

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL****22 JANUARY 2019****FOSTERING SERVICE REGULATION 35 - 6 MONTHLY REPORT**

Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel: Councillor Miles

Report Author(s): Joanne Rabbitte Head of Delivery,  
Corporate Parenting Service**SIX MONTHLY REPORT IN RESPECT OF THE ADOPTION SERVICE 1 APRIL –  
30 SEPTEMBER 2018****Purpose of 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.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

This report, therefore, reports on these regulatory activities The Executive or Committee is asked to:

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

**Issues**

2. The Children Act 2004, Care Standards Act 2000 and associated relevant Regulations and National Minimum Standards require the Local Authority Fostering Service to report to Members regularly on the activities of the Service.
3. This report covers activities in the period 1 April 2018 to 30 September 2018

**Recruitment of Adopters**

4. Information Evenings continue to be held on a monthly basis. Enquiries can be received from a number of different methods including MKC website, telephone or email to a Duty Social Worker service.
5. 64 enquiries have been received in this period of which 15 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 provided with information and invited to attend an information evening.
6. As of 30 September 2018, ten households were in stage one of the process and ten in stage two.

7. Three new adoptive households completed their assessment and were approved as prospective adopters.
8. As of 30 September 2018, Milton Keynes Council had two approved adopters where no link had been identified and family finding was in progress.
9. Three prospective adopters withdrew in Stage 1 following agency advice.

### **Adopter recruitment and Placements for Children**

10. Year to date performance:

	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2018-30 <sup>TH</sup> September 2018 <b>activity to date</b>
Adult Approvals	1
Adoption Plans	
Matched	11
Adoption Order	9

### **Training**

11. The Adoption Team have held a number of training events during this period to assist adopter preparation including foster to adopt training, family and friends workshop and prospective adopter training. Theraplay training is planned to be held for adoptive parents and prospective adopters in November 2018. In addition adoptive parents can access training via another Local Authorities annual training programme. Feedback includes:

Foster for Adoption training:

*“I have had a better insight into Foster for Adoption and feel better prepared to make an informed decision.”*

Prospective Adopters Training:

*“Thank you again for making the training days informative and inspiring. We are really excited for the next steps,” and “we feel fortunate to have been exposed to such good training, thank you.”*

## Family & Friends Training:

*"I was made aware of the process for adopting and the involvement of various agencies. The provided list of reading material was useful. Attending the meeting allowed me to feel part of the adoption process and become aware of how to best support those adopting."*

12. As of 30 September 2018, there are ten children placed in adoptive placements pre the granting of an adoption order. Seven have an application to adopt submitted to court with orders expected to be granted in the next few months
13. Of the ten children matched for adoption three were matched with Milton Keynes Council approved adopters and seven with external agency providers.
14. Nine Adoption Orders were granted in this reporting period.
15. There have continued to be no adoption disruptions of children placed by Milton Keynes Council within this period. This is the second year of no disruptions and indicates that the matching and decision making process is robust and based on a good understanding of a child's individual needs.
16. No non agency adoption orders were granted in this period.

## Interagency

17. During this reporting period five children from other local authorities were placed with two prospective adopter households approved by Milton Keynes Council.
18. This has a positive impact on national performance particularly with the low numbers of adopter applications and approvals nationally.

## Adoption Support

19. Thirty four requests for adoption support were received. These include nine requests for an intermediary service from adopted adults/birth family members.
20. 28 Adoption support assessments have been completed.
21. Eighteen applications to the Adoption Support fund have been completed and agreed. This has enabled the provision of therapeutic intervention to identified families . The available funding is being fully utilised by Milton Keynes adoption service and in the 6 months covered for the purpose of this report gained £150,623 funding for therapeutic support.
22. Support also continues through post adoption contact arrangements 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. As of 30 September the service was managing 175 family contact agreements.
23. Support events have continued to be held such as the monthly coffee mornings, Easter party and a summer picnic in August. Positive feedback is generally received from the adoptive families who attend:

*“just wanted to say that I personally have really valued the coffee mornings,” and “I just wanted to let you know what a fabulous time the kids had at the Easter party. I was worried about managing the two kids on my own and staff were so helpful on the day - it really made it easier for me.”*

24. The Adoption Team has also run a youth club for adopted children which now runs termly after a positive pilot period. There are two sessions to accommodate differing age ranges of children. Young person feedback has been positive and includes:

*“everyone there is like me cos we're all adopted so no one's judging me”*

*“Youth Club was great. i really enjoyed it and loved making friends with other children just like me”.*

### **Key Events**

24. Milton Keynes Council 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 a Regional Adoption Agency with Milton Keynes Council. The implementation stage is in progression to achieve the 'go live' date on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 .
25. The Fostering and Adoption Panel membership has remained consistent. An interim Panel advisor was appointed in this period. This is a key quality assurance role and the Panel Chair comments that the role has had a positive impact on performance and the quality of work presented to panel.

