



Adopt
Are you ready
to decide?

Appendix A

Central
Bedfordshire



great
prospects

Recruitment strategy

Adoption Service

1 April 2017 - 31 March 2018

A great place to live and work.



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1. Introduction

This Recruitment Strategy outlines the target for 2017 – 2018 and our current need for prospective adopters. It also gives an overview of our key marketing initiatives and targeted campaigns we will be undertaking for the next financial year (April 2017 – March 2018).

2. Needs analysis and evaluation of activities in 2016 – 2017

2.1) Needs analysis

The Adoption Service has year on year met its recruitment targets with 20 prospective adopters being approved in 2015 – 2016 and a further 20 in 2016 – 2017.

As of 31st March 2017 15 children were matched for adoption, 9 of those were matched with Central Bedfordshire Council adopters. The remaining 6 were placed with other Local Authority/Voluntary Adoption Agency approved adopters, the reasons for these were:

- 2 children (a sibling group) needed to be placed out of County and the surrounding areas due to risk
- 1 child had significant health needs
- 2 children (a sibling group) were placed with dual ethnicity adopters to reflect their own ethnicity
- 1 child was placed with their sibling who had previously been adopted out of County.

The following is a highlight of performance for the last financial year:

Enquiries:	
Adoption enquiries received	92
Step parent enquiries received	8
Approvals:	
Total number of approvals	17
Picture going forward as of 31st March 2017:	
Total number of households in stage 1	6
Total number of households in stage 2	8

2.2a) Evaluation of activities in 2016 – 2017

Last year the Service's promotion of adoption was limited due to the uncertainty of the progress of the East Regional Adoption Agency Partnership work. Adoption also continued to be a highly self-motivated search which returned a good number of natural enquiries so low level marketing was undertaken such as outreach, information evenings, article and information sharing and social media activity.

The current process of recording adoption enquiries does not show detailed marketing source information for us to evaluate. This financial year we will make amendments to the way in which we record our enquiries to aid us in evaluating our marketing plan following 2017 – 2018's marketing activity. The changes will be made to the daily recording of enquiries and the use of a tracking spreadsheet to include more specific marketing information and to track the prospective adopters through their journey of application and through to assessment.



2.2b) Joint work with First 4 Adoption

We have worked to build an extremely positive relationship with First 4 Adoption which resulted in an exciting piece of joint work during National Adoption Week in October 2016.

Each year First 4 Adoption run a National campaign highlighting the need for adopters for children who are waiting to be adopted. The campaign reaches out to National newspapers and media channels to promote the campaign and help to find suitable placements for children seeking adoptive parents. During National Adoption week they worked closely with The Daily Mirror to share stories of five children/siblings groups, one of which was a Central Bedfordshire Council child.

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FIRST 4 ADOPTION WHO CAN ADOPT BEING AN ADOPTIVE PARENT THE ADOPTION PROCESS SUPPORT FOR ADOPTERS

IN THIS SECTION

- > NATIONAL ADOPTION WEEK
- > THE CHILDREN FEATURED IN THE MIRROR
- > WALL OF FAME
- > AWARDS
- > FOR AGENCIES

LOOK FOR ADOPTION AGENCIES WORKING IN YOUR AREA [FIND AN AGENCY](#)

NATIONAL ADOPTION WEEK

[View as slideshow](#) [Storify](#)

National Adoption Week 2016 aimed to encompass all aspects of adoption, to demystify and clarify the adoption process, reflect the challenges of adoptive parenting and share individual stories. Here we present a flavour of what happened during the week.

We worked with the Daily Mirror to find families for some of the thousands of children waiting to be adopted in England.

How do I go about adopting a child? A step-by-step guide.
A step by step guide on how to adopt a child from First4Adoption who run National Adoption Week
[STEVE MYALL](#)

Want to adopt but not sure you're eligible? 10 myths about adoption busted
There are fewer barriers to adoption than you might think and it may be easier than you think
[STEVE MYALL](#)

The campaign was a huge success and has been a significant step in family finding for our child who has complex health needs and communication difficulties.

- The Mirror article reached 926,191 people
- Online media reached 773,190 people
- A specific web profile regarding our child was set up on First 4 Adoption's website and 1150 people visited the page to find out more about him
- 105 people contacted First 4 Adoption regarding our child following the campaign
- 2 credible prospective families, both who were second time adopters, were identified following the campaign
- From the 2 credible prospective families, 1 of those went forward to be assessed as prospective adopters for our child. We are now in the final stages of their assessment and hope to work towards matching in August 2017.

