

## Central Bedfordshire Council

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Monday, 18 January 2016

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### Report on the Adoption Support Fund

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#### Purpose of this report

1. To inform the Corporate Parenting Panel the remit of the Adoption Support Fund.
2. To explain how Central Bedfordshire are making use of the fund.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to:

1. Note the content of the report
2. Comment on the report

#### Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

3. This item is not planned to go to Overview & Scrutiny as the report is for the Corporate Parenting Panel.

#### Issues

Background

4. On 24 December 2013, the Government announced new resources to help would-be adopters find a child to adopt along with more money for councils. Included in this announcement was an Adoption Support Fund to be set up to improve the support available to adoptive families.

## Adoption Support Fund

5. The Adoption Support Fund was set up by the Department for Education to provide funding to extend adoptive families access to therapy.
6. There was considerable variation in the services and resources provided between local authorities. Some authorities were able to provide some therapy within their service, such as Theraplay, and some had access to specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) whereas others were only able to access mainstream CAMH services where families often did not meet the criteria for a service from the CAMH service.
7. Adoption Regulations are clear that local authorities should provide the following under adoption support services:
  - Information, advice, guidance and signposting
  - Counselling
  - Opportunities for adoptive parents to interact (e.g. support groups, family days)
  - Mediation of contact with birth families
  - Mediation services when an adoptive family is at risk of disruption
  - Financial support
  - Basic Life story work
  - Short break care where no therapeutic input is provided
8. Additional identified services, such as an identified therapeutic service, are a discretionary provision where the local authority can decide whether or not to provide the service.
9. The prototype for the Adoption Support Fund was tested in ten local authorities between June 2014 and May 2015 and was used to refine key features and operating procedures of the Adoption Support Fund.
10. Following assessment of a families needs, local authorities can apply to the Adoption Support Fund for funding for therapy. The therapy could be provided by the Local Authority adoption support service, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), other public sector services, or by an independent sector provider.

11. From 01 May 2015 £19.3 million was made available nationally to fund the first year and became accessible to 152 local authorities to submit applications for funding through an online portal. Each application is considered on a case by case basis.

#### Aims of the Adoption Support Fund

12. The Adoption Reform recognised that many adopted children have experienced difficult and traumatic care before being placed for adoption, which can prevent them from settling into their new home and can create difficulties at particular stages such as adolescence.

13. The National picture shows that:

- 72% of children adopted in 2013-14 entered care due to neglect or abuse
- Around 3% of adoptions disrupt
- 25% of parents report major challenges and a further 33% describe life as generally good with some challenge
- Parents report high levels of child to parent violence and other challenging behaviours. High incidence of mental health needs in clinical range, but also below thresholds in many other areas
- Educational attainment is higher than LAC but lower than non adopted

14. Support paid for by the Adoption Support Fund will be identified by suitability to achieve positive outcomes for the child and family. Outcomes include:

- Improved relationships with peers
- Improved relationships with siblings, parents and other family
- Improved relationships with teachers and school staff
- Improved engagement with learning
- Improved emotional regulation
- Improved behaviour management
- Improved confidence

- Improved ability to enjoy a positive family life and social relationships
- Reduced child on parent violence

## Central Bedfordshire

15. In addition to the support offered to families on an annual basis we are, as of 30 November 2015, offering intensive adoption support to seventeen families with a total of twenty children. These families have an Adoption Support assessment completed to identify the support required. On most occasions support can be provided by the Adoption Agency via an allocated Social Worker or by signposting to other services.

16. Six of these families have been identified as requiring a therapeutic service or assessment and applications to the fund have been completed and agreed. These families are currently receiving therapeutic services from external providers from the independent sector.

Four examples of the identified need and funding include:

- 1 young person, female aged 16 years, receiving one to one sessions with an accredited counsellor completing therapeutic life story work. Amount agreed £2,155.60
- 1 family - two parents and twin boys aged 14 years, receiving Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy. This family has complex relationship difficulties and the young people are involved with several services such as Family Support, Youth Offending and education. Amount agreed £4,000.00 for initial assessment plus £11,050.00 for the therapy.
- 1 family - two parents and two children aged 5 years and 9 years, currently having an assessment for therapeutic needs due to complex attachment issues within the family dynamics. Amount agreed £4,000.00.
- This assessment is likely to lead to a plan of therapeutic intervention where a 'top up' from the fund will be applied for.

- 1 young person, male aged 10 years, currently undergoing a therapeutic assessment with an independent accredited therapist following concerns regarding his mental wellbeing. Amount agreed £2,000.00. This assessment is likely to lead to a plan of therapeutic intervention where a 'top up' from the fund will be applied for.

17. To date the six families who have benefited from the fund, to the value of £29,396.26, have received a therapeutic intervention which has sustained the placement and reduced the risk of a family disruption.

18. A further four families have been assessed as requiring a therapeutic intervention and applications are being completed at present.

### **Options for consideration**

19. None

### **Reason/s for decision**

20. Not applicable

### **Reason for urgency**

21. Not applicable

### **Council Priorities**

22. Making effective use of the Adoption Support Fund ensures that we are able to provide a service that protects the vulnerable and improves the wellbeing of each individual within the family.

In addition it enables us to provide a more efficient and responsive service to adoptive families who require specialist therapeutic support to meet their needs.

### **Corporate Implications**

23. None

### **Legal Implications**

24. None

### **Financial and Risk Implications**

25. The Government has extended the Adoption Support Fund for another year to 31 March 2017.

## **Equalities Implications**

26. Adoption services provided affect all sectors of communities.

## **Implications for Work Programming**

27. Not applicable

## **Conclusion and next Steps**

28. The fund has enabled us to provide responsive and intensive therapeutic services for adoptive families where universal support services are insufficient to address the needs of the family. This has reduced the risk of disruption in each family and assisted Central Bedfordshire to provide a responsive service.

Central Bedfordshire Adoption agency are in the process of sending service user feedback forms to those families who have accessed a service funded by the Adoption Support Fund to inform the local offer of adoption support to adoptive families for 2016-2017. To date we have verbally received feedback from adoptive parents who are positive about the service being provided.

Each family have an allocated Social Worker who works closely with the family, therapy provider and school. The therapeutic service provided is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it is meeting the needs of the child. Once the identified therapy has been completed the provider produces a report as a record of the work completed. To date work has yet to be completed with a family to enable us to conclude on the measured outcomes. This will be measured based on family, school stability and feedback from the family and young people.

For other families we have included information about the fund in our newsletter and within the Guide for Adoption Support leaflet which can be downloaded on Central Bedfordshire Website.

The risk of adoption disruption increases in adolescence, so to minimise the risk we are planning to develop a young peoples group for children aged 10 years in 2016 with the aim to offer a regular group activity with a learning development theme for each group session i.e. identity, healthy relationships, contact etc. Once the programme is defined we will complete an application to the Adoption Support Fund for funding.

## **Appendices**

None

## **Background Papers**

None