) Scheme	17
3.9) Supported Lodgings Scheme	17
3.10) Staying Put	17
<b>Section 4: Special Guardianship Orders</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Section 5: Private Fostering</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Section 6: Training and development for foster carers</b>	<b>19</b>
6.1) Skills to Foster	19
6.2) Induction	20
6.3) The Fostering training and development Programme	20
<b>Section 7: Support for foster carers</b>	<b>21</b>
7.1) The Fostering Social worker	21
7.2) Advice and Mediation Service	21
7.3) Foster carer support groups	21
7.4) Celebration of Fostering event	22
7.5) Queens Garden Party	22
7.6) Foster carers Talk Time	22
7.7) Tea with Alex	23
7.8) The Mentoring Scheme	23
7.9) Out of hours service	23
7.10) The Foster Carers Association	23
7.11) Fostering Network and BAAF membership	24
7.12) Sons and daughters	24
<b>Section 8: Notifications</b>	<b>24</b>

<b>Section 9 Allegations</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Section 10: Complaints</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Section 11: Compliments</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Section 12: Conclusion</b>	<b>28</b>
Appendix 2 – Fostering and Permanence Panel Annual Report	
Appendix 3 – Foster Carers Charter	



## Introduction

This Fostering Report provides information to Elected Members and decision makers about the progress and developments in the Fostering Service between 1 April 2017 -31 March 2018. The report may also be of interest to service users, staff and colleagues from partner agencies.

The Fostering Service is a service for children and young people in care. It has responsibility for ensuring that children in care receive good quality services which support their identified needs. The Fostering Service and dedicated team of foster carers work in partnership to ensure children live in safe, nurturing local family homes where they can achieve their potential and enjoy their childhood.

## Section 1

### The Fostering Service

#### 1.1 Service Overview

- 1.1.1 The Fostering Service is co-located within the Corporate Parenting Service of Children's Services. This supports the close working relationship between the operational childcare teams and the Fostering Service.
- 1.1.2 The Fostering Service provides a range of services as required within the current legislation. The Statutory Guidance underpinning fostering legislation prescribes the services and processes to be followed by a Fostering Service and the qualifications required by Managers and Social Workers.
- 1.1.3 The Fostering Service has experienced a number of staff changes during this year mainly due to staff moving on to other teams or external posts for career development opportunities.
- 1.1.4 The Fostering Service staff team is made up of the Practice Manager, 2 team managers, 2 senior social workers, 10 social workers, a Family Support worker and 2 business support officers.
- 1.1.5 All employed staff are permanent apart from 1 agency social worker who is covering for a member of staff on maternity leave. Staff range in their experience, knowledge and skills with less experienced staff being supported by other social workers, seniors and managers who have many years post qualifying experience.

- 1.1.6 All fostering social workers are qualified and registered with the Health Care Professions Council (HCPC). They have access to the Council's extensive Learning and Development Programme and can apply to attend external courses and conferences where appropriate. The Council's Learning and Development Programme also provides diversity training for staff in order to ensure they understand and address issues of diversity when working with foster carers and children in care. Staff are encouraged to embrace and celebrate the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual.
- 1.1.7 The teams carry out the full functions of the fostering service with social workers completing a range of fostering work, including foster carer assessment (family and friends and career carers), supervision/support, reviews etc. In addition, the fostering service is involved in the assessment of Supported Lodgings carers and the assessment and support of Special Guardianship Order (SGO) carers and Private Foster carers.
- 1.1.8 The Fostering Service is also supported by specialist staff across the Fostering and Adoption Service. These include a Marketing, Recruitment and Training Officer, a Marketing, Recruitment and Training Support Officer, a Professional Panel Adviser and 2 Panel Secretaries who support and manage the Fostering and Permanence Panel. The Fostering Service has access to CAMHS (Children and Mental Health Service) clinicians who provide support to Social Workers, Children in Care and Foster Carers. The Fostering Service also works particularly closely with the Placement and Resource Team whose staff are responsible for making placements and foster carer payments.

## **1.2 The Fostering and Permanence Panel**

- 1.2.1 The Fostering and Permanence Panel meets generally once or twice a month, depending on demand and considers a maximum of 6 cases per panel. During the period between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018, the panel met on 17 occasions.
- 1.2.2 The Fostering and Permanence Panel considers applications from prospective foster carers and makes recommendations as to their approval. First annual reviews and those reviews where there has been a proposed change in carer's approval or where there has been an allegation made against the foster carer are presented to panel for consideration. Panel also make recommendations in relation to children being matched to their permanent foster carers.

### 1.3 Provision of information on fostering

- 1.3.1 Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) has a single point of contact to the service through a local rate telephone line. Enquiries can be made via the council website where information about fostering is readily available and are directed to a fostering email address. Enquirers are provided with information about fostering and the assessment process. Initial visits are offered where enquirers are provided with more information about fostering and an initial assessment of their home is undertaken to ensure it meets health and safety requirements to foster.

## Section 2

### Children and Fostering

#### 2.1 Children accommodated

- 2.1.1 Between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018 there were 131 occasions on which a child was admitted into the care of the Local Authority concerning 123 children (compared to 132 in the previous year). Looking at the 131 LAC admissions during the year;

- 62 young people (47.3%) were in a placement with other foster carer (not long term)
- 23 young people (17.6%) were in independent living
- 17 (13.0%) were placed with parents
- 11 (8.4%) were in foster care with relative/friend (not long term)
- 4 (3.1%) were placed in 'other' placement types
- 2 (1.5%) were placed in 'Homes and Hostels'
- 2 (1.5%) were placed in NHS/Health Trust placements
- 2 (1.5%) were placed in a family centre or Parent and Child unit
- 2 (1.5%) were placed in a Young Offenders Institute or Prison
- 2 (1.5%) were placed in Residential Schools
- 2 (1.5%) were in temporary accommodation (for 7 days or less)
- 2 (1.5%) were in a placement with another foster carer who is also an approved adopter/FFA.

- 2.1.2 As at 31 March 2018, 131 children were placed with in house foster carers (61%) and 85 (39%) were placed with Independent Fostering Agencies compared to 134 (65%) in house and 75 (35%) IFA's last year.

- 2.1.3 The number of children placed in foster care increased this year from 209 as at the 31 March 2017 to 216 as at the 31 March 2018.
- 2.1.4 The referral for the child/young person which includes essential and preferable matching criteria is crucial to identifying which carers may be able to support a child. Where a placement does not meet the essential criteria or where any identified risk cannot be managed, an alternative placement is sought. 20 of the young people placed either with in-house foster carers, Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's) or in semi-independent living were unaccompanied asylum seekers (compared to 44 in the previous year). The main countries of origin for these young people were Eritrea (9), Vietnam (5) and Afghanistan (3).
- 2.1.5 Regular respite placements were provided 102 occasions (which is 50 more than in the previous year). In addition, ad hoc respite was provided on 79 occasions (which is 7 more than in the previous year). Intensive Support carers were provided with 13 periods of respite as part of the Intensive Support Care agreement (this is 3 less than in the previous year).
- 2.1.6 24 referrals for foster placements were received from the Emergency Duty Team (EDT), (compared to 15 in the previous year), 11 of the children were Luton children, 1 was from Bedford Borough and the remaining 12 were from CBC. This is a shared EDT service that provide emergency services out of the office hours for CBC, Bedford Borough and Luton areas.

## **2.2 Age of Children Accommodated**

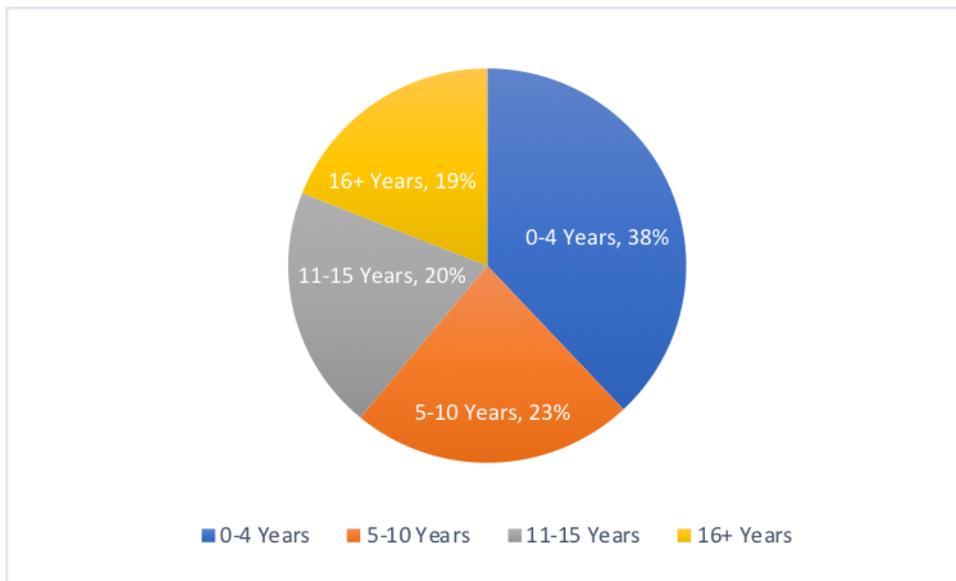
- 2.2.1 The highest percentage of the 123 individual children accommodated between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018 were aged between 0 and 4 years of age (38%). In the previous financial year (2016/2017) the highest percentage of children accommodated were in the 16+ age category (affected by the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children entering care). Children aged between 0-10 years account for 61% of the total number accommodated.

The full age distribution was as follows:

- 0-4 years – 47 children (38% compared to 27% in the previous year)
- 5-10 years - 28 children (23% compared to 20% in the previous year)

- 11-15 years – 25 children (20% compared to 22% in the previous year)
- 16+ years – 23 young people (19% compared to 31% in the previous year)

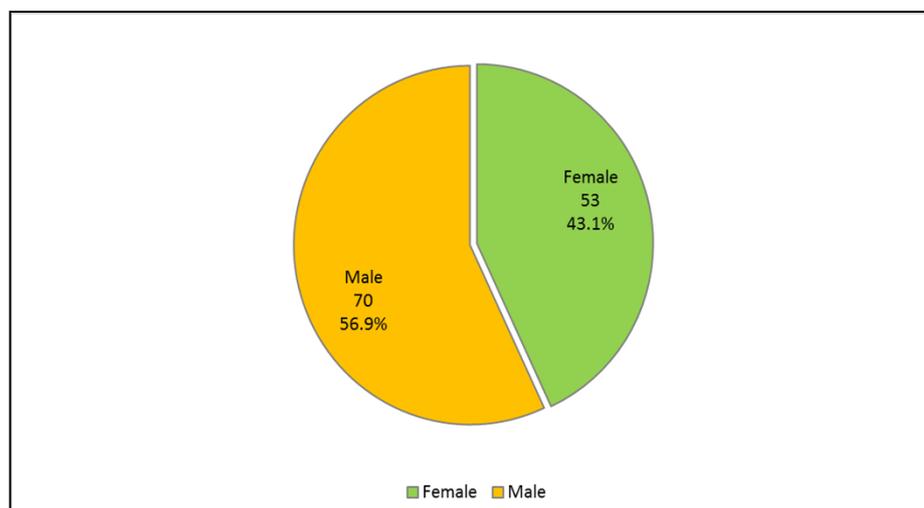
### **Age of Children Accommodated**



## **2.3 Gender of children accommodated**

2.3.1 Of the 123 children accommodated between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018, 70 (57%) were male and 53 (43%) were female. This is evidence of a slight decrease in males and a slight increase in females accommodated during this period compared to last year, where there were 85 (64%) males accommodated compared to 47(36%) females.

### **Gender of children accommodated**

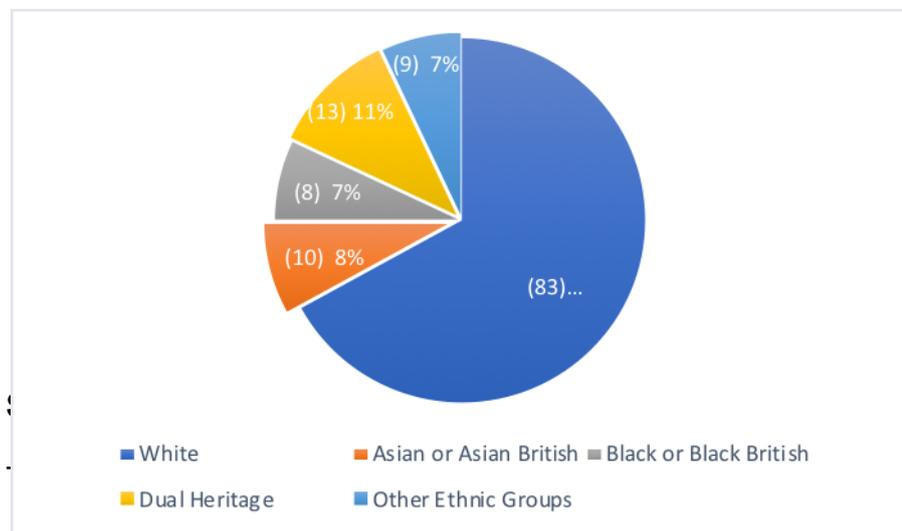


## 2.4 Ethnicity of children accommodated

2.4.1 In terms of ethnicity of the 123 children accommodated between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018:

- 83 (67%) were of White ethnicity;
- 10 (8%) were Asian/Asian British,
- 8 (7%) were Black/Black British,
- 13 (11%) were Dual Heritage and
- 9 (7%) were classed as Other Ethnic Groups (some may be Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People).

### Ethnicity of children accommodated



2.5

2.5.1

2.5.2

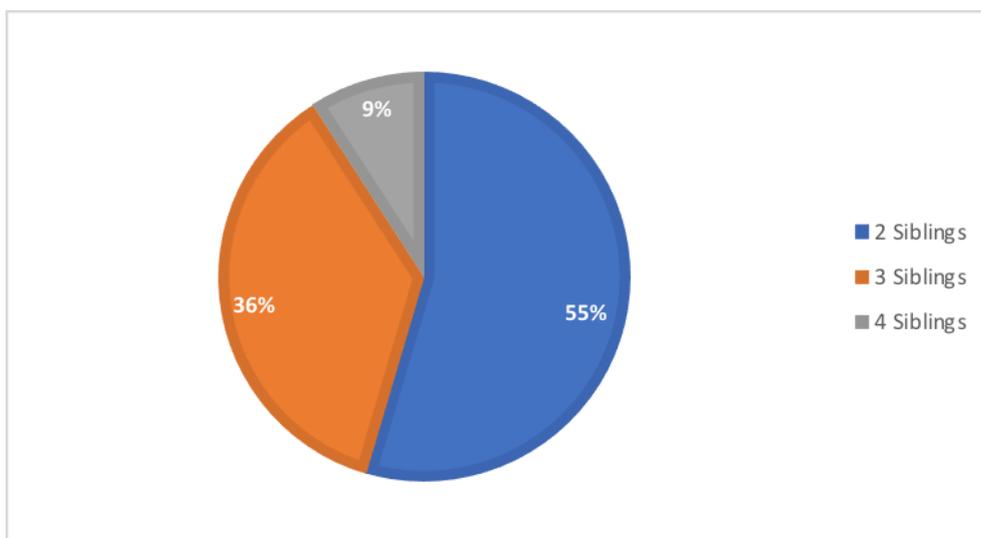
One of the significant criteria for matching children with carers is enabling

during the

year (comp

them to be

### Sibling Groups of children accommodated



## **2.6 Placement Stability**

- 2.6.1 Research indicates that placement stability for children and young people in care is an important factor for them having more positive outcomes during their lives. Changes of placements and primary carers causes instability in terms of attachment and sometimes disruption in education/friendships etc.
- 2.6.2 The Service has 2 targets in relation to placement stability; one for short term and one for long term stability.
- 2.6.3 The short-term indicator is in relation to the percentage of Looked After Children with 3 or more placement moves over the previous month. The target set for this financial year was stretched from last year's 11% to 8% (low is good) and at the end of March 2018 the Service had exceeded this target at 7.1% (22 out of 310 children).
- 2.6.4 The long-term indicator looks at the percentage of children under 16 who have been looked after continuously for 2.5 years and been in the same placement for at least 2 years or have been placed for adoption. The target set for this financial year was stretched from last year's 70% to 80% (high is good) and at the end of March 2018 the Service reported 75.6% (90 out of

119 children) - slightly below the set target. However, the figure achieved has significantly improved from the 2015/16 outturn of 63%.

- 2.6.5 Placement stability is also measured by the number of fragile placement and disruption meetings held during the year. The service only had 3 fragile placement meetings and 1 disruption meeting held between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018, which is very low.

## **Section 3**

### **Foster carers**

#### **3.1 Recruitment of foster carers – enquiries through to approval**

- 3.1.1 In order to ensure a range of foster carers are recruited for Central Bedfordshire children a range of marketing and recruitment activities have taken place during the year. These have mainly included on line marketing/recruitment but also includes some general advertising and radio/press coverage and awareness raising within the community.
- 3.1.2 Between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018 there were 107 enquiries (compared to 92 in the previous year) from people who were interested in becoming foster carers.
- 3.1.3 During 2017/18 the best months for enquiries were as follows: June (15), August (15) and April (11). On the other hand, the worst months for enquiries were: December (4) and July (5).
- 3.1.4 All assessments are carried out in accordance with the National Minimum Standards and Statutory/Practice Guidance. All prospective foster carers are required to attend in-depth 'Skills to foster' training as part of the preparation and assessment process.
- 3.1.5 The Fostering Service's recruitment target for 2017/18 was to recruit 10 new career carers and this was achieved with 11 career carers being approved. This target is in addition to all the other assessments the Service is involved in which includes: Regulation 24, Family and Friends, SGO and Private Fostering assessments.

#### **3.2 De-registrations/termination of approvals**

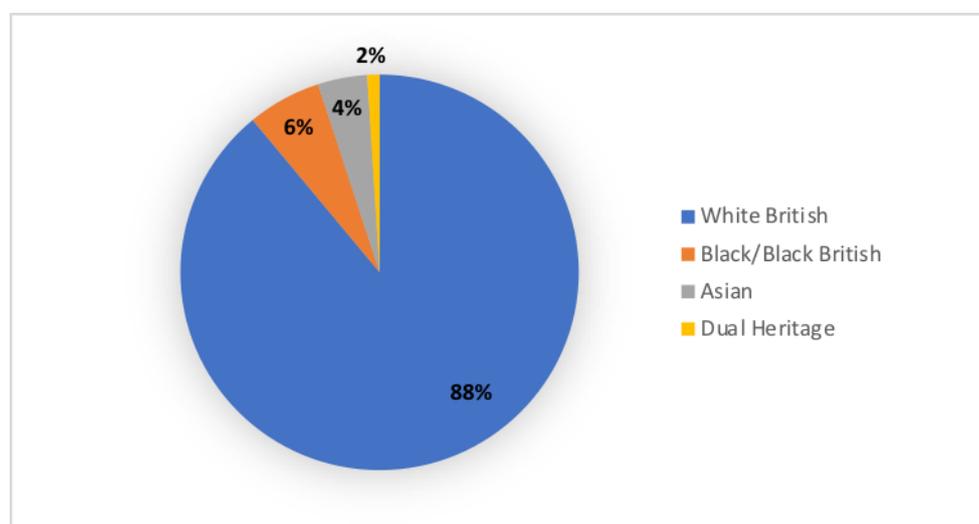
- 3.2.1 Foster carers cease to foster either because their approval has been terminated by the Service or because they wish to resign. Termination of approvals occur usually because there has either been an allegation against a foster carer or concerns arisen regarding the standard of care provided.
- 3.2.2 Between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018, 2 fostering households had their approval terminated, both because the carers were not meeting the National Minimum Standards required of foster carers i.e. inability to work with the child's care plan/work with professionals.
- 3.2.3 During 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018, there were 19 de-registrations, of which:  
5 de-registered due to an SGO being granted  
4 de-registered due to a Child Arrangement Order being granted  
3 de-registered due to retiring/wanting to spend more time as a family  
2 de-registered as not available to offer placements  
2 de-registered due to the impact of fostering on their family  
2 de-registered due to disengaging with the service  
1 de-registered from an existing foster carer as they had separated

### 3.3 Ethnicity of foster carers

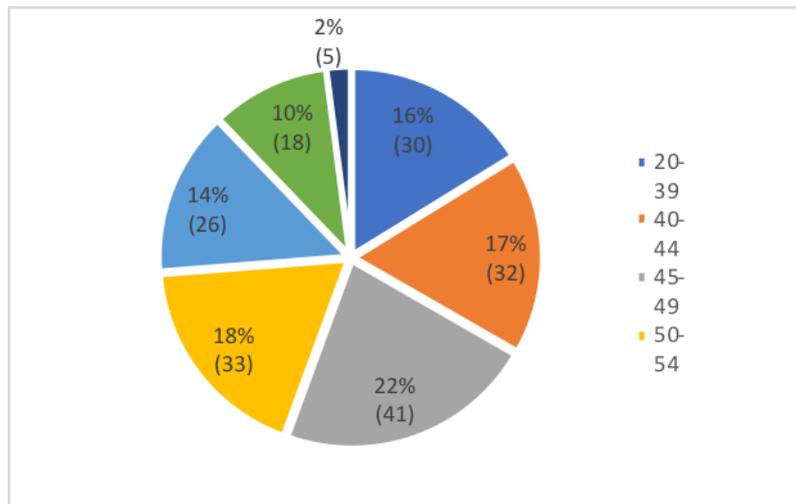
- 3.3.1 The majority of CBC foster carers:
- (88%) of foster carers are from a White British ethnic background, however we also have foster carers who are Black or Black British (6%), Asian (4%), and of Dual Heritage (1%).