We will continue to build our relationship with First 4 Adoption to enable us to be part of future research, work and campaigns.

4. Target and current need for 2017 – 2018

The Services target for 2017 – 2018 is to recruit 20 adopters, in particular:

- Adopters who are able and willing to undertake fostering for adoption
- Adopters for children aged 3 years and over
- Adopters who are able and willing to adopt sibling groups of children
- Adopters who are able and willing to meet the needs of children with additional and or developmental needs
- Adopters that reflect the diverse background of the children with a plan for adoption.

This recruitment strategy looks to recruit those people and families from within 20 miles of Central Bedfordshire. It also aims to support the Services priorities by recruiting a diverse pool of adopters, the priorities that directly affect this strategy are:

- Local placements for local children
- Ensuring effective matching of children to the placement that will best meet their needs
- Providing a choice of placements for every child (a more diverse pool of adopters offers greater placement choice, reducing delay for the child)
- Enabling siblings to remain together
- Promoting early permanence to improve performance and placement stability.

5. Recommended marketing and recruitment plan for 2017 - 2018

5.1) Website

This year has seen an exciting change to the Council website, with a more up to date platform that ensures users on mobile devices have an easy journey through the website.

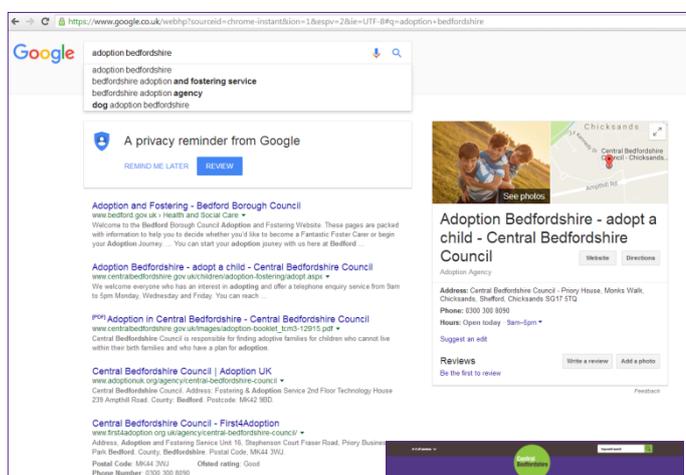


During this financial year the following web pages were most popular:

Page title	Page views
Adopt a child	2294
Come to an adoption information session	732
Support after adoption	404
Adopting your partner's child	290
Inter country adoption	229
I am a birth parent / relative	213

During this financial year we will work closely with the Web Content Manager to review and update the adoption web page content. The work will include research into key phrases and words that are most popular when searching for adoption in Bedfordshire. This will ensure that our pages are highly rated on google search listings and will improve the users journey through our pages to make them engaging and interesting.

Part of this work has already begun and the Web Team have updated our google business listing. This is a great addition at no cost to the Authority to ensure we have a visual presence on google search listings. For example, if a member of the public googles 'adoption Bedfordshire' we are currently appearing second in the search results, however we have a large visual and eye catching business listing on the right hand side that catches the users attention. It gives them our contact details, our duty 'opening hours' as well as a direct link to our web pages.



At regular intervals and during times of campaigns such as National Adoption Week and LGBT week, we will also set up to be included on the home page focus circles. This will help us to reach a further audience through the website who may have visited the pages for another purpose.

5.2) Information evenings

Information evenings continue to be well attended and an integral part of the marketing, recruitment and assessment process of prospective adopters. The information evenings will be held each month at our Chicksands office which reduces venue costs and staff travel time without impacting on the quality of the information evenings.

When we reviewed our website figures it was clear that people thinking about adoption are interested in our information evenings with a high number of page views to this particular page.

Currently our website pages do not show the full details of our evenings and previously the venues have not been advertised to encourage prospective adopters to call us first. On reflection we recognise that this may be a possible barrier to further prospective adopters attending.

This year we will start to promote all information, including times and venues across our campaigns and will also ensure that this information is clear on the Central Bedfordshire Council (Adoption) web pages.

The content of the information evening presentation will also be updated this year to ensure it is informative but engaging and to also include some further up to date performance related information such as further information regarding matching.

5.3) Press

The use of press releases is a great way for us to keep in touch with our local media routes e.g. newspapers, newspaper websites, radio and TV stations. It is an opportunity to share good news stories, promote our excellent work and improve our public profile as well as promoting adoption to the general public free of charge.

