



Central Bedfordshire Council
and Bedford Borough Council
working together

Adoption Agency

Annual Report

**For the period
2010/2011**



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FOREWORD

On 1st April 2009 the new unitary arrangement came into being. Bedfordshire County Council ceased to be, and two new councils emerged – Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils.

From this date, Adoption and Fostering became a shared service, hosted by Central Bedfordshire, but serving both of the new councils. Over the last year our focus has continued to be building on the positive work and outcomes achieved over the past three years for the children of both Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough. We believe that over the past year we have continued to provide an excellent service to those children, adults and families affected in some way by adoption.

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 annual report will be presented to the Central Bedfordshire Council Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2011 and a six monthly update report will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel.

June 2011

SECTION 1

1.0 - INTRODUCTION

- 1.0.1 This report describes the activity of Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils' Adoption Agencies during the period 1st April, 2010 to 31st March, 2011, noting their achievements, clarifying the remit and focus of their work and identifying recommendations for the development of the service.

1.1 STAFFING / SERVICE STRUCTURE

1.1.1 Staffing and Service Structure

- 1.1.2 The Adoption and Permanence Support Team is currently made up of the following staff as of 31st March 2011

- 1 x full time Team Manager
- 1 x full time Deputy Team Manager
- 4 x Senior Practitioners (three full time equivalent)
- 8 x Social Workers (full time equivalent)
- 3.5 x Social Work Assistants (three full time equivalent / .5 part time)
- 0.5 x Administrator for Letter-box contact
- 1 x Lifestory Senior Practitioner

There have been some changes during this period with a new Team Manager in post from September 2010, one full time social worker retiring and 3 social worker assistants on maternity leave.

1.2 THE ADOPTION PANEL

- 1.2.1 The Adoption Panel usually meets every month of the year, with an occasional extraordinary panel as and when required. There was one extra panel during 2010/2011. During this period the Panel met on 13 occasions.

1.3 ADOPTION PANEL MEMBERSHIP

- 1.3.1 As at 31st March 2011 the Adoption Panel membership was as follows:

Panel Chair	Independent
Independent	Adoptive Mother
Independent	Adoptive Father
Independent	Birth Parent of an Adopted Child
Social Work Member	Fostering Team Manager
Social Work Member	Head of Service for Looked After Children, Leaving & After Care & Asylum (Vice Chair) (BBC)
Educational Psychologist (Vice Chair)	Educational Psychologist (BBC)
Medical Adviser	Consultant Community Paediatrician

Elected Member	Central Bedfordshire Council
Independent	Adopted Person
Elected Member	BBC - Vacancy

1.3.2 In attendance but non voting members are:

Professional Adviser	
Panel Secretary	

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

1.3.4 As from 1st April 2009, the Adoption Panel became a Joint Adoption Panel shared between the two new unitary authorities – Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils. This means that from 1st April 2009 there were vacancies for two elected members on the Panel, one from each new unitary authority. There remains a vacancy for an elected member for Bedford Borough Council.

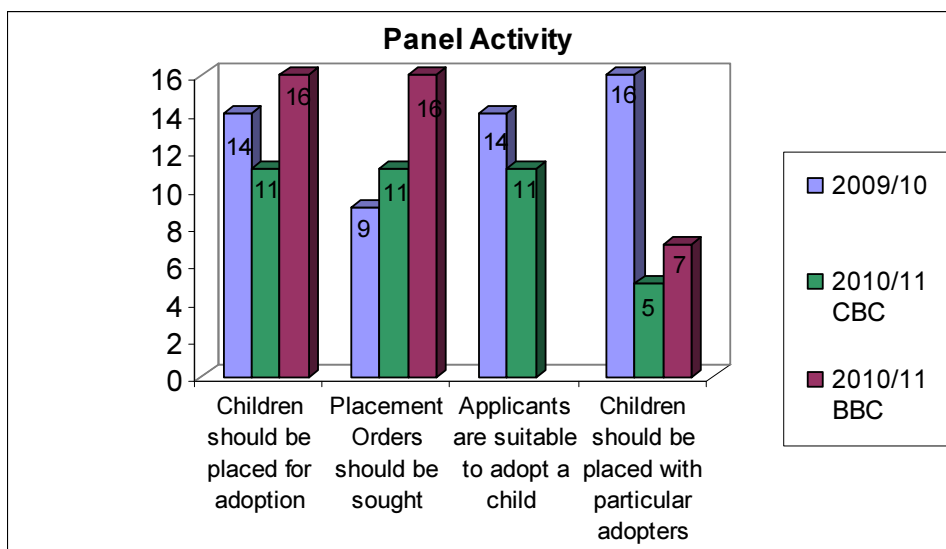
1.4 PANEL ACTIVITY

1.4.1 In 2010/2011 the Adoption Panel met 13 times and recommended that 27 children should be placed for adoption. Of these 11 were from Central Bedfordshire and 16 from Bedford Borough. This compares to 14 children in 2009/10 and represents a significant increase. The Panel also recommended that Placement Orders should be sought in relation to 27 children. Of these 11 were from Central Bedfordshire and 16 were from Bedford Borough. This compares to 9 in 2009/10.

1.4.2 In relation to approvals, the Panel recommended that 11 households were suitable to adopt a child (of these applicants, all attended the panel). This compares to 14 households in 2009/10.

1.4.3 In terms of matching, the panel recommended that 12 children should be placed with particular adopters. Of these 5 were from Central Bedfordshire and 7 from Bedford Borough. This compares to 16 children in 2009/10.