Whilst this generally reflects the ethnicity of our Looked After Children population there is still a need to recruit more foster carers from different ethnic minorities in order to refine the matching process further. This is, therefore, an ongoing focus of our marketing and recruitment strategy.

#### Ethnicity of foster carers



**3.4 Carers**



**Age of in Fostering Household**

3.4.1 The average age of CBC foster carers is 40-54 years with 22% aged 45-49 years, 18% aged 50-54 years and 17% aged between 40 and 44 years. Research showed that within CBC there was a vast age range of foster carers with the youngest being 23 years and the oldest being 76 years.

3.4.2 Nationally there is a concern that there is an aging population of foster carers with 10-15% of foster carers due to retire over the next 5 years. Research completed by CBC fostering service indicated that this is not currently an area for concern.

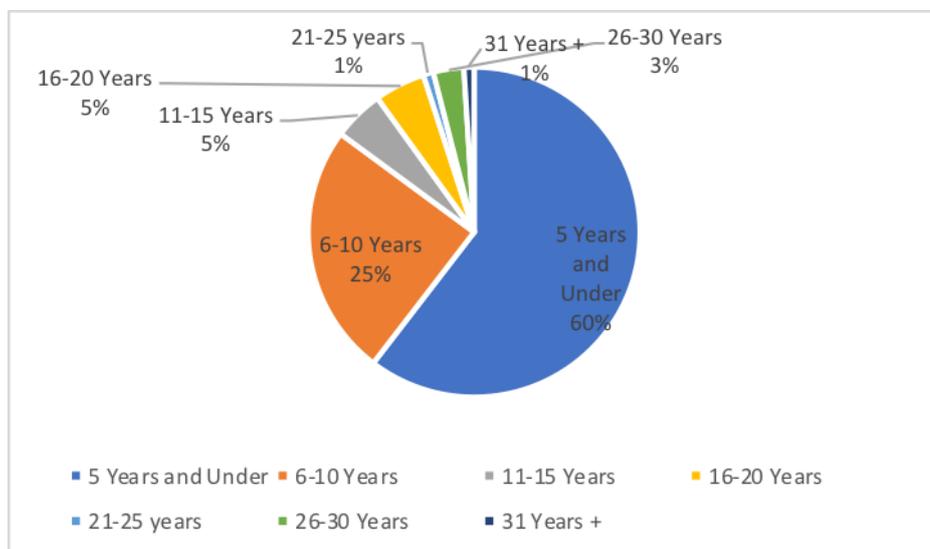
**Age of Carer in Fostering Household**

### 3.5 Length of service of foster carers

3.5.1 Within CBC we have a cohort of foster carers who range in experience and length of service; from those recently recruited, to others who have over 25/30 years' experience. Length of service of our current cohort of foster carers is as follows:

5 years and under:	61 (60%)
6-10 years:	25 (25%)
11-15 years:	5 (5%)
16-20 years:	5 (5%)
21-25 years:	1 (1%)
26-30 years:	3 (3%)
31 years plus:	1 (1%)

#### Length of service of foster carers



### **3.6 Intensive Support Fostering Scheme**

- 3.6.1 This scheme provides specialist care from experienced foster carers to children and young people mainly over the age of 10 (although younger children can and are placed) who have particularly challenging behaviour/complex needs.
- 3.6.2 As of 31 March 2018, there were 8 approved Intensive Support Foster Carers (compared to 7 in the previous year) caring for 6 children (compared to 4 in the previous year).

### **3.7 Family Link Scheme**

- 3.7.1 The Family Link Scheme offers short breaks to children of all ages who have a physical or functional disability. Foster carers can care for a child in their own home, the child's home or take the child out to an activity. Periods of short breaks are planned and can be for a few hours or weekends on a regular basis.
- 3.7.2 As of 31 March 2018, there were 3 Family Link Carers supporting 2 children by providing regular short breaks.
- 3.7.3 There is also 1 salaried Family Link foster carer who is linked to 2 children (1 of whom is a from a neighbouring authority).

### **3.8 PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence) Scheme**

- 3.8.1 The Local Authority has a duty to provide accommodation to children and young people under the age of 18 who have been arrested and charged in relation to a criminal offence. CBC want to limit the amount of time children and young people have to spend in police custody. The fostering service, therefore, set up a PACE fostering scheme in April 2017. The plan is for the

relevant child or young person to be transferred to a Local Authority PACE foster carer overnight before they are presented to court the following day, rather than remaining in police custody until the hearing. As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 the fostering service had 3 prospective PACE foster carers in assessment with the first one due to be presented to the Fostering and Permanence Panel for approval in June 2018.

### **3.9 Supported Lodgings Scheme**

3.9.1 The Supported Lodgings Scheme was introduced in January 2017 to offer 16-17 year olds a secure place to live, whilst at the same time providing them with a supportive adult who can help them to develop vital life skills necessary to live independently such as budgeting, cooking, and emotional support. The Supportive Lodging Scheme offers young people the opportunity to move towards independence in a planned and secure way, whilst remaining close to their network of family and friends. As at 31 March 2018 there were 2 Supported Lodgings Carers caring for 1 young person.

### **3.10 Staying Put**

3.10.1 Staying put arrangements give stability and support to young people as it enables them to remain living with their former foster carers beyond their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. This can often support to young people to prepare them for adulthood, allow them to experience a transition akin to their peers, avoid social exclusion and be more likely to avert a subsequent housing and tenancy breakdown.

3.10.2 According to Ofsted National Statistics 2016/2017, young people were less likely than in previous years to stay put with their foster carers when they turned 18. This is the case locally as at 31 March 2018 there were only 2 young people placed in in-house staying put arrangements.

## **Section 4**

### **Special Guardianship Orders**

4.1.1 The Fostering Service is involved in the assessment and support of Special Guardianship Order (SGO) carers. The number of SGO carers in Central Bedfordshire has been increasing steadily year on year. As at 31 March 2018 there were 140 SGO's in place, compared to 135 in the previous year.

- 4.1.2 Once assessed and the SGO is granted, the majority of SGO carers do not receive ongoing support (apart from a financial allowance) as they access universal services.
- 4.1.3 There are, however, a small cohort of families who contact the service for specific support when issues arise. Between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018, the Fostering Service supported 16 families (compared to 27 in the previous year). The areas of support requested from families were in the following areas:

<b>SGO Support</b>	<b>Number of times support given</b>
Contact	5
Play therapy	3
Financial support requested	2
Advise re applying for a passport	1
Advise re housing payments	1
Advise re revoking SGO	1
Mediation required re SGO carer and birth parents	1
Section 37 info requested from a neighbouring authority	1
Update to advise SGO carer had died	1

## **Section 5**

### **Private Fostering**

- 5.1.1 Family Support team have overall responsibility for monitoring Private Fostering arrangements in Central Bedfordshire and for providing a separate annual report in relation to Private Fostering. However, in July 2018 the fostering service took over responsibility for the assessment and support of private foster carers. As at the end of March 2018 the Fostering Service were supporting 2 Private Foster Carers who were caring for 2 children.

## **Section 6**

### **Training and Development of Foster Carers**

All foster carers are expected to attend mandatory training and other training that has been recommended as part of their PDP (personal development plan). The service has a full and comprehensive Training Programme for foster carers, from preparation training (Skills to Foster), through induction to more complex/specific post-approval training.

## **6.1 Skills to Foster**

- 6.1.1 New Fostering applicants have many questions prior to and during the assessment process. As an essential part of the fostering assessment, preparation to become a foster carer the 'Skills to Foster' training examines issues that are relevant, such as what it will be like to have children placed with them or working in tandem with the Local Authority in order to reach positive outcomes for children.
- 6.1.1 Spread over several dates, this training provides an opportunity for prospective foster carers to reflect on their values and attitude to caring and learn more about the skills and attributes needed to become a foster carer.
- 6.1.2 During 2017/2018, the Fostering Service ran 3 'Skills to Foster' course with a total of 25 delegates attending.
- 6.1.3 As part of the application and assessment process, all applicants must complete Emergency First Aid training; 6 courses were held during 2017/2018 with a total of 85 delegates attending.

## **6.2 Induction**

- 6.2.1 Following approval, foster carers enter their 12-month induction phase into the Service and are required to complete their mandatory Training, Support and Development (TSD) standards. As at 31 March 2018 88 fostering households had successfully completed the Standards, 7 were yet to complete, but still had time to address within the required timescale and 3 households were overdue in completing the Standards and were outside the required timescale. Supervising Social Workers and the Marketing, Recruitment and Training Support Officer were providing additional support to help these carers achieve the standards.
- 6.2.2 Foster Carers training is linked to the foster carers tier level/fee which means that foster carers have to complete relevant training to remain on their tier level or progress to a higher tier level. Attendance at training is good which

appears to be having a positive impact on raising standards in foster carers practice alongside their continued professional development.

### **6.3 The Fostering Training and Development Programme**

- 6.3.1 Each year the Fostering Service produces a comprehensive Training Programme covering a wide range of topics to help foster carers develop their skills and knowledge. During this financial year, a total of 49 specialist in-house training courses were provided (compared to 40 in the previous year) on 36 subjects (compared to 26 in the previous year). The training available was diverse to meet the differing needs of carers and included training such as: Self harm, first aid, radicalisation, tax talk, allegations, introduction to Theraplay, depression and Internet Safety.
- 6.3.2 Foster carers are able to access training on-line and between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018, 212 carers accessed on line training on a wide variety of topics.
- 6.3.3 Foster carers were also able to access training from the LSCB (Local Safeguarding Children's Board), Social Care, Virtual Schools Domestic Violence and the Early Years Teams. 10 foster carers attended training on the following: crisis intervention, mentoring, supporting children through traumatic experiences, self-regulation, domestic abuse, self-harm, safeguarding children in a digital world, effective child protection conferences and county lines, and gangs and young people.
- 6.3.4 Having access to many specialist training courses in different formats enables foster carers to tailor their training to suit their specific requirements/style of learning based on the needs of the children they have in placement as well as ensuring they attend the core training required by the National Minimum Standards for the Fostering Service. If carers identify specific training support needs, these will be looked at on an individual basis and additional support provided, where required.

## **Section 7**

### **Support for foster carers**

#### **7.1 The Fostering Social Worker**

- 7.1.1 The fostering social worker is responsible for the foster carer's ongoing assessment and support and must provide regular supervision that

addresses their learning and development needs. It is the key role of the fostering social worker to support foster carers in meeting the National Minimum Standards required in the care they provide to children and young people.

- 7.1.2 A key strength of the fostering service is the ability of the staff group to remain child focused while providing a high level of support to foster carers.

## **7.2 Advise and Mediation Service**

- 7.2.1 Independent advice and mediation is provided to foster carers via Fostering Network (a national organisation supporting foster carers). This service is primarily used by foster carers during an allegation as it helps to provide independent support and advice during these times. The Fostering Service spot purchases this service as and when it is required. During this financial year there was only 1 request for this service which the Fostering Service supported.

## **7.3 Foster carer support groups**

- 7.3.1 Local monthly support groups are held for foster carers across the county. These are held in Dunstable, Millbrook and Cardington and have been well attended throughout the year.
- 7.3.2 Monthly support groups are also held for Intensive Support carers. As part of the support offered to Intensive Support carers a clinician from CAMHS attends these to provide group supervision and offer advice and support to help aid placement stability.
- 7.3.3 Two evening social events for foster carers took place over this financial year and included a Hawaiian night (23 adults and 26 children attended) and a Cinema night (13 adults and 20 children attended).

## **7.4 Celebration of Fostering event**

- 7.4.1 A Celebration of Fostering event is held every year to recognise the commitment, loyalty, hard work and achievements of our foster carers and their families. This year the event was held at Woburn Safari Park and was extremely well received with 68 adults and 66 children attending. Staff from the Corporate Parenting Service attended as well as the Chief Executive, Deputy Director (Safeguarding & Early Help, Children's Services) and, Executive Member for Adults, Social Care and Housing Operations (HRA).

15 foster carers received long service awards this year;

9 for 5 years

4 for 10 years

1 for 15 years and

1 for 20 years.

Special awards were also presented for carers in the following categories:

- Outstanding contribution to caring for children with disabilities
- Brilliant family and friends foster carer
- Fabulous foster carer
- Outstanding contribution to fostering
- Special sons and daughters

## **7.5 Queens Garden Party**

7.5.1 In recognition of foster carers' hard work and dedication to their role the Service recommended a number of foster carers for attendance at one of the Queen's Garden Parties. 5 foster carers were recommended, however 2 had previously attended, the 3 remaining applications were successful and 3 fostering households have been formally invited to attend one of the Queen's Garden Parties in 2018.

## **7.6 Foster Carers 'Talk Time'**

7.6.1 This event is held quarterly and gives foster carers the opportunity to meet with Fostering Managers and other senior managers to discuss fostering issues. It also allows the Corporate Parenting Service to update foster carers on developments within the service. Four 'Talk Times' were held in this financial year with a total of 39 carers attending. Following the 'Talk Time' meeting a newsletter is sent out to all foster carers updating them of areas discussed at 'Talk Time' as well as providing information on a whole host of other topics relevant to fostering.

## **7.7 'Tea with Alex'**

7.7.1 'Tea with Alex' was an initiative set up by the new Head of Service, Alex Coman, when he took over in November 2017. It gives foster carers an opportunity to meet with the Head of Corporate Parenting Service, on a

regular basis (quarterly) to help him shape the service and support foster carers to improve the lives of our children in care. There was 1 'Tea with Alex' arranged during the last financial year with 6 foster carers attending.

## **7.8 The Mentoring Scheme**

7.8.1 The Mentoring Scheme currently has five foster carer mentors who specialise in specific areas such as care of teenagers, short term care for younger children, and long-term care. All newly approved foster carers are allocated a mentor at the time of approval and existing foster carers are able to access the scheme during challenging times or if they require additional support. During this financial year the service had 6 mentors who supported 11 mentees.

## **7.9 Out of hours service**

7.9.1 Fostering managers and social workers from the Fostering Service provide an 'out of hours' telephone support service for foster carers. A mobile phone is dedicated to this service and all carers have access to the number. The service is available from 5.20pm (4.20 on a Friday) – 11pm weekdays and from 8.45am – 11pm during weekends and bank holidays. This service ensures that foster carers can readily access telephone support from an experienced fostering worker.

7.9.2 Feedback from foster carers indicates that this service is highly valued. Outside of these hours foster carers will contact the Emergency Duty Team.

## **7.10 The Foster Carers Association**

7.10.1 The Bedfordshire Foster Carers Association is run by foster carers and provides local support and social activities for foster carers. The council actively encourages and supports the Association and provides financial support and services in kind to assist with producing and circulating a quarterly newsletter. During this financial year, events that the Foster Carers Association organised included an Easter egg trail, Hunt and Bonnet competition, Picnic in the Park, a Halloween Party, a Christmas Party and a trip to Wickstead Park.

## **7.11 Fostering Network and BAAF membership**

7.11.1 The Fostering Service is a corporate member of Fostering Network that works to promote fostering in the UK. All approved foster carers are provided

with individual membership, funded by the Fostering Service. The Fostering Service also spot purchases Fostering Network's advice and mediation service for foster carers, as and when required.

## **7.12 Sons and daughters**

- 7.12.1 The Fostering Service run holiday activities for sons and daughters of foster carers which are activity-based but also aimed to support them with the impact of fostering on their family. This year 3 events took place, these included a trip to Caldecot Xperience, an Adventure Centre (8 attendees), the Pantomime (8 attendees) and a backstage tour of Milton Keynes theatre (5 sons and daughters of foster carers and 4 looked after children).

## **Section 8**

### **Notifications**

- 8.1.1 The Fostering Service has to notify Ofsted (Schedule 7) of any significant events, accidents or incidents that occur for children whilst placed in foster care.
- 8.1.2 Between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018 there were 3 notifications sent to Ofsted (compared to 1 in the previous year). The first notification was referred by a foster carer who reported that a known sex offender had been giving a lift to a childminder assistant who supported a foster carer. The L.A.D.O (Local Authority Designated Officer) was contacted and Ofsted informed. The second notification was in relation to an allegation made against a male foster carer regarding their conduct. A J.E.M. (Joint Evaluation Meeting) was held and a Section 47 inquiry initiated. The allegation was withdrawn and so no further action was taken. The third notification was in relation to an anonymous referral received alleging a child was being physically abused by a CBC foster carer. They also stated that the child was having to attend the carer's workplace while they worked and that the child was petrified of the carer. A referral was made to the L.A.D.O. and a J.E.M. was held. The allegation was proved to be unfounded and no further action was taken.

## **Section 9**

### **Allegations**

9.1.1 Allegations against foster carers are dealt with in accordance with 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.

9.1.2 Between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018, there were 2 allegations made against foster carers (compared to none in the previous year) both of which are mentioned in Section 8 above.

## Section 10

### Complaints

10.1.1 The Fostering Service uses the Children's Services Complaints Procedure for dealing with and monitoring complaints by foster carers, birth parents and relatives, staff and other partners with a relevant interest in the way CBC fostering services are provided.

10.1.2 Between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018 there were no complaints made (compared to 8 in the previous year). There was an unresolved complaint, however, from the previous year that escalated to a stage 2 complaint and was taken to the LGO (Local Government Ombudsman) in this financial year. The complaint (which was reported on in the previous year) was in relation to a foster carer who had wanted to adopt a child who had previously been in her care, however, the Local Authority's care plan was for the child to be placed with her siblings. The L.G.O. upheld the carers' complaint as they felt that the council had failed to provide an opportunity for the family to say goodbye to the child, also that the council failed to provide the carers with a written response to their intention to adopt. In order to remedy these failings, the council agreed to:

- Pay £500 for the distress, time and inconvenience expended to complain about the council's actions
- Re-offer the carers the provision of counselling.
- Invite the carers to consider mediation to see if there was a way forward for them to continue their career as foster carers.

10.1.3 Following a review of the LGO decision, managers from the Corporate Parenting Service met to review learning from the complaint. As a result, the Fostering and Adoption policies were amended to ensure a written response

would always be provided to foster carers who expressed an intention to adopt a child.

