

Meeting: Corporate Parenting Panel
Date: 10 January 2012
Subject: Quarter Two Report on the Adoption Service – April to September 2011
Report of: Catherine Parry, Assistant Director Children’s Services Operations
Summary: The report outlines the activity in the Adoption Agency during the first six months of 2011-12.

Contact Officer: Fiona Mackirdy, Head of Adoption and Fostering
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

Central Bedfordshire Council’s Strategic Plan 2009-11 Priority 2 – Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people.

The Children and Young People’s Plan 2011-2014 Priority 2 – Protecting children and keeping them safe.

Adoption is a key statutory service to Looked After Children.

Financial:

1. Adoption and Fostering within Children’s Services has an annual budget of £5.015 million, including income from Bedford Borough Council under the Shared Service arrangement. There are no new financial considerations arising from this report.

Legal:

2. Regulations, associated Statutory Guidance and National Minimum Standards outlines the requirement to report to Members on the management and outcomes of the Adoption Agency, in order that they can satisfy themselves that the services are effective and achieving good outcomes for children.

Risk Management:

3. Regulatory Risks: Failure to report to Members would be a breach of National Minimum Standard.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

4. Not Applicable.

Equalities/Human Rights:

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

Community Safety:

6. Not Applicable.

Sustainability:

7. Not Applicable.

Procurement:

8. Not applicable.

RECOMMENDATION:

that the Corporate Parenting Panel note and comment on the content of the report, particularly paragraph 22.

Background

9. The Children Act 2004, Care Standards Act 2000 and associated Relevant Regulations and National Minimum Standards require Local Authority Adoption Agencies to report to Members at six monthly intervals. This will be achieved by presentation of a six monthly, Quarter 2 update to the Corporate Parenting Panel and a full year Annual Report to this Panel and the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June each year.
10. The Adoption and Fostering service is a shared service hosted by Central Bedfordshire Council. Annual reports contain information activity in respect of both Councils. This report will also be provided to Bedford Borough Council.
11. This report covers activity in the period April to September 2011. Comparative data with the previous year is included where relevant.

Recruitment of Adopters

12. During the period 40 households attended information evenings about becoming adopters and 21 households attended for a subsequent in-depth interview.
13. 13 assessments of new adopters commenced in the period. This means the service is on track to meet the recruitment target of 26 new adoptive households in the year.
14. 7 new adoptive households completed their assessment and were approved by the Adoption Panel.

Adoption planning and placements for Children

15. In this 6 month period there were 42 referrals for permanence planning including those where the plan was adoption. 21 were from CBC and 21 from BBC. This took the total number of family finding cases to 35 Borough cases and 43 for CBC.
16. 8 cases were presented to the Adoption Panel for a recommendation as to whether adoption should be the plan for the child.
17. 12 children were placed with adopters during the period (8 from Bedford Borough and 4 Central Bedfordshire Council children). This takes the total number of children placed with adopters and awaiting the adoption order to 14 5 adoption orders have been granted since April 2011, 3 for Bedford Borough children and 2 for Central Bedfordshire children.

Special Guardianship and Adoption Support

18. Children's Services staff working in adoption and permanence support play a key role in supporting children placed under a Special Guardianship Order or for adoption after the legal order is made. At the end of September the team were providing adoption support to 42 families (23 BBC and 19 CBC) and Special Guardianship support to 23 families (8 BBC and 15 CBC).
19. Support was also offered by 213 "letterbox contact" cases (119 BBC and 94 CBC). This work is identified as part of the children and young people's plans for permanence, it ensures they have a record of contact with their birth family including letters and sometimes photographs, that birth family send into the team for them to distribute to the adoptive carers and children.

Adult Adoption work

20. Over the period there were 23 referrals from adopted adults or their birth relatives seeking support to trace records or for intermediary services to facilitate contact.

Key Events

21. The 3-yearly inspection of the adoption agency took place in August 2011, resulting in a judgement of the service as good with outstanding features. One recommendation was made by Ofsted in relation to the content of reports when making reference to children's birth family. The work on the action plan has ensured that all staff have been reminded to record these very sensitive observations and challenges in a way that can be understood and accepted by an adult that may want to look at their records later in life. Specialist training will be made available to frontline practitioners from January 2012 to improve this practice further.

Report title Quarter Two Adoption report v2

Last saved by ManningL01

23/01/12 17:23

22. There has been an increased volume of activity and this work is compliant with updated guidance and legislation. At the time of writing, sufficient staff are in place to respond in a timely and effective manner to adoption matters. This will be kept under constant review. The national interest in adoption and recent inspection has provided an additional focus on work to demonstrate this compliance and evidence of good practice that is child focussed.

Appendices: None

Background Papers: None