1.4.4 In addition to this, one child was placed for adoption with existing foster carers.



1.5 PANEL TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

1.5.1 Over the past 12 months, the following training has been provided to the Panel Members:

April 2010	Attachment Style Interviews (Bitesize)
May 2010	Siblings – Assessment and Planning (Full day training)
January 2011	Gypsy & Roma Cultures (Bitesize)
February 2011	Adoption Preparation Training (Bitesize)

1.5.2 The Panel Adviser has devised a comprehensive training programme for the coming year which will include a full day training on Safeguarding and Allegations in Fostering and Pre-Adoptive Placements in June 2011, a closer look at aspects of preparation training, support services post adoption and a workshop with the “Teenage Adoption Panel” in August.

1.6 PROVISION OF INFORMATION ON ADOPTION

1.6.1 Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils have a single point of contact to the service through a freephone line. A regularly updated information pack outlining the services available and procedures for prospective adopters is sent within 24 hours to those expressing an interest in adoption.

1.6.2 Bi-monthly Information Evenings are held by the Adoption and Permanence Support Team where current information on the needs of children requiring adoption and the process of assessment is given to those people who are interested in becoming prospective adopters. It is a legal requirement for the agency to ensure that prospective adopters are offered the opportunity to attend an Information Evening within 8 weeks of their enquiry to the team.

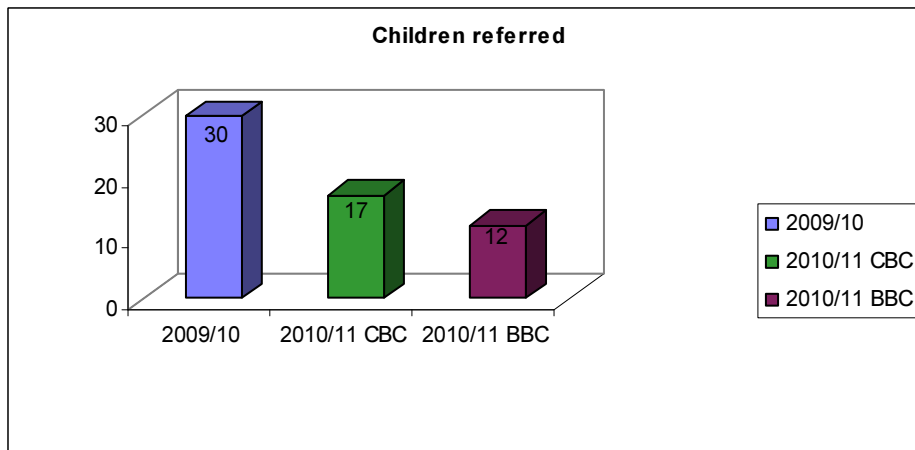
1.6.3 Preliminary counselling discussions in the form of an initial interview with prospective adopters are offered by Adoption Social Workers, supported by the Adoption Manager to enable enquirers to decide whether to pursue their enquiry. This counselling session also enables the Adoption Agency to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

1.6.4 Statistics in relation to enquiries received are included later in this report.

SECTION 2 – CHILDREN AND ADOPTION

2.0 – CHILDREN REFERRED FOR ADOPTION

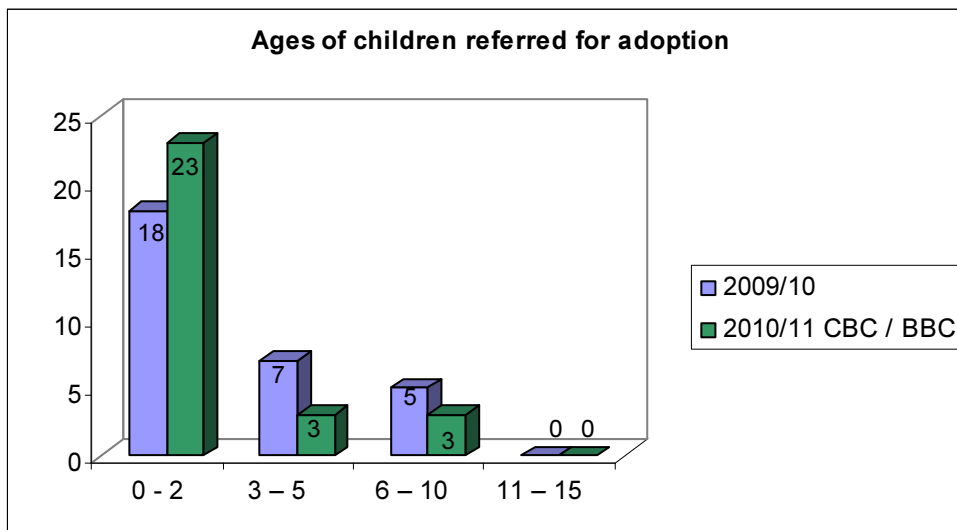
2.0.1 In 2010/11, there were 29 children referred to the service for adoption. Of these, 17 were from Central Bedfordshire and 12 from Bedford Borough. This compares to 30 children in 2009/2010 (22 of whom were from Central Bedfordshire and 8 from Bedford Borough).

