
Meeting: Corporate Parenting Panel
Date: 1 December 2014
Subject: Six Monthly Report on the Adoption Service
April to September 2014
Report of: Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services
Summary: The report outlines the activity in the adoption service
during April to September 2014

Contact Officer: Gerard Jones, Assistant Director Operations
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

Central Bedfordshire Council's Strategic Plan 2012-16 Priority 3 – Promote health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable

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

Adoption and Fostering are key statutory services to Looked After Children.

Financial:

1. Adoption and Fostering within Children's Services has an annual budget of £8,044,710 million. There are no new financial considerations arising from the report.

Legal:

2. Regulations, associated Statutory Guidance and National Minimum Standards outline the requirement to report to Members on the management and outcomes of the services, 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 would be a breach of National Minimum Standard.

Child Protection Risks: Failure to assess risk may lead to unfavourable outcomes.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

4. There are no staffing issues.

Equalities/Human Rights:

5. Adoption and Fostering affects all sectors of communities.

Community Safety:

6. There are no community safety issues.

Sustainability:

7. There are no sustainability issues.

RECOMMENDATION:

- that the Corporate Parenting Panel comments on the statutory reports

Background

8. The Children Act 2004, Care Standards Act 2000 and associated Relevant Regulations and National Minimum Standards require Local Authority Adoption Services and Fostering Services to report regularly on the operation of the services. The service specific regulations outline the frequency of reporting and to whom the reports must be submitted.
9. Until 3 December 2013 the Adoption Service was a shared service between Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough council. The service is now a single service, however with a shared Adoption panel. This report only contains statistics in relation to Central Bedfordshire Council.

Adoption Services

10. The Adoption Service is required to report at six-monthly intervals. An Annual Report will be produced by the end of May each year covering the preceding April to March period. In addition a six-monthly briefing update will be produced by the end of October each year and presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel.
11. In the first six months of 2014 there was a decrease for the first time in three years in the number of children whose cases were presented to the Agency Decision Maker for a recommendation as to whether adoption should be the plan for the child. This was for 14 children, a decrease from 35 in the same period last year. 14 households were approved as adopters and matches of 15 children to adopters were made.
12. 11 Adoption Orders were granted in respect of looked after children in Central Bedfordshire Council. The number for the year 2013/14 was 10.
13. As of the 30 September 2014, 11 adopted children and their families were in receipt of support. In addition contact plans were being made on behalf of 96 children. Each child placed for adoption is required to have a contact plan in relation to their birth family, which usually involves supporting the periodic exchange of letters or information between adoptive and birth families.

14. In the same period the team were working with 9 adult adoptees and their birth relatives, which represents a drop in numbers from previous years. Post Adoption support in the form of tracing birth records, counselling and practical advice during tracing, an intermediary service and pre and post reunion support was provided.
15. The team continues to be successful both in recruiting and assessing prospective adopters and in placing children with new families in a timely manner, in line with the Government's Adoption Reform Agenda. The Adoption Service is in a strong position to meet the requirements of the action plan, having robust performance monitoring and good practices in place in regard to planning for adoption.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Adoption Agency six month report

Background Papers:

None