



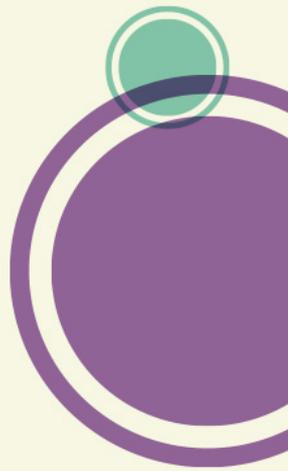
Adopt
Are you ready
to decide?

Appendix A



great
prospects

Recruitment strategy



Adoption Service

1 April 2018 - 31 March 2019

Contents

A great place to live and work.



	Page
1 Introduction	3
2 Successes within the Service	3
2.1) Ofsted inspection	3
2.2) Joint work with First4Adoption	3
3 Needs analysis and evaluation of activities in 2017 – 2018	4
3.1) Needs analysis	4
3.2) Evaluation of activities in 2017 – 2018	5
4 Target and current need for the year ahead	6
5 Recommended marketing and recruitment plan for the year ahead	6
5.1) Website	6
5.2) Information evenings	7
5.3) Press	7
5.4) Net Natives contract for multiple advertising campaigns	7
5.5) Lamppost banners	8
5.6) Social media	8
5.7) Newsletters and information sharing	9
5.8) Admobile advertising	9
6 Training and support	10
6.1) Training	10
6.2) Social events	10
6.3) Support groups and drop ins	11
6.4) Buddy scheme	11
6.5) Communication	11
6.6) Adoption UK	11
6.7) New Family Social	11
7 Other areas for consideration	12
7.1) Update of literature	12
7.2) Regional Adoption Agency	12
8 Review of strategy	12



National data from the Adoption Leadership Board (ALB) shows that the number of approved adopters has declined during the last year. ALB Chair, Andrew Christie, reports “this reinforces the importance of increasing adopter recruitment and support, especially for harder to place children”.

In support of this report, this recruitment strategy outlines the target for 2018 – 2019 and the current need for prospective adopters. It also gives an overview of the key marketing initiatives and targeted campaigns the Service will be undertaking this year.

2. Successes within the Service

2.1) Ofsted inspection

In June 2017 the Service was inspected by Ofsted as part of the ‘Child in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers Inspection’. Central Bedfordshire Children’s Service achieved an overall outcome of ‘Good’ and the graded judgement for adoption performance ‘Good’. This was a great achievement for the Service with Ofsted making positive references to the recruitment and training of adopters:

‘Adoption and Fostering Services are good, and effective recruitment, training and support arrangements are in place.’

‘A programme of training has been used to raise awareness of the Prevent duty, and good use is made of the train the trainer programmes to maximise impact and take up.’

‘Recruitment and preparation of adopters are effective.’

‘Staff respond promptly to enquiries about adoption. Historical delay in the first stage of the assessment has now been addressed, and newly approved adopters are satisfied with the time take for assessment.’

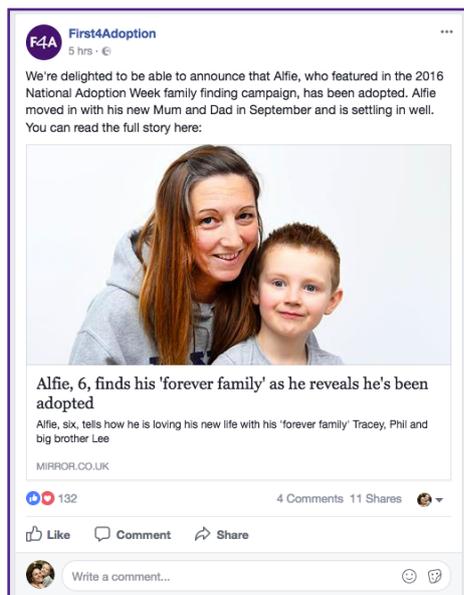
‘There has been a strong focus on seeking to recruit prospective adopters for fostering for adoption, which is discussed as part of the assessment.’

2.2). Joint work with First4Adoption

The Service was invited to work with First4Adoption (National Adoption Information Service in England) to assist with launching their National campaign - National Adoption Week. The previous year the Service worked with First4Adoption to find an adoptive family for a Central Bedfordshire child (Alfie) which was a great success and Alfie was successfully matched with his adopters who responded to the National campaign.

The Service and First4Adoption worked closely with Alfie’s family to produce a range of articles, social media posts and a good news story to share with national and local media to successfully launch National Adoption Week.