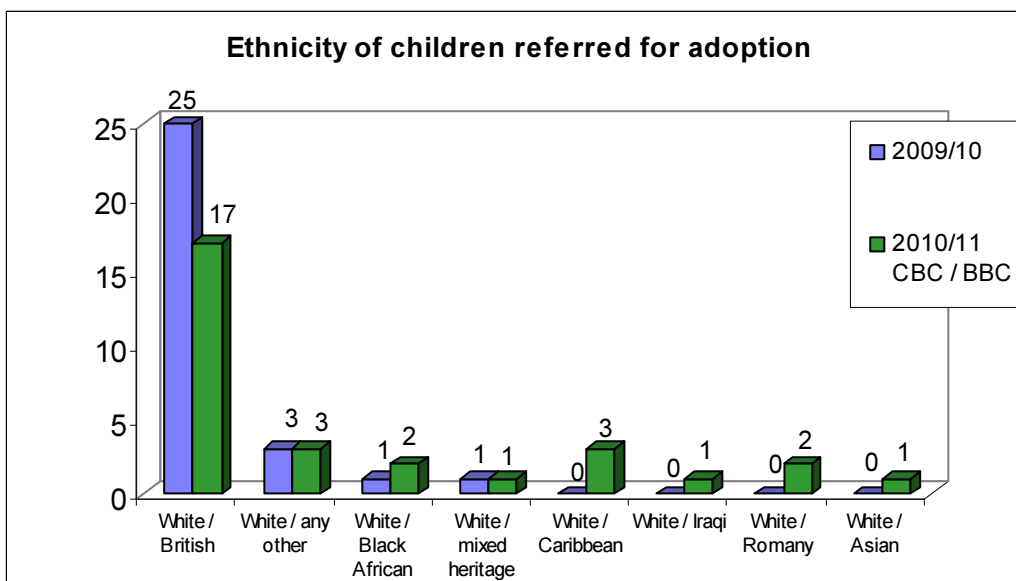
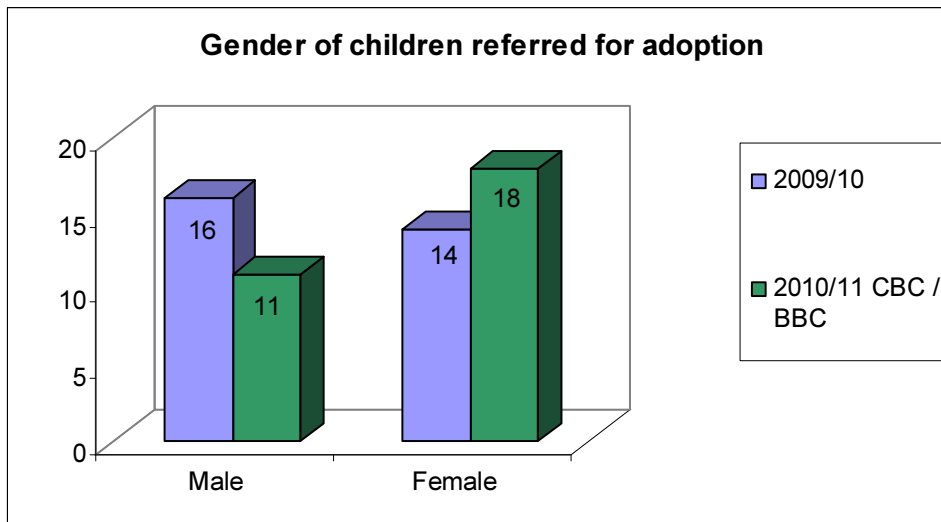


2.1 – AGE, GENDER AND ETHNICITY OF CHILDREN REFERRED FOR ADOPTION 2010/2011

2.1.1 As can be seen from the figures below, the majority of children referred for adoption were under the age of 5 years. This was also the case in 2009/2010. There were slightly more girls than boys referred to the service in 2010/2011 (18 girls and 11 boys). Of the 29 children referred for adoption 16 were from White / British, 3 were White / any other backgrounds, 2 children were White / Black African, 1 was White / mixed heritage - father's ethnicity unknown, 3 were White / Caribbean, 1 was White / Iraqi, 2 were White / Romany Traveller and 1 was White / Asian.

- 0 – 2 years - 23 children (15 girls and 8 boys)
- 3 – 5 years - 3 children (1 girl and 2 boys)
- 6 – 10 years - 3 children (2 girls and 1 boy)
- 11 – 15 years - 0 children



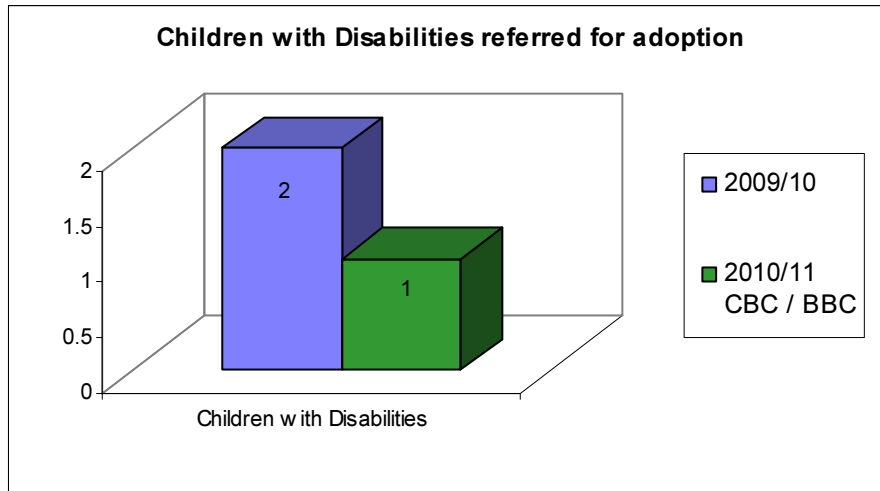


2.2 SIBLING GROUPS OF CHILDREN REFERRED FOR ADOPTION

2.2.1 The service received referrals for 8 sibling groups during the year 2010/2011. This compares to 7 sibling groups in 2009/2010. Placing large sibling groups together can be challenging, especially when the group contains older children.



