

## Central Bedfordshire Council

Corporate Parenting Panel

14 November 2016

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### Six Monthly Report in Respect of the Adoption Service - 1 April to 30 September 2016

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#### Purpose of this report

1. 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 update to the Corporate Parenting Panel and a full year Annual Report to this Panel each year.
2. The report outlines the activities that the Adoption Service undertook throughout 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016

#### RECOMMENDATION

The Executive or Committee

1. That the Corporate Parenting Panel notes and comments on the content of the report.

#### Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

3. This item is not planned to go to O&S as it is an update report providing an overview of the service.

#### Recruitment of adopters

4. Information Evenings continue to be held on a monthly basis. Enquiries can be received from an online enquiry form on the Central Bedfordshire website, email to the Adoption Team or telephone call via a duty Social Worker service.

5. We have had 43 enquiries in this period. As of 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2 households were in stage one of the process and 9 in stage two.
6. 8 new adoptive households completed their assessment and were approved to adopt. The target for this year is 20 households approved to adopt so we envisage meeting this target
7. Central Bedfordshire has 9 approved adopters waiting at present of which 3 could offer a foster for adoption placement.

**Adoption planning and placements for children**

8. Central Bedfordshire performance is as follows:

|                 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17<br>April – Sept |
|-----------------|---------|---------|---------|-------------------------|
| Adult Approvals | 29      | 22      | 18      | 8                       |
| Adoption Plans  | 48      | 26      | 30      | 11                      |
| Matched         | 20      | 29      | 22      | 5                       |
| Adoption order  | 15      | 20      | 17      | 11                      |

9. 2 plans were rescinded relating to decisions made in the previous years.
10. As of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016 18 children were placed in adoptive placements pre the granting of an adoption order. This accounts for 5.8% of the total amount of LAC (312 children). In addition there are 2 children placed in Foster for adoption placements
11. Of the 5 matches made in this period 3 were placed with Central Bedfordshire approved adopters including 1 Foster for Adoption placement. 2 children were matched with adopters from another agency.
12. 11 Adoption Orders were granted in this reporting period. This is an increase of 4 adoption orders within the same period the year before.
13. During this reporting period 9 children from other local authorities were placed with 4 prospective adopter households approved by Central Bedfordshire. This has a positive impact on national performance.
14. The council has focussed on recruiting applicants open to considering foster for adoption and embedding the practice and learning from such placements. There is an element of risk in these types of placements but the advantage is that a child is placed at a younger age and does not have to move placement if a placement order is granted. 2 children were placed in such placements within this reporting period with 1 being placed directly from hospital.
15. Monthly Adoption tracking meetings continue to be held across children's services to track children who may be subject to a plan for adoption. This

enables the council to plan for early permanence and inform our recruitment strategy whilst also enabling to prevent delay for children and promote early permanence.

### **Adoption Support**

16. The Adoption Support Fund was introduced in May 2015 and we continue to make applications on behalf of adoptive families. 16 applications to the adoption support Fund have been completed and agreed enabling the council to commissioning therapeutic services for the identified families.
17. Support also continues through post adoption contact arrangements (sometimes referred to as indirect contact) for each individual child. It seeks to ensure a secure and consistent record of contact between birth family and adoptive family. This often includes letters and occasional photographs that are often of high significance to the adoptee later in life.
18. Support events have continued to be held such as the annual summer barbeque which was attended by over 100 adults and children. This reporting period we also completed a drama workshop for adopted young people which is progressing to re establish the 'Teenage Adoption Panel' (TAP). Panel members are adopted Young people from the local area who pose questions to adopter applicants. This enhances the learning and preparation of prospective adopters and provides opportunity for the young people to contribute to the service and community.

### **Key Events**

19. In July 2015 and again in 2016, the Department for Education (DfE) required all local authorities to join larger regional groups to radically redesign the adoption system in their areas and to provide excellent adoption services with a strong focus on innovation and practice. This was underpinned by the Children and Families Act 2014 and the recent publication 'Putting Children First: delivering our vision for excellent children's social care' (DfE) published in July 2016. All LAs are expected to become part of a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) by 2020. RAAs are required to have one pool of adopters and one pool of children and to ensure that Voluntary Adoption Agencies' are integral in their design and delivery.
20. In response to this Central Bedfordshire joined the partnership Central East with Coram-i as the project lead. Monthly project Board meetings are undertaken alongside the development of a Regional Shadow Hub with project leads to develop the workstreams such as permanence planning and adoption support. The Regional Adoption Agency continues to be within the design and develop stage with funding from DfE being secured to progress the development to the next stage.
21. The Adoption Panel has continued to remain a shared service hosted by Central Bedfordshire.

22. Since April 2016, 54 young people ceased to be looked after and of these 11 children were adopted – this shows that our year to date Adoption performance stands at 20.4% at the end of September 2016. This is above the set target of 17.0% as well as our 2015/16 and 2014/15 outturns of 17.7% and 16.7% respectively. In the 6 months since April 2016, we have been above target for this indicator for 5 months of the year.
23. Looking at the average time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family in days (Adoption Scorecard Indicator), the Q2 figure for July-September 2016 stands at 487 days (rolling 3 year average ending 30<sup>th</sup> September). This is an improvement when compared to our 2014/15 (539 days) and 2015/16 outturn (504 days). We have also improved compared to Q1 (April to June) rolling 3 year average reported figure of 488 days. National average target for 2014-2017 is 475 days so we will continue to work towards improving this average.
24. The next six months will continue to develop the Regional Adoption Agency and share learning and good practice across the partnership to improve practice and outcomes for children.

### **Council Priorities**

25. Central Bedfordshire Council's Medium Term Plan Priority C Promote Health and Well-being and Protect the Vulnerable.

Value – results focussed – we will focus on the outcomes that make a difference to people's lives.

Adoption is a key statutory service to Looked After Children.

### **Corporate Implications**

#### **Legal Implications**

26. 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.
27. The National Adoption Leadership Board continues to monitor performance and drive change. The quarterly survey reports on all significant data for children with a plan for adoption and adults who have expressed an interest in adoption.
28. Regulatory Risks: Failure to report to Members would be a breach of National Minimum Standard.

### **Financial and Risk Implications**

29. Adoption within Children's Services has an annual budget of £648170.00 including costs of other Adoption Agency placements and provision on behalf of Bedford Borough Council under the Shared Adoption Panel.
30. In this period the Government has provided a grant for all Local Authorities to apply to the Department for Education (DfE) for reimbursement of interagency fees for harder to place children.

### **Equalities Implications**

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

### **Appendices**

None

### **Background Papers**

None