- 10.1.3 There have been no referrals to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) during this period. The IRM is a mechanism for appeal open to the foster carer when disagreeing with the fostering service provider which considers a prospective or existing foster carer not to be suitable to foster a child, or feels an alteration is needed to an existing foster carer's terms of approvals.

## Section 11

### Compliments

- 11.1.1 Compliments about service delivery from customers and for their representatives are recorded within the service as these, alongside complaints and comments, can be shared to promote learning and make improvements.
- 11.1.2 Between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018 the Fostering Service received 7 compliments (compared to 16 in the previous year). Compliments included:
- 2 foster carers provided positive feedback about their supervising social workers whose support they valued.
  - 1 childcare social worker complemented a foster carer on her 'excellent care' of 2 children she had looked after. The social worker acknowledged there had been some difficulties and upsetting times over the previous few months but that the foster carer's care of the children had never wavered from being excellent. The social worker made the carer aware that CBC valued her professionalism
  - 1 foster carer provided positive feedback about a social event the fostering service had facilitated during the Christmas period.
  - 1 foster carer complemented the fostering service on her 'excellent' presentation of a training course which focused on the child's journey through placement.
  - 1 foster carer provided positive feedback on a new 'Tea with Alex' initiative where foster carers had the opportunity to meet with the Head of Corporate Parenting Service to discuss fostering issues.
  - 1 independent foster panel member also wrote in to complement the panel secretary on the 'excellent' standard of her minutes.

In addition to these compliments the fostering service also received very positive feedback from Ofsted following the 'Children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers' Inspection. The following feedback about the fostering service was received:

- There are effective recruitment, training and support arrangements in place
- Foster carers valued the stability of their supervising social workers who 'do what they say they will do'
- Assessments of carers are timely and thorough
- Supervising social workers visit carers regularly and work closely with children's social workers to promote placement stability
- A dedicated group of foster carers provide other carers with respite care. This has been effective in promoting the stability of placements in very challenging situations.
- Foster carers receive good training to help them understand attachment theory and the impact of trauma
- The number of placement disruptions is low and learning is used to improve practice
- The independently chaired fostering panel is effective. It has a dedicated panel adviser who ensures all reports are of a suitable standard.
- The central list of panel members includes experienced individuals from a range of diverse backgrounds.
- The panel is consistently curious and use penetrating questions to assure members about the quality of work.

## Section 12

### Conclusion

- 12.1.1 The Fostering Service has had a tremendously positive and successful year. The Service has met its recruitment target for career foster carers for 4 consecutive years. Whilst the percentage of children placed in-house has dipped from an all-time high of 65% to 61%, this figure is still good. The main reason for this dip is because the number of children in care has increased during this financial year so maintaining 65% has been more difficult to

achieve. The service still aspires to place 70% of its looked after children in house and is confident that in time with its robust recruitment strategy in place and other work being undertaken, that this can be achieved.

- 12.1.2 Maintaining a high percentage of children placed in-house has enabled CBC to make significant savings on placement costs as IFA placements are significantly more expensive than in house foster placements. Having more in-house foster carers has supported greater placement choice which has enabled better matching of children and enabled significantly more children being placed in local placements that better meet their needs, where support is more readily available and where improved placement stability has been achieved.
- 12.1.3 In order to continue developing the service this year saw the introduction of the PACE fostering scheme which aims to support children and young people who have been arrested and charged in relation to a criminal offence. Recruiting foster carers to such a scheme is notoriously difficult, however, as at 31 March 2018 the fostering service had 3 PACE carers in assessment. It was planned that Luton, Bedford Borough and CBC would recruit a number of carers each which would then be pooled and used on a Rota basis in order to provide this specialist care to a small number of children/young people who require this type of placement. It is unclear, currently, whether Luton or Bedford Borough have managed to recruit any PACE carers themselves.
- 12.1.4 During this financial year the service has been developing a 'Parent and Child' scheme, to meet the increasing demand for such placements. This scheme is due to be launched at the start of the new financial year.
- 12.1.5 This year the service has also implemented a change of procedure in relation to children's savings. All foster carers are expected to routinely save for the children in their care. Prior to the change of procedure foster carers were expected to open bank/building society accounts for the children in their care and often experienced difficulties with this as they didn't always have the relevant documentation required to open such accounts. Monitoring to ensure all foster carers were routinely saving for children was also problematic. The new procedure, to be introduced at the start of the new financial year, will involve CBC taking the savings from source (taken out of the foster carers allowance before it was paid to them). This money will be kept in a virtual bank account so when the child reaches 18 a calculation will be made as to the number of weeks the child has been in care and a bank

account would then be set up for the person to be able to access as required.

- 12.1.6 During this year the fostering service has also taken on responsibility for assessing and supporting private foster carers. The Family Support Service retains overall responsibility for private fostering including responsibility for the privately fostered child.
- 12.1.7 In consultation with foster carers, the fostering service updated the Foster Carers Charter, which sets out the fostering services and foster carers roles and commitment to each other (see Appendix 3)
- 12.1.8 The service continues to offer a wide range of support to foster carers in order to ensure children are cared for in safe and stable placements that meet their specific needs. The high take up of training, the positive figures in relation to placement stability and the low number of allegations and complaints indicates that foster carers are well supported. Positive feedback from Ofsted also evidenced the fostering service has provided a high quality, safe and effective service to foster carers and looked after children.
- 12.1.9 In order to involve foster carers more in the development of services a new initiative was also introduced in this financial year where the Head of Corporate Parenting meets with foster carers on a regular basis to help shape the service and ensure foster carers are supported to improve the lives of children in care.
- 12.1.10 The fostering service has experienced a number of staff changes this year and although most posts have now been recruited to, the changes in staffing have had an impact on foster carers who rely on the close working relationship they have with their supervising social workers. Staff recruited recently are now working hard to develop good working relationships with their foster carers to ensure they feel valued and supported and can continue to foster for CBC for the foreseeable future.
- 12.1.11 In terms of the forthcoming year the service will continue to concentrate on increasing the number of in house foster carers so that more children can be placed with carers who can appropriately meet their needs locally. The recruitment target for 2018/19 is to recruit a further 10 career foster carers, however, targeted recruitment will concentrate on recruiting carers who can care for older children, those with challenging behaviour, respite carers, PACE carers and those who can provide parent and child placements.

12.1.12 New recruitment strategies based on successful recruitment strategies used in other Fostering Services will be implemented in the forthcoming year and will include recruiting Fostering Ambassadors from our existing foster carers who will help support the service in the implementation of its recruitment strategy. Another new recruitment initiative will be looked at in the form of Star Parties (Start Thinking About Recruitment parties) as these have been used as a successful recruitment tool within foster carer community groups within Rotherham.

12.1.13 During 2018/2019 the Fostering Service also plan to finalise a loans policy for foster carers wishing to extend their accommodation in order to be able to increase the number of placements they are able to offer or to provide permanency for those children who might otherwise not be able to be placed, or keep siblings together.

12.1.14 Another consideration for the Fostering Service will be the potential introduction of a 'Support Care' Fostering Scheme. Support care is a preventative support service which is designed to provide families who are experiences difficulties in caring for their children with some time out or respite. It is a time limited service which is provided as part of a plan to prevent family breakdown and avoid children becoming looked after on a long term basis. Work will be undertaken with the family support service to establish if this scheme would be a viable option and where it should sit within the organisation.

This Report has been composed and presented for members to consider and note by:

Annie Craig  
Practice Manager Corporate Parenting Service - Fostering

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*Produced by Central Bedfordshire Council, Fostering Team*  
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# Foster carers charter

## Our roles and commitment to each other

### **The Fostering Service role:**

The Fostering Service aims to provide stable and first-rate foster care for children who are valued, supported and encouraged to grow and develop as individuals.

To achieve this aim, we recruit, train and approve foster carers and deliver ongoing support to them, in order to give them the skills and confidence they need to develop meaningful relationships with the children and young people they care for and provide stable and loving homes while they are part of the foster family.

### **The Foster Carer's role:**

Foster carers are at the heart of the foster care service.

We are assessed, trained and supported to look after children and young people by developing meaningful relationships in a family environment, providing them with stability, care, love and an opportunity to grow and develop to reach their potential.

### **Fostering Service and foster carers commitment to each other:**

1. Working in equal partnership
2. Respect for the child and each other as valued members of the team around the child
3. Information
4. Clarity and timely updates about decisions and plans
5. Support each other
6. Ongoing learning and development
7. Fair treatment
8. Communication and consultation.



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# What the fostering service and foster carers can expect from each other:

## 1) Working in partnership

We will recognise each other's skills and expertise and demonstrate a high standard of care and conduct to ensure we make the biggest difference to the everyday lives of children in care.

### We will:

- Demonstrate our expertise and make use of our skills to the best of our ability
- Recognise each other's knowledge and understanding of each child's lived experience
- Plan, prepare for and attend all meetings that affect the child looked after
- Through our work with children we will support them to have a positive experience of family life
- Work with the agencies involved with the child such as school, health and religious establishments
- Ensure that we meet the standards set out in Fostering Regulations and guidance and follow departmental policies and procedures
- Treat each other without discrimination and respect each other as colleagues
- Respect confidentiality.

## 2) Respect for the child

Every child and young person should be respected as an individual and be supported in meeting their needs and achieving their aspirations and potential.

### We will:

- Develop a meaningful relationship with the child, understand their needs, support their growth and be an advocate and champion for them
- Respect and promote a child's religious, linguistic and cultural heritage
- Ensure the protection and care of the child meets the National Minimum Standards
- Ensure the child has the right to make decisions regarding their own lives, as appropriate to their age and understanding.

## 3) Information

We believe that open and honest dialogue is the key to a good relationship and we will aim to build a meaningful and collaborative relationship with each other.



**We will:**

- Provide each other with all the information needed in order to ensure the child is safely cared for even when emergencies occur
- Ensure that a placement plan is drawn up together and adhered to
- We will ensure any financial guidance is clear and adhered to
- If any difficulties arise these will be discussed at the soonest opportunity.

#### **4) Clarity about decisions**

We recognise that in order for children to live a full family life, foster carers must be able to make decisions regarding the children they foster.

**We will:**

- Work together to ensure that wherever possible, foster carers can and do make everyday decisions that mean that fostered children are not treated differently to their peers and feel part of the family
- Work together to ensure there is clarity about decisions that cannot be made by the foster carers so that everyone understands who is responsible for what.

#### **5) Support**

We recognise that fostering is an isolating and challenging task and appropriate and timely support makes all the difference to the fostering family and to the child in care.

**We will:**

- Respond positively to requests for additional support
- Commit to and utilise regular supervision provided
- Provide honest and open feedback
- Ensure the fostering allowance and associated expenses are paid, utilised and claimed for appropriately and in a timely manner.

#### **6) Learning and Development**

We will access learning and development opportunities. This will ensure we have the skills and knowledge we need and allow us to develop our practice in order that we can help transform the lives of children in care.

**We will:**

- Attend relevant training opportunities in order to develop our skills and knowledge of fostering issues



- Support each other to enable meaningful relationships with children in care to develop.

## 7) Fair treatment

We recognise that everyone has a right to be treated fairly, no matter what the circumstances.

### We will:

- Ensure openness in our discussions and communications with you
- Ensure we treat each other with respect and keep each other informed on important issues/concerns/events
- Ensure the framework for dealing with allegations is adhered to in agreed timescales.

## 8) Communication and consultation

We believe that open and honest dialogue is the key to a good relationship.

### We will:

- Ensure that we consult with you in a meaningful way and build good working relationships
- Support children in care to do the same
- Utilise consultation opportunities in order to inform the development of the service.

---

Sue Harrison  
Director of Children's Services

---

Cllr Steve Dixon  
Lead Member



## Central Bedfordshire Council

Corporate Parenting Panel

Monday 26 July 2018

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### Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2018 - 2019

Report of:

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

Responsible Director(s):

Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services,  
([sue.harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:sue.harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

**This report relates to a decision that is Non-Key**

---

#### Purpose of this report

1. This Recruitment and Retention Strategy outlines the target for 2018 – 2019, our current need and the successes and learning we have found through our analysis of the last financial year's activities. It gives an overview of our key marketing initiatives and targeted campaigns we will be undertaking for the next financial year (April 2018 to March 2019).

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

**The Committee is asked to:**

1. Consider and note appendix; Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2018 – 2019.

#### Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

2. This report has not been to or planned to go to Overview and Scrutiny as no recommendations/decisions are required. Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to consider and note the Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy.

#### Issues

3. The Fostering Network (the UK's leading fostering charity) states that a child comes into care in need of a foster family every twenty minutes with 7,000 new fostering families needed in the UK (Fostering Network Foster Care Fortnight statistics for Local Authorities, 2018).

4. According to the Fostering in England 2016 – 2017 main findings report, nationally the number of approved foster places continues to rise. However, while the number of places did rise, the number of places that were unavailable for children to be placed into increased at a faster rate. This in effect meant that there were fewer places for children who needed foster care than last year. The number of households and therefore the number of carers continued to steadily decrease, driven by the fall in mainstream (known as career carer) households. This would have been the biggest decrease in households in recent years but for the large increase in family and friend's households. However, if the decrease in mainstream households continues, along with a continued increase in children in care, there is a risk that the sector will reach a point where there are not enough suitable places available.
5. The above research and statistical information highlights the need for positive and proactive recruitment. This Recruitment and Retention Strategy outlines the current need and the successes and learning found through analysis of the last years activities and the recruitment targets for the year ahead. It gives an overview of the key marketing initiatives and targeted campaigns that the Service will be undertaking.

### **Council Priorities**

6. The Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy meets the following Council priorities:
  - Enhancing Central Bedfordshire
  - Improving education and skills
  - Protecting the vulnerable; improving wellbeing
  - Creating stronger communities
  - A more efficient and responsive Council.

### **Corporate Implications**

7. Legal, financial and equalities implications were requested, feedback can be found below.

### **Legal Implications**

8. Reviewed by Jennifer Lee and suggested amendments made within report, see appendix.

### **Financial and Risk Implications**

9. Reviewed by Denis Galvin, no issues from a finance perspective.

### **Equalities Implications**

10. Reviewed by Clare Harding:

11. 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. This report highlights the work that is undertaken to recruit and retain carers from diverse backgrounds who can meet the needs of looked after children.

### **Conclusion and next Steps**

12. If approved the strategy will shape the monthly working plan for the Marketing, Recruitment and Training Officer to recruit and retain foster carers for the Corporate Parenting Service in Central Bedfordshire Council.

### **Appendices**

#### **Appendix A:**

Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2018 – 2019.

The following Appendix is attached/ provided through an electronic link:

<https://centralbedfordshire.box.com/s/xn5ycasrxavop73l9kdwt8eg3o573mky>

### **Background Papers**

None.

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Appendix A

# Recruitment and retention strategy

Fostering Service

1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019



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# Contents

	Page	
<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Needs analysis and evaluation</b>	<b>3</b>
	2.1) Introduction to the population of Central Bedfordshire	3
	2.2) Location of looked after children and foster carers	3
	2.3) Current picture of foster carers	4
	2.3a) Average age of Central Bedfordshire foster carers	4
	2.3b) Approved foster carer conversion of enquiry	5
	2.4) Looked after children	5
	2.5) Evaluation of activities in 2017 - 2018	7
<b>3</b>	<b>Developments and successes within the service</b>	<b>9</b>
	3.1) Ofsted inspection	9
	3.2) Fostering Network Muslim Fostering Project	9
	3.3) PACE fostering	10
	3.4) Queens Garden Party	10
	3.5) Parent and child	10
	3.6) Consultation with foster carers	10
<b>4</b>	<b>Target and current need for the year ahead</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Recommended marketing and recruitment plan for the year ahead</b>	<b>11</b>
	5.1) Website	11
	5.2) Net Natives for multiple advertising campaigns	12
	5.3) Lamp post banners	12
	5.4) Brand awareness – roundabout and bus adverts	13
	5.5) Large scale posters at Tesco	13
	5.6) Fostering Ambassadors	13
	5.7) Star Parties (start thinking about recruitment parties)	13
	5.8) Press, newsletters and information sharing	14
	5.9) Social media	14
	5.10) Councillor support	14
	5.11) Admobile advertising	15
<b>6</b>	<b>Retention and support plan for the year ahead</b>	<b>15</b>
	6.1) Training	15
	6.2) Celebration of fostering	15
	6.3) Support groups	16
	6.4) Consultation	16
	6.5) Foster Care Association	17
	6.6) Mentoring	17
	6.7) Fostering Network membership	17
	6.8) Discounts for foster carers	17
	6.9) Family and friends foster carers	17
	6.10) CAMHS support	18
<b>7</b>	<b>Other areas of consideration</b>	<b>18</b>
	7.1) Parent and child fostering scheme	18
	7.2) Update of literature	18
	7.3) Improving the customer journey through enquiry to assessment	19
	7.4) Contact list for enquiries that have ended	20
<b>8</b>	<b>Review of strategy</b>	<b>20</b>



## 1) Introduction

The Fostering Network (the UK's leading fostering charity) states that a child comes into care in need of a foster family every twenty minutes with 7000 new fostering families needed in the UK (Fostering Network Foster Care Fortnight statistics for Local Authorities, 2018).

According to the Fostering in England 2016 – 2017 main findings report, nationally the number of approved foster places continues to rise. However, while the number of places did rise, the number of places that were unavailable for children to be placed into increased at a faster rate. This in effect meant that there were fewer places for children who needed foster care than last year.

The number of households and therefore the number of carers continued to steadily decrease, driven by the fall in mainstream (known as career carer) households. This would have been the biggest decrease in households in recent years but for the large increase in family and friend's households. However, if the decrease in mainstream households continues, along with a continued increase in children in care, there is a risk that the sector will reach a point where there are not enough suitable places available.

The above research and statistical information highlights the need for positive and proactive recruitment. This Recruitment and Retention Strategy outlines the current need and the successes and learning found through analysis of the last years activities and the recruitment targets for the year ahead. It gives an overview of the key marketing initiatives and targeted campaigns that the Service will be undertaking for the year ahead.

## 2) Needs analysis and evaluation

### 2.1) Introduction to the population of Central Bedfordshire

Central Bedfordshire is less diverse than England as a whole with a greater proportion of people in Central Bedfordshire who are White British (89.7%). The biggest ethnic groups within Central Bedfordshire are White Other (2.8%), White Irish (1.2%) and Indian (1%). (Central Bedfordshire Key Facts and Figures, January 2017).

