

## Fostering and Adoption

### **Purpose of the report and Summary**

This report explains some of the ways the local authority manages the care planning and adoption process so that delays for children don't happen. The report also explains what action we are taking in Lancashire to make sure we are doing things in the way the Government wants and most importantly of all says what we are doing to make sure we do things quickly enough for children who need to be placed with foster carers or adopted. The purpose of the report is to provide the Board with information and the chance to ask questions.

The Local Authority must make arrangements for there to be an Adoption Panel and a Fostering Panel. The Panels have an important role to play and check that good plans are being made for children and young people. The Chair of the Adoption and Fostering Panel is Independent. We have recently appointed a new Chair.

One of the jobs which the Chair of the Panel must do is to provide regular reports to the Director with information about the work that has been presented to the Panel.

### **Key Information and Questions for Board Members**

The Adoption Panel - recommends the approval of people who want to be adopters. The Adoption Panel also recommends which adopters are the best parents for particular children.

The Fostering Panel - recommends the approval of people who want to be Foster Carers including those who may be relatives of a child or be connected with them.

The Panel members are given lots of information to help them make the best suggestions which are then passed to the Agency Decision Maker who makes a final decision.

The Agency Report to the Fostering and the Adoption Panel provides a summary of all the matters the Panel has been asked to think about.

### **Background**

We know there are sometimes risks involved when we place children with Foster Carers or for adoption and we have to manage these risks. For hundreds of children every year their lives are improved by being placed with foster carers or by then being adopted. It is important though to make sure that we place children with people who are able to meet their needs, make them happy and help them to achieve.

Most children being placed with Foster Carers or for adoption have already had a lot of difficult things happen in their life. Social workers know how important it is for children to have settled placements that last at the earliest possible stage. We are already doing many of the things which the Government are suggesting. We know

the Fostering and Adoption Service in Lancashire has more to learn and we can probably do better. Children deserve no less. The Fostering and Adoption Service are working hard to find more people who are suitable to foster or adopt and to train them properly. The Agency Report to the Fostering and Adoption Panel gives lots of very detailed information about the way the Panel has worked and any improvements that have been made. The report also looks at things that we might need to improve or do in a different way.

Last year more adopters have been approved than in any previous year – 2013/14, 65 families were approved, 2012/13, 58 families, 2011/12, 46 families.

The number of children we have placed has improved – 2013/14 a total of 109 children were placed, compared to 83 in 2012/13 and 61 in 2011/12. .

The Adoption panel has met 34 times during the year.

The Fostering Service is working hard to make sure there are plenty of foster carers and to provide them with the support they need in order to meet the needs of the children who are placed with them.

The Fostering Panel has met 23 times during the year

## **WORK WE ARE DOING IN LANCASHIRE TO MAKE SURE WE CAN FIND GOOD FOSTER CARERS AND ADOPTERS**

- Using ways to find and prepare adopters and foster carers which makes sure we get the right kind of people for our children who need to be adopted.
- Use lots of different ways to find enough adopters and make sure that we train them well to care for the children we place with them.
- Work closely with other local authorities and learn from their good ideas.
- We are starting a new way of approving some people as adopters so that children do not have to change placements as often. To start with we hope to get 15 carers who we can have as both Foster and Adoptive Parents.
- Improving the way the Fostering and Adoption Panel works to make sure it does not slow things down.
- Improving the way we check and test out what we are doing in the Adoption Service and Children's Social Care and know what we are doing well and where we need to improve.

### **Decisions required**

The report is for information though questions may be asked of the report author.

*Report Author: Anne-Marie Ranson and Stasia Osiowy*