

**Notice of a public meeting of
Corporate Parenting Board**

To: Councillors Looker (Chair), Runciman (Vice-Chair),
Brooks, Cuthbertson, Funnell, Potter, Scott and
Wiseman

Date: Thursday, 4 July 2013

Time: 5.30pm

Venue: The Severus Room - 1st Floor,
West Offices, York

AGENDA

1. Declarations of Interest

At this point, Members are asked to declare:

- any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests
- any prejudicial interests or
- any disclosable pecuniary interests

which they may have in respect of business on this agenda.

2. Minutes (Pages 3 - 8)

To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on
Thursday 2 May 2013.

3. Public Participation

At this point in the meeting members of the public who have
registered to speak regarding an item on the agenda or an issue
within the Board's remit can do so. The deadline for registering is
5pm the working day before the meeting, in this case **5pm on
Wednesday 3 July 2013.**

4. Good and Safe Placements for Looked After Children - A progress report on Fostering and Adoption Activity and Outcomes in York (Pages 9 - 38)

This report provides an update to the Board on York's progress through the delivery of its fostering and adoption services, in delivering good and safe placements to children who require alternative care.

5. Children in Out of Authority Residential Care - Quality and Surveillance

Members are to receive a verbal update from officers on the quality and surveillance of children in out of authority residential care.

6. Urgent Business

Any other business which the Chair considers urgent under the Local Government Act 1972.

Democracy Officers

Name: Catherine Clarke and Louise Cook (job-share)

Contact Details:

Telephone: (01904) 551031

Email: catherine.clarke@york.gov.uk and louise.cook@york.gov.uk

For more information about any of the following please contact the Democracy Officers responsible for servicing this meeting.

- Registering to speak
- Written Representations
- Business of the meeting
- Any special arrangements
- Copies of reports

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- ensure that what you want to say speak relates to an item of business on the agenda or an issue which the committee has power to consider (speak to the Democracy Officer for advice on this);
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Further information about what's being discussed at this meeting

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The majority of councillors are not appointed to the Cabinet (39 out of 47). Any 3 non-Cabinet councillors can 'call-in' an item of business following a Cabinet meeting or publication of a Cabinet Member decision. A specially convened Corporate and Scrutiny Management Committee (CSMC) will then make its recommendations to the next scheduled Cabinet meeting, where a final decision on the 'called-in' business will be made.

Scrutiny Committees

The purpose of all scrutiny and ad-hoc scrutiny committees appointed by the Council is to:

- Monitor the performance and effectiveness of services;
- Review existing policies and assist in the development of new ones, as necessary; and
- Monitor best value continuous service improvement plans

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City of York Council

Committee Minutes

| | |
|-----------|---|
| MEETING | CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD |
| DATE | 2 MAY 2013 |
| PRESENT | COUNCILLORS LOOKER (CHAIR), BROOKS, CUTHBERTSON AND RUNCIMAN (VICE-CHAIR) |
| APOLOGIES | COUNCILLORS FUNNELL, POTTER AND SCOTT |

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

At this point in the meeting, Members were asked to declare any personal, prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests they might have in relation to the business on the agenda or other general interests they might have within the remit of the Board. None were declared.

25. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on 7 March 2013 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

26. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

27. KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER

Members received a presentation from the Assistant Director (Children's Specialist Services) entitled "Keeping Families Together – Keeping Children Safe" which set out changes to the arrangements for the delivery of children's social care services in the city in response to the social work reform challenges. It focused on the vision for these services and how they would

safely support a continued reduction in the number of children who became looked after and improve the quality of provision for those children and young people who are looked after. The presentation provided Members with the following information.

- National drivers behind the changes include:
 - The Munro Review of Child Protection – Final Report – this began a comprehensive process of shifting children’s social work from compliance to a learning culture.
 - Changes to the regulation of social work – all social workers are now required to register with the Health and Care Professions Council.
 - Introduction of the College of Social Work – responsible for quality of social work programmes and promotion of high professional standards
 - The work of the Social Work Reform Board (SWRB)
 - The new Ofsted Inspection Framework - shifting the focus from process to outcomes
 - Family Justice Review – speeds up public law process and emphasises the voice of the child and the role of professionals working together.
 - Revised Working Together 2013 – streamlines previous guidance documents
 - Further Action on Adoption – sets out our proposals for the next steps in tackling delay.
 - Early Intervention – The Allen Review
 - Our local learning - will shape our approach to delivering our service vision
- The vision for the service and how it would be achieved
- Summary of the new style of delivery – changing the way things are done and agreeing what the new “style” will be.
- Two new roles have been created. These are Principal Officer Strategy and Performance and Principal Social Worker
- Flow chart detailing the structure of the service under the Assistant Director (Children’s Specialist Services), Head of Early Intervention Services, Head of Service Safeguarding and Head of Service Resources. (Majority of resources and energies are directed close to the front line by removing layers of hierarchy.)
- A suite of services has already been developed to support the outcomes sought. These include the following:

- Single Front Door – a single point of contact for all referrals to CSS for advice and for safeguarding concerns for children and young people.
- Integrated Family Service – a family support service (incorporating York’s “Troubled Families” Programme) which seeks to provide early help and support to families across the city.
- Looked After Children’s Support Service – a dedicated support service to looked after children including addressed and supervised contact and direct work with looked after children. This team will move into a new, specially designed, facility in September 2013.
- Review and Re-procurement of Children’s Home Provision –The provision of children’s home beds has been contracted to Northern Care. This includes the block purchase of four beds at Wenlock Terrace in York and a further two external placements in Northern Care’s other homes.
- A New Deal for Foster Carers – a new fees and allowances scheme that is closely linked to a foster carer’s development pathway has been introduced.
- Strengthened Independent Challenge – Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) have been located within the City of York Council of York Safeguarding Children Board (CYSCB) and a new IRO post has been created.
- Creation of Separate Fostering and Adoption Teams – Both services have been strengthened and each team will have a dedicated service manager and advanced practitioner to lead the delivery of these services.