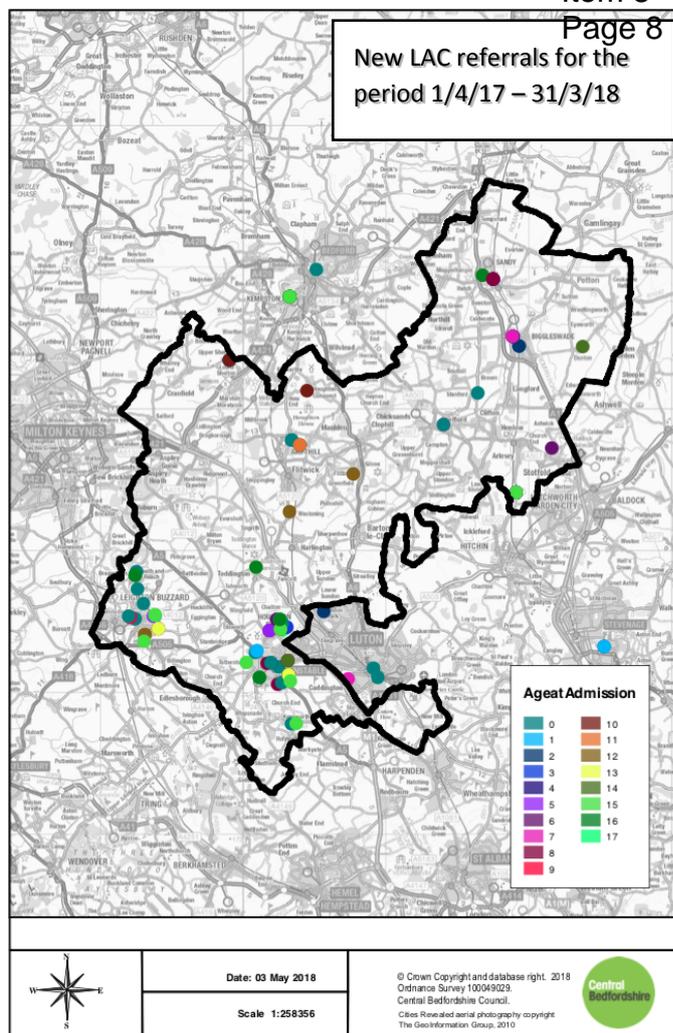
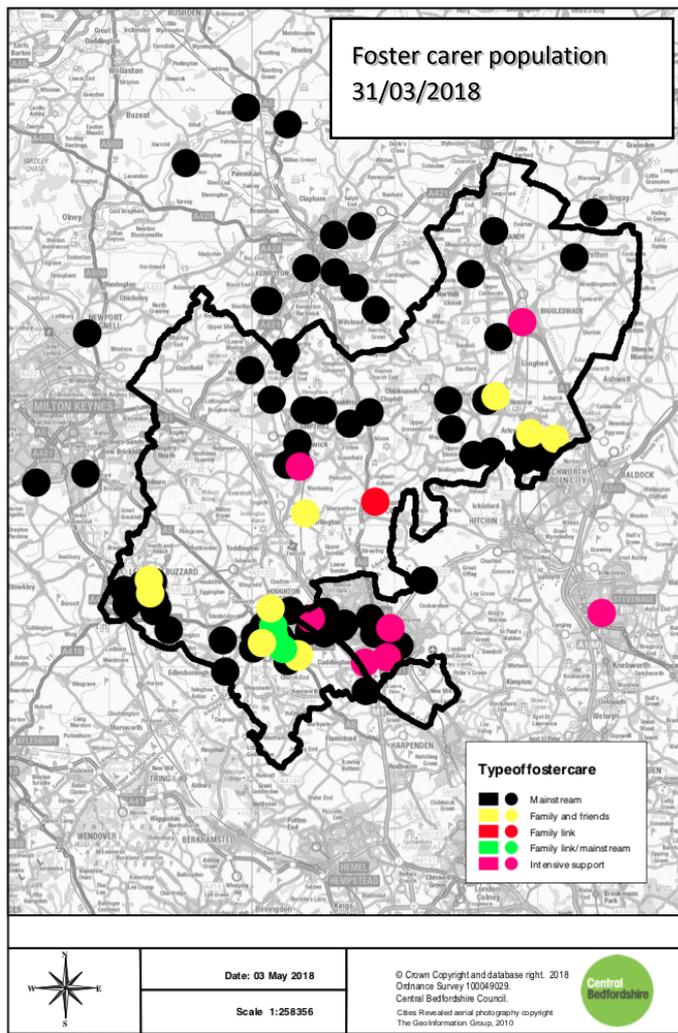
### 2.2) Location of looked after children and foster carers

With Central Bedfordshire being classed as largely rural it was important to gain further information regarding:

- a) The areas that the Service's looked after children are coming from
- b) The areas in which the Service has foster carers.

The following maps show that the Service has foster carers spread across the whole of Central Bedfordshire, with some from outside the Central Bedfordshire borders. The main population of looked after children are shown to be coming from the south of Central Bedfordshire:





### 2.3) Current picture of foster carers

Part of the analysis for this strategy was to gain a clearer picture of the Service's current foster carers, their ages, and what encouraged them to contact Central Bedfordshire Council to enquire about fostering. This will enable the Service to capture any trends for better targeting for future advertising campaigns.

#### 2.3a) Average age of Central Bedfordshire foster carers

With a national concern of an ageing population of foster carers with 10 – 15% due to retire in the next 5 years (Fostering Network State of the Nation's Foster Care, 2016) it was important for the Service to review the average age of Central Bedfordshire foster carers and if there is a need to focus on recruiting younger foster carers.

From research undertaken, the age of foster carers for Central Bedfordshire is not a high concern with the majority of foster carers being aged between 40 – 54 years:

- 22% are aged 40 - 54 years
- 18% are aged 45 – 49 years
- 17% are aged 50 – 54 years
- As a whole, the youngest foster carer is 23 years and the eldest is 76 years.

### 2.3b) Approved foster carer conversion of enquiry

During the research enquiries were revisited for current foster carers to see what encouraged them to come forward as foster carers. Although this information for some carers was not available due to the length of their fostering career, it was clear that word of mouth was the most popular reason for them to contact Central Bedfordshire Council. This indicates that foster carers being part of the recruitment strategy remains a high priority.

When compared with the outcomes for 2016, it is evident that there is an increased knowledge by foster carers being able to transfer between authorities and agencies. There was a good number of foster carers transferring to Central Bedfordshire with 8% transferring from an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) and 1.1% transferring from another Local Authority.

Foster carer enquiry conversion	2018	2016	Difference from 2016 to 2018
Unknown	31.0%	42.7%	- 11.7
Word of mouth/friends who foster	17.2%	19.5%	- 2.3
IFA transfer	8.0%	0%	+ 8
Website	6.9%	4.9%	+ 2
Radio advert	4.6%	4.9%	- 0.3
Internet search	4.6%	3.7%	+ 0.9
Local paper	3.4%	6.1%	- 2.7
Word of mouth - staff member	3.4%	1.2%	+ 2.2
Advert - location not specified	3.4%	2.4%	+ 1
Attended info evening	3.4%	1.2%	+ 2.2
School bus advert	2.3%	2.4%	- 0.1
Referred to us by another LA	2.3%	2.4%	- 0.1
Previously fostered for the LA	2.3%	2.4%	- 0.1
Outreach	2.3%	1.2%	+ 1.1
LA transfer	1.1%	0%	+ 1.1
Roundabout	1.1%	3.7%	- 2.6
Previously a Reg 24 carer	1.1%	0%	+ 1.1
Early years newsletter	1.1%	1.2%	- 0.1

### 2.4) Looked after children

The Service has continued to place a high number of children with in house foster carers and are keen to work towards the aspiration to have 70% of the Looked after children (LAC) population placed with in house foster carers and therefore reduce the cost and use of independent fostering agencies (IFA).

This has proved challenging with the LAC population rising year on year but the in house to IFA split remains high with 61% of the LAC population being placed with in house foster carers and 39% with IFA's (as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018). This is good compared to Central Bedfordshire Council's 2014 figure which was 46%. It has now stabilised in the low 60% but with a robust recruitment and retention strategy the Service is confident this figure will continue to rise.



In order to gain a good understanding of the types of foster carers that are needed, a breakdown of referrals for placements for looked after children was analysed. This analysis focussed on those children placed outside their family and friends network and accordingly both family and friends and Regulation 24 placements were excluded from the analysis. From this analysis, it is evident that the following areas are in need of active recruitment during 2018 – 2019 (further information on our current need can be found in section four):

- Fostering households for sibling groups
- Fostering households for older children aged 10 years plus
- Parent and child foster carers
- Respite foster carers.

The following shows a snapshot of the results from the analysis:

#### **New referrals placed with in house foster carers**

- 41 new referrals were placed with in house foster carers:
  - 18 were aged between 0 – 2 years (White British, White British/Italian and White British/Asian)
  - 4 were aged between 3 – 5 years (White British and Asian British)
  - 9 were aged between 6 – 10 years (White British, Black British and Black African)
  - 9 were aged between 11 – 15 years including 3 unaccompanied young people seeking asylum (White British, Black African, Eritrean and Afghan)
  - 1 placement was a parent and child (White British).

#### **New referrals placed with Independent Fostering Agencies:**

- 22 new referrals were placed with IFA foster carers
  - 3 children were aged between 0 – 2 years (White British and Asian British)
  - 4 children were aged between 3 – 5 years (White British and Asian British)
  - 7 children were aged between 6 – 10 years (White British and Asian British)
  - 7 young people were aged between 11 – 15 years, including one unaccompanied young person seeking asylum (White British, White British/Arab, Asian British, Sudanese)
  - 1 placement was a parent and child (White British).

The reasons for the above external placements were:

- Older child and no in-house option available
- Respite required and no in-house option available
- Sibling group and no in-house option available
- Parent and child placement and no in-house option available
- Placed out of county.

During this time, 19 placements were brought back in house to Central Bedfordshire from an IFA through planned moves to Central Bedfordshire foster carers, being placed with family and friends or Regulation 24 carers or where IFA carers transferred to Central Bedfordshire with Central Bedfordshire children in placement.



The need for foster carers for unaccompanied young people seeking asylum (UASC) continues with Central Bedfordshire reaching their 0.7% threshold. This is due to the high number of spontaneous arrivals into the region at Toddington Service Station. As the young people move onto independence the Service will be able to provide further placements for UASC and will continue to ensure that caring for UASC is promoted to both prospective and approved foster carers during the year ahead.

## 2.5) Evaluation of activities in 2017 – 2018

This year has seen the Service meet its recruitment target for the fourth consecutive year with the following approvals:

- 10 x career fostering households
- 1 x family and friends foster carer approved as a career foster carer
- 2 x supported lodgings households.

The trend of IFA carers expressing an interest to transfer from their current IFA to Central Bedfordshire has continued this year with a good number of initial contacts and enquiries. Four of the above approvals were IFA transfers, all of which were caring for Central Bedfordshire children (seven children in total) which resulted in a considerable saving in IFA fees to the service.

Last year, there were a total of 393 initial contacts for information regarding fostering. Compared with the previous year's figure of 299, this has increased significantly by 31%.

The following shows the progress of this year's cohort of initial contacts so far (as we progress through their applications these figures may change):

April 2017 – March 2018		Comparison; figures for 2016 – 2017
Initial contact for information regarding fostering	393	299
Completion of the initial enquiry form	110	105
Went forward for initial visit	56	64
Application forms sent to prospective foster carers	46	53
Application forms returned	27	26
Number that went forward to assessment	27	24
Number of assessments that cancelled out	12	10
Reasons why those assessments were cancelled out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not willing to complete employment reference</li> <li>- Reached the end of the supported lodgings assessment and department unable to contact applicant. No indication of wanting to end assessment</li> </ul>	



- Concerns around applicant's ability to set appropriate boundaries
- Medical required before assessment can begin, medical not completed by two separate applicants
- Applicant's did not engage with assessment
- Personal reasons – decided to move to a new house and try for a baby
- Employment, lost their job so ended the assessment
- Applicant no longer wished to proceed
- Health issues
- Not willing to complete ex-partner check
- Decided to stay with IFA.

Initial contacts for information regarding fostering continue to come from a range of marketing activities, with the website and digital marketing sources continuing to see a rise in interest and follow through to initial contact, the main sources are:

- Website
- Facebook advertisements
- Social media coverage e.g. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
- Google searches
- IFA transfer queries
- Response to articles in community and staff newsletters
- Word of mouth e.g. foster carers, staff, friends, colleagues and neighbouring authorities
- Radio advertising
- Ebulletins
- Adverts, leaflets and posters.

From the initial contact, the Service records the prospective foster carers name, telephone number and email address to enable further contact to be made to discuss taking their enquiry further and to then complete an initial enquiry form. The majority of enquiries then lead to an initial visit with a social worker visiting them at their home. This year's conversion rate for the completed initial enquiry form to progress to an initial visit is 50.9%.

Following the initial visit, the Service will encourage suitable applicants to complete an application form to start their foster carer assessment. This year's conversion from completed initial enquiry form to completion of the application form is 24.5% which is significantly higher than the national average of 18% for Local Authorities (Fostering in England 2016 – 2017: main findings).

From this stage, a full fostering assessment will commence where their ability to foster will be reviewed in more depth. Based on the above figures the conversation rate from completion of the initial enquiry form to assessment was 24.5%, compared to 22.8% the previous financial year. The Service has continued to



provide good and consistent customer service throughout the time of an applicant's journey through application to assessment, but it is recognised that there are areas for improvement (see section seven for further information).

When the journey of completion is broken down from initial enquiry to approval, it shows that Central Bedfordshire's conversion is 13.6% which is higher than the national average of 10% (Fostering Network Benchmark Survey 2016).

The above figures could improve further as the Service progresses through the year ahead due to some enquiries being at initial visit stage or where the Service is waiting for prospective foster carers to return their application forms.

At the time of the last strategy (31<sup>st</sup> March 2017) the average journey time of a prospective foster carer to approval was 173 days, which was better than the national average of 180 days. As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, the journey time remained under the national average at 176 days.

### **3) Developments and successes within the Service**

The Fostering Service has had a tremendously positive and successful year. Below is a snapshot of the highlights for Service:

#### **3.1) Ofsted inspection**

In June 2017 the Service was inspected by Ofsted as part of the 'Child in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers Inspection'. Central Bedfordshire Children's Services achieved an overall outcome of 'Good' with the Fostering Service receiving some very positive feedback, particularly in relation to the recruitment, retention and training of foster carers:

'Adoption and Fostering Services are good, and effective recruitment, training and support arrangements are in place.'

'Effective foster carer recruitment, together with good support and training for carers, is leading to an increase in in house fostering households, although there is a lack of parent and child placements.'

'Foster carers receive good training to help them understand attachment theory and the impact of trauma.'

'A programme of training has been used to raise awareness of the Prevent duty, and good use is made of the train the trainer programmes to maximise impact and take up'.

#### **3.2) Fostering Network Muslim Fostering Project**

In August 2017 the Service was successful in being selected as one of the four Fostering Agencies to take part in an exciting National project hosted by the UK's leading fostering charity, The Fostering Network. The project was a great opportunity for the Service to show their strengths within recruitment and training but to also identify areas for development from the outcomes of the project.



The project aimed to build a picture of the experiences of Muslim children in foster carer, prospective and approved Muslim foster carers as well as foster carers who have a different culture and religion to Muslim children they care for.

Following the project, the Service were invited to attend and present at The Muslim Fostering Project's Practice Learning Day to share their experience regarding Learning and Development for foster carers, in particular to the training around Cultural Competency and Caring for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People.

During the Practice Learning Day, the Service had the chance to network with other Local Authorities and Agencies to share practice. The Service will be receiving funding from the Fostering Network to go towards recruitment activities and further information on plans for this additional money can be found in section five of this strategy.

A report of findings for the project will be published shortly by The Fostering Network and will be available to Services nationally in June 2018.

### **3.3) PACE fostering**

The PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence Act) fostering scheme was successfully launched in April 2017. The purpose of the scheme is to support young people aged between 10 and 17 years who have been arrested to prevent them having to spend time in a police cell before they attend court the following day.

Following the launch and targeted recruitment, the Service currently has three PACE foster carers in assessment and will look to recruit further PACE foster carers throughout the year ahead.

The Service will continue to work closely with neighbouring Local Authorities to ensure an effective PACE rota is provided by PACE foster carers with further recruitment taking place where required.

### **3.4) Queen's Garden Party**

Recognition of foster carers dedication to their role and the children in their care continued to be a high priority for the Service with five fostering households being nominated for an invitation to the Queen's Garden Party. Unfortunately, two households had already attended so their applications were unable to be processed but the Service is pleased to report that the remaining three households were formally invited to attend The Queen's Garden Party in 2018.

### **3.5) Parent and child fostering scheme**

During the last strategy, the need for parent and child foster carers was highlighted, it was also an area for consideration from the recent Ofsted inspection. This year saw the development of a parent and child fostering scheme due to the increasing demand for such placements. The scheme is due to be launched in April 2018 and further information can be found in section seven.

### **3.6) Consultation with foster carers**

This year saw the Service introduce further consultation opportunities for foster carers in the form of an informal drop in with the Head of Corporate Parenting Service called 'Tea with Alex'. This has been successful and foster carers have provided positive feedback.



#### 4) Target and current need for the year ahead

The target for the year ahead is to:

- Recruit 15 career fostering households
- Implement the parent and child fostering scheme.

The focus for recruitment will be for:

- Intensive support foster carers for young people with more complex needs and behaviours. The Service will work towards recruiting and maintaining 10 intensive support fostering households
- PACE foster carers
- Parent and child foster carers
- Foster carers who can support sibling groups
- Foster carers for older children
- Foster carers for unaccompanied young people seeking asylum (UASC). Part of this will include working with our current foster carers to support them in considering UASC placements
- Respite foster carers for young people with both mainstream and intensive support foster carers.

All of the above will contribute to the aspiration to have 70% of Central Bedfordshire looked after children placed with in house foster carers.

#### 5) Recommended marketing and recruitment plan for the year ahead

From reviewing the above research there is a clear shift in the number of initial contacts requesting information regarding fostering coming from digital sources. The strategy will continue with a blended marketing approach of traditional marketing but with an increasingly larger presence online and through social media.

##### 5.1) Website

The recent developments of the webpages, alongside the increased digital marketing, led to a considerable increase in number of page views with 11,363 views between April 2017 – March 2018 compared to 7,577 the previous 12 months.

This, in turn, led to a rise in the number of initial contacts through the website. This has almost doubled from 59 in 2016 – 2017 to 104 requests for information in 2017 – 2018.

In the next 12 months the Service will continue to focus on digital marketing, including the following developments:

- The website pages will be updated to reflect the new parent and child fostering scheme and other information throughout the year as required e.g. the updated foster carers charter
- The Service will continue to work closely with the Communications team to ensure that the website's content is kept fresh, updated and engaging to continue to provide the best information to the public
- Increase use of short, targeted and specific marketing pages for advertising campaigns to encourage those interested in fostering to make an enquiry. The pages are created and made



bespoke to each advertising campaign. This improves the enquirer's journey to finding out the information they require. They are short and precise with the information regarding the particular scheme being advertised with an 'enquire now' button that asks for their name, email and telephone number. This enables the Service to have direct contact with the enquirer, provide them with information quickly and to be able to keep in touch.

### **5.2) Net Natives contract for multiple advertising campaigns**

Central Bedfordshire's contract with the digital advertising company Net Natives was renewed following a cost and quality procurement process. The contract has given the Service the opportunity to work with a company who have extensive and proven experience of successful digital marketing campaigns within adoption and fostering.

To reduce the number of external companies used, Net Natives will be running multiple campaigns for both adoption and fostering during 2017 – 2018 including the following fostering campaigns:

- Facebook advertising  
Three separate, four-week campaigns will be produced for Facebook. The adverts will run during proven successful times of the year – during and after Foster Carer Fortnight, September (which is aimed at 'empty nesters' when young people move onto university) and in January when the general public look for new opportunities.
- Radio advertising  
Radio advertising will continue on Heart radio for one four-week campaign which will be aired in May.
- Leaflet distribution  
Leaflet distribution will be completed between December and January to homes within Central Bedfordshire. The hope is to target affluent areas and larger homes where there may be more than one-bedroom spare to promote caring for siblings.
- Google Dynamic Words  
The Service will be utilising a new type of digital marketing this year, Google Dynamic Words. When someone searches terms, keywords or phrases closely related to fostering, Google uses them to generate a text advert to display to the user. This will then lead the member of the public to a marketing page and enquiry form regarding fostering for Central Bedfordshire.

### **5.3) Lamp post banners**

To raise brand awareness across Central Bedfordshire the service will be installing new large scale fostering posters in four different locations this year in the form of raised lamppost banners.

The banners will alternate between an adoption and fostering advert and will be installed in the following areas:

- High Street, Dunstable
- Lake Street, Leighton Buzzard
- West Street, Leighton Buzzard
- Town Centre, Biggleswade.



All the above locations will either have a high footfall of slow moving traffic or are located close to supermarkets, town centres or areas with a high footfall of traffic or pedestrians.

