

Corporate Parenting Board

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 30 January 2020

Report of the Head of Fostering and Adoption, Residential, and YOT

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| Electoral Division affected: (All Divisions); |
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Adoption Panel Report

(Appendix 'A' refers)

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Executive Summary

This report (Appendix 'A') summarises the work of Lancashire County Council's Adoption Panel over the six month period from 1 April to 30 September 2019. Lancashire Adoption Panels are joint panels which means that they compose of both adoption and fostering items. However this report considers just the adoption items.

With regard to children's cases and the decision to place for adoption, this was removed from the panels remit, except in cases where there is no court scrutiny (relinquished children). However, this report also summarises the work of these separate 'should be placed for adoption' (SHOPA) meetings.

Recommendation

Board Members are invited to review Lancashire County Council's Adoption Panel report (Appendix 'A'), and ask any questions that arise when the document is shared at the meeting.

Background and Advice

Adoption panels perform an important role in assisting the agency to reach the best possible decision in respect of:

Whether a child should be placed for adoption, where there is parental consent, the suitability of prospective adopters or the termination of approval of a prospective adopter, and whether a child should be placed for adoption with a specific prospective adopter.

They are intended to be multi-disciplinary bodies with a considerable element of independence from the agency. This independence means that they cannot themselves make decisions but make recommendations to the agency's decision maker in respect of cases referred to it.

Panels play an important quality assurance role, providing objectivity and having the ability to challenge practice which is felt not to be in the interests of children or fall short of the Regulations or National Minimum Standards.

Panels are required to give regular feedback to the agency. The panel can give advice to the agency (but it is not required to do so) on: contact arrangements; whether an application for a placement order should be made; the number of children the prospective adopter may be suitable to adopt, their age range, sex, likely needs and background; and the provision of adoption support.

The agency should monitor its performance and provide reports to its trustees or board members if it is a voluntary adoption agency or the executive side of the local authority every six months about children who are in the care of their local authority and who are waiting to be placed with new families.

These reports should include: the number, type and age of the children waiting for an adoptive placement and length of time they have been waiting; the agency's performance against the timescales set out for the two-stage process; progress in the recruitment of suitable adoptive families; the number of children placed for adoption and adopted since the last report; and the number of children whose placement has disrupted or where there has been a change of plan and the child is no longer to be placed for adoption.