The Assistant Director provided additional information in response to particular issues raised by Board Members.

In response to a query about vacant posts, he advised that they had had a very good response to external advertisements for social workers posts, from newly qualified social workers to principal social workers, including some internal applications, and they hoped to be able to fill most posts.

A concern was raised that having police based within West Offices may deter some looked after children from visiting West Offices. Members were assured that police officers would not be

in uniform and would be based back office so this should not be a problem.

- RESOLVED:
- (i) That the presentation be noted.
 - (ii) That an update be provided to the Board in approximately 18 months time.

REASON: In order that the Board is kept informed with regard to the changes which have taken place in the arrangements for the delivery of children's social care in York.

28. CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD DRAFT WORKPLAN FOR 2013/14

Members considered a report which set out the proposed timetable of reports for the Corporate Parenting Board for 2013-14. Members noted that the aim of the work plan was to ensure that there was overview of each of the areas of the City of York Looked After Children's Strategy 2012-15 during the forthcoming municipal year.

Members discussed the proposed timetable as set out in the agenda papers, and agreed the timetable as follows:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 4 July 2013 | Good and Safe Placements Annual adoption report Quarterly fostering report, including inviting a representative from the York Area Foster Carers Association |
| 3 October 2013 | Health of Looked After Children Moving into Adulthood, including Care Leavers Charter |
| 5 Dec 2013 | Respect and Involvement, including a report from the Children's Rights Officer Education, with a report from the head teacher of the virtual school of Looked After Children. |

(Virtual Head Teacher for Looked after Children be invited to attend the meeting)

6 March 2013 The emotional well being of looked after children (slot in dependent on when it comes through scrutiny)

Maintaining and promoting important relationships for looked after children

1 May 2014 Respect and involvement including the annual report of the independent reviewing officer service

Promoting a positive sense of identity for all children.

Board Members thought it would be useful to hear back from those Members who had responsibility for visiting children's homes and agreed to receive a report from the service manager and member visiting. Officers noted that it would be beneficial to hear feedback from the Glen in the context of wider short breaks.

RESOLVED: That the work plan and timetable of meetings outlined above be agreed.

REASON: To ensure the Council's commitment to undertake its role as a responsible Corporate Parent in line with the desired outcomes in the Looked After Children's Strategy 2012-15.

Councillor J Looker, Chair
[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 6.15 pm].

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Corporate Parenting Board**4 July 2013**

Report of the Director of Adults, Children and Education

Good and Safe Placements for Looked After Children – A progress report on Fostering and Adoption Activity and Outcomes in York

Summary

1. This report provides an update to the Board on York's progress, through the delivery of its fostering and adoption services, in delivering good and safe placements to children who require alternative care.

Background

2. The council's placement strategy focuses upon children being placed with local foster families, where practicable. For children, who can not return to the care of their parents or extended family, there is an explicit commitment to seeking adoption families, in which they will have the opportunity to grow up in a new permanent, loving family.

The fostering and adoption services are registered with Ofsted as the regulatory authority. There is an extensive legislative base underpinned by regulation, national minimum standards and an inspection framework.

The adoption and fostering regulations require that each service report on a regular basis to the Director of Children's Services and the Cabinet member with responsibility for Children's Services. The reports for the annual review of the adoption service and the quarterly report of the fostering service for period January to March 2013 are submitted for consideration (appendices A and B).

Consultation

3. The work of each of the officers reporting to the Board is undertaken with consultation with service users e.g. foster carers, adopters, looked after children and care leavers. Feedback from York Area Foster Carers Association, Show Me That I Matter and I Matter Too (representatives of all looked after children) is regularly sought and incorporated into the service development.

Options

4. There are no options for decision, as the information provided is intended to develop the knowledge for the Board of the experience of looked after children.

Analysis

5. Not applicable

Council Plan

6. The Corporate Parenting Board will be ensuring that the work of partners for looked after children contributes to the aims of
 - The Children and Young People's Plan
 - Building strong communities
 - Protecting vulnerable people

Through the positive outcomes for looked after children, the aim is for them to be able to benefit from and contribute to

- Get York moving
- Create jobs and grow the economy
- Protect the environment

7. Implications

- **Financial:** Not applicable
- **Human Resources:** Not applicable
- **Equalities:** Not applicable

- **Legal** : Not applicable
- **Crime and Disorder**: Not applicable
- **Information Technology**: Not applicable
- **Property** : Not applicable
- **Other**: Not applicable

Risk Management

8. Not applicable

Recommendations

9. It is recommended that the Board receives the reports regarding the adoption and fostering services from the Director of Adults, Children and Education relating to the progress of the department and its key partners in progressing the actions to achieve York's vision for looked after children.

