

Central Bedfordshire Council

Corporate Parenting Panel

11 February 2019

Six Monthly Report in respect of the Adoption Service 1 April – 30 September 2018

Report of: Cllr Steven Dixon, Executive Member for Families, Education and Children and Lead Member for Children's Services (steven.dixon@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Responsible Director(s): Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services, (Sue.harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Purpose of this report

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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panel is asked to:

Consider, note and comment on the content of the report.

Issues

1. Information Evenings continue to be held on a monthly basis. Enquiries can be received from an online enquiry form on the Central Bedfordshire website, via social media, email to the Adoption Team or telephone call via a duty Social Worker service.
2. We have had 45 enquiries in this period of which 5 related to Step Parent Adoption. Many enquiries are for the provision of advice and information only. All those enquiring about becoming a prospective adopter are invited to attend an information evening.

3. As of 30 September, 5 households were in stage one of the process and 6 in stage two (the final assessment stage before Adoption Panel approval).
4. 4 new adoptive households completed their assessment and were approved as prospective adopters.
5. As of 30 September, Central Bedfordshire had 3 approved adopters where no link had been identified and family finding was in progress.
6. 2 prospective adopters withdrew in Stage 2 following agency advice.
7. 2 approved adopters withdrew post approval due to a change in circumstances.

Adopter Recruitment and Placements for Children

8. Central Bedfordshire year to date performance:

	2018-19 activity to date
Adult Approvals	4
Adoption Plans	19
Matched	6
Adoption Order	5

9. As of 30 September 2018, there were 15 children placed in adoptive placements pending the granting of an Adoption Order. 8 children have an application to adopt submitted to court with orders expected to be granted in the next few months. In addition, there were 3 children placed in a Foster for Adoption placements pending the outcome of Care Proceedings.
10. Of the 6 matches made in this period 3 children were matched with Central Bedfordshire approved adopters and 3 with external agency providers.
11. 5 Adoption Orders were granted in this reporting period.
12. There have continued to be no adoption disruptions of children placed by Central Bedfordshire within this period.
13. One non-agency adoption order was granted following a step parent adoption application.

Interagency:

14. During this reporting period 4 children from other local authorities were placed with 2 prospective adopter households approved by Central Bedfordshire.
15. 5 adoption orders were granted to interagency placements provided by CBC adopters. This has a positive impact on national performance and reflects the successful recruitment of adopters for children requiring adoption nationally.

Adoption Support

16. 18 requests for adoption support were received. These include 4 requests for an intermediary service.
17. 10 Adoption support assessments have been completed.
18. Applications to the Adoption Support Fund have significantly increased in this period compared with the same period in 2017-18 with 19 applications completed and agreed. This has enabled the provision of therapeutic intervention to identify families.
19. Support also continues through post adoption contact arrangements (sometimes referred to as indirect contact) for each individual child placed for adoption. 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.
20. Support events have continued to be held such as the annual summer barbeque which was attended by over 100 adults and children.

Key Events

21. Central Bedfordshire continue to be a partner within the Central East Regional Adoption Agency. CBC are the lead authority and following the completion of an outline and full Business Case are progressing to implement an RAA with Milton Keynes Council from 1st April 2019.
22. The Adoption Panel has continued to remain a shared service with Bedford Borough hosted by Central Bedfordshire. A new Panel Chair was appointed and attended Team Meetings to discuss panel matters and practice development with both services.

Reporting to Members – Legal Requirements

23. Regulations associated Statutory Guidance and National Minimum Standards outline the requirements to report to Members on the management and outcomes of Services provided, in order that they can satisfy themselves that the Services provided are effective and achieving good outcomes for children.

Risk Management

24. Regulatory Risks: Failure to report to Members would be a breach of National Minimum Standard.

Staffing (including Trade Unions)

25. Not Applicable.

Community Safety:

26. Not Applicable

Sustainability

27. Not Applicable

Procurement:

28. Not Applicable

Council Priorities:

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

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

31. Adoption is a key statutory service to Looked After Children

Corporate Implications

32. Not Applicable

Legal Implications

33. Regulations; associated Statutory Guidance and National Minimum Standards contain and outline 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.

34. 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.
35. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Financial and Risk Implications

36. Adoption within Children's Services has an annual budget including costs of other Adoption Agency placements and provision on behalf of Bedford Borough Council under the Shared Adoption Panel. The report is an update on the Adoption service and does not have financial implications.

Equalities Implications

37. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Adoption services provided to Looked after Children affects all sectors of communities. Central Bedfordshire Council consider adopters from a wide range of backgrounds and the matching process carefully considers individual needs and characteristics.

Conclusion and next Steps

38. Since April 2018, 57 young people ceased to be looked after and of these 5 children were adopted – this shows that our year to date Adoption performance stands at 8.8% of children leaving care do so through adoption.
39. The total numbers of adoptions during this year are expected to improve significantly due to the number of children currently placed for adoption and the timetable when adoption orders are expected to be granted.
40. The average time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family in days (Adoption Scorecard Indicator) continues to improve.
41. Q1 (April to June) rolling 3-year average was reported at 390 days. This was maintained for Q2 (July-September 2018 - rolling 3-year average ending 30th September). This is an improvement when compared to our 2016/17 (443 days) and 2017/18 outturn (430 days).
42. National average target for 2014-2017 is 417 days and we will continue to work to achieve permanence through adoption for our children in timescales that are better than the national target.

43. Adoption Support activity remained stable in this period with 18 assessments being undertaken to date (the same number completed in 2017/18). The adoption support offer continues to be reviewed alongside the implementation of the RAA.

Appendices

None

Background Papers: (open to public inspection)

None

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