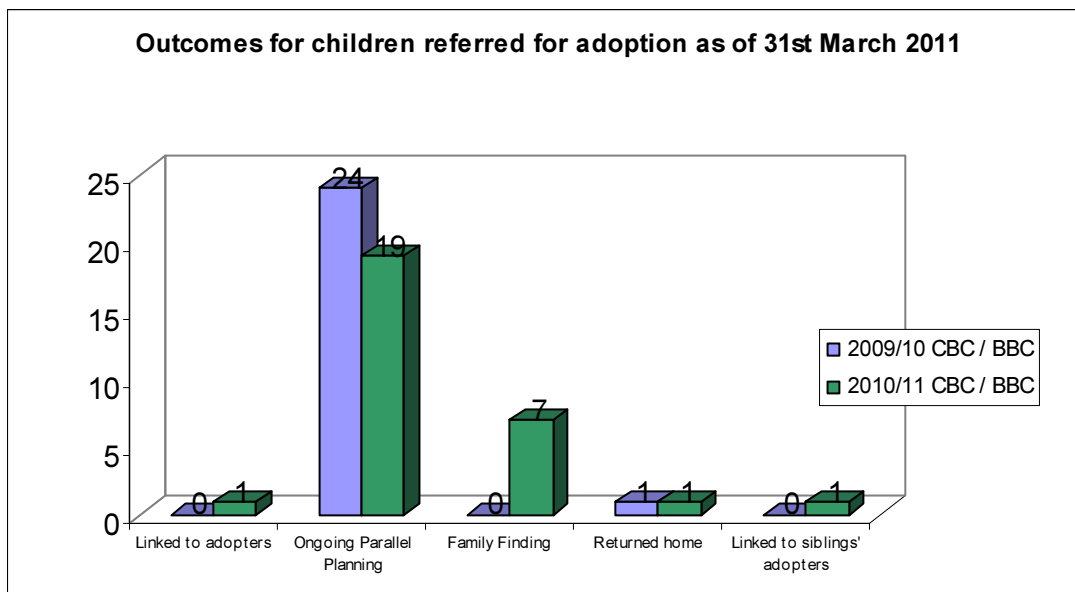
2.3 – CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES REFERRED FOR ADOPTION IN 2010/2011



2.3.1 The service received 1 referral for a child with a disability during 2010/2011. This was a slight decrease in the figures from 2009/2010, when there were 2 referrals received for children with disabilities.

2.4 OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN REFERRED FOR ADOPTION

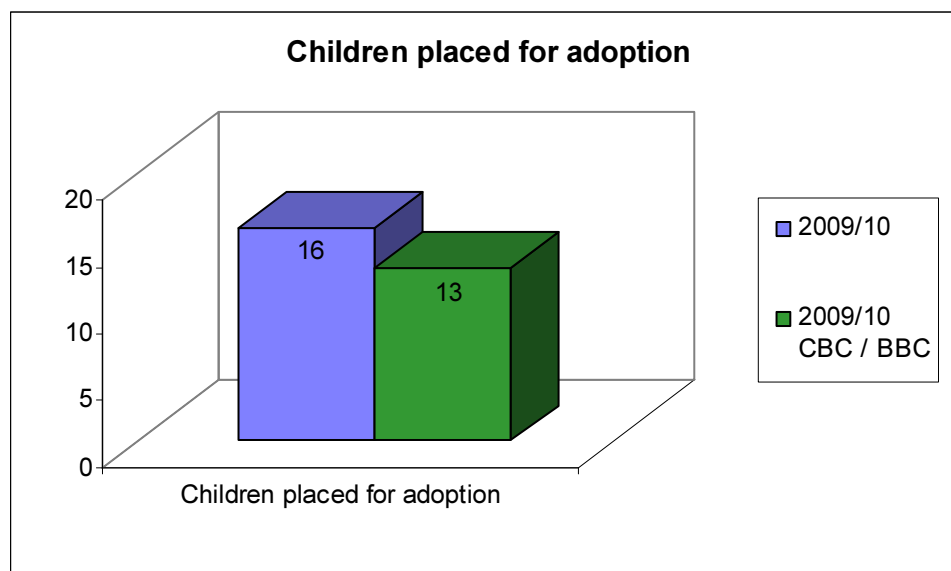
2.4.1 Of the 29 children referred for possible adoption in 2010/2011, only 1 was placed for adoption by March 2011. 1 child was returned home to her birth parents, 1 child's siblings' adopters were in the process of being re-assessed as prospective carers for her. In the case of 7 children the team were actively family finding as of 31st March 2011 and as at the time of writing in June 2011, 7 have already been "matched". The remaining 19 children were still subject to care proceedings as at 31st March 2011. Permanence planning was in place with potential adopters beginning to be identified in order to expedite placements once Placement Orders were granted.



- 2.4.2 In order to avoid case drift for children, social workers are asked to refer children for family finding when adoption is a possible outcome for that child. This does not mean that all children referred will subsequently be adopted, but ensures that robust planning is considered as part of a child's care plan. In many cases, children safely return to their families or are placed with extended family members under other Orders, such as Special Guardianship.
- 2.4.3 In the year 2010/2011 we have seen a large number of children where Care Proceedings have taken much longer than expected, often due to viability assessments of family members taking place consecutively.