Reason: To develop the Board's knowledge and experience of looked after children

Contact Details

Author:

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Howard Lovelady, Head of Service (Resources) Children's Social Care, ACE Tel: (01904) 555357

Eoin Rush, Assistant Director
Tel: (01904) 554212

Report Approved

Date 25/06/2013

Specialist Implications Officer's: Not applicable

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Annexes:

Adoption Service Report 2013, Appendix A

Fostering Service Report January to March 2013, Appendix B



Annual report on the Adoption Service in York: April 2012 - March 2013

1. Background

1.1 The Adoption National Minimum Standard 25.6 requires that the Executive of the local authority receives written reports on the management, outcomes and financial state of the agency every 6 months. This report sets out a summary of the work of the Adoption Service for the period 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2013. The attached Appendices provide data on activity over this period. The Adoption Service was inspected by Ofsted in January 2010 and was rated as good overall with outstanding prospects for 'Helping children make a positive contribution'

2. Summary of main issues

2.1 The increase in the numbers of children with a plan for adoption in recent years, alongside the Government drive to increase the number of children adopted, has led to greater demands on the Service. In recognition of this, the recent restructure in Children's Social Care has increased management capacity in the service by establishing a separate post of Adoption Service Manager and increased the staff complement by 50% from 2.5 to 5 placement workers.

3. Purpose of this report

3.1 The purpose of the report is to consider the activity of the Adoption Service in relation to its compliance with the National Minimum Standards; the implementation and progression of children's care plans; the service offered to those seeking to adopt and the services offered to those affected by adoption through the provision of adoption support. It is also used to identify any significant trends in adoption practice and how York can continue to meet the changing demands within adoption.

4. Overview

4.1 Adoption work within the agency is located within two main areas; within child care teams who complete the necessary internal and legal processes when adoption is identified as a suitable option for a child; and within the family placement team where adoption social workers assess an individual's suitability to be approved as an adopter and help children's social workers identify a suitable adoptive family for a child.

4.2 City of York has always been a high performing adoption agency, and is ranked in the top local authorities nationally for its performance in respect of the percentage of children adopted from the looked after children's population. York performs well in respect of placing a high percentage of children with a prospective adoptive family within 12 months of the plan for adoption being agreed, and in having a low rate of these placements disrupting before an Adoption Order is made. These three indicators taken together are indicative of a concerted approach to the active planning for adoption, consistent support to prospective adopters and prompt completion of the process. National data on the performance of all 152 local authorities is gathered by government in the 'Adoption Scorecard'.

4.3 The most recently published scorecard in November 2012 (hyper-link in Appendices) rated City of York's performance (out of 152 local authorities) as:

- 19th for the percentage of Looked After Children (LAC) adopted during the year;
- 6th for the average time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family;
- 31st for the average time between a LA getting a Placement Order and matching a child and
- 19th for the percentage of LAC who wait less than 21 months between entering care and moving in with an adoptive family.

5. National Picture

5.1 The work of City of York Council as an adoption agency is regulated by the Adoption and Children Act 2002 [ACA 2002] which was fully implemented in December 2005. A full revision of the statutory adoption guidance was issued by the Department for Education in February 2011; part of the Statutory Guidance relating to prospective adopters has been revised again for implementation on 31st July 2013, and further revisions are expected later in

the year. Statutory guidance does not have the full force of statute but should be complied with unless local circumstances indicate exceptional reasons which justify a variation. New Adoption National Minimum Standards were published at the end of March 2011 and together with the Adoption Regulations form the basis of the regulatory framework which governs the conduct of adoption agencies.

5.2 There has been considerable national focus on adoption activity as the government has raised concerns about the reduction nationally in children in care being placed for adoption, delay in placing children for adoption and the need to recruit more adopters. An Action Plan for Adoption: Tackling Delay published by the Department for Education (DoE) in March 2012 set out the changes to be made to speed up the adoption system in England, followed by revised Regulations and Statutory Guidance. All reforms requiring primary legislation are expected to be implemented from April 2014.

5.3 A National Gateway for Adoption has been set up, allowing those interested in adoption to learn more about what adoption means, in order to be better informed before they approach an adoption agency. They will also be able to gain advice and information about the local authorities and voluntary adoption agencies most appropriate for them.

5.4 A new, shorter two-stage training and assessment approval process for prospective adopters is introduced from 1st July 2013. The new process will comprise a two month initial training and preparation stage (Stage One) and a four month assessment stage (Stage Two). Stage One will commence when a prospective adopter registers his/her interest with an adoption agency, and will end with the agency's decision on whether the prospective adopter can proceed to Stage Two.

5.5 There will be a fast-track procedure for approved foster carers and previous adopters, who will receive a tailored assessment and, at the same time, any necessary additional training. A new process 'Fostering for Adoption' will allow approved prospective adopters to be approved rapidly as temporary foster carers so that they can foster a named child (with whom they have been matched to adopt) whilst a placement order is sought.

5.6 Steps have also been taken to reduce the length of court proceedings. The courts have introduced a new care monitoring system which indicates when cases come in, whether they are on the 26 week track, or "exceptional" track.

5.7 There is a new duty on local authorities to refer a child's details to the National Adoption Register as soon as possible and no later than three months from the decision that he/she should be placed for adoption (unless the agency is actively considering a match for the child with a particular prospective adopter) and to ensure that all the information about the child referred to the Register is kept up to date. Likewise all adoption agencies have to refer a prospective adopter's details (subject to their consent) to the Register no later than three months from approval (unless they are actively considering matching him/her with a particular child).

5.8 There has been consultation seeking views on whether the size of adoption and fostering panels should be restricted to a maximum of five members with a quorum of three; the outcome of this consultation is expected shortly.