3. Needs analysis and evaluation of activities in 2017 – 2018

3.1) Needs analysis

Over the last year, 18 households were recommended for approval, 14 households were White British, and 4 couples were of mixed ethnicity including White British/Indian and White British European.

The number approved was 2 less than the set target of 20, the reasons for this were:

- One application not meeting Adoption Regulations and Standards
- One application withdrew due to a change in their personal circumstances.

14 children were considered for a match with prospective adopters:

- 12 children were matched with Central Bedfordshire adopters (3 of which were placed in fostering for adoption placements)
- All 14 children were White British, a reflection of the population of Central Bedfordshire that has a high White British population at 89.7%
- 2 children were matched with prospective adopters approved by other agencies, reasons for these placements were
 - No Central Bedfordshire adopters available who wished to adopt a single, older child
 - No Central Bedfordshire adopters available to adopt a child with consideration needed to locality and interrupted attachment.
- 6 children were aged under 1 year
- 1 child was aged 1 year
- 5 were between 2 – 4 years
- 2 children were 6 years plus
- 11 children were male
- 3 children were female.

26 children had a plan for adoption which saw an increase in activity as this was 8 more than the previous year.

3.2) Evaluation of activities in 2017 – 2018

The following is a highlight of performance for the last financial year which shows an increase in interest of adoption as well as step parent adoption:

Enquiries:	2017 – 2018	Comparison; Figures for 2016 - 2017
Adoption enquiries received	123	92
Step parent enquiries received	13	8
Approvals:		
Total number of approvals	18	17
Number of assessment in process:		
EoY Total number of households in stage 1	4	6
EoY Total number of households in stage 2	7	8

In order to ensure a range of adopters were recruited a blended marketing approach of traditional and digital marketing was utilised to attract a diverse range of people and families to consider adoption for Central Bedfordshire Council.

The following shows the most popular sources of initial contact which encouraged people to come forward to find out more about adoption:

Source:	Total number of initial contacts
Website	33
Net Natives; Facebook campaign	27
Telephone; no marketing source identified	21
Email; no marketing source identified	20
Step parent adoption query	8
No marketing stated	6
Google search to website	4
Word of mouth; Bedford Borough	3
Attended an information evening	2
Gov.uk website	2
Word of mouth; friend	2
Word of mouth; another Local Authority	2
Website through Adoption UK	1
Word of mouth; not specified	1
Voluntary child care expo	1
Radio advert	1

4. Target and current need for the year ahead

This 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 target for 2018 – 2019 is to recruit 20 adopters from a range of backgrounds and ethnicities who are willing to consider:

- Foster for adoption (this will be a priority for the year ahead)
- Siblings
- Older single children
- Children with additional needs.

5. Recommended marketing and recruitment plan for the year ahead

5.1) Website

The web pages have continued to see a high number of traffic through the adoption pages. This year has seen a rise in the number of views with 5,637 visits compared with 4,162 visits last year. This could be due to a number of factors such as increased activity on our Central Bedfordshire Council media channels e.g. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, increased digital marketing advertising through digital newsletters and the use of the free my google business listing.

Some minor developments to the web pages will shortly be undertaken to include imagery and the Ofsted logo. Further developments will be completed this year to further improve the journey for our customers using our website pages.

The Service will work closely with the Website team to complete the following this year:

- The web content will be rewritten by using research into the customers journey and the UK's most popular search terms in relation to adoption. It will ensure that key phrases and words are included within the text to help our pages appear higher within google when a member of the public is searching for adoption in the Bedfordshire area. The new layout will help adopters get answers to their questions or queries quickly by having sections that are important to particular groups of people e.g. those interested in foster for adoption, those wishing to know more about step parent adoption etc
- Another area for consideration is more frequent use of marketing pages. These are used for advertising campaigns to encourage those interested in adoption to make an enquiry. The pages are created and made bespoke to each advertising campaign. This improves the enquirers journey to finding out the information they require. They are short and precise with the information regarding the particular campaign being advertised with an 'enquire now' call to action that asks for their name, email and telephone number. This enables the Service to have direct contact with the enquirer, provide them with information quickly and to be able to keep in touch.

The Service will continue to work closely with the Website team to ensure that the website's content is kept fresh, updated and engaging to continue to provide the best information to the public.