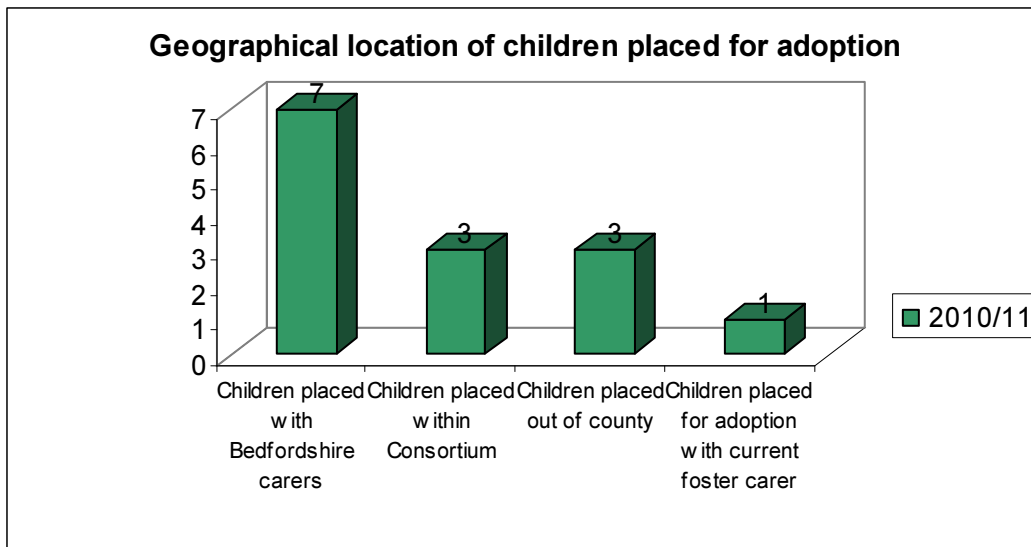
2.5 – PLACEMENTS OF CHILDREN

- 2.5.1 Members of the Adoption Team were active in facilitating the placements of the 13 children placed for adoption in 2010/2011. This compares to the placement of 16 children in the previous year.
- 2.5.2 There were 3 sibling groups placed for adoption during 2010/2011. Additionally 1 child was able to join a sibling who had already been adopted.



2.6 – GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF CHILDREN PLACED FOR ADOPTION (INTER-AGENCY VERSUS BEDFORDSHIRE)

- 2.6.1 Of the 13 children placed for adoption in 2010/2011, 7 were placed with adopters assessed and approved by Bedfordshire. 1 sibling group and 1 single child were placed with adopters from the Consortium. Another sibling group and single child were placed out of county and 1 child was placed for adoption with his foster carers.



2.7 – ETHNICITY OF CHILDREN PLACED FOR ADOPTION 2010/2011

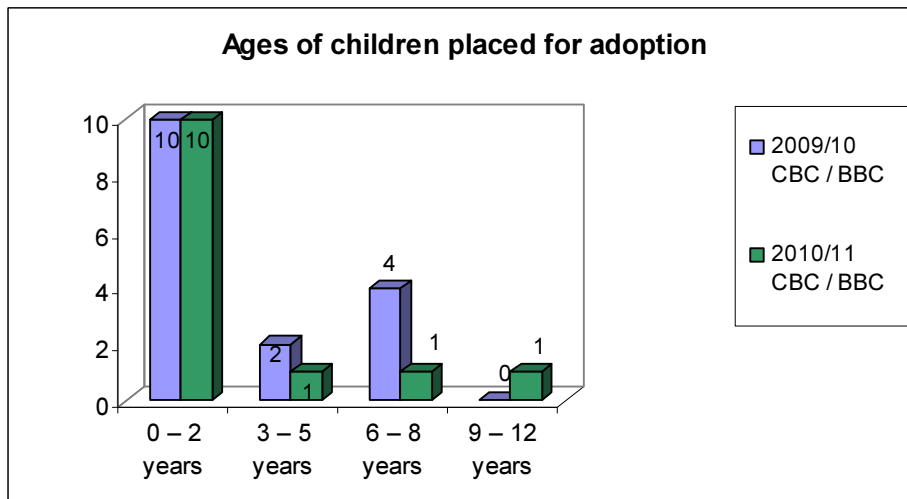
2.7.1 Of the 13 children placed for adoption in the year 2010/2011, 10 were White / British, 2 were of White / British / Irish Traveller heritage and 1 child was of Polish heritage.

2.8 – AGES OF CHILDREN PLACED FOR ADOPTION 2010/2011

2.8.1 Of the 13 children placed for adoption in 2010/2011, 3 were aged three and above. 10 out of the 13 were aged 2 years or under. The age of a child at placement is the single most important variable in predicting a successful outcome, the younger the child at placement, the higher the likelihood of success.

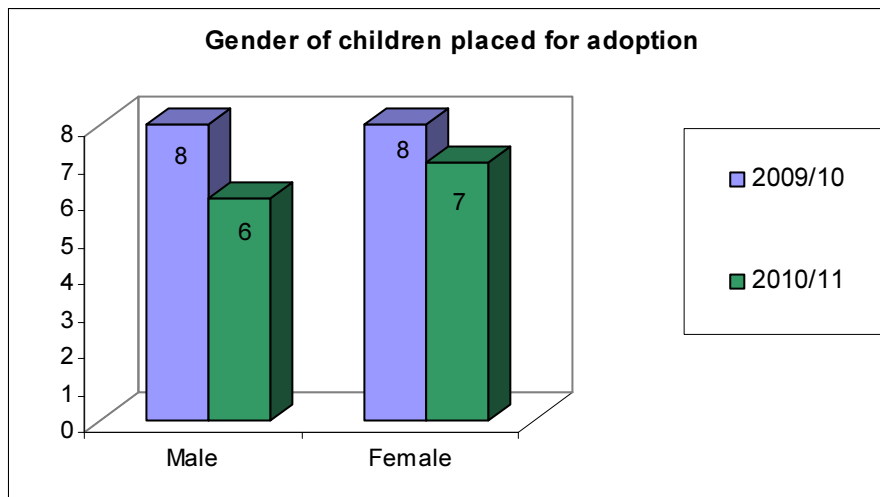
2010/2011

0 – 2 years	10
3 – 5 years	1
6 – 8 years	1
9 – 12 years	1



2.9 – GENDER OF CHILDREN PLACED FOR ADOPTION 2010/2011

- 2.9.1 Of the 13 children placed for adoption in 2010/2011, 7 were female and 6 were male. Of these in Central Bedfordshire there were 3 females and 2 males placed for adoption and in Bedford Borough, there were 4 females and 4 males.