5.9 The DoE published 'Further Action on Adoption: Finding More Loving Homes' in January 2013 which stated the intention of putting forward legislative proposals that would give the Secretary of State the power to require local authorities to outsource the recruitment and approval of adopters.. It was acknowledged that this was a radical proposal and local authorities were challenged to come up with alternative proposals that would increase the number of adoptive families available to avoid these services being taken away from them.

5.10 In February 2013, the DoE announced financial support for greater investment in adoption in the form of a one-off £150 million Adoption Reform Grant for 2013/14. This funding is to address the backlog in children awaiting adoption as well as supporting wider improvements in the functioning of adoption services. The grant is in two parts: Part A which is not ring fenced, for which City of York was awarded £279,193 and Part B, which is ring fenced, for which York received £160,880.

6. Regional picture

6.1 York continues to be an active member of the Yorkshire Adoption Consortium. Membership of the Consortium has worked to York's advantage in that, unlike most other local authorities in the region, York is too small geographically to place children from York with adopters in the City, without compromising the anonymity of a placement. York therefore places children across the region (and beyond, where necessary) and recruits adopters for use by other local authorities. City of York's use of the Yorkshire Adoption Consortium is documented in the balance sheet of April 2013 (Appendix 3).

6.2 The Yorkshire Adoption Consortium has charged a fee for the placement of a child between agencies, at two-thirds (£8758), of the nationally set inter-agency fee (£13138). Thus a placement with a local authority in the Consortium has costs less than placing a child with a local authority outside of the Consortium, or with a family approved by a Voluntary Adoption Agency, where the fee is £27000. However the Government is equalising the nationally set inter-agency fee so that all placements between agencies will be charged at £27000 and expects the ring fenced element of the Adoption Reform Grant to be used by local authorities to cushion this upraise.

6.3 The Consortium has put together a response to 'Further Action on Adoption: Finding More Loving Homes' proposing a regional approach to increasing recruitment and approval of more adopters. Along with other local authorities in the Consortium, York has agreed additional funding for the Consortium in order to achieve this. It is proposed that members continue to pay two-thirds of the nationally set inter-agency fee, rather than the full fee. It remains to be seen whether the Consortium will be allowed to do so, or whether £27000 will have to be charged for all placements.

7. York's Adoption Service

7.1 The Adoption Service has been managed by the Family Placement Service Manager, who also manages the Fostering Service. Following the recent restructure of Children's Social Care services, the Family Placement Service Manager role has been split into two posts: Adoption Service Manager and Fostering Service Manager, in line with most other local authorities. When a Fostering Service Manager comes into post in July 2013, the current Family Placement Service Manager will become the Adoption Service Manager.

7.2 The adoption section of the Family Placement Team currently consists of 3 full time posts, plus an Advanced Practitioner working term time only. The target for the number of adoptive families to be approved in 2013/14 is 18, a 50% increase on the previous years' targets. Additional social work posts have been created in the team, which should be operational by the autumn. In order to meet the new timeframes in the revised Statutory Guidance, the team will work with colleagues in North Yorkshire and East Riding to hold monthly information sessions for all those interested in adoption across the 3 local authorities.

7.3 Alongside the recruitment, preparation and assessment of prospective adoptive families, the adoption social workers provide support to children's social workers seeking to identify a suitable adoptive family for a child, alongside seeking children to match with adopters approved by York. They also run the post box service, which facilitates indirect contact between adopted children and their birth families without compromising the anonymity of the adoptive family. They provide advice and support for prospective adopters; adoptive families; birth parents; social workers and colleagues. The Service Manager and Advanced Practitioner also play a key role in providing specialist advice to social workers in the Children's Safeguarding teams in relation to adoption work, and specialist advice to the Adoption Panel and the Agency Decision Maker.

7.4 The team provide adoption support to families living in the City; these can be families approved by York, or families approved by other adoption agencies, with children placed by other local authorities. Three years after the making of an adoption order, York becomes responsible for addressing any adoption support needs these families may have. The adoption social workers also run regular 'drop in' events for adoptive parents and children, which offers an opportunity for adopters to meet each other and build up support networks and for informal training and advice. In some instances adoptive families will need more intensive social work support and are therefore referred onto the long term social work teams.

7.5 There is a close working relationship with colleagues in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and with After Adoption Yorkshire. York has a Service Level Agreement with After Adoption Yorkshire (AAY), a voluntary sector adoption support agency, which provides independent advice and support to all those affected by adoption living in the City. This focuses mainly on work with birth relatives and providing specialist counselling and intermediary work for adopted adults.

7.6 There is a high take up of this service, such that more availability is necessary to meet the need; part of the Adoption Reform Grant will be used to purchase additional provision in 2013/14. York also has a Service Level agreement with the Yorkshire Adoption Agency which provides advice and information to those interested in adopting a child from overseas.

8. Recommendation

8.1 It is recommended that this report is received and noted by the Director for Adults, Children and Education and the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Mary McKelvey

Service Manager

June 2013

Appendix 1: Data**CHILDREN****1. Plan for Adoption Agreed**

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 2011/12 Number of children | 2012/13 Number of children |
| 12 | 24 |

This is a 100% increase on the number of children who had a plan for adoption in the year 2011/12

Gender

| | |
|------|--------|
| Male | Female |
| 19 | 5 |

Ethnicity

| | |
|---------------------------|----|
| White British | 22 |
| White and Black Caribbean | 1 |
| White European. | 1 |

Age at date plan agreed:

| | |
|------------------|----|
| Less than 1 year | 5 |
| 1-5 years | 16 |
| 5 years plus | 3 |

Single/siblings

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| Sibling group of 3 | 2 (6 children) |
| Sibling group of 2 | 4 (8 children) |
| Single children | 10 |

2 of the children with plans for adoption had a learning disability. A number of other children had delayed development, attachment difficulties or face difficulties resulting from parental substance or alcohol misuse.