#### **5.4) Brand awareness – roundabout and bus adverts**

The Service will extend the contracts for the following for the year ahead:

- Roundabout signs  
To continue with brand awareness in a central location of Central Bedfordshire, the roundabout signs will remain in Flitwick for another year.
- Rear bus adverts  
To continue with brand awareness in the Luton and Dunstable area four - four weekly campaigns will continue for this strategy.

#### **5.5) Large scale posters at Tesco**

The large-scale posters at Tesco in Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard were installed for 2017 – 2018 with a two-year contract. The content and posters have been refreshed and updated versions will be installed in April 2018 for the last year of the contract.

#### **5.6) Fostering Ambassadors**

As word of mouth continues to be a high scoring recruitment tool, the Service will be looking to start a new scheme to find Fostering Ambassadors. Fostering Ambassadors will be existing, experienced foster carers who will support the Service with recruitment. This area will be explored further this year.

#### **5.7) Star Parties (Start Thinking About Recruitment Parties)**

Star Parties were set up by Rotherham Fostering Service as a recruitment tool as part of their recruitment strategy. The parties are proving to work well in recruitment within foster carers community groups and could be a good opportunity for Central Bedfordshire to recruit further foster carers within Central Bedfordshire.

Existing foster carers are encouraged to host a Star Party and invite a minimum of five people who they think may be interested in fostering. The parties are a relaxed atmosphere in the foster carer's home with food encouraged to help with networking and a member of the Fostering team in attendance to support.

The hope is that the parties will not only support recruitment of foster carers but will also promote future support networks if attendees of the party become foster carers. It aims to encourage community engagement and help prospective carers feel at ease in a less intimidating environment.

Costings for this scheme will need to be reviewed for Central Bedfordshire before this scheme is set up, the following is the current set up for Rotherham's Star Parties:

- Host is paid a fee of £100  
The fee is provided to cover the cost of the food and for the carer to spend as they wish. Any remaining money is theirs to keep as a fee for holding the party.
- £250 is paid to the host for any attendees who move onto approval as a foster carer
- A further £250 is paid to the host for those who then take a placement.



### **5.8) Press, newsletters and information sharing**

The Service has continued to keep in touch with the local media to promote the amazing work of foster carers and share our good news and successes. The Celebration of Fostering continues to bring interest from the local media with articles and images of our foster carers being included in various publications, newspapers and through their social media channels and websites. The Service will continue to work closely with the Communications Officer to produce press releases around National campaigns and times of celebration and successes such as Foster Carer Fortnight, the celebration of fostering event, sons and daughter's week and LGBT adoption and fostering week.

Part of this work will also include the use of the following:

- Internal messaging through Staff Central (staff newsletter)
- Internal messaging through Members Information Bulletin (Councillors' newsletter)
- Regular messaging to Central Bedfordshire residents through ebulletins
- Use of foster carer testimonies and films from a diverse range of people, families and young people (where possible)
- Uploading new and engaging video clips regarding fostering to the Central Bedfordshire YouTube channel
- Nomination of foster carers and other members of the family for National awards such as The Fostering Network Excellence Awards, The Towergate Care Awards, the Queen's Garden Party and the Queen's Honours.

### **5.9) Social media**

Social media continues to be a quick and free of charge way to spread good news and messaging about fostering to the general public reaching a high number of people in a short space of time.

The numbers of page likes on both the fostering and Central Bedfordshire pages have continued to rise throughout the year:

- Fostering Facebook page  
The number of page likes has risen to 504 compared to 382 in March 2017
- Central Bedfordshire Council Facebook page  
The number of page likes has risen to 10,573 compared to 8,325 in April 2017
- Twitter has also been a vital tool with Central Bedfordshire's Let's Talk Central page hitting 11,100 followers
- There is also the capacity to extend our marketing through the Central Bedfordshire Instagram page that currently has 738 followers.

The Service will continue to work closely with the Communications Officer to post and tweet messages about fostering, our celebrations and successes.

### **5.10) Councillor support**

Continued Councillor support to fostering remains a high priority and the Service will work closely this year with Central Bedfordshire Councillors to seek their support in the marketing and recruitment of foster carers.



### 5.11) Admobile advertising

A new area of future advertising is admobile, a quick and non-intrusive advert shown on mobiles telephones. The Service are able to build an advert and reach a local, targeted demographic through a scrolling banner advert.

The Service will review this type of advertising this year and utilise if cost effective.

## 6) Retention and support plan for the year ahead

### 6.1) Training

Following the implementation of the training policy in 2016 the level of attendance at training has risen with foster carers increasingly meeting their core training requirements. The social workers supporting foster carers work closely with the training department to analyse each individuals' training needs and requirements to ensure training is meaningful and builds on individual's skills and knowledge to support them and the children in their care.

This year has seen the training programme financially break even for the first time. This has been achieved by multi agency working and regular advertising of the programme with neighbouring Local Authorities. This has enabled the Service to purchase specialist courses for foster carers with spaces being sold to reimburse the initial expenditure of the training. The Service has worked closely with Milton Keynes Council and Luton Borough Council who have purchased training through Central Bedfordshire Council with Bedford Borough in particular purchasing a large number of training courses for their adopters and foster carers. The Service will continue to work closely with our neighbouring Local Authorities to continue to bring in income to the Service and sharing of training resources through this year.

This year the Service will continue to provide an extensive and comprehensive training package for foster carers including face to face training, e-learning and a range of resources e.g. books, leaflets, resource packs and DVD's.

### 6.2) Celebration of Fostering

The Celebration of Fostering event continues to be a popular event in the social calendar with foster carers, staff, senior management and councillors getting together to celebrate the successes of Central Bedfordshire's foster carers and their families. This year saw fifteen foster carers/couples receive long service awards with a total of an incredible 120 years' service between them. There were also five individual awards given to carers who were nominated for going above and beyond for the children they have welcomed into their homes. The following is a snapshot of some of the feedback received about the award winners through their nominations:

*"They encompass everything that foster carers can be. They provide exemplary care for the children in their care, enjoying and embracing their individuality and the significance of their birth family"*

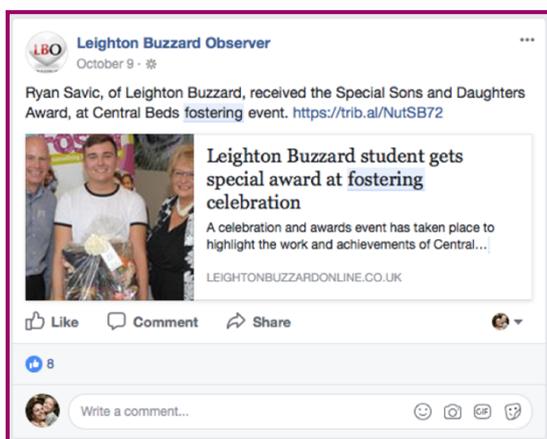
*"I feel privileged to have been on her journey with her, her foster placement has been superb. She has been a part of helping this young person to find her voice in the world, and shout loudly, I can do anything I want to do!"*



*“They help foster self-belief in the children and recognise this is the cornerstone for all other development. Most recently, at matching panel, the whole panel, social workers and foster carers suspended their belief as their two children confidently explained to panel why their carers were so special to them and why they wanted to be matched with them. This magical occasion was due to the respect that the carers show to the children and their birth family. We are really proud of the children, but we are also really proud of the foster carers.”*

*“He is an amazing foster brother, he takes her out and includes her with his friends that come around to our home. He is an amazing source of support to me, it’s been a very difficult year and he’s been such a valuable support to me.”*

The event will be held earlier this year to bring it closer to Foster Carer Fortnight and will return to Woburn Safari Park on a Sunday to enable families to enjoy the day together. The Service will also continue to work closely with the Communications Officer to produce as many publicity opportunities as possible following the event.



### 6.3) Support groups

Support groups continue to be well attended and to help foster carers build support networks within their local area. As they are well received they will continue to be held in Dunstable, Millbrook and Cardington with an evening social group held every quarter.

### 6.4) Consultation

A vital area of continued development is consultation and the Service will continue to consult with foster carers, looked after children and the Children in Care Council.

The foster carers talk time continues to be well attended with a number of issues successfully developed and issues resolved such as taking looked after children’s savings directly from source.

A new opportunity has also been offered to foster carers this year called ‘Tea with Alex’. This is an opportunity for foster carers to meet with the Head of Corporate Parenting Service in an informal setting as a drop-in service to discuss fostering issues.



The Service will continue to communicate with foster carers by email which means we can share information quickly at no cost and have an open dialogue with foster carers to enable them to share their views directly with the Service. The Foster Carers Newsletter is also produced and sent to foster carers every quarter.

The Service will consider different methods of communication with foster carers to encourage further communication between foster carers and the service e.g. the possibility of a WhatsApp group.

#### **6.5) Foster Care Association**

The Foster Care Association is an independent voice for foster carers and provides a vital service to foster carers within Bedfordshire. The Service will continue to support the Association financially and in terms of consultation and advertising events on behalf of the Foster Care Association.

#### **6.6) Mentoring**

The mentoring scheme has seen some developments this year including recruitment of a further three foster carer mentors. The Service now has six active mentors who are available to support newly approved foster carers as well as those more experienced foster carers who may need additional support.

Each mentor brings their own specialisms such as experience of long term care, experience of caring for young people with challenging behaviour as an intensive support foster carer, caring for unaccompanied young people who are seeking asylum, caring for a broad age range of children and caring for children with disabilities.

The mentor paperwork was also reviewed this year to ensure good practice, accountability and good, clear records. The mentors continue to be supervised by two members of the Fostering Service through choice of phone or face to face supervision.

#### **6.7) Fostering Network membership**

Individual household membership for foster carers continues to be provided to each household and the Service will continue to be corporate members of the Fostering Network. Advice and mediation services will continue to be purchased as and when required.

#### **6.8) Discounts for foster carers**

Max cards have and will continue to be provided to all foster carers once they are approved. This enables them to gain discounts to family days out and activities nationally and within Central Bedfordshire. Foster carers are also able to access KAARP benefits which enables them to access deals and discounts for various days out and services. Both will continue to be advertised regularly in the foster carers' newsletter.

#### **6.9) Family and friends foster carers**

Family and friends foster carers are able to access all support groups and training as career foster carers. The Service also ensure that they receive all communications as any other foster carer.

One area for consideration this year will be the possibility of reinstating the family and friends and SGO support group. This will enable family and friends and SGO carers to build a network of peer carers who



face similar challenges. The Service will consult with family and friends and SGO carers and if viable reinstate the group at a location and time that suits those wishing to attend.

#### **6.10) CAMHS support**

CAMHS continue to support the Corporate Parenting Service and for the year ahead the following support will be provided:

- Support group  
CAMHS will be holding regular support groups for foster carers whose children have CAMH involvement.
- Attendance at Talk Time  
CAMHS will attend the Foster Carers Talk Time where possible to support foster carers with queries that may arise within the meeting.
- Office based support  
CAMHS will provide office-based support to foster carers and staff whereby they are able to book slots with CAMHS to discuss any concerns they may have.
- Complex case discussions  
CAMH will attend these meetings where CAMH support may be required.

### **7) Other areas of consideration**

#### **7.1) Parent and child fostering scheme**

The Parent and Child Fostering Scheme will be launched in April 2018. This will follow the route of a blended marketing approach with the following awareness:

- Press release
- Internal messaging to foster carers through the foster carers newsletter
- Internal messaging to staff through Staff Central
- Ebulletins to Central Bedfordshire residents
- Social media.

#### **7.2) Update of literature**

An area for improvement that will begin this year is to update the fostering literature e.g. information pack, leaflets and factsheets. Following the Foster Care in England Review (February 2018), the benefits of marketing campaigns being targeted to appeal to carers intrinsic motivations has been highlighted. Research shows that enquiries have increased where local authorities have used promotional materials that explicitly recognise fostering as altruistic, often expressed as loving children and stressing the potential to making a difference to the lives of children. This is something the Service has adopted for marketing campaigns, but it was felt some supporting literature was outdated and could be updated to take into account the above research. There is also benefit in literature and marketing materials having a more personal tone which will be considered during this exercise.

During the review it will also be a good opportunity to showcase that Central Bedfordshire is an Ofsted Good Service with the 'Good' logo being added to our existing literature.



### 7.3) Improving the customer journey through enquiry to assessment

During the Fostering Network Practice Learning Day, the Service had the opportunity to network with both Local Authorities and IFA's. During this networking some improvements to duty and the assessment process were highlighted as areas to consider for this year, such as:

- **Amendment to the initial enquiry form**  
It is recognised that the customer's first impressions and journey when they make an initial enquiry are vitally important to be a positive experience as there are many other Local Authorities and IFA's on our doorstep. The Service will look to amend the form and questions asked to make it more positive this year.
- **Adding an evening call following an initial contact**  
When members of the public enquire about fostering, the Service requests a telephone number to enable follow up calls to be made to complete the enquiry form to progress to initial visit. Calls are made during the working day with the first call being made two days following initial contact, the next the following week and the final call a week later. The Service will look to add a fourth call during the evening by the out of hours duty worker to ensure we give those who work during the week the chance to speak to a member of the Service.
- **Timescales for enquiries and initial visits**  
The timescales of a prospective foster carers journey from initial contact will also be reviewed to ensure that the Service is responding quickly and effectively.
- **Mystery shopping**  
The Service will review the possibility of completing a mystery shopping exercise at the stage of enquiry.

Another area for improvement is the way in which the Service processes initial visits with the following areas and questions to be considered:

- Are initial visits tailored to each family, their situation, their culture, beliefs etc?
- Are initial visits more positive than negative?
- How can the Service support the enquirer to overcome their fears, worries or any barriers that may have been raised during their initial visits and assessment?
- Does the Service positively challenge views to broaden them and open up their minds e.g. use of scenarios to highlight that their views of certain children, behaviours, cultures, beliefs, situations may not be what they expect and to broaden their minds to consider children of different ages, abilities and faiths?
- What does the Service do to demystify areas of concern?
- Does the Service bring up areas that they think the prospective foster carer may find a concern e.g. some prospective carers may not wish to discuss them in fear of the Service being resistant to their concerns?
- For the Service to think more about early nurturing of potential and newly approved foster carers
- Possibility of staff training regarding what a foster carer should be, their own anxieties, challenge their views and to be solution focussed.

The Service will also be looking into the possibility of experienced foster carers attending initial visits to prospective foster carers. The aim is to help prospective foster carers gain a clear picture of the reality of



fostering and to hear directly from a foster carer. The hope is that it will also help carers work through real life examples of what may worry them and how real life foster carers manage those concerns.

#### **7.4) Contact list for enquiries that have ended**

In some cases, initial contacts for information regarding fostering will be for those people who are at the early stages of their fostering journey. It is thought that some people can take months or even years to decide to foster. Central Bedfordshire has the use of Gov Delivery which enables the service to send blanket messaging to a large group of people across Central Bedfordshire by the use of ebulletins. This year the Service will collate emails for those people who have decided it is not the right time for them and add to the system. This will enable the Service to send regular ebulletins to keep fostering fresh in their mind with the hope that they will then return to Central Bedfordshire when they are ready to progress their enquiry. To ensure the Service is GDPR compliant the Service will ensure that the relevant permissions are granted at the stage they request information from the Service regarding fostering.

#### **8) Review of strategy**

As the needs of the Service change throughout this financial year the Service will regularly review and adapt the strategy and monthly working plan to meet any challenges or needs of Looked after children.



## Central Bedfordshire Council

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Thursday 26 July 2018

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### Adoption Agency Annual Report 2017/18

Report of: Cllr Steve Dixon, Executive Member for Social Care and Housing  
([steve.dixon@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:steve.dixon@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

Advising Officers: Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services; Nickie Phillips,  
Practice Manager – Corporate Parenting Service – Adoption.  
([Nickie.phillips@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Nickie.phillips@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

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#### Purpose of this report

1. The report and appendix outline the statutory framework regarding the Adoption annual report.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive or Committee are asked to:

1. Note the statutory report

#### Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

1. The report is planned to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

#### Issues

2. Appendix 1 is the Adoption annual Report for 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

#### Options for consideration

3. None

#### Council Priorities

4. Adoption is a key statutory service to Looked After Children.
  - Enhancing Central Bedfordshire
  - Great resident services

- Improving education and skills
- Protecting the vulnerable; improving wellbeing
- Creating stronger communities
- A more efficient and responsive Council.

## **Corporate Implications**

### **Risk Management:**

5. Regulatory Risks: The provision of sufficient and suitable adoption placements is a key activity monitored by Ofsted during inspection, forming part of their judgement about services for Looked after Children.
6. Child Protection Risks: Failure to recruit or retain sufficient and suitable adopters would be a child protection risk.
7. Reputational Risk: Recruitment of adopters is a competitive market activity and has a high media profile.
8. Financial Risk: Looked after Children placements is a demand led activity. Interagency adoption placements are high cost and can have significant and immediate impact on forecast spend.

### **Legal Implications**

9. Adoption regulations, associated Statutory Guidance and National Minimum Standards outline the requirement to report to Members on the management and outcomes of the service, in order that they can satisfy themselves that the service is effective and achieving good outcomes for children.

### **Financial and Risk Implications**

10. This report provides updating information and does not include any financial decisions / implications

### **Equalities Implications**

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

The annual adoption report highlights that all 14 children matched for adoption were recorded as White British, and that of the 14 children matched for adoption by Central Bedfordshire, 11 were male and 3 were female. Of the 12 Adoption Orders granted during the period 4 were male and 8 were female. These differences may warrant further consideration. In order to ensure a range of adopters are recruited a blended marketing approach of traditional and digital

marketing was utilised to attract a diverse range of people and families to consider adoption for Central Bedfordshire Council. The level of disruption to placements is very low.

The adoption panel report highlights that there is still a continued need to recruit more male members to Panel and a broader diversity of minority representation.

12. The annual report highlights how these considerations are taken into account. Examples include:

- Diversity related training provided for the panel and adopters
- A range of recruitment activity
- No adoption disruptions in this period, reflecting the care given to the matching process
- Continued membership of New Family Social, a national charity supporting adopters and foster carers from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community.

### **Conclusion and next Steps**

13. The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to note the Adoption Agency statutory report for 2017-18.

### **Appendices**

**Appendix A:** Adoption Agency, Annual Report 1st April 2017 – 31st March 2018

### **Background Papers**

**None**

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Central  
Bedfordshire

great  
prospects

# Annual report

Adoption Agency, Central Bedfordshire Council

For the period:

1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018

**A great place to live and work.**



# Contents

<b>Section 1 - introduction</b>	3
1.0 Introduction	3
1.1 The Adoption Team	3
1.2 The Adoption Panel	4
1.3 Adoption Panel Membership	4
1.4 Panel and Agency Decision Maker Activity	5
1.5 Panel Training And Development	5
1.6 Provision Of Information On Adoption	6
<b>Section 2 – Children and Adoption</b>	6
2.0 Children Referred For Adoption	6
2.1 Outcomes For Children with Plans for Adoption in this period	7
2.2 Placements Of Children	7
2.3 Type of Adoption Placement	8
2.4 Ethnicity Of Children Placed For Adoption	8
2.5 Ages Of Children Placed For Adoption	8
2.6 Gender Of Children Placed For Adoption	8
2.7 Adoption Orders	8
<b>Section 3 – Adopters</b>	8
3.0 The Work Of The Adoption And Permanence Support Team	8
3.1 Recruitment Of Adopters	9
3.2 The Assessment Process: Enquiries, Assessments And Approvals	10
3.3 Ethnicity Of Adopters	10
3.4 Post Approval Support	10
3.5 Training For Adopters	11
<b>Section 4 – Adoption Support Services</b>	11
4.0 Post Adoption Support To Families	11
4.1 Services To Adopted Adults / Birth Relatives	12
4.2 Disrupted Adoptions	13
<b>Section 5 – Other Activities</b>	13
5.0 Inter-Country and Non Agency Adoption	13
5.1 Regional Adoption Agency	13
5.2 Membership	14
5.3 Commissioned Services: Independent Birth Family Counselling	14
5.4 The Adoption Scorecard	14
<b>Section 6</b>	17
6.0 Conclusion and Performance Objectives	17

## Section 1:

### Introduction

- 1.0.1 This report describes the activity of Central Bedfordshire Council's Adoption Agency during the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, noting their achievements, clarifying the remit and focus of their work and identifying recommendations for the development of the service.
- 1.0.2 This report is provided as part of the monitoring of the adoption agency required under the Local Authority Adoption Service Regulations 2003 and National Minimum Standards 2011. This report will be presented to Central Bedfordshire Council Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and a six-monthly update report will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel.