This year we will work closely with our Communications Officer to produce press releases around national campaigns and times of success such as National Adoption Week and LGBT Adoption and Fostering Week.

Part of this work will involve reviewing our bank of adopter testimonies and films. We will work towards having a bank of testimonies and films from a diverse range of people, families and where appropriate young people.

5.4) Local news web page takeovers

With many of our enquiries coming through email or through our web page online enquiry form we looked into possible sources of advertising and will be making use of web page takeovers of local news websites. During pre-booked weeks across the year our branding and adverts will be across local news website such as Bedford Today, Luton Today, Biggleswade Today and Leighton Buzzard Today. We will be running 1 campaign for 1 week on each in May, July, September and November.

5.5) Radio advertising

Radio advertising was not explored in recent years for adoption but is a great opportunity to reach a large varied audience. We will be running campaigns with Global on Heart Radio with each campaign running for two weeks at a time in June, October, January and March.

5.6) Social media and Net Natives – digital advertising

Social media continues to be a good source of advertising and information sharing so during 2017 - 2018 we will be working closely with Net Natives, a digital marketing company to produce and lead our Facebook adverts that will run between 1st – 30th May. The reason for running the campaign at this time of the year is due to the impact of Foster Carer Fortnight which sees a spike in interest around adoption also.



The work with Net Natives will also help to improve the number of likes on our Adoption Facebook page to give us a captive audience for future messaging. Our larger network will be encouraged throughout the year to like and share different messages that we post on our pages to spread our message far and wide at no cost.

Alongside this we will work closely with our communications team to post and tweet messaging on the main Central Bedfordshire Council Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Both have a high number of followers, the Facebook page has now risen to 7829 page likes so we will utilise this large audience to like and share messages about adoption.

5.7) Newsletters and information sharing

Electronic newsletters are a great way of sharing articles, posters, leaflets and messages to a large number of people at no cost, they also bring traffic to our web pages. We will make use of electronic newsletters and information sharing with organisations such as Police, Fire, Health, Schools, Hospitals, Doctors surgeries, Community Groups, Town and Parish Councils to encourage those thinking about adoption to contact us.

5.8) Newspaper advertising

Local newspapers continue to bring in enquiries for our colleagues in fostering so during 2017 - 2018 we will run four half page adverts in publications in the Milton Keynes Citizen, Bedford Times and Citizen, Biggleswade Chronicle and Leighton Buzzard Observer. The publications are good value for money as we will also be provided with a digital element of our adverts across the relevant newspaper's website.

5.9) Joint work through the Regional Adoption Agency

The Service continues to be part of the Central East Regional Adoption Agency Partnership. We will continue to work closely as a partnership to shape the future of Adoption Agency joint working. Part of this work may include ad-hoc, shared recruitment activity and profiling events.

6. Other areas of consideration

6.1) The duty recording/spreadsheet

Currently enquiries are logged with basic information e.g. name, date of enquiry, enquiry type (eform, telephone or email). To enable us to review our marketing strategy and activity we will undertake a review of the information recorded at enquiry stage to gain a more comprehensive view of which marketing activity is aiding us in recruiting adopters. This will then ensure that we have the information we need to review our strategy for 2018 – 2019.

6.2) Training

A comprehensive training programme is currently shared with the Fostering Service which includes face to face courses and elearning with use of our training booking website, CPD Online. Prospective adopters and approved adopters are also able to access a large number of courses through Central Bedfordshire Early Years, Multi Agency and LCSB programmes through this website which provides further training opportunities.



Going forward we will be reviewing the core expectations for training available to prospective adopters. They will continue to be expected to attend the Adoption Preparation Training and First Aid. The review will look into the possibility of a parenting programme and Triple P seminars which will be available to both prospective adopters and those who are approved. In addition to this the Fostering for Adoption training will also be developed.

During 2016 – 2017 the Adoption Preparation training programme was reviewed and redesigned to give it fresh, up to date content that is engaging and informative. We will be using the new presentations which will be reviewed by feedback from participants.

6.3) Social events

The Service's social events continue to be a huge success with over 100 adopted children attending in 2016 - 2017. During 2017 – 2018 the social events will continue to be shared with Bedford Borough Council with events such as:

- Summer BBQ
- Christmas party.

This financial year a quarterly support event will also be looked into as an opportunity for adopters to meet each other and build support networks in their local area.

7. Review of strategy

As the needs of the Service change throughout this financial year we will regularly review and adapt our strategy and monthly working plan to meet any challenges or where the needs of the Service change.