2. Placed for Adoption

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 2011/12 Number of children | 2012/13 Number of children |
| 11 | 16 |

This is an increase of 45% on the number of children placed for adoption in the previous year.

Family placed with.

| | 2011/12 Number of children | 2012/13 Number of children |
|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Family approved by a local authority in Consortium | 7 | 6 |
| Family approved by a local authority NOT in Consortium | 2 | 6 |
| Family approved by a Voluntary Adoption Agency (VAA). | 2 | 4 |

A further 5 children were matched with families in this period, but not placed until after 31st March 2013.

Gender

| | |
|----------|----------|
| Male | Female |
| 9 | 7 |

Age at placement:

| | |
|------------------|----------|
| Less than 1 year | 3 |
| 1-5 years | 9 |
| 5 years plus | 4 |

Single/siblings

| | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| Sibling group of 2 | 4 (8 children) |
| Single children | 8 |

None of the children placed had a diagnosed learning disability or a physical disability, though several had delayed development, attachment difficulties, and/or had been exposed to alcohol and/or other drugs in utero.

3. Placed but not yet Adopted at 31st March

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 2011/12 Number of children | 2012/13 Number of children |
| 10 | 12 |

Of the 12 children, 2 had been placed for 6 month; the remaining 10 for less than that.

4. Adoption Order made

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 2011/12 Number of children | 2012/13 Number of children |
| 13 | 14 |

Single/siblings

| | |
|--------------------|----------------|
| Sibling group of 2 | 3(6 children) |
| Single children | 8 |

The children placed or adopted during this period are not necessarily the same as those with plans were approved during the same period; a child's plan for adoption or placement may have been approved in a previous financial year.

5. Placement Disrupted

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 2011/12 Number of children | 2012/13 Number of children |
| 1 | 0 |

6. Children where plan of adoption has been withdrawn in period

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 2011/12 Number of children | 2012/13 Number of children |
| 6 | 4 |

Unfortunately for some children, due to their age and complex needs, it is not possible to find an adoptive family despite extensive searching and their plan has to be changed from adoption to long term fostering. All of the children whose plans changed in the year were aged over 5 years: 2 boys and 2 girls.

7. Awaiting Placement as at 31st March

| | 2011/12 Number | 2012/13 Number |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| Total | 17 | 19 |
| Aged 2 years or younger | 2 | 3 |
| Aged 2 – 4 years | 7 | 9 |
| Aged 5 years and over | 8 | 7 |
| Sibling groups of 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Sibling groups of 3 | 0 | 1 |
| Boys | 8 | 15 |
| Girls | 9 | 4 |
| Length of time waiting since plan approved | | |
| Less than 6 months | 2 | 9 |
| 6 months –12 months | 6 | 7 |
| 12- 18 months | 9 | 1 |
| Over 18 months | 0 | 2 |

Of the 19 children awaiting placement on 31st March, 5 had a match agreed at Panel, but were not placed with their adoptive families until after 31st March. A further 5 were matched with families in May. Of the remaining 9 children: all are aged 4 years or over; 8 are boys; 2 have learning difficulties. The delays in these cases are related primarily to the age and gender of the children or their particular special needs and complexity.

Adopters

| Approved Adopters | 2011/12 Number of households | 2012/13 Number of households |
|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Approved during year | 6 | 13 |
| Matched during year | 8 | 11 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With children from the Consortium | 8 | 8 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With children outside the Consortium | 0 | 3 |
| With children placed at 31/3/12 but not yet adopted | 4 | 10 |
| Approved, awaiting match as of 31/3/12 | 6 | 5 |

During the year 1 approved adoptive family decided to no longer consider adoption and 1 family withdrew during assessment.

| Applicants | 2011/12 Number of households | 2012/13 Number of households |
|--|--|--|
| Assessment in progress as of 31/3/12 | 7 | 9 |
| Applications awaiting allocation as of 31/3/12 | 9 | 0 |

Consortium placements made between 1/4/12 to 31/3/13

| Agency | Families Placed | Children Placed |
|------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Barnsley | 2 | 3 |
| Bradford | 1 | 1 |
| Calderdale | 6 | 6 |
| Doncaster | 5 | 7 |
| East Riding | 2 | 3 |
| Hull | 4 | 4 |
| Kirklees | 4 | 5 |
| Leeds | 3 | 4 |
| NE Lincs | 7 | 4 |
| North Lincs | 4 | 6 |
| North Yorkshire | 3 | 1 |
| Sheffield | 1 | 2 |
| Wakefield | 2 | 10 |
| York | 7 | 4 |
| Total Placements Made | 51 | 60 |

Appendix 2: Monitoring the quality of the adoption agency under NMS 25

1. What children and adopters say about the service and how they contribute to its development?

1.1 We have recently invited young adopted people living in the City of York to assist us in writing a new guide to adoption for children and young people as we feel it is importance that this is written for children by children. The feedback we receive from families is that they are very positive about the support on offer and the children within the families particularly enjoy the opportunities of Adoption Parties and Trips out when they can be with other adopted children.

1.2 We hold a monthly drop in Service and a 3 monthly social event which are well attended. We send regular Newsletters and Feedback forms asking adopters and adopted children how we can improve our Service and understand from their perspective what does and does not work for them.