### 1.1 The Adoption Team

- 1.1.1 The Adoption Agency is co-located within the Corporate Parenting Service of Children's Services. This supports the close working relationship with the court teams to achieve early permanence planning for children.
- 1.1.2 The Adoption Agency has remained conveniently located to support the provision for providing the range of adoption services as specified within the current legislation. The Statutory Guidance underpinning adoption legislation prescribes all the services and process to be followed by an Adoption Agency and the qualifications required by Social Workers.
- 1.1.3 The agency has experienced has retained a consistent staff group.
- 1.1.4 During this reporting period the Adoption Team Staffing has been:
- 1 x full time Practice Manager
  - 1 x Senior Practitioner (part time)
  - 5.5 x Social Workers
  - 1 x Social Work Assistant
  - 1 x Business Support Administrators
- 1.1.5 All employed staff are permanent and have a number of years post-qualifying experience.
- 1.1.6 All social workers are qualified and registered with the Health and Care Professions Council and have at least three years' post qualifying experience required by the 'Restriction of Adoption Reports Regulations 2005'.
- 1.1.7 The team carries out the full functions of an adoption agency, with social workers carrying a range of adoption work, including recruitment and assessment of prospective adopters, adoption support and family finding.

1.1.8. 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 and manage the Adoption Panel.

## 1.2 The Adoption Panel

1.2.1 The Adoption Panel is hosted by CBC and continues to be a shared panel between Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council. A panel usually sits twice per month, with extraordinary panels as and when required to meet timescales.

1.2.2 Adoption panel considers the following:

- Whether a prospective adopter is suitable to adopt
- Whether a child should be placed for adoption with a particular prospective adopter
- Should be placed for adoption decisions relating to relinquished children
- The termination of approval of prospective adopters

1.2.3 Each panel considers a maximum of six cases per panel.

1.2.4 The Agency Decision Maker makes the decision in regard to whether a child should be placed for adoption without a recommendation from the Adoption Panel. The only exception is for a plan for adoption for a child relinquished for adoption by their birth parent.

1.2.5 The panel management team meet 6 monthly and an annual report is provided by the panel chairperson on the quality of panel business.

## 1.3 Adoption Panel membership

1.3.1 As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 the Adoption Panel Central List was as follows:

Panel Chair	Independent
Independent	Adoptive Mother
Independent	Adoptive Father
Independent	Birth Parent of an Adopted Child
Independent	Gypsy and Traveller Educational Consultant
Independent	Adopted Person,
Social Work Member	Social Worker
Social Work Member	Social Worker
Social Work Member	Independent Social Worker
Social Work Member	Social Worker, Adoption Team CBC
Medical Adviser	Consultant Community Paediatrician
Elected Member	Central Bedfordshire Council
Independent (Vice Chair)	Adopted Person
Elected Member	Bedford Borough Council

1.3.2 In attendance but non-voting members are:

Professional Adviser	Central Bedfordshire Council
Panel Secretary	Central Bedfordshire Council

1.3.3 The Legal Adviser and Medical Advisor provide advice, in writing, in advance of Panel meetings.

#### **1.4 Panel and Agency Decision Maker activity**

1.4.1 In this period the Adoption Panel met on 19 occasions.

1.4.2. The Agency Decision Maker decided that adoption should be the plan for 26 children. This compares to 18 in 2016/2017 which shows an increase in activity.

1.4.3 5 plans for adoption were rescinded within this period due to a change in the Care Plan. This related to two sibling groups that had a plan for adoption agreed in previous years.

1.4.4 18 households were recommended for approval by Adoption Panel and all were later ratified by the Agency Decision Maker as suitable to adopt. All applicants attended the panel.

1.4.5 The target was 20 approvals and so 18 approvals represent 2 households less than the set target. 1 application was ended as it did not meet Adoption regulations and standards and 1 application withdrew due a change in their personal circumstances.

1.4.6 The panel considered and recommended a match with prospective adopters for 14 children and all were later ratified by the ADM.

#### **1.5 Panel Training and Development**

1.5.1 The Adoption Agency strives to ensure that there is a good level of training, appraisal and induction offered to Panel Members.

1.5.2 An annual training day was held on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2017 covering the following subject matters:

- Review the legal framework re: permanence planning for looked after children
- Early Permanence planning including foster for adoption.
- Significance of Life Story information for adoptee's
- Performance Update

1.5.3 All Panel Members had an annual appraisal completed by the Agency Panel Advisor and Panel Chairperson where their personal training needs are discussed and considered.

1.5.4 In addition, the Panel Chair attends the national CoramBaaf panel chairs meeting to support learning, good practice development and updates to legislation. The Panel Chair and Vice Chair also attended a meeting with the Agency Decision Maker for each authority.

1.5.5 Panel members can also access the annual training programme to attend any training needs identified from their annual appraisal.

1.5.6 The Panel Chair is invited to attend adoption disruption meetings to learn from practice. There have been no adoption disruptions within the reporting period.

## 1.6. Provision of information on adoption

- 1.6.1 Central Bedfordshire Council has a single point of contact to the service through a local rate telephone line. Enquiries can also be made via the council website, where information on adoption is readily available, directly to an adoption email address and via the social media page. Enquirers are provided with information about the needs of children placed for adoption and the assessment process. They are invited to attend an information evening and in addition, are offered an initial interview with a Social Worker to consider their personal circumstances to assist a decision regarding an application to be assessed as prospective adopters.
- 1.6.2 Information Evenings are held monthly where information on the assessment process and the needs of children requiring adoption is provided by social workers from the service. Dates and details of information events are easily accessible on the council website and promoted via social media.

- 1.6.3 Some feedback from attendees includes:

*“the information given was very valuable and easy to understand”*  
*“far more in depth than I was expecting but this is good”*  
*“lots of opportunities to ask questions was provided”*  
*“very informative and presented in a professional but friendly manner”*

Statistics in relation to the number of enquiries received are included later in this report.

## Section 2:

### Children and Adoption

#### 2.0 Children Referred for Adoption

- 2.0.1 In this reporting period 33 children were referred to the service for parallel planning where adoption would be the alternative plan if no other options were available. This was a slight decrease from the previous year of 38.
- 2.0.2 In order to avoid case drift or delay for children, children are referred for family finding when adoption is a possible alternative outcome for that child. This does not mean that all children referred will subsequently have a plan for adoption but ensures that robust early permanence planning is considered as part of a child’s care plan, including the duty to consider foster for adoption. In many cases, children safely return to their families or are placed with extended family members under other orders, such as Special Guardianship.
- 2.0.3 Early Permanence has remained a focus including the provision of Foster for Adoption placements for children. Such placements will only be progressed for children who meet the criteria.
- 2.0.4 CoramBaaf guidance reflects that foster for adoption may apply in one of the following circumstances:

- *Where parents have had one or more children previously placed for adoption or other forms of permanent placement and the evidence strongly suggests that their circumstances have not changed and pose the same risks.*
- *The local authority does not have a proactive plan to rehabilitate the child as the circumstances of the parents are such to pose a serious on-going risk.*
- *Where this is the first child, the circumstances of the parents and the risks to the child are such that there is no proactive plan to return the child to the birth parents or to other family members.*
- *Where parents have indicated that they may want their child adopted but have not formally consented. (S52(3) Adoption and Children Act 2002)*
- *There are other circumstances where placement with a dually approved carer may be in the best interests of the child. Concurrent planning is the clearest example.*

2.0.5 A service for birth parents who wish to voluntarily relinquish their child for adoption is provided by the team. This requires intensive support to the parent to enable them to make an informed decision. The service received 2 referrals in the period, only 1 arrangement proceeded to placement with prospective adopters.

## 2.1. Outcomes for children with plans for adoption in this period

2.1.0 Of the 26 children with plans for adoption in this period (1.4.2) as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018:

7 had been matched and placed with prospective adopters,  
3 with Placement Orders were subject to ongoing family finding  
3 were linked with prospective adopters pending the match being presented to a panel  
6 were subject to a change in Care Plan.  
7 plans for adoption remain pending the conclusion of care proceedings

2.0.5 In this reporting period a total of 14 children have been matched with prospective adopters.

2.0.6 6 children, subject to Placement Order, where adoption continues to be the appropriate plan, were waiting to be matched at the end of the period. Of which 3 had a link identified pending the match being presented to Adoption Panel.

## 2.2 Placements of children

2.2.2 There were 2 sibling groups placed for adoption during this period.

2.2.3 1 child placed had significant needs.

2.2.4 3 children were placed in Foster for Adoption/early permanence placements.

### **2.3. Type of Adoption Placement**

- 2.3.1 Of the 14 children matched in this period, 12 were matched with prospective adopters approved by CBC. 2 were matched with prospective adopters approved by other agencies.
- 2.3.2 3 children were placed in Fostering for Adoption/early permanence placements approved by CBC.

### **2.4 Ethnicity of children placed for adoption**

- 2.4.1 All 14 children matched for adoption were recorded as White British.

### **2.5. Ages of children placed for adoption**

- 2.5.1 Of the 14 children matched for adoption by Central Bedfordshire, 6 were aged under 1 year, 1 was 1yr, 5 were between 2-4 years and 2 children were 6yrs +.

All 3 children placed in Foster for adoption placements were under 6 months old upon placement.

### **2.6 Gender of children placed for adoption**

- 2.6.1 Of the 14 children matched for adoption by Central Bedfordshire, 11 were male and 3 were female.

### **2.7 Adoption Orders**

- 2.7.1 12 Adoption Orders were granted during the period.
- 2.7.2 The Adoption Orders granted included 3 siblings groups and 6 single children.
- 2.7.3 4 were male and 8 were female.
- 2.7.4 1 child was adopted by her foster carers.
- 2.7.5 At the end of the reporting period 12 children were placed for adoption, pending the adoption order. It is anticipated that these will be granted in 2018/19 increasing the comparative number of adoption orders expected to be granted from this reporting period.

## **Section 3:**

### **Adopters**

#### **3.0 The work of the Adoption and Permanence Support Team**

- 3.0.1 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, placements for siblings and children with significant needs.

- 3.0.2. The Adoption service strive to ensure that all children are placed with adoptive families who can meet all their identified needs including, ethnicity, culture and religion where possible. A match with adopters who are able to meet most of the child's identified needs will be considered to avoid delay.
- 3.0.3 CBC offer timely information, advice and counselling to members of the public enquiring about adoption and access to records via a duty service
- 3.0.4 Children and families are provided with information explaining adoption support and information is readily available on the council website.

### **3.1 Recruitment of Adopters**

- 3.1.1 In order to ensure a range of adopters are recruited a range of recruitment activity has taken place during the year.
- 3.1.2 In order to ensure a range of adopters are recruited a blended marketing approach of traditional and digital marketing was utilised to attract a diverse range of people and families to consider adoption for Central Bedfordshire Council.

This has included:

- Regular information evenings
  - Local news webpage takeovers
  - Radio advertising
  - Facebook advertising
  - Regular advertising in electronic newsletters across community groups, staff groups and through our local doctors and dentist surgeries
  - Newspaper advertising.
- 3.1.3 The Service previously worked with First4Adoption to recruit adopters for a specific child which was successful, and he is now placed with his prospective adopters. As part of National Adoption Week, the service worked with First4Adoption to provide an update on his progress to launch National Adoption Week and raise the awareness of adoption.

The strategy continued with a targeted approach to provide a clear picture of the needs of Central Bedfordshire with adverts specifically targeting those who would consider:

- Foster for adoption
  - Sibling groups
  - Children with additional or more complex needs.
- 3.1.4 A clear message from the Department of Education has been the need for adoption agencies to recruit from a wider and more diverse pool of prospective adoptive parents. The Adoption Service has focused on recruiting the right adopters to provide loving families for the children who are waiting, and this has enabled more children from Central Bedfordshire to be placed in their own adoptive placements whilst providing placements for children from other Local Authorities. Where this is not possible the service uses a range of other placements from Voluntary Adoption Agencies and other Local Authorities to ensure choice and avoid delay for children. Due to this approach only 2 children were placed in external placements (interagency).

3.1.5. The target for approval of adopters during this period was 20 approved households. This anticipated the demand from children subject to placement orders and the pool of adopters already available for matching.

### **3.2 The Assessment Process: enquiries; assessments; and, approvals**

3.2.1 Prospective adopter assessments are carried out in accordance with the 2011 National Minimum Standards for Adoption and the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 and the Statutory Guidance for Adoption published in July 2013. The two-stage process for adopters, which was introduced as part of the Government's Adoption Reform Agenda, remains to be implemented.

3.2.1 136 enquiries were received in this period of which 13 were in regard to step parent adoption.

3.2.2 18 recommendations for approval were presented to panel and approved by the Agency Decision Maker.

3.2.3 1 application was ended as the required checks and references did not meet Adoption regulations and standards. 1 application withdrew due a change in their personal circumstances.

3.2.4 10 CBC approved adoptive families have provided placements for 17 children from other Local Authorities within this reporting period.

3.2.5 No approvals were terminated

3.2.6 As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, Central Bedfordshire had 9 approved prospective adoptive families waiting, of which 5 were linked with a child pending the match being presented to panel.

3.2.7 11 prospective adopter applications were in progress – 4 in Stage 1 and 7 in Stage 2.

### **3.3 Ethnicity of adopters**

3.3.1 14 approved households were White British, 4 were of mixed ethnicity couples including White British/Indian and White British/European

### **3.4 Post approval support**

3.4.1 All approved adopters are supported by a Social Worker from the Adoption Team from approval, through the process of matching and placement of a child, to the application and granting of an Adoption Order.

3.4.2 Post Adoption Order, adoptive families can continue to access support and/or request an assessment of their additional support needs via the Adoption Team.

3.4.3 Approved prospective adopters must be reviewed annually if not matched or linked with a child. There is no requirement for the review to be presented to the Adoption Panel unless the agency consider that approval is no longer appropriate.

3.4.4 3 Annual Reviews were completed within this period with approval continuing to be appropriate.

### 3.5 Training for adopters

3.5.1 Social Workers from the Adoption service provide the preparation training for prospective adopters.

3.5.2 Training is accessed in Stage one of the assessment process and is provided in three modules:

- **The Process** – information about the assessment process and matching.
- **The Child** – Explores the experiences and trauma of children placed for adoption
- **Adoption for Life** – Explores a child's life story and Adoption Support

3.5.3 A Foster for Adoption module is available for applicants wanting to consider providing this type of placement.

3.5.4 Adopters also have access to the full annual training programme offered by CBC. This annual programme is available to both prospective adopters and adoptive parents for adoption support.

## Section 4:

### Adoption support services

A local authority must provide a range of adoption support services under Section 3(1) of the Children and Families Act 2014. The Adoption Support Regulations 2005 (ASR) set out the detail of such provisions. In summary these include

- Counselling, advice and information;
- Therapeutic services;
- Financial support;
- Services to ensure discussion of matters relating to adoption;
- Services to ensure the continuation of adoptive relationship;
- Assistance in relation to arrangements for contact.

The Statutory Guidance on Adoption (2013) provides greater clarity for the provision of Adoption Support and the specific role of the Adoption Support Services Advisor (ASSA) when carrying out duties.

The Adoption Support (Amendment) Regulations 2014 make it the duty of a local authority to provide information about adoption support and make further provision to provide the following information about adoption support services;

- The Adoption Passport
- Availability of assessments for adoption support,
- Information on priority school admission for looked after children and those placed for adoption,

- Details of where to find information on statutory adoption pay and adoption leave,
- Information about the prospective adopter's right to receive the child's permanence report including medical adviser's report on the health of the child and the complaints procedures.

#### 4.0 Post Adoption Support to Families

- 4.0.1 The Adoption and Children Act 2002 established the right of adopted families to request an assessment of their adoption support needs. To inform people about support available we have a booklet called 'Adoption Support Services in Central Bedfordshire'. Also available is a 'Children's Guide to Adoption Support', both can be downloaded from the Council website.
- 4.0.2 In this period the service had 25 new enquiries for adoption support and completed 18 adoption support assessments, each either requiring advice and support only, signposting to universal services or a prescribed service such as therapy or counselling
- 4.0.3 The families either self-refer or are referred via other agencies such as school or health services. In such instances the team either provides direct social work support or where a specific need is identified, a specialist service may be commissioned.
- 4.0.4 The Adoption Support Fund has remained available throughout this year to provide therapeutic support and intervention for adopted children and their family. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 the Department for Education extended the criteria for applications to include Intercountry Adoptions (once the placement has been made and the child is in England) and for Special Guardians who care for children who were previously looked after. This has continued in the annual reporting period.
- 4.0.5 National demand for the fund continued to grow and in recognition of this additional funding was made available. Whilst the funding increased the Minister of State for Children and Families confirmed, in November 2017, that the existing fair access limits remain in place – up to £2,500.00 for specialist assessments and up to £5,000.00 for therapy
- 4.0.6 A small number of children may require an exemption to the Fair Access Limit and funding will be available for such children in exceptional circumstances. In such cases funding would be available but only where the Local Authority agree to 'match' funding.
- 4.0.7 The scope for access to the fund has remained unchanged.
- 4.0.8 13 applications for funding were approved providing a fund total of £46,570.00 to provide a therapeutic intervention to children and families.
- 4.0.9 The agency maintains a mailing list of adoptive families to send newsletters, invitations to support groups, family activity days and the annual training programme.
- 4.0.10 Each child placed for adoption has a contact plan in relation to post adoption contact with their birth family. Birth family includes birth parents, siblings, grandparents and any other significant family member. The service currently manages 123 individual arrangements of post adoption contact.
- 4.0.11 Financial support for adopters continues to be available to meet the needs of the child and the circumstances of adopters.

#### 4.1 Services to Adopted Adults and Birth Relatives

- 4.1.1 Social Workers provide an advice and counselling service to adopted adults seeking access to their birth records. For all residents of CBC an access to records counselling service is offered. Information is also provided to other councils who are supporting adopted adults living in their area who were adopted through Bedfordshire.
- 4.1.2 An initial counselling interview is offered to those seeking birth records and work is undertaken to locate records held by other Adoption Agencies. Counselling and advice during tracing, an intermediary service and pre and post reunion support are also available to adopted adults and their birth relatives.
- 4.1.3 10 requests for access to adoption information were received in this reporting period.
- 4.1.4 Birth relatives or those with a prescribed relationship, seeking to make contact with adopted adults are offered information and advice. An intermediary service can be offered where appropriate and if there is capacity in the service.

#### 4.2 Disrupted adoptions

- 4.2.1 Disruption in prospective adoption placements refers to placements that have ended prior to an adoption order being granted.
- 4.2.2 No placements have experienced a disruption in this reporting period, which continues a low disruption rate for a second year running.

### Section 5:

#### Other activities

##### 5.0 Inter-Country and non-agency adoption

- 5.0.1 1 enquiry was received relating to Intercountry adoption.
- 5.0.2 Non-Agency Adoption
- 13 enquiries regarding step parent adoption were received and 1 progressed to a notification of intention to adopt.
  - 1 section 44 application was received, and assessment progressed.