2.10 – ADOPTION ORDERS / SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP ORDERS 2010/2011

- 2.10.1 Adoption Orders were made in respect of 16 children during the period 1st April 2010 – 31st March 2011. Of these 5 were for children from Central Bedfordshire and 11 from Bedford Borough. Special Guardianship Orders were made in respect of 13 children. Of these 2 were from Central Bedfordshire and 11 from Bedford Borough.

SECTION 3 - ADOPTERS

3.0 – THE WORK OF THE ADOPTION AND PERMANENCE SUPPORT TEAM

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

3.1 – ADVERTISING AND RECRUITMENT OF FAMILIES

- 3.1.1 It has not been possible to place all of Bedfordshire children with families assessed and recruited by Bedfordshire. This is in part due to the needs of the individual children, but also in some instances because they cannot be placed safely within the area. During the year it was therefore decided to actively recruit adopters and so a “drop in” was held in November, alongside adverts in local newspapers, highlighting the need for adopters who can consider

children who are older, in sibling groups, have specific needs or are from mixed heritage backgrounds. This event brought forward five sets of potential adopters on the evening, however, may also have contributed to increased numbers attending the open evenings in December and February.

3.2 – THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS OF PROSPECTIVE ADOPTERS: ENQUIRIES, ASSESSMENTS AND APPROVALS

- 3.2.1 All assessments are carried out in accordance with the National Minimum Standards for Adoption (Care Standards Act 2000) and the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 and their Statutory and Practice Guidance. All prospective adopters are required to undertake a training programme as part of the preparation and assessment process and have a review of their assessment conducted by a Manager or Senior Practitioner of the Adoption and Permanence Support Team.
- 3.2.2 The number of enquiries from prospective adopters has decreased slightly from 121 enquiries in 2009/2010 to 104 in 2010/2011. All enquirers were invited to attend information evenings and sent information packs. 70 households attended with 38 households being interviewed. We accepted 18 applicants of whom 11 went on to be approved.
- 3.2.3 Of the adopters approved the majority of them were White / British, apart from two couples where in one case one partner was Colombian and in another one partner was Black / Caribbean.

3.3 – ETHNICITY OF ADOPTERS

- 3.3.1 2 of the 104 enquiries were referred straight to PACT and 2 to other agencies. (Parents and Children Together – PACT – are contracted to provide an adoption service for adopters wishing to adopt from abroad). Of the remaining 100 enquiries, 8 enquiries were of an Asian background, 3 of a Black / African and 6 were of a White / British / European background. 1 couple were of White / British and South American backgrounds. In the past year, all but 3 of the children placed for adoption by the service have been White / British, 1 was White / European and 2 were of Irish Travelling heritage.

3.4 – POST APPROVAL SUPPORT

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

3.5 – TRAINING FOR ADOPTERS

- 3.5.1 Social Workers from the Adoption and Fostering Service provide the preparation training for adopters. Adopters also have access to the full training programme offered to the Agency's foster carers and adopters. This ongoing training is available to both approved adopters as well as to adoptive parents at any point after an Adoption Order has been granted.
- 3.5.2 During the year April 2010 to March 2011 a four day preparation training programme was held on four occasions and was attended by 14 households, compared to 18 households during 2009/2010.
- 3.5.3 The training covered a variety of topics including:
- The Adoption Process
 - Agency Policy / Legislation
 - Valuing Diversity
 - Disability Awareness
 - Child Development
 - Attachment and Resilience
 - Health and Education
 - Abuse
 - Memories, Loss and Separation
 - Lifestory work
 - Adoption Support Team – Their work (including Contact and Adoption Support)
 - Disruptions
 - Matching
- 3.5.4 Training is evaluated at the end of each programme, and again when prospective adopters attend Adoption Panel. The feedback to Panel during the past 12 months has been universally positive.
- 3.5.5 The Team re-evaluated the preparation training programme in December 2010, in response to evaluation from attendees. As a consequence it was decided that the format would include further experiential activities, such as "Loving Waters", which is an attachment exercise and the "String Exercise", which illustrates children's connections and relationships. Subsequent evaluation forms from attendees shows that such experiential exercises are particularly valued and understood by prospective adopters.