5.2) Information evenings



Information evenings are promoted within the Adoption web pages of the Central Bedfordshire website as well as the First4Adoption and New Family Social websites. Previously times and locations were not included to encourage those wishing to attend to call us first. This has been reviewed and full details, times and venues are now advertised to encourage those wishing to find out more about adoption to drop into an event. They continue to be well attended and received.

Information evenings will continue to be held one evening a month at a central location.

5.3) Press

The Service has continued to keep in touch with local media to promote adoption and share good news and successes. This has included adopters being invited to local radio stations to talk about their experiences of adoption and why they would recommend those thinking about adoption to contact Central Bedfordshire to start their journey.

The Service will continue to work closely with the Communications Officer to produce press releases around National campaigns and times of celebration and successes such as National Adoption Week and LGBT Adoption and Fostering Week.

Part of this work will also include the use of the following:

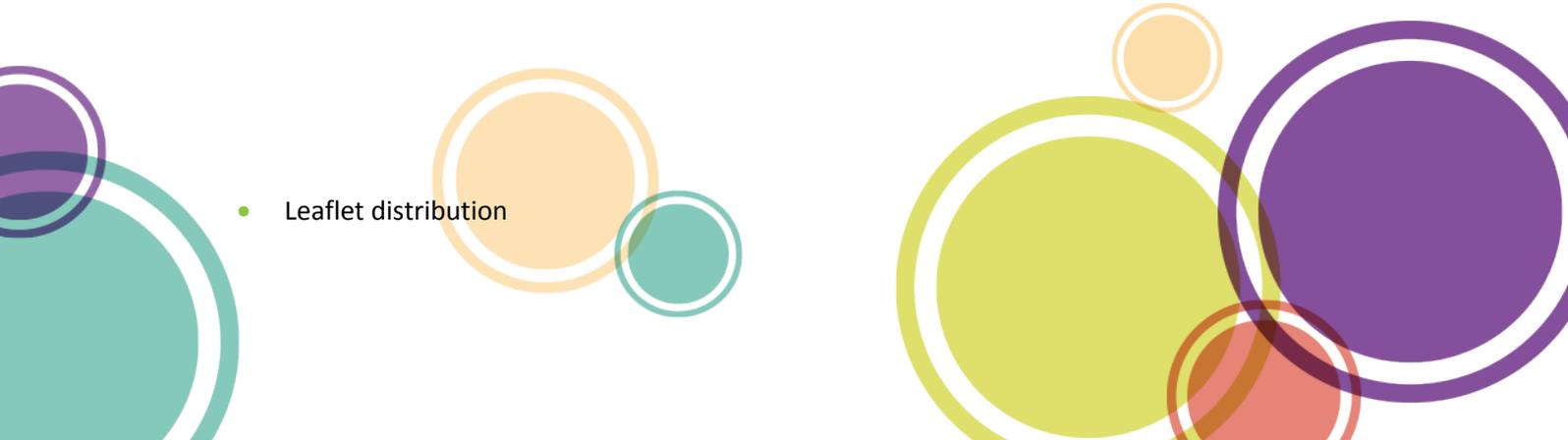
- Internal messaging through Staff Central (staff newsletter)
- Regular messaging to Central Bedfordshire residents through ebulletins
- Use of adopter's testimonies from a range of people and families.

5.4) Net Natives contract for multiple advertising campaigns

At the end of 2017 Central Bedfordshire's digital advertising contract with Net Natives came to an end and a procurement exercise was completed to source the best company for the future contract. Three companies with experience of adoption and fostering were invited to provide a quotation. Following the price and quality exercise Net Natives were successful in their bid and the Service will continue to work with them for the next two years (with the possibility of extending the contract for a further year if required). The contract has given the Service the opportunity to work with a company who have extensive and proven experience of successful digital marketing campaigns within adoption and fostering.

To reduce the number of external companies used, Net Natives will be running multiple campaigns for both adoption and fostering for the year ahead including the following adoption campaigns:

- Facebook advertising
Two, four-week campaigns will be produced for Facebook. The adverts will run during proven successful times of the year – during and after National Adoption Week and in January when the general public look for new opportunities.
- Radio advertising
Radio advertising will continue on Heart radio for one, four-week campaign which will be aired between April and May.

- Leaflet distribution
- 

Leaflet distribution will be completed between December and January to homes within Central Bedfordshire.

- **Google Dynamic Words**
The Service will be trialling a new type of digital marketing this year, Google Dynamic Words. When someone searches terms, keywords or phrases closely related to adoption, Google uses them to generate a text advert to display to the user. This will then lead the member of the public to a marketing page and enquiry form regarding adoption for Central Bedfordshire.