##### 5.1 Regional Adoption Agency

- 5.1.1 CBC are members of the Central East Partnership with other Local Authorities. In addition, the partnership includes two local Voluntary Adoption Agencies:
- AdoptionPlus
  - St. Francis Children's Society

5.1.2. The Regional Adoption Agency has remained in the design and development phase during this reporting period. Practitioner groups and a matching project have met on a regular basis to share learning, good practice and support matching for children within the region.

## 5.2 Membership

5.2.1 The agency has continued its membership with New Family Social, a national charity supporting adopters and foster carers from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans-gender community. The organisation provides social events, a website and membership events for carers, and support and advice to adoption agencies.

5.2.2 Membership with Adoption UK has continued.

## 5.3 Commissioned services: Independent birth family counselling

5.3.1 The agency provides an Independent Birth Family Counselling and support service. This service is provided by Adoption Plus Limited on behalf of Central Bedfordshire Council. Adoption Plus is an independent adoption support agency.

5.3.2 The aim of the service is to provide birth relatives of children who might be/are adopted an opportunity for independent counselling support. Although the agency are involved in commissioning this service, Adoption Plus will undertake all counselling work with the birth family members which will be confidential unless concerns arise about the safety or welfare of a child.

5.3.3 Ongoing contract reviews are held each quarter to ensure there is maximum support available for those accessing the service and to ensure optimum take up by birth parents.

5.3.4 21 referrals were made to the service.

5.3.5 27 birth relatives used the service

## 5.4 The Adoption Scorecard

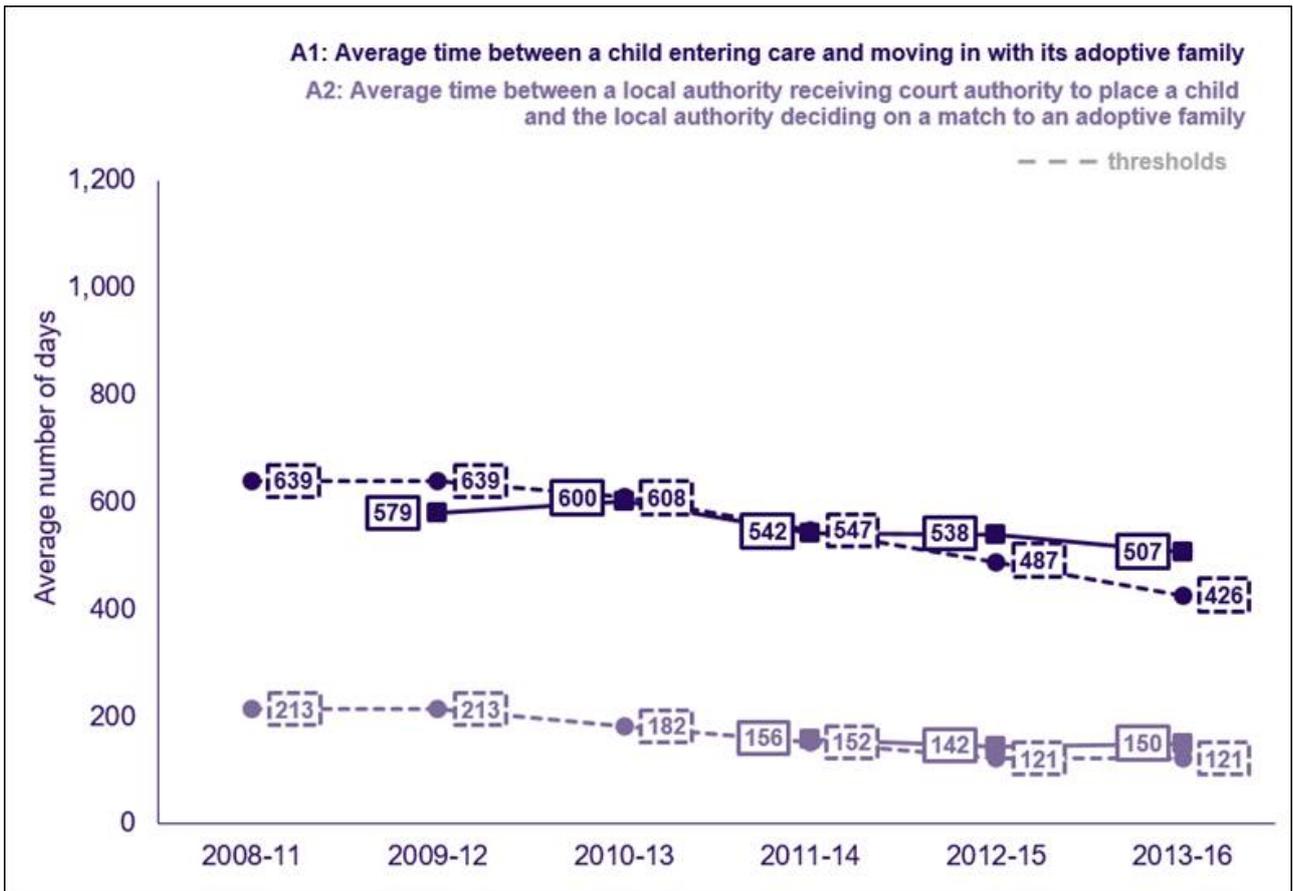
5.4.1 In 2012 the Department for Education published 'An Action Plan for Adoption: Tackling Delay' in which they outlined the intention to publish Adoption Scorecards for each council outlining performance in relation to numbers and timeliness of adoptions. This introduced a number of key indicators to measure local authority performance in relation to achieving permanence for children. The scorecard details a 3-year average for:

- A1. Average time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family
- A2. Average time between the council receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family
- A3. Children who wait less than 16 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (number and %)

5.4.2. Performance:

**A1.** 3-year average (2013-2016) for time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family (days) was 507 days, showing a reduction of 31 days from the previous performance.

This is lower than the England/National average for the same period which was 558 days. (Nationally, the lowest rate was 325 days and the highest was 872 days)

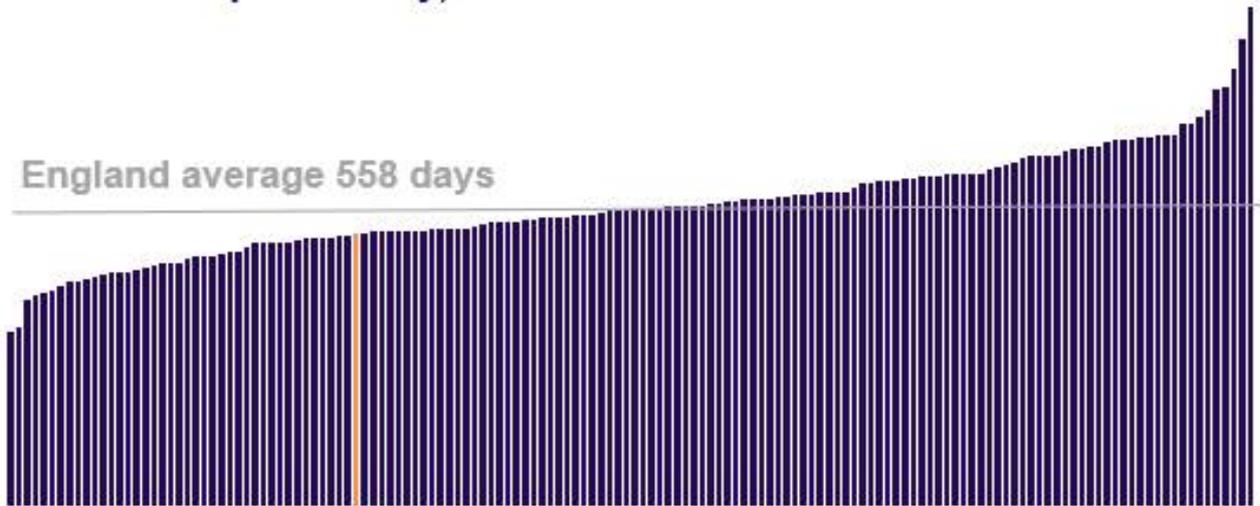


**A2.** 3 year average time between a local Authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family was 150 days, showing an increase of 8 days from the previous performance.

This is lower than the reported England/National figure of 226 days for the same period. (Nationally, the lowest rate was 62 days and the highest was 413 days)

**A1: Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, 2013-16**

England average 558 days



**A3.** 60% of Central Bedfordshire Children with a placement order wait less than 16 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family. The England/National average of 55% shows that Central Bedfordshire is performing slightly better than the England average.

**A2: Average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family, 2013-16**

England average 226 days



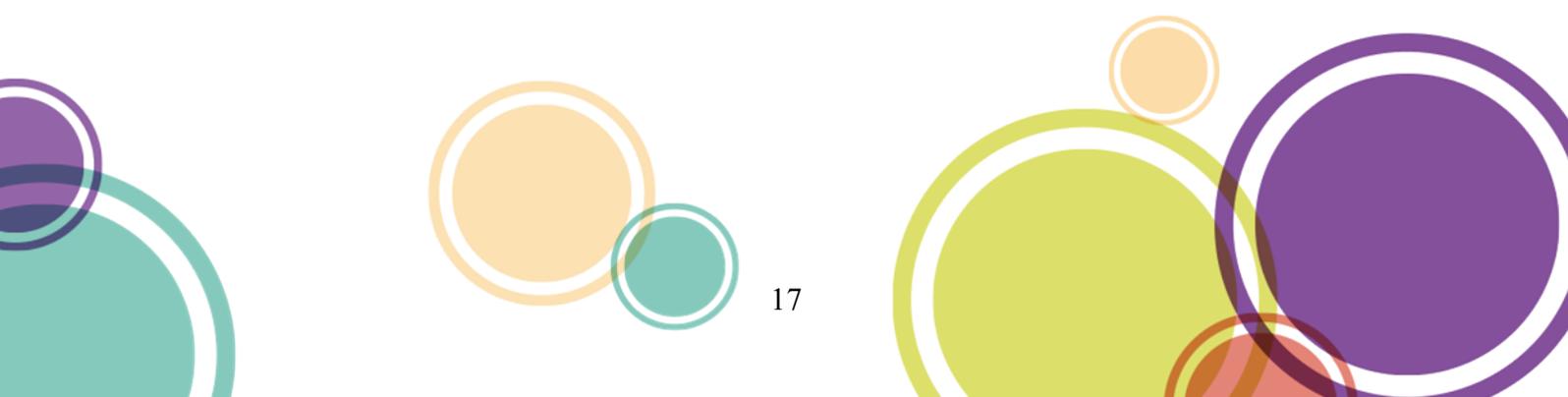
## Section 6:

### Service Developments in 2018/19

- 6.0.1 Recruit 20 adopters and increase the pool of adopters to meet the needs of all children with a plan for adoption. Continue to work in partnership with regional partners to widen the placement choice for children.
- 6.0.2 To expand the use of Early Permanence placements for children by maintaining a robust parallel planning process. The option of early permanence placements will continue to be routinely considered within the parallel planning process and the Adoption service will continue to work closely with childcare colleagues to achieve this.
- 6.0.3 Continue to work in partnership with regional partners to develop the Regional Adoption Agency.

### Report written by:

Nickie Phillips  
Corporate Parenting Service - Adoption Practice and Registered Manager  
Telephone: 0300 300 8090



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

Për Informacion

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**Produced by Central Bedfordshire Council**

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## Central Bedfordshire Council

Corporate Parenting Panel

Thursday 26 July 2018

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### Adoption Recruitment Strategy 2018 - 2019

Report of:

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

Responsible Director(s):

Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services,  
([sue.harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:sue.harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

**This report relates to a decision that is Non-Key**

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### Purpose of this report

1. This Recruitment Strategy outlines the target for 2018 – 2019, our current need and the successes and learning we have found through our analysis of the last financial year's activities. It gives an overview of our key marketing initiatives and targeted campaigns we will be undertaking for the next financial year (April 2018 to March 2019).

### RECOMMENDATIONS

**The Committee is asked to:**

1. Consider and note appendix; Adoption Recruitment Strategy 2018 – 2019.

### Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

2. This report has not been to or planned to go to Overview and Scrutiny as no recommendations/decisions are required. Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to consider and note the Adoption Recruitment Strategy.

### Issues

3. National data from the Adoption Leadership Board (ALB) shows that the number of approved adopters has declined during the last year. ALB Chair, Andrew Christie, reports "this reinforces the importance of increasing adopter recruitment and support, especially for harder to place children".

4. In support of this report, this recruitment strategy outlines the target for 2018 – 2019 and the current need for prospective adopters. It also gives an overview of the key marketing initiatives and targeted campaigns the Service will be undertaking this year.

### **Council Priorities**

5. The Adoption Recruitment Strategy meets the following Council priorities:
  - Enhancing Central Bedfordshire
  - Improving education and skills
  - Protecting the vulnerable; improving wellbeing
  - Creating stronger communities
  - A more efficient and responsive Council.

### **Corporate Implications**

6. Legal, financial and equalities implications were requested, feedback can be found below.

### **Legal Implications**

7. Reviewed by Jennifer Lee and suggested amendments made within report, see appendix.

### **Financial and Risk Implications**

8. Reviewed by Denis Galvin, no issues from a finance perspective.

### **Equalities Implications**

9. Reviewed by Clare Harding:
10. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The report highlights the steps that are taken to recruit adopters from diverse backgrounds in order to meet the needs of children being considered for adoption.

### **Conclusion and next Steps**

11. If approved the strategy will shape the monthly working plan for the Marketing, Recruitment and Training Officer to recruit adopters for the Corporate Parenting Service in Central Bedfordshire Council.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A:**

Adoption Recruitment Strategy 2018 – 2019.

The following Appendix is attached/ provided through an electronic link:

<https://centralbedfordshire.box.com/s/reylrnpdc8f0n6asesty2wxig55gwlvf>

### **Background Papers**

None

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**Adopt**  
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to decide?



**great**  
prospects

Appendix A

# Recruitment strategy

Adoption Service

1 April 2018 - 31 March 2019

## Contents

**A great place to live and work.**



	Page
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2 Successes within the Service</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1) Ofsted inspection	3
2.2) Joint work with First4Adoption	3
<b>3 Needs analysis and evaluation of activities in 2017 – 2018</b>	<b>4</b>
3.1) Needs analysis	4
3.2) Evaluation of activities in 2017 – 2018	5
<b>4 Target and current need for the year ahead</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>5 Recommended marketing and recruitment plan for the year ahead</b>	<b>6</b>
5.1) Website	6
5.2) Information evenings	7
5.3) Press	7
5.4) Net Natives contract for multiple advertising campaigns	7
5.5) Lamppost banners	8
5.6) Social media	8
5.7) Newsletters and information sharing	9
5.8) Admobile advertising	9
<b>6 Training and support</b>	<b>10</b>
6.1) Training	10
6.2) Social events	10
6.3) Support groups and drop ins	11
6.4) Buddy scheme	11
6.5) Communication	11
6.6) Adoption UK	11
6.7) New Family Social	11
<b>7 Other areas for consideration</b>	<b>12</b>
7.1) Update of literature	12
7.2) Regional Adoption Agency	12
<b>8 Review of strategy</b>	<b>12</b>

1. Introduction



National data from the Adoption Leadership Board (ALB) shows that the number of approved adopters has declined during the last year. ALB Chair, Andrew Christie, reports “this reinforces the importance of increasing adopter recruitment and support, especially for harder to place children”.

In support of this report, this recruitment strategy outlines the target for 2018 – 2019 and the current need for prospective adopters. It also gives an overview of the key marketing initiatives and targeted campaigns the Service will be undertaking this year.

## **2. Successes within the Service**

### **2.1) Ofsted inspection**

In June 2017 the Service was inspected by Ofsted as part of the ‘Child in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers Inspection’. Central Bedfordshire Children’s Service achieved an overall outcome of ‘Good’ and the graded judgement for adoption performance ‘Good’. This was a great achievement for the Service with Ofsted making positive references to the recruitment and training of adopters:

‘Adoption and Fostering Services are good, and effective recruitment, training and support arrangements are in place.’

‘A programme of training has been used to raise awareness of the Prevent duty, and good use is made of the train the trainer programmes to maximise impact and take up.’

‘Recruitment and preparation of adopters are effective.’

‘Staff respond promptly to enquiries about adoption. Historical delay in the first stage of the assessment has now been addressed, and newly approved adopters are satisfied with the time take for assessment.’

‘There has been a strong focus on seeking to recruit prospective adopters for fostering for adoption, which is discussed as part of the assessment.’

### **2.2). Joint work with First4Adoption**

The Service was invited to work with First4Adoption (National Adoption Information Service in England) to assist with launching their National campaign - National Adoption Week. The previous year the Service worked with First4Adoption to find an adoptive family for a Central Bedfordshire child (Alfie) which was a great success and Alfie was successfully matched with his adopters who responded to the National campaign.

The Service and First4Adoption worked closely with Alfie’s family to produce a range of articles, social media posts and a good news story to share with national and local media to successfully launch National Adoption Week.





### 3. Needs analysis and evaluation of activities in 2017 – 2018

#### 3.1) Needs analysis

Over the last year, 18 households were recommended for approval, 14 households were White British, and 4 couples were of mixed ethnicity including White British/Indian and White British European.

The number approved was 2 less than the set target of 20, the reasons for this were:

- One application not meeting Adoption Regulations and Standards
- One application withdrew due to a change in their personal circumstances.

14 children were considered for a match with prospective adopters:

- 12 children were matched with Central Bedfordshire adopters (3 of which were placed in fostering for adoption placements)
- All 14 children were White British, a reflection of the population of Central Bedfordshire that has a high White British population at 89.7%
- 2 children were matched with prospective adopters approved by other agencies, reasons for these placements were
  - No Central Bedfordshire adopters available who wished to adopt a single, older child
  - No Central Bedfordshire adopters available to adopt a child with consideration needed to locality and interrupted attachment.
- 6 children were aged under 1 year
- 1 child was aged 1 year
- 5 were between 2 – 4 years
- 2 children were 6 years plus
- 11 children were male
- 3 children were female.

26 children had a plan for adoption which saw an increase in activity as this was 8 more than the previous year.

### 3.2) Evaluation of activities in 2017 – 2018

The following is a highlight of performance for the last financial year which shows an increase in interest of adoption as well as step parent adoption:

Enquiries:	2017 – 2018	Comparison; Figures for 2016 - 2017
Adoption enquiries received	123	92
Step parent enquiries received	13	8
Approvals:		
Total number of approvals	18	17
Number of assessment in process:		
EoY Total number of households in stage 1	4	6
EoY Total number of households in stage 2	7	8

In order to ensure a range of adopters were recruited a blended marketing approach of traditional and digital marketing was utilised to attract a diverse range of people and families to consider adoption for Central Bedfordshire Council.

The following shows the most popular sources of initial contact which encouraged people to come forward to find out more about adoption:

Source:	Total number of initial contacts
Website	33
Net Natives; Facebook campaign	27
Telephone; no marketing source identified	21
Email; no marketing source identified	20
Step parent adoption query	8
No marketing stated	6
Google search to website	4
Word of mouth; Bedford Borough	3
Attended an information evening	2
Gov.uk website	2
Word of mouth; friend	2
Word of mouth; another Local Authority	2
Website through Adoption UK	1
Word of mouth; not specified	1
Voluntary child care expo	1
Radio advert	1

### 4. Target and current need for the year ahead



This strategy looks to recruit those people and families from within 20 miles of Central Bedfordshire. It also aims to support the Services' priorities by recruiting a diverse pool of adopters.

The target for 2018 – 2019 is to recruit 20 adopters from a range of backgrounds and ethnicities who are willing to consider:

- Foster for adoption (this will be a priority for the year ahead)
- Siblings
- Older single children
- Children with additional needs.

## 5. Recommended marketing and recruitment plan for the year ahead

### 5.1) Website

The web pages have continued to see a high number of traffic through the adoption pages. This year has seen a rise in the number of views with 5,637 visits compared with 4,162 visits last year. This could be due to a number of factors such as increased activity on our Central Bedfordshire Council media channels e.g. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, increased digital marketing advertising through digital newsletters and the use of the free my google business listing.