SECTION 4 – ADOPTION SUPPORT SERVICES

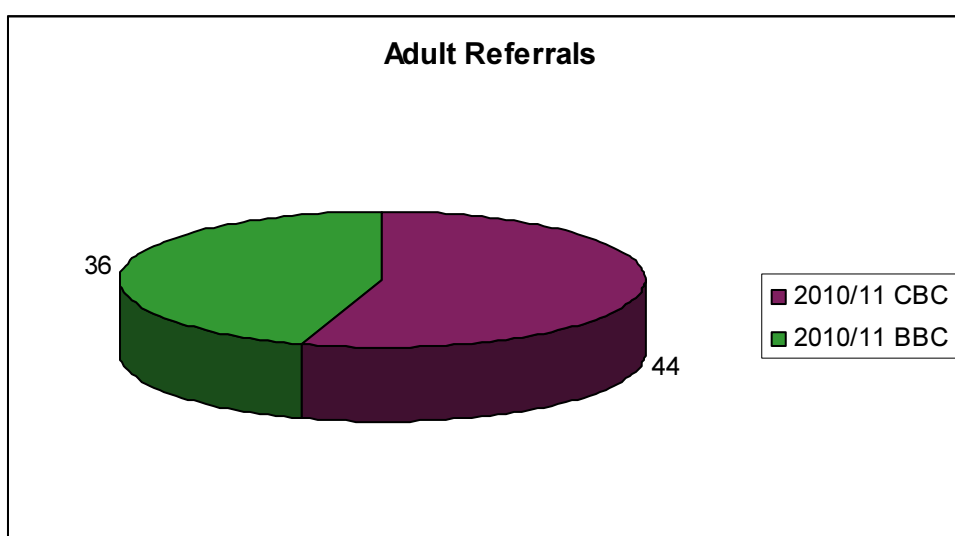
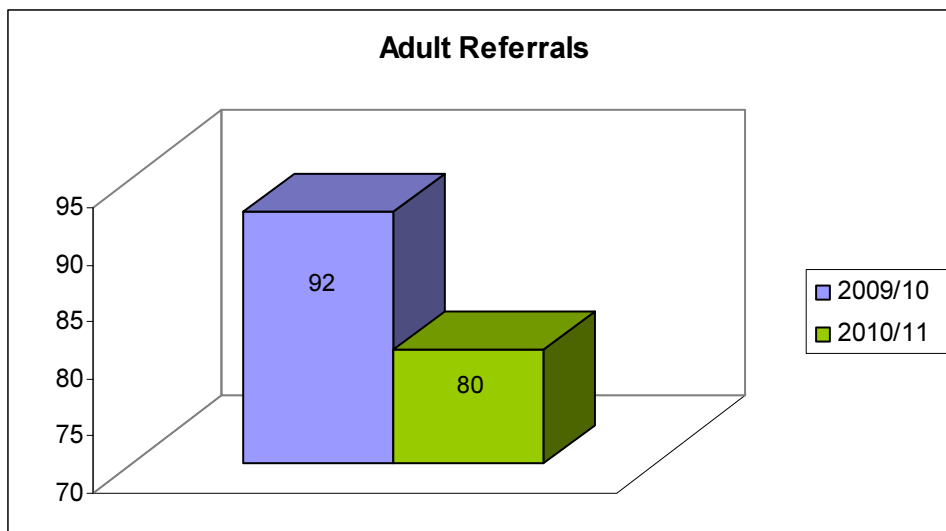
4.0 – POST ADOPTION SUPPORT TO FAMILIES

- 4.0.1 The Adoption and Children Act 2002 established the right of adopted families to request an assessment of their adoption support needs. These families either self-refer or come to the attention of the department via another agency. In such instances the team either provides direct social work support or where a specific need is identified, a specialist service may be commissioned.
- 4.0.2 As of the 31st March 2011, the team were working directly with 41 adopted children and their families who were in need of support. Of these 20 were from Central Bedfordshire and 21 from Bedford Borough. This compares to 49 children, 25 from Central Bedfordshire and 24 from Bedford Borough on 31st March 2010. Between 1st April 2010 and the 31st March 2011 the team received a total of 25 referrals for adoption support, 11 from Central Bedfordshire and 14 from Bedford Borough.

- 4.0.3 The team have a mailing list of 130 adoptive families from Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough who are sent newsletters, invitations to support groups for adoptive parents and family days, all provided by Adoption UK. They are also sent information about training events provided by the Adoption and Fostering Service.
- 4.0.4 All new adoption support referrals are offered an Adoption UK Buddy and access to the above services. The Adoption & Permanence team also provide groups for adopted children and their families, including Talking About Adoption workshops. All adoption support referrals have an assessment of need and adoption support plan upon request.
- 4.0.3 Each child placed for adoption is required to have a contact plan in relation to their birth family. The service currently manages contact plans on behalf of 204 children (compared to 193 children in 2009/2010), many of which have required direct intervention to support all the parties involved in the contact arrangements, i.e. adopted children and young people, their adoptive parents and their birth families.

4.1 – SERVICES TO ADOPTED ADULTS / BIRTH RELATIVES

- 4.1.1 Social Workers in the Adoption Support Team provide an advice and counselling service to adopted people seeking information and access to their birth records. For all residents of Bedfordshire, a counselling service is offered and information is provided to other local authorities who are supporting people in their areas who were adopted through Bedfordshire. Specific leaflets outlining this service are available to enquirers through the Adoption Duty Desk.
- 4.1.2 Not only is an initial counselling interview offered to those seeking birth records, but work is undertaken to locate records held by other Adoption Agencies. Counselling and practical advice during tracing, an intermediary service and pre and post reunion support are also available to adopted adults and their birth relatives.
- 4.1.3 Birth relatives seeking to make contact with adopted adults are offered information and advice and an intermediary service. In the case of birth relatives, they are not given any identifying information about the adopted person.
- 4.1.4 In the period 2010/2011 there were 80 referrals from adult adoptees and their birth parents who were seeking Post Adoption counselling support.
- 4.1.5 Of the 80 adult referrals received during 2010/2011, 44 came from Central Bedfordshire, 36 from Bedford Borough. 59 were adopted adults and 21 were birth relatives.



4.2 – DISRUPTED ADOPTIONS

4.2.1 Nationally the disruption rate pre Adoption Order is in the region of 20%. After 3 years with no disruptions the placement of one child aged 12 years disrupted post order in the year 2009/10. There were no disruptions again in 2010/11 of children placed by the two local authorities. This low figure reflects the care given to the matching process between children and adoptive families, the resilience and commitment of adoptive parents and the support given to them and the children in the critical early months of placements.