### **Annual Budget**

26. For the financial year 2018/2019 the Adoption Service within Children's Services had an annual budget of £1,149,875

### **Reporting to Members – Legal Requirements**

27. 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**

28. Regulatory Risks: Failure to report to Members would be a breach of National Minimum Standards.

### **Council Priorities**

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

### **Corporate Implications**

30. Not applicable

### **Legal Implications**

31. 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.

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.

### Financial and Risk Implications

32. Adoption within Children’s Services has an annual budget including costs of other interagency adoption placements.

### Equalities Implications

33. Milton Keynes Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation 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.

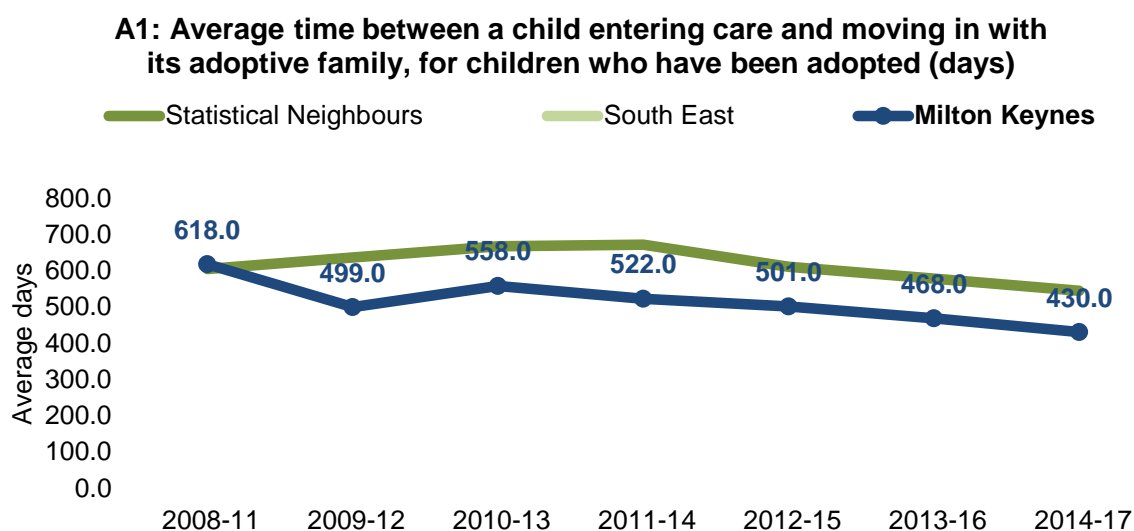
### Conclusion:

For Q1 and Q2 there have been 9 adoption orders granted matching the total for the previous year. With the number of children currently placed for adoption end of year performance will be a significant improvement from the previous period.

This reflects the improved performance for robust permanence planning in Children’s Services and achieving good outcomes for children.

Since April, 89 young people ceased to be looked after and of these 9 children were adopted – this shows that our year to date Adoption performance stands at 10.1% at the end of September 2018 which shows improvement on our 2017/18 and 2016/17 outturns of 6.3% and 6.6% respectively.

The time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family in days (Adoption Scorecard Indicator) has improved over recent years (see chart below) but for Q1 and Q2 it has risen to 467 days.



Considering the current children subject to Placement Orders awaiting a match for adoption the average time is likely to increase so performance will be closely monitored.

Implementation of the Regional Adoption Agency continues with the expected 'go live' date of 01 April 2018. Implementation will align services and good practice models across the two authorities to provide improved services and outcomes in Adoption service delivery.

Panel members work well together and are committed and experienced members who bring a range of skills and experience to the role. Some panel members have limited time to give to panel attendance and further recruitment is needed to ensure quoracy at every panel. The membership of the central list lacks diversity which the Panel Adviser is addressing through recruitment of new panel members and the development of the Regional Agency.

**Annexes:** None

**Background Papers:** None