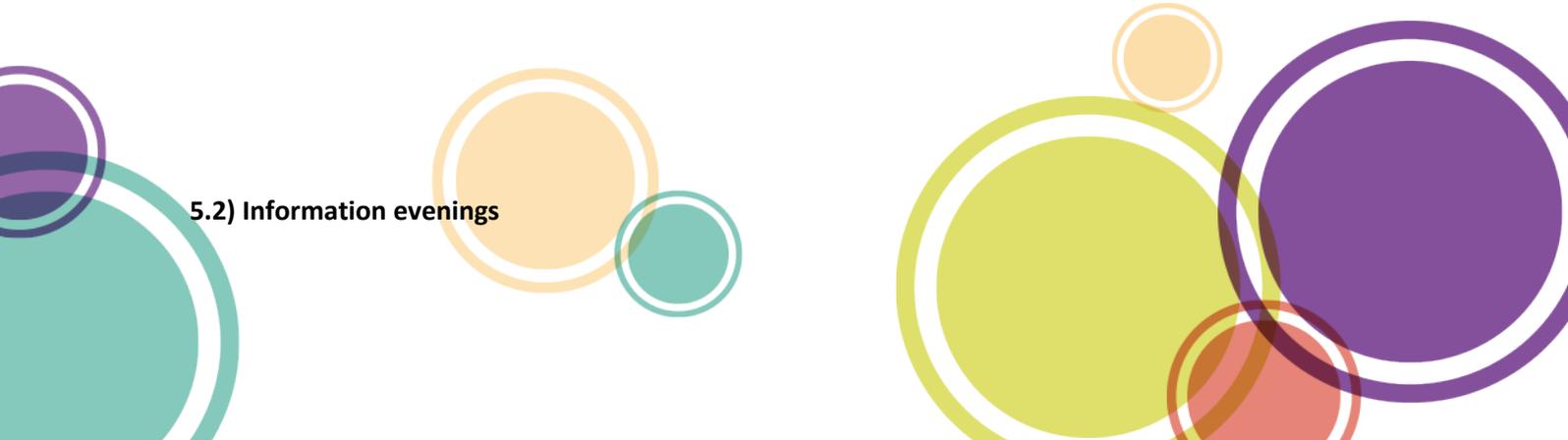
Some minor developments to the web pages will shortly be undertaken to include imagery and the Ofsted logo. Further developments will be completed this year to further improve the journey for our customers using our website pages.

The Service will work closely with the Website team to complete the following this year:

- The web content will be rewritten by using research into the customers journey and the UK's most popular search terms in relation to adoption. It will ensure that key phrases and words are included within the text to help our pages appear higher within google when a member of the public is searching for adoption in the Bedfordshire area. The new layout will help adopters get answers to their questions or queries quickly by having sections that are important to particular groups of people e.g. those interested in foster for adoption, those wishing to know more about step parent adoption etc
- Another area for consideration is more frequent use of marketing pages. These are used for advertising campaigns to encourage those interested in adoption to make an enquiry. The pages are created and made bespoke to each advertising campaign. This improves the enquirers journey to finding out the information they require. They are short and precise with the information regarding the particular campaign being advertised with an 'enquire now' call to action that asks for their name, email and telephone number. This enables the Service to have direct contact with the enquirer, provide them with information quickly and to be able to keep in touch.

The Service will continue to work closely with the Website team to ensure that the website's content is kept fresh, updated and engaging to continue to provide the best information to the public.

### 5.2) Information evenings



Information evenings are promoted within the Adoption web pages of the Central Bedfordshire website as well as the First4Adoption and New Family Social websites. Previously times and locations were not included to encourage those wishing to attend to call us first. This has been reviewed and full details, times and venues are now advertised to encourage those wishing to find out more about adoption to drop into an event. They continue to be well attended and received.

Information evenings will continue to be held one evening a month at a central location.

### **5.3) Press**

The Service has continued to keep in touch with local media to promote adoption and share good news and successes. This has included adopters being invited to local radio stations to talk about their experiences of adoption and why they would recommend those thinking about adoption to contact Central Bedfordshire to start their journey.

The Service will continue to work closely with the Communications Officer to produce press releases around National campaigns and times of celebration and successes such as National Adoption Week and LGBT Adoption and Fostering Week.

Part of this work will also include the use of the following:

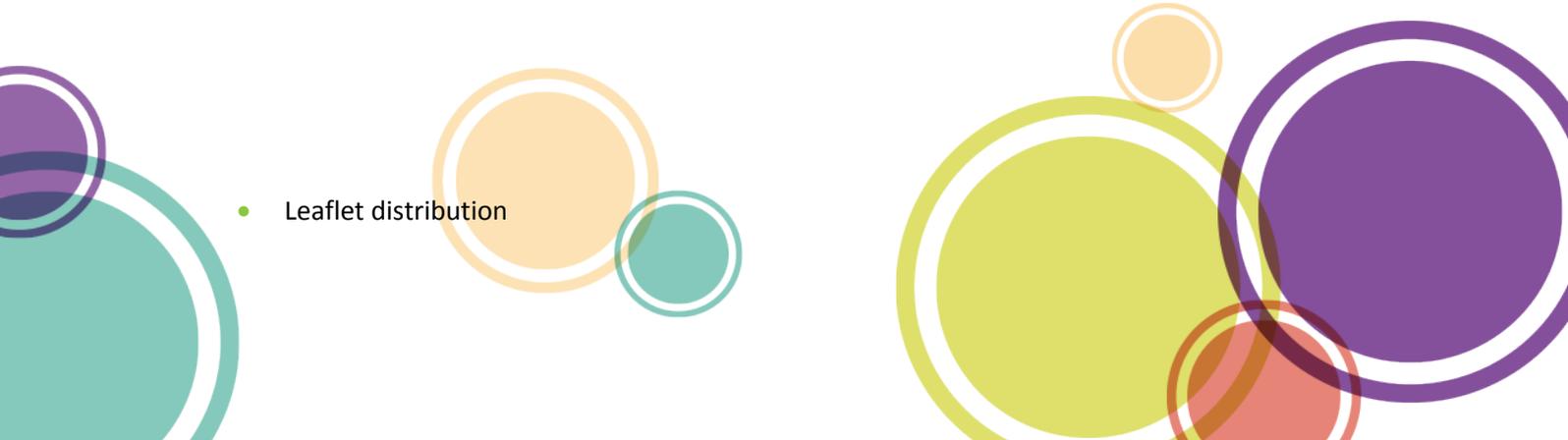
- Internal messaging through Staff Central (staff newsletter)
- Regular messaging to Central Bedfordshire residents through ebulletins
- Use of adopter's testimonies from a range of people and families.

### **5.4) Net Natives contract for multiple advertising campaigns**

At the end of 2017 Central Bedfordshire's digital advertising contract with Net Natives came to an end and a procurement exercise was completed to source the best company for the future contract. Three companies with experience of adoption and fostering were invited to provide a quotation. Following the price and quality exercise Net Natives were successful in their bid and the Service will continue to work with them for the next two years (with the possibility of extending the contract for a further year if required). The contract has given the Service the opportunity to work with a company who have extensive and proven experience of successful digital marketing campaigns within adoption and fostering.

To reduce the number of external companies used, Net Natives will be running multiple campaigns for both adoption and fostering for the year ahead including the following adoption campaigns:

- Facebook advertising  
Two, four-week campaigns will be produced for Facebook. The adverts will run during proven successful times of the year – during and after National Adoption Week and in January when the general public look for new opportunities.
- Radio advertising  
Radio advertising will continue on Heart radio for one, four-week campaign which will be aired between April and May.

- Leaflet distribution
- 

Leaflet distribution will be completed between December and January to homes within Central Bedfordshire.

- Google Dynamic Words  
The Service will be trialling a new type of digital marketing this year, Google Dynamic Words. When someone searches terms, keywords or phrases closely related to adoption, Google uses them to generate a text advert to display to the user. This will then lead the member of the public to a marketing page and enquiry form regarding adoption for Central Bedfordshire.

### **5.5) Lamppost banners**

To raise brand awareness across Central Bedfordshire the Service will be installing new large-scale adoption posters in four different locations this year in the form of raised lamppost banners.

The banners will alternate between an adoption and fostering advert and will be installed in the following areas:

- High Street, Dunstable
- Lake Street, Leighton Buzzard
- West Street, Leighton Buzzard
- Town Centre, Biggleswade.

All of the above locations will either have a high footfall of slow moving traffic or are located close to supermarkets, town centres or areas with a high footfall of traffic or pedestrians.

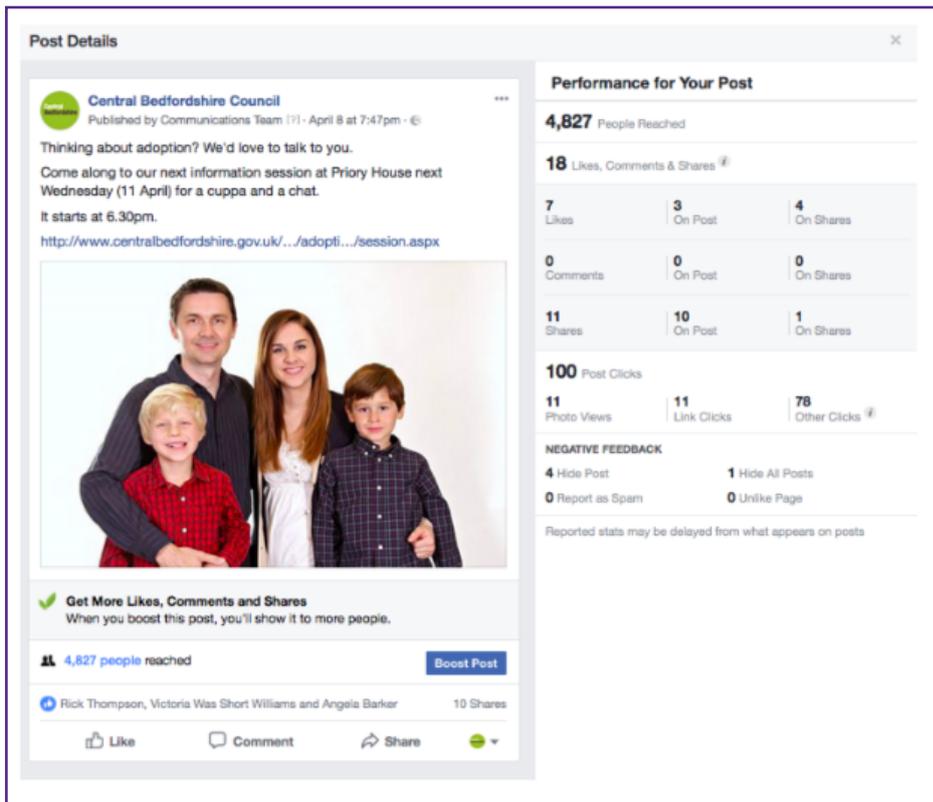
### **5.6) Social media**

Social media continues to be a positive, quick, responsive and free way of spreading messages and good news stories about adoption the public. The numbers of likes on both Central Bedfordshire Council's Facebook and Twitter pages has risen significantly and continue to be a great tool for advertising our adoption information evenings:

- Central Bedfordshire Council Facebook page  
The number of page likes has risen to 10,573 compared with 8,325 in April 2017
- Twitter has also been a vital tool with Central Bedfordshire's Let's Talk Central page hitting 11,100 followers
- There is also the capacity to extend our marketing through the Central Bedfordshire Instagram page that currently has 738 followers.



Posts on the above pages have proved to be very popular with increased activity, example below:



The Service will continue to work closely with the Communications Officer to post and tweet messages about adoption.

### 5.7) Newsletters and information sharing

With increased initial contacts coming through digital sources the Service will continue to work with local community groups and employers to access their electronic newsletters to include articles to promote adoption.

### 5.8) Admobile advertising

A new area of future advertising is admobile, a quick and non-intrusive advert shown on mobile telephones. The Service are able to build an advert and reach a local, targeted demographic through a scrolling banner advert.

The Service will review this type of advertising this year and utilise if cost effective.

## 6. Training and support

### 6.1) Training

A comprehensive training programme continues to be available to adopters in Central Bedfordshire. The training covers a range of key areas and within this year's programme the following areas have been reviewed and made available:

- Let's talk about adoption
  
- Foetal alcohol spectrum disorder.  
Current research estimates that at least one third of looked after children come into care with their parents having a history of alcohol misuse so a new course has been added to support adopters called working with foetal alcohol spectrum disorder.
  
- PACE training  
PACE training was provided for both adopters and foster carers in the last year which was well received. A specific PACE module will be made available for adopters this year which is facilitated by a member of the Adoption Team.
  
- Triple P Seminars  
The Parenting Service restructure meant that Triple P seminars for adopters were unable to be organised for the previous year. The Service has remained in contact with the Parenting Team who are now in a position to provide further training for adopters around:
  - Triple P 3 – 12 years Parenting
  - Triple P Teen Parenting.
  
- Free elearning for prospective adopters, First Steps, continues to be made available through First4Adoption covering areas such as:
  - Backgrounds of children and why they come into care
  - Attachment and its importance in adoption
  - Identity, heritage and life story work
  - Challenges and transition to new situations.

### 6.2) Social events

The Service continues to work closely with Bedford Borough's Adoption Service to provide two annual events. The events are very well attended and encourage networking and socialising amongst adopters and their children, they are:

- The Summer BBQ
- The Christmas Party.

The Service will also be looking to add further events for families including:

- Two family-based activity days for children and their adopters.  
The activities events again aim to encourage networking and also to promote fun within their relationships.
  
- Teddy Bears Picnic.  
To encourage networking amongst adopters with younger children.

### 6.3) Support groups and drop ins



Adoption drop in, support groups continue to be provided every three months on a Friday morning at Priory House to provide informal support to adopters. A member of the adoption team is present at the support group to answer any queries or worries adopters may have.

Letterbox drop ins are also provided to enable adopters to drop in and discuss any queries they have regarding letterbox.

#### **6.4) Buddy scheme**

Informal networking is encouraged by social workers within the team to strengthen support networks within the adopter's local area. A buddy is identified for prospective adopters who would benefit from peer support.

#### **6.5) Communication**

Email correspondence to adopters continues to ensure that adopters are aware of the range of events and training provided. Part of the communication to adopters include an Adoption Newsletter which is sent to adopters three times a year with articles of interest relating to adoption, adoption support, child development and activities etc.

#### **6.4) Adoption UK**

The Service promotes the use Adoption UK including holding a Local Authority membership.

Adopters are encouraged to become members of Adoption UK and as part of the Local Authority's membership, five free household memberships are provided each year (these are distributed to adopters who will benefit from the membership the most, free of charge). Local Authority membership includes services such as:

- Access to and features within Children Who Wait magazine, a family finding resource
- Access to training workshops
- Promotion of Service within the online database of agencies
- A helpline for staff and adopters
- Access to the Adoption UK library
- Access to online information e.g. articles, factsheets and recommended reading lists.

#### **6.5) New Family Social**

The Service continues to support LGBT adopters through membership to New Family Social (NFS) which includes services such as:

- Adopters who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender are able to join NFS for free and access unique peer support networks of other LGBT adopters
- Inclusion of the Service on the websites agency finder to enable LGBT potential adopters to choose an agency that will welcome and support their application
- Inclusion of the Service's information events on the NFS website
- Access to NFS children's profiles for family finding
- Agency discount to suggested training providers
- Regular magazine
- Access to free flyers and logos to promote adoption within the LGBT community.

## **7. Other areas for consideration**

### **7.1) Update of literature**

An area for improvement that will begin this year is to update the adoption literature. Research shows that there are benefits of marketing campaigns being targeted to appeal to people's intrinsic motivations. Research also shows improvement in initial contacts for information where local authorities have used promotional materials that explicitly recognise adoption as altruistic, often expressed as loving children and stressing the potential to making a difference to the lives of children. This is something the Service has adopted for marketing campaigns, but it was felt some supporting literature was outdated and could be updated to take into account the above research. There is also benefit in literature and marketing materials having a more personal tone which will be considered.

During the review it will also be a good opportunity to showcase that Central Bedfordshire is an Ofsted 'Good' Service with the 'Good' logo being added to our existing literature.

### **7.2) Regional Adoption Agency**

Central Bedfordshire continues to work alongside other Local Authorities as part of the Central East Partnership. The partnership includes Central Bedfordshire Council, Bedford Borough Council and Milton Keynes Council.

Central Bedfordshire Council became the project lead working with iMpower to design and develop the partnership and to continue to share learning and good practice.

The Service will continue to work with the Local Authorities to shape the future of the partnership.

## **8. Review of strategy**

As the needs of the Service change throughout the year ahead we will regularly review and adapt our strategy and monthly working plan to meet any challenges or where the needs of the Service change.



## Central Bedfordshire Council

Corporate Parenting Panel

Thursday, 26 July 2018

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### Work Programme

Advising Officer:

Sharon Griffin, Committee Services Officer  
(Sharon.griffin@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

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### 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

<b>2017/18 Municipal Year</b>	
15 January 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LAC Annual (Health) Report (NHS – Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group) (TMcD)</li> <li>• LAC Social Worker ‘Churn’ (RC)</li> <li>• Adoption Fund (NP)</li> <li>• Presentation on the PAUSE Programme (AC/GJ)</li> <li>• Action Plan arising from the Ofsted inspection</li> <li>• Work Programme (LM)</li> </ul>
5 March 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaving Care Housing (spotlight report) (AC/NS)</li> <li>• Spotlight Report on the PAUSE Programme (AC/GJ)</li> <li>• Children with 3 or more placement moves in 12 months (including data about outliers) (AC/GJ)</li> <li>• Fostering Service Q3 Report (A Craig)</li> <li>• Spotlight report on how the adoption process works and how people become adopters (GJ)</li> <li>• Work Programme (SG)</li> </ul>
30 April 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amendment to the Terms of Reference</li> <li>• Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose 2018/19 (ACraig)</li> <li>• Fostering Agency Statement of Purpose 2018/19 (ACraig)</li> <li>• Questionnaire for Foster Carers (ACraig)</li> <li>• Virtual School for LAC Interim Report (JE)</li> <li>• Work Programme (SG)</li> </ul>
26 July 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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)</li> <li>• CiCC and Participation Annual Report 2017/18 (KM) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Aspirations Wish List</li> <li>▪ How does the CiCC view Members</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Independent Reviewing Officers’ Annual Report 2017/18 (SK)</li> <li>• Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2018/19 (AC)</li> <li>• Fostering Agency Annual Report 2017/18 (AC)</li> <li>• Adoption Recruitment Strategy 2018/19 (NP)</li> <li>• Adoption Agency Annual Report 2017/18 (NP)</li> <li>• Work Programme (SG)</li> </ul>
3 September 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Spotlight Reports’ on the following issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ LAC with disabilities (KH)</li> <li>○ Unaccompanied asylum seekers as LAC (AC)</li> <li>○ The Virtual School (JE)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Update on the Regional Adoption Agency (Nickie Philips)</li> </ul>
12 November	

14 January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘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)</li> <li>• Permanency Planning for Children including peer review feedback</li> <li>• Leaving care offer</li> </ul>
25 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>

### Unscheduled reports:

1. LAC Annual (Health) Report (NHS – Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group) (TMcD)
  - a. LAC 6 Month (Health) Report (NHS – Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group) (TMcD)
  - b. CAMHS and data available
  - c. East of England Protocol
  - d. Update on the Health Passport for Looked After Children and how the Passport works would be given
2. The appointment of a lay member/parent and the appointment of a substitute elected Member to the Joint Adoption Panel (author to be determined).
3. Report on the average number of social worker changes and the top 10 children affected (taking into account planned changes)
4. Progress report on the WAY project ([May/June 2019](#))