5.5) Lamppost banners

To raise brand awareness across Central Bedfordshire the Service will be installing new large-scale adoption posters in four different locations this year in the form of raised lamppost banners.

The banners will alternate between an adoption and fostering advert and will be installed in the following areas:

- High Street, Dunstable
- Lake Street, Leighton Buzzard
- West Street, Leighton Buzzard
- Town Centre, Biggleswade.

All of the above locations will either have a high footfall of slow moving traffic or are located close to supermarkets, town centres or areas with a high footfall of traffic or pedestrians.

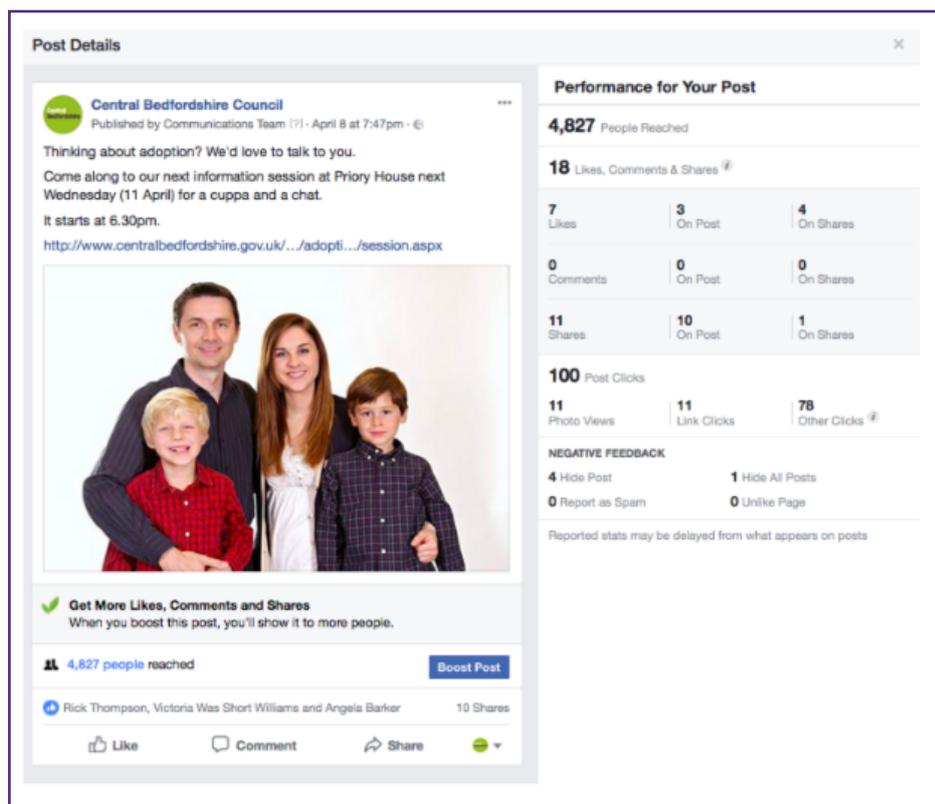
5.6) Social media

Social media continues to be a positive, quick, responsive and free way of spreading messages and good news stories about adoption the public. The numbers of likes on both Central Bedfordshire Council's Facebook and Twitter pages has risen significantly and continue to be a great tool for advertising our adoption information evenings:

- **Central Bedfordshire Council Facebook page**
The number of page likes has risen to 10,573 compared with 8,325 in April 2017
- Twitter has also been a vital tool with Central Bedfordshire's Let's Talk Central page hitting 11,100 followers
- There is also the capacity to extend our marketing through the Central Bedfordshire Instagram page that currently has 738 followers.



Posts on the above pages have proved to be very popular with increased activity, example below:



The Service will continue to work closely with the Communications Officer to post and tweet messages about adoption.

5.7) Newsletters and information sharing

With increased initial contacts coming through digital sources the Service will continue to work with local community groups and employers to access their electronic newsletters to include articles to promote adoption.

5.8) Admobile advertising

A new area of future advertising is admobile, a quick and non-intrusive advert shown on mobile telephones. The Service are able to build an advert and reach a local, targeted demographic through a scrolling banner advert.

The Service will review this type of advertising this year and utilise if cost effective.

