

Lancashire Children's Services Improvement Plan

Fostering & Adoption April 2016

Introduction

The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence, Ofsted 2015

‘Services for children in need of adoption are improving and they receive good-quality support post-adoption. Many still wait too long for permanence and do not receive timely help to understand their past experiences. There is a lack of strategic oversight of adoption. Previous targets, rather than the local authority’s analysis of current need, inform recruitment of both adopters and foster carers.’

Recommendation 12:

Ensure that the need for permanence for all looked after children is considered at an early stage and is regularly reviewed

- A tracking tool has been developed which will enable all permanence planning for children to be monitored. All cases known now to the adoption service are now tracked.
- The tracking tool incorporates revised timescales to prevent delay for children in securing early permanence. This will support improved performance against A1 & A2 on the Adoption scorecard.
- There are identified checks and monitoring identified on the tracking sheet
- An colour coordinated Early Permanence Adoption Timeline tool for social workers has been developed to ensure workers in each service know what to do at different points during the process. (timeline)
- Plans are in place to work with colleagues in CAFCASS and the Judiciary to identify blockage to early permanence and to consider concurrency and fostering for adoption to reduce the number of placement moves a child may have.

Recommendation 15

Ensure that managers of the service maintain a strategic overview of the experience of children from the point they enter care to adoption or permanency that is sufficiently rigorous to prevent drift and delay and assist with identifying and predicting future placement needs

- Children Awaiting Adoption service has now been integrated with the wider Adoption service, all functions are now managed by a single service.
- Work is taking place with Young People to consider how they influence service improvements.
- Service developments include;
 - Processes have been reviewed and new guidance implemented in relation to Lifestory Work and Later Life Letters
 - Timeliness of permanence planning has been reviewed and more streamlined services implemented
 - Tracking systems are now in place to monitor permanence plans
 - A comprehensive recruitment strategy has been drafted which targets sibling groups and older children harder to place
 - Step parent adoption process is under review and will be completed by end of May
 - Full review of current skill set in the service and development plan in place

Recommendation 16:

Ensure that all looked after children who need it receive timely life story work so they understand their history and what has happened in their lives.

- The backlog of all Lifestory Work and Later Life Letters for Adopted children has now been cleared
- A Lifestory Book protocol has been updated and implemented
- A system is in place to ensure managers quality assure all Lifestory Books and Later Life Letters
- Additional checks to progress are built into the panel process and reviews
- Process has been established to ensure Lifestory Books and Later Life Letters are now completed in real time. This has been shared and embedded in practice within Adoption team

Summary

The adoption service is committed to ensuring suitable adoptive families are identified without delay for all children for whom adoption is in their best interests. That recruitment and assessment arrangements are aligned with national systems and enable potential adopters to consider and to be considered for a wide range of children for whom they may provide a home. Children are able to develop safe and secure relationships with their adoptive family that persist over time. When support is needed, children, young people, families and carers are able to access it for as long as it is needed, throughout their childhood and beyond