

BEST VALUE REVIEW OF ADOPTION SERVICES.**BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT PLAN PROGRESS REPORT JULY 2004****1. Key Improvement Activity - Permanency for Looked After Children**

Benefit to the Customer - Ensuring that children are securely attached to carers capable of providing safe and effective care for the duration of their childhood.

Item	Actions Required	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Outcome/Progress
1.1	Establish pilot scheme on the use of Family Group Conferences to explore permanency options within extended family.	Commissioning Officer	Implementation programme to be completed by June 2004.	Pilot has been established and evaluated, funding awaited for 2005/6 budget.
1.2	Permanency plan agreed by child's 4 th month review and evidence parallel planning in place.	Localities/ Independent Reviewing Team	From now.	Implemented and monitored.
1.3	Permanency plans to be reviewed every 6 months, relatives and foster carers to be considered, new plan considered if previous not achieved.	Localities/ Independent Reviewing Team	From now.	Implemented and monitored.
1.4	Independent counselling service to be developed from a voluntary agency for birth relatives whose child has an adoption plan.	Lead Manager/ Commissioning Officer	Completed.	Agreement has been reached with an independent agency to provide this service.
1.5	Review current use of permanent	Commissioning	Completed.	Review completed.

	foster care and the process of recruitment and support.	Officer/Lead Manager Fostering.		
1.6	Specific approval for permanent foster carers and the permanent foster placement match for children under 12 years old should be approved by the fostering panel.	Fostering Panels/ Fostering Service/ Children's Teams	By April 2004.	Policy agreed, procedure introduced and implemented

2. Key Improvement Activity - Timescales to Adoption

Benefit to Customer - Reduce average time children remain looked after before they are adopted

Item	Actions Required	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Progress
2.1	Clarify Senior Management responsibilities.	Programme Manager	Achieved.	Agency decision maker and line management responsibilities clarified.
2.2	Review current adoption processes and pathways to isolate causes of delay, streamline and clarify roles and responsibilities.	Lead Manager Adoption	Completed.	Processes reviewed and all cases tracked to identify when and where delay occurs.
2.3	Adoption plans/parallel plans to be monitored.	Locality Managers/Lead Manager Adoption	In place.	Bimonthly meetings in each Locality established to track individual case progress.
2.4	Plan to Panel in 8 weeks of decision.	Children's Teams/ Adoption Service	Implemented and monitored.	Processes in place and monitored.
2.5	Timescales for each stage of process to be monitored and reviewed.	Lead Service Manager/ Performance Review	Monitoring to be established through quarterly Fostering	Monitoring established in Framework system.

		Team/ Adoption Service	and Adoption Module statistics by March 2004.	
2.6	All permanently looked after children to have detailed chronological history as part of their core assessment.	Children's Teams	Process in place.	Chronological histories are now part of the core assessment.
2.7	Detailed chronological history on computer available for transfer to reports.	IT implementation programme	December 2004	Implementation of this computer record will be part of the frame programme development September 2004
2.8	Introduce new format for panel reports when adoption plan is to be considered.	Commissioning Officer	Achieved and introduced.	Panels now use the core assessment format when considering plans.
2.9	Develop a policy regarding the use of Section 20 admissions and monitor their use.	Chair Children's Commissioning Senior Management Group Children's Commissioning	Completed.	Policy developed, implemented and monitored.
2.10	Increase number of adoption panels to three	Lead Manager Adoption	Achieved.	Third Adoption Panel is up and running.
2.11	Identify children with difficult to resource adoption plans and fast-track external recruitment options.	Lead Manager Adoption/County Adoption Team/Independent Reviewing Officer	Process in place.	Individual care reviews and Locality tracking meetings identify and monitor these children.
2.12	Where older children have developed significant attachment	Independent Reviewing	Improvement achieved.	There has been a sustained increase in the

	their carers should be encouraged to adopt	Officers/County Adoption Team		percentage of foster carer adoptions.
2.13	Review relationship between adoption allowances and fostering allowances and identify options dealing with equity and incentive.	Lead Managers: Adoption/Fostering/Finance.	June 2004	New adoption legislation has generated a new package of financial support in adoption and progressed this review.
2.14	Timescales and delay to be subject of further discussions with courts, legal services and CAFCASS (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Services)	Assistant Director	Ongoing.	Presentations and liaison meetings ongoing but this remains a problem area.

3. Key Improvement Activity - Recruitment and Matching

Benefit to the Customer - Reducing the average time children remain looked after before they are adopted.

Item	Actions Required	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Progress
3.1	Increase number of approved adopters.	County Adoption Team/ Lead Manager Adoption	From September 2002.	Individual targets for staff approving adopters have been met.
3.2	Reduce average time for adopter approval.	County Adoption Team/ Lead Manager Adoption	Achieved.	Average timescale for adopter approval is down to eight months.
3.3	Revise process for responding to specific advertisements.	Lead Manager Adoption	Implemented.	All enquires now go to County Adoption Team.

3.4	County Adoption Service to be involved in the making of adoption plans. External advertised children allocated a team member.	County Adoption Team	Implemented.	County Adoption Team is involved in planning and allocate a worker for each child's plan.
3.5	Consider closer links between County Adoption Team and Central Adoption Unit to consolidate family finding processes.	Lead Manager Adoption	By March 2004.	Review completed and integration has been implemented into a consolidated service.
3.6	Experiment and evaluate new methods of family finding: internet, using Public Relations consultants, alternative publications, contracting out difficult to place to Voluntary Adoption Agencies	Lead Manager Adoption	Ongoing evaluation.	Recruitment Publicity Officers now in post, family finding strategy has been developed.
3.7	Service managers to make final decision if possible family link not suitable.	Children's Service Managers	In place.	Final decision not to use adopters is made by Service Manager.

4. Key Improvement Activity - Develop Post Adoption Support Services

Benefit to the Customer - Increase number of families receiving post order support and encourage more people to adopt.

Item	Actions Required	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Progress
4.1	Explore possible sources for additional investment in Support After Adoption.	Director	Achieved.	Funding agreed through Adoption Support Grant.

4.2	Agreed procedure for adopters right to assessment for post adoption support.	Commissioning Officer	Achieved.	Process in place, now a statutory duty under Adoption and Children Act 2002.
4.3	Increase range of support packages.	Team Manager - Support After Adoption	Implemented.	CAMHS grant money has funded groupwork and therapy, Quality Protects money for respite support scheme.
4.4	Increase support for contact arrangements.	Support After Adoption Team/ Lead Manager Adoptions	Increase achieved.	Additional funding to Support After Adoption Team from Adoption Support Grant.
4.5	Create specialist resource for Birth Records Counselling.	Lead Manager Adoption/ Support After Adoption Team	October 2004.	Plan to achieve this through Phase 2 of Adoption Support Grant spending.

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