6. Training and support

6.1) Training

A comprehensive training programme continues to be available to adopters in Central Bedfordshire. The training covers a range of key areas and within this year's programme the following areas have been reviewed and made available:

- Let's talk about adoption
- Foetal alcohol spectrum disorder.
Current research estimates that at least one third of looked after children come into care with their parents having a history of alcohol misuse so a new course has been added to support adopters called working with foetal alcohol spectrum disorder.
- PACE training
PACE training was provided for both adopters and foster carers in the last year which was well received. A specific PACE module will be made available for adopters this year which is facilitated by a member of the Adoption Team.
- Triple P Seminars
The Parenting Service restructure meant that Triple P seminars for adopters were unable to be organised for the previous year. The Service has remained in contact with the Parenting Team who are now in a position to provide further training for adopters around:
 - Triple P 3 – 12 years Parenting
 - Triple P Teen Parenting.
- Free elearning for prospective adopters, First Steps, continues to be made available through First4Adoption covering areas such as:
 - Backgrounds of children and why they come into care
 - Attachment and its importance in adoption
 - Identity, heritage and life story work
 - Challenges and transition to new situations.

6.2) Social events

The Service continues to work closely with Bedford Borough's Adoption Service to provide two annual events. The events are very well attended and encourage networking and socialising amongst adopters and their children, they are:

- The Summer BBQ
- The Christmas Party.

The Service will also be looking to add further events for families including:

- Two family-based activity days for children and their adopters.
The activities events again aim to encourage networking and also to promote fun within their relationships.
- Teddy Bears Picnic.
To encourage networking amongst adopters with younger children.

6.3) Support groups and drop ins



Adoption drop in, support groups continue to be provided every three months on a Friday morning at Priory House to provide informal support to adopters. A member of the adoption team is present at the support group to answer any queries or worries adopters may have.

Letterbox drop ins are also provided to enable adopters to drop in and discuss any queries they have regarding letterbox.

6.4) Buddy scheme

Informal networking is encouraged by social workers within the team to strengthen support networks within the adopter's local area. A buddy is identified for prospective adopters who would benefit from peer support.

6.5) Communication

Email correspondence to adopters continues to ensure that adopters are aware of the range of events and training provided. Part of the communication to adopters include an Adoption Newsletter which is sent to adopters three times a year with articles of interest relating to adoption, adoption support, child development and activities etc.

6.4) Adoption UK

The Service promotes the use Adoption UK including holding a Local Authority membership.

Adopters are encouraged to become members of Adoption UK and as part of the Local Authority's membership, five free household memberships are provided each year (these are distributed to adopters who will benefit from the membership the most, free of charge). Local Authority membership includes services such as:

- Access to and features within Children Who Wait magazine, a family finding resource
- Access to training workshops
- Promotion of Service within the online database of agencies
- A helpline for staff and adopters
- Access to the Adoption UK library
- Access to online information e.g. articles, factsheets and recommended reading lists.

6.5) New Family Social

The Service continues to support LGBT adopters through membership to New Family Social (NFS) which includes services such as:

- Adopters who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender are able to join NFS for free and access unique peer support networks of other LGBT adopters
- Inclusion of the Service on the websites agency finder to enable LGBT potential adopters to choose an agency that will welcome and support their application
- Inclusion of the Service's information events on the NFS website
- Access to NFS children's profiles for family finding
- Agency discount to suggested training providers
- Regular magazine
- Access to free flyers and logos to promote adoption within the LGBT community.

7. Other areas for consideration

7.1) Update of literature

An area for improvement that will begin this year is to update the adoption literature. Research shows that there are benefits of marketing campaigns being targeted to appeal to people's intrinsic motivations. Research also shows improvement in initial contacts for information where local authorities have used promotional materials that explicitly recognise adoption as altruistic, often expressed as loving children and stressing the potential to making a difference to the lives of children. This is something the Service has adopted for marketing campaigns, but it was felt some supporting literature was outdated and could be updated to take into account the above research. There is also benefit in literature and marketing materials having a more personal tone which will be considered.

During the review it will also be a good opportunity to showcase that Central Bedfordshire is an Ofsted 'Good' Service with the 'Good' logo being added to our existing literature.

7.2) Regional Adoption Agency

Central Bedfordshire continues to work alongside other Local Authorities as part of the Central East Partnership. The partnership includes Central Bedfordshire Council, Bedford Borough Council and Milton Keynes Council.

Central Bedfordshire Council became the project lead working with iMpower to design and develop the partnership and to continue to share learning and good practice.

The Service will continue to work with the Local Authorities to shape the future of the partnership.

8. Review of strategy

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