1.3 The feedback we receive from our adopters is positive. Most adopters have a positive experience and this is evidenced in the long term relationships that are established with individual social worker and the team as a whole. Some of our adopters have been attending our drop ins for many years and a network of adoptive families has emerged which continues to recruit new members.

1.4 We have a number of adopters who have been happy to co-facilitate our Information Evenings and Adoption Preparation courses and we intend for this to continue and to be opened to new adopters wishing to become involved

2. How we ensure that adoptive placements that will meet children's needs are provided

2.1 In York we have a family finding process that starts at the point of a child's plan for adoption being approved by the ADM. This involves the social worker for the child, the adoption manager, the social worker's manager and the foster carers' supervising social worker. The purpose of this meeting is to gather information and discuss from differing perspectives how we can best meet a child's needs. It is also an opportunity to challenge "fixed" ideas about what a family should look like ensuring we retain the needs of the child at the centre of the process.

2.2 We recruit prospective adopters able to meet children's needs from within the City and make these families available to other local authorities in the local consortium. Due to York's geographical size we cannot usually place York children with York adopters. We pro-actively look for families for all our children with plans for adoption, using families from within the consortium or available through the Adoption Register. We profile our children at national Exchange days. There is regular monitoring of the progress of family finding activity for all individual children with senior managers. All suitable families are explored for a potential match, those approved by VAA or well as other local authority adopters.

3. How children progress in their health, learning and emotional and social development.

3.1 We work with all agencies and services who are involved in the life of a child and provide advice and guidance about managing adoptive children with complex and challenging needs, as well as acting as advocates for children who would benefit from increased support (for example, statement of educational needs, CAMHS intervention). CAMHS provide input to foster carers preparing children to move to an adoptive placement. The children all have Life Story books to accompany them into their new families. There is close liaison with the prospective adopters' local authority to dovetail planning from placement through to adoption, to ensure that all services are in place to support the child. Adoption workers and the placing social worker offer ongoing support after placement. Adopters approved by York are supported to access services for the children placed with them.

4. How the adoption agency contributes to promoting good outcomes for children and young people.

4.1 The family finding process for all City of York children is a shared responsibility of the social worker and the Adoption Team. There is a tiered level of support which is led by a family finding process to ensure newly qualified workers have a robust support system to guide them and support them in finding a suitable family for a child.

4.2 The family finding process involves a series of meetings which start as soon as a child's plan is booked to the ADM. This sets out a clear agenda about who will take a lead on family finding, what support a social worker needs, is there intervention support needed from other services such as CAMHS that can assist in guiding us about the right families. These meetings take place monthly to ensure there is no "drift" in the process and maximises all opportunities of promoting family finding opportunities for children such as attending National Adoption Exchange Events, Mail Shots to OLA's and VAA's, placing children's details Be My Parent.

4.3 The child's needs are carefully considered against identified prospective adopters to ensure the best possible match. A Life Appreciation Day is held to ensure that prospective adopters have all available information on a child before proceeding to Adoption Panel. The Panel closely scrutinise the proposed match to ensure that it is likely to meet the child's needs. There is close liaison with York based agencies to ensure good information gathering and effective transfer to key agencies in the prospective adopters' local authority.)

5 How recruitment, assessment, training and supervision of adopters promotes positive outcomes for children and young people.

5.1 Our enquiries are dealt with via a duty system within the adoption team and all enquiries are dealt with every 5 working days (5 days ahead of the new recommendations in the revised Statutory Guidance). Information Evenings have been held every 2 months, and will move to monthly from July 2013, in collaboration with North Yorkshire and East Riding Councils.

5.2 Preparation course are run every 3 months and offer training to prospective adopters that is current, accessible and pitched over a 4 week period to allow consolidation and reflection. We also have adoptive parents who co-facilitate both our Information Evenings and Preparation courses. We prepare adopters well and work collaboratively and supportively, planning work in advance with an emphasis on this being a “shared” process. The Prospective Adopters Report is written up following each visit together with analysis and all families are given a copy of this to ensure congruence and transparency within the relationship. This ensures any issues of concern are dealt with immediately with the emphasis on supporting and working through these wherever possible.

5.3 In the main we strive to complete assessments within 5 months of allocation, and work towards this being presented in panels either in the 5th or 6th month. We ensure that whilst we wish to work to a timely manner for adopters, that we structure the visits to meet the needs of the adopters’ taking into account understanding, ability, language and differing cultures.

6. How adopters are involved in matching and subsequent planning.

6.1 If approved as a prospective adopter, work is undertaken to identify a child whose needs they are able to meet. Supervision and support is provided through the matching and placement process and on through to adoption order, and beyond. The positive working relationships established enable adopters to seek advice and support from the adoption team in parenting their children throughout their childhood.

6.2 Adopters are involved throughout the matching and linking process. The Adoption Team works with the consortium and the National Adoption register to identify potential matches and read and exchange reports. We keep adopters regularly up to date either via telephone or email. Adopters are invited to attend National Adoption Exchange events with the support of their worker to help them to gain further insight into the family finding process for themselves.