SECTION 5 – OTHER ACTIVITIES

5.0 – INTER-COUNTRY ADOPTION

5.0.1 Inter-Country adoption has become increasingly more complex in terms of the legal requirements of those countries that permit children to be placed for adoption outside of their country of origin. In recognition of this and given the specialist knowledge and expertise which this work demands, the Adoption Agency has a Service Level Agreement (S.L.A.) with a voluntary adoption agency based in Reading, Parents and Children Together (PACT), which is recognised as being a leading agency in this area of work, to provide this service on its behalf.

- 5.0.2 Families who are normally resident in Bedfordshire wishing to adopt children from overseas are referred to PACT who will provide information and preparation training and will assess and approve families wishing to adopt children from overseas.
- 5.0.3 Families are required to pay for their assessment in accordance with Regulations but Bedfordshire funds all of the initial counselling interviews.
- 5.0.4 During 2010/2011 there were 6 enquiries concerning inter-country adoption from residents of Central Bedfordshire or Bedford Borough, all of whom were referred straight to PACT. In addition PACT received a further 14 enquiries directly from people living in the Central Bedfordshire/Bedford Borough Council areas.

5.1 – THE ADOPTION CONSORTIUM

5.1.1 Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council Adoption Agency is a member of the local adoption consortium whose aim is to work in partnership to share information about children and approved adopters to make local matches and to share good practice. The other full members are:

- Buckinghamshire County Council
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Luton Borough Council
- Milton Keynes Council

Associate member: St Francis Children's Society

5.1.2 We are pleased to be able to assist other consortium members and in the year 2010/2011 there were 3 children from Bedford Borough placed with adopters approved outside of Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils. There were no children from within the consortium placed with adopters trained, assessed and approved by Bedfordshire.

5.2 – BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR ADOPTION AND FOSTERING (BAAF)

5.2.1 Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council Adoption Agencies are full members of BAAF which is a leading national voluntary organisation working to promote best practice for children separated from their birth families. It is the leading organisation representing local authority and voluntary adoption agencies and provides training courses, practice guidance, research material, and a consultation and advice service to all its members.

5.2.2 Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council Adoption Agency is also a member of the BAAF Eastern Region, a group which meets quarterly to discuss and exchange best practice in the East Anglia region. Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough are represented by the Agency Adviser, Adoption and Fostering.

5.3 – INDEPENDENT BIRTH FAMILY COUNSELLING

- 5.3.1 In 2008, the agency introduced an Independent Birth Family Counselling service. This is a pilot project and the service is provided by Adoption Plus Limited on behalf of Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council Adoption Agency. Adoption Plus is an independent adoption support agency.
- 5.3.2 The aim of the service is to provide birth relatives of children who might be adopted an opportunity to talk about their feelings. Although the agency are involved in commissioning this service, Adoption Plus will undertake all counselling work with the birth family members and the counselling will be confidential unless concerns arise about the safety or welfare of a child.
- 5.3.3 The contract with Adoption Plus was renewed in 2010/2011. Currently this service is under review, but has been renewed until September 2011 when it is hoped that the service will go out to tender.

SECTION 6

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS, ACTIONS AND OUTCOMES 1ST APRIL 2010 – 31ST MARCH 2011

- 6.0.1 2010/11 has been the second year of the shared service for Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils. Our primary aim for the year was to continue to offer a quality service to the children living in Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils, as well as to their adoptive and birth families.
- 6.0.2 We consider this to have been a successful year for the service and one in which we have continued to develop our practice and meet challenges of offering creative and quality services that are cost effective.
- 6.0.3 Following on from the Ofsted Inspection of 2008 which judged the Adoption Service as “Outstanding”, we have continued to develop and review our practice.
- 6.0.4 2010/2011 saw further developments in the services offered by the Adoption Team:
- Support to adopted children and their families continues, both to individual families requesting a service and through delivery of more informal support.
 - Family and Friends days and Talking about Adoption workshops have been offered throughout the year and have been well attended.
 - The complexities around adopted young people and their birth relatives making contact through social networking sites has been discussed nationally. The team have presented two workshops to adopters to highlight this and offer support and guidance.
 - Groups for young people and a parent and toddler group continue to be offered and are becoming an established part of our service.
 - Following a successful pilot of a Teenage Adoption Panel this has become part of our preparation for adopters. Prospective adopters have found the opportunity to hear from, and be questioned by, adopted young people, both challenging and enlightening.
- 6.0.5 Overall in 2010/2011 there has been another significant increase in the number of children who have been referred for adoption – a trend which we believe will continue throughout 2011/2012 as statistics from April, May and June indicate. There has also been an increase in the number of complex post adoption support cases referred.
- 6.0.6 We continue to seek the most appropriate means of offering early intervention and low level support, as well as identifying and commissioning cost effective services with the aim of preventing adoption disruption.
- 6.0.7 To increase the number and variety of support events being made available to adopters, from workshops, children’s groups and social events. It is hoped that by engaging adopters in this way we will see a reduction in families only approaching us in difficulty.
- 6.0.8 In 2009/10 the adoption team recognised that adopters feeling confident in talking to their children about adoption and their “stories” is key to successful outcomes. Consequently we introduced a rolling programme of workshops for adopters of children of all ages, in order to

develop their confidence in this complex and sensitive area. The workshops also gave them the opportunity to share their experiences with other adoptive families. The feedback received from those attending has evidenced that such a service is invaluable to adoptive families.

6.0.9 In 2009/10 we also developed our group work with and for adopted children and young people. We now have a group for girls and a group for boys, who meet separately, but met together as a whole in the summer and at a Christmas party.

6.0.10 We have also reviewed the BAAF "Pushing the Boundaries of Assessment" publication and as a consequence, we are piloting a Youth Panel. This Panel is made up of adopted young people who will interview prospective adopters as part of the adoption assessment. This will be reviewed and may be incorporated into our assessment process in the future.

Please note this report will be updated in November 2011.

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