6.3 Once children's reports are shared with adopters we meet with them to discuss their thoughts. We then compile together questions we may have about a child. A linking visit then takes place and if the plan is to proceed, this is then booked to a matching panel. In York we hold Life Appreciation Days for all children. This usually takes place before panel and includes everyone who has ever been involved in a child's life, including the Paediatrician. This enables adopters to have a "fuller" picture of a child and an understanding from the differing perspectives of those who have worked with the child and/or their birth families. All Life Appreciation Days are minuted and these minutes are given to the prospective adopters. A copy is also placed in a sealed envelope for the child along with a letter from the Chair of the Life Appreciation Day who writes to the child to explain what a Life Appreciation Day is who attended and what people said. This is an opportunity to write anecdotal information about a child which is often not in the more formal reports. A copy of this is also given to the adopters

7. Management for the Adoption Service

7.1 We regularly meet as a staff team and social workers are encouraged to take leads on various aspects of development. If someone in the team has attended training which would be beneficial for the team, they will feed this back into the team and we then look at whether our families would benefit from this and we then look at implementing this in the adoption preparation course, sharing at drop ins, or facilitating specific training to share this with adoptive families. All social workers in the team have 3 weekly planned supervision and an annual Professional Development Plan to ensure workers to take an active part in improving and enhancing the agency and thus the service delivery to our adoptive families.

7.2 The Assistant Director Children's Services acts as the Agency Decision Maker., along with the Heads of Service. The Agency Decision Maker has weekly appointments available to consider a child's plan for adoption, and will make his decision within a few days of receiving all the paperwork for the child; this ensures that there is no delay in the court process.

7.3 The Adoption Panels meets monthly to consider approval of adopters and matches for children. It also provides an oversight and quality assurance of the work presented to panel. Panel received regular feedback at each panel meeting regarding the progress of cases considered in the previous 6 and 12 months. The Agency Decision Maker receives the recommendations of the Panel and then makes the decision regarding agreeing (or not) approvals and matches. There are good operational links in place between the adoption

service and the Children in Need and Assessment Team, where requests for assessments for adoption support are received and also with the Safeguarding children's social work teams who complete any ongoing adoption support work with a family following an assessment.

8. Plans for improvement and development.

8.1 We are currently developing a children's guide having written to all adoptive families and children to seek their views and ask if they would like to be involved. We are looking at the new Statutory Guidance and Regulations which come into force on 1st July to ensure the agency meets these new requirements. We are developing a training package to foster carers and children's social worker about the process of adoption, covering issues such as matching considerations, introductions, Life Appreciation days and direct work and creative ways of enabling children to understand adoption and moving to an adoptive family. We have worked with our adopters who have produced a training DVD which is utilised pre Introduction to a new family. This enables a child to see their new family, hear what they sound like and look at their new home. This has worked to very good effect and we now use this as training material on the preparation course for new prospective adoptive families.

8.2 We have increased our target for approving new families from 12 to 18 in the financial year 2013/14.

Appendix 3: Hyperlink to Scorecard

<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/adoption/a00208817/adoption-scorecards>

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Fostering Service 3 monthly Report for Executive and Senior Management Team

Period covered: 1st January to 31st March 2013

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Three monthly reports on the management outcomes and financial state of each fostering agency must be provided to the executive side of the Local Authority (National Minimum Standards 25.7). The executive is expected to monitor the management and outcomes of the service and to be satisfied regarding the effectiveness of the service and the achievement of good outcomes for children. Data on the service is provided in Appendix A.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE LAST 3 MONTHS

- 2.1 The Fostering team continued to be busy training and supporting foster carers and working with colleagues in the Children's Safeguarding teams to identify and maintain good and safe fostering placements for children and young people. After extensive consultation with all foster carers and YAFCA (York Area Foster Carers' Association) over the last year 'A New Deal for York Foster Carers – Recognising and rewarding professional development' was presented to the Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Young People in February 2013. The resulting new system of grades and fees was introduced from 1st April 2013. Work on further professional development of the fostering role will continue over the next year.

3. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PLACED WITH CITY OF YORK FOSTER CARERS.

- 3.1 In line with national trends, the number of children and young people looked after by the Council has continued to steadily decline, with 15 fewer young people looked after on 31st March 2013 than twelve months previously (258 reduced to 243) . There has been a concurrent steady decline in the percentage placed with foster carers approved by York. However, apart from a slight decline in the quarter ending 31st December, the number of young people placed with foster carers approved by Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) has remained relatively constant. The

decline in the percentage placed with York approved foster carers is likely to be attributable to the shortening of Care proceedings to 26 weeks, (except in exceptional circumstances) which results in Connected People foster carers being deregistered more quickly, following a child no longer being subject to a Care Order but instead subject to a Residence or Special Guardianship Order to the Connected person, or the child returning home.

4. FOSTER CARERS

- 4.1 There are a range of carers with different experiences, knowledge and skills. Foster carers have been consulted throughout the process of developing the the new system of grades and fees and their feedback incorporated into the new scheme.
- 4.2 There is a robust and comprehensive assessment process, including a preparation period with training and information concerning the standards of care and practice expected. The induction process over the first year of approval includes a ten session core training program which emphasises specific areas of practice, expectations and information required of all foster carers. This process supports the potential for positive outcomes for children and young people in foster care by ensuring that they are cared for by skilled, knowledgeable and well supported foster carers. Professional development of foster carers extends beyond their first year of approval, with access to a range of training course and support groups specifically for foster carers, as well as to the training provided by the Council's Workforce Development Unit (WDU) for all staff. Foster carers also co-facilitate preparation courses and training courses with social workers.
- 4.3 Foster Carers are formally supervised monthly by their linked Supervising social worker. Placement planning is undertaken prior to or within five days of any placement, at which the placement plan is updated to reflect the foster carers details and highlight any gaps in provision. Support plans are undertake to ensure foster carers and the wider service is able to meet the needs of the child or young person
- 4.4 The number of fostering households has dipped over the quarter and a new recruitment campaign is planned for 2013/14, focussing on attracting enquirers who will consider young people with complex needs and behaviour, a feature of many of the young

people in IFA placements, or offer long term placements to children and young people.

5. STAFFING

- 5.1 The Fostering team has been part of the Family Placement Service, with day to day management of the team supervised by the Practice Manager, line managed by the Family Placement Manager. The Family Placement Service Manager also managed the Adoption Service. The need for a separate manager for each service was recognised in the recent restructure within Children's Social Care which split the post of Family Placement Service Manager into two distinct posts: Adoption Service Manager and Fostering Service Manager. For each team there is a new advanced practitioner social worker post. This team member will not have line management responsibility but will mentor new staff and develop practice, alongside carrying a caseload. The team will continue to have the same number of supervising social workers as previously, though one of these posts will be filled by a newly qualified social worker.

6. PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OVER THE NEXT QUARTER

- 6.1 In line with changes to Statutory Guidance and Regulations coming into force on 1st July 2013, the placement planning process will be reviewed with foster carers and social workers to look at improvements that can be made, including revising Placement Plans for children and young people to emphasise the potential for delegated authority to foster carers.
- 6.2 The new Fostering Service Manager commence on 1st July 2013. This increased management capacity in the Fostering Service will enable a review of current procedures, including strengthening the annual foster carer review process.
- 6.3 There will be a six monthly recruitment campaign using the local media, alongside exploration of other recruitment opportunities using social media.

7. RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 It is recommended that this report is received and noted by the Director for Adults, Children and Education and the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Mary McKelvey
Service Manager, Family Placement

Appendix A: Data**1. Children and young people placed with City of York Council approved foster carers**

| | |
|--|------------|
| Number of children looked after on 31/03/13 | 243 |
| Number placed with CYC foster carers | 162 |
| % placed with CYC foster carers | 67% |
| % placed with CYC Connected People foster carers* | 9% |

* Connected People foster carers are those with whom the child/young person had an established relationship prior to being looked after (e.g. aunt, grandparent etc).

In previous quarters:

| | Number of children looked after | % placed with CYC foster carers | % placed with CYC Connected People foster carers |
|----------|--|--|---|
| 31/12/12 | 250 | 69% | 13% |
| 30/09/12 | 246 | 70% | 17% |
| 30/06/12 | 253 | 72% | 18% |
| 31/03/12 | 258 | 76% | 17% |

2. Fostering households approved by City of York Council

| | |
|---|------------|
| Total on 31/03/13 | 113 |
| Of which foster carers | 92 |
| Of which Connected People foster carers | 21 |

In previous quarters:

| | Total | Mainstream foster carers | Connected People foster carers |
|----------|--------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 31/12/12 | 117 | 93 | 24 |
| 30/09/12 | 119 | 95 | 24 |
| 30/06/12 | 119 | 96 | 23 |
| 31/03/12 | 117 | 94 | 23 |

3. Young people placed with foster carers approved by independent fostering agencies (IFA).

| | |
|--------------------|-----------|
| On 31/03/13 | 17 |
|--------------------|-----------|

In previous quarters:

| | |
|----------|----|
| 31/12/12 | 14 |
| 30/09/12 | 18 |
| 30/06/12 | 17 |
| 31/03/12 | 16 |

4. Number of enquiries received from people interested in finding out more about becoming a foster carer

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------|
| January - March 2013 | 20 |
| In previous quarters: | |
| October- December 2012 | 16 |
| July-September 2012 | 18 |
| April- June 2012 | 19 |

5. Preparation Course.

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| January - March 2013 | 4 households attended |
| In previous quarters: | |
| October- December 2012 | 7 households attended |
| July-September 2012 | 4 households attended |
| April- June 2012 | 7 households attended |

6. Applications received for assessment as prospective foster carers

| | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| January - March 2013 | 4 |
| Of which as mainstream foster carers | 2 |
| Of which as Connected People foster carers | 2 |
| In previous quarters: | |
| | Total mainstream Connected People |
| October- December 2012 | 4 3 1 |
| July-September 2012 | 3 2 1 |
| April- June 2012 | 3 2 1 |

7. New foster carers approved in period

| | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Total on 31/03/13 | 3 |
| Of which as mainstream foster carers | 1 |
| Of which as Connected People foster carers | 2 |
| In previous quarters: | |
| | Total Connected People mainstream |
| October-December 2012 | 3 2 1 |
| July-September 2012 | 4 2 2 |
| April- June 2012 | 5 1 4 |

8. Deregistration in period

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Total | 7 |
| Reason: | |
| Child no longer Looked After | 5 |
| Change in foster care's circumstances | 2 |

In previous quarters:

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| October- December 2012 | 5 |
| July-September 2012 | 4 |
| April- June 2012 | 3 |

9. Exemptions

Households granted exemption from the usual fostering limit of 3 looked after children/young people being in placement at one time

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| January - March 2013 | 4 households |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|

The period of exemption agreed ranged from 2 days to 1 week.

In previous quarters:

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| October- December 2012 | 5 |
| July-September 2012 | 1 |
| April- June 2012 | 3 |

10. Complaints and allegations against foster carers in period

| | |
|-----------------|----------|
| Total | 3 |
| Outcome: | |
| Unfounded | 1 |
| Unsubstantiated | 2 |

In previous quarters:

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| October- December 2012 | 0 |
| July-September 2012 | 3 |
| April- June 2012 | 4 |

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