

**Report for Corporate Parenting Board regarding activity day held on
26 September 2016**

Purpose of the report and Summary

On the 26 September 2016 the Family Finders from Lancashire County Council Children Awaiting Adoption Team attended a regional event, which was held at Preston North End. The event was arranged and facilitated by RAMS (Regional Adoption Managers). The event was specifically aimed at prospective adoptive families who had waited longer than 6 months to be matched.

The evening consisted of presentations from guest speakers, one of which was an adoptive parent. The presentations focussed on the reasons why the landscape of adoption had changed and why there were fewer young children awaiting adoption. The information given by the adoptive parent was very useful, as it enabled prospective adopters to consider how they may be able to become less restrictive in their matching consideration and becoming open to consider factors they previously thought they could not consider. The speaker gave information of her own experience of only wanting a girl, but after being asked to consider a boy, which she did and it had turned out to be a perfect match.

Children

A number of children were profiled at this event. In comparison to other agencies Lancashire profiled more "harder to place" children although the event was not well attended by other agencies. Lancashire profiled 8 of our "harder to place" children, the children are as follows:-

1. A is a 3 year old boy of mixed heritage who was placed with foster carers once discharged from hospital following his birth. Care Proceedings concluded on 24 October 2014 with the making of a Full Care Order and a Placement Order. Risk issues relating to A's birth parents include substance misuse by both parents, chaotic lifestyle choices, domestic violence, learning disabilities and mental health issues relating to the mother and lack of engagement by parents. Family Finding commenced in November 2014 and has continued to date without success. During this period A has received a diagnosis of autism which has significantly reduced the pool of potential adopters. Intensive family finding is ongoing but discussions will be held during next CLA Review to see if we should consider a change of care plan to long term fostering.
2. B is a 1 year and 8 months old girl of dual heritage (White British/unknown Asian). B has a level of uncertainty about her development, and there has been a suggestion that this may be linked to Foetal Alcohol Syndrome although paediatric advice is that she is currently too young to be diagnosed. The paediatrician has, however made a referral for an assessment to consider whether B has ADHD. B's mother has had three older children removed from her care, the youngest of whom has been adopted. The mother's main issues

are:- drug use, chaotic lifestyle, prostitution, and inability to prioritise a child's needs. B was placed with her current foster carers after her discharge from hospital. B has been subject to a Placement Order for 16 months and to date family finding has proved unsuccessful. During this time one family had reached the stage where the linking documents had been submitted for adoption panel, unfortunately the prospective adoptive mother revealed she was three months pregnant and the linking was withdrawn. Another in-house family were identified as a potential match with information being shared, however after lengthy discussions with the family the family chose not to progress as they felt B could struggle living in their predominantly white area. Out of County funding has now been agreed and there have been a number of enquiries; to date two families have had B's information shared but both chose not to progress due to developmental uncertainty. Currently a recently approved in-house are being approached.

3. C is a 15 month old happy and smiley little boy with big blue eyes and blonde hair. C was born prematurely at 27 weeks and it was noted at birth that he had multiple congenital abnormalities. C's right leg is absent from below the knee and his left foot is under developed with some deformity to the leg. He has fused fingers to both the left and right hands and low set ears. C's head is not perfectly shaped however is not noticeably different. He was also born with a cleft lip and palate, although reconstructive surgery has already been carried out to correct this. A chromosome report has also showed a particular abnormality which can be associated with muscular dystrophy, however, this will not become known until C is a little older. Out of county funding was allocated for C early on in the family finding process due to the extent of his additional needs. He is currently in foster care and is awaiting adoption. Despite C's health needs he continues to develop well. He is able to grasp with his hands and to roll on the floor, getting himself around without much difficulty. He is currently unable to sit up unaided. C has settled well into his current foster placement and is reported to be a happy and content baby with a liking for physical affection from his carers.
4. D is a three year old boy who became subject to a Placement Order on 5 December 2013. D has a diagnosis of global developmental delay. D has only just started to walk unaided and has limited speech. Those who know D well are able to understand what he is saying. He doesn't currently exhibit any emotional or behavioural difficulties. D has recently started at nursery where he has been reported to make considerable progress. It is believed that with stimulation and interaction D will develop and gain some independence. D is settled within his foster placement where he has been placed since leaving the hospital. To date, family finding has been unsuccessful notwithstanding extensive searches and promotion of D's profile at various adoption events. There have been some prospective adopter families that have shown an interest in D, however have they have not proceeded, as they were worried that if he did not continue to make progress they would be unable to meet his long term needs.
5. E is a 3 year old little girl of white British and black French heritage. E is considered as 'harder to place' as at a recent health assessment it was identified that there was an increased likelihood that E could develop a neurodevelopmental disorder such as ADHD or Autism. She is quite hyperactive

and has trouble getting to sleep and wakes frequently during the night, she has medication to aid her sleep. E's mother did drink alcohol during pregnancy, so Foetal Alcohol Syndrome has also not been ruled out. A Placement Order was granted in June 2015. Although searches for adopter have found potential matches for E, so far these have not progressed to adoption linking stage due as stated are the uncertainty associated with her development and additional needs.

6. F is a 5 year little boy who has a diagnosis of Autism. He was removed from the care of his birth parents to drug use and neglect. All family members ruled out as potential long-term carers within care proceedings and as such his plan became one of adoption. F was accommodated at the age of 2 years and has had several placement moves. Most of these due to his significant needs and behaviour and the families being unable to care for him in the longer term. He is very delayed with regards to his development. He is in receipt of DLA and has an EHC Plan. He currently attends a special needs school although there are times that they find F difficult to manage. F is a complex health needs and requires a high level of support.

7&8 G&H are 2 and 3 year old little boys with no significant needs. The reason G and H are considered "hard to place" is due to their gender, their ethnicity and the fact they are a sibling group. The children are from a background of Romani Gypsy of Czech Republic heritage. The boys suffered chronic neglect whilst in the care of their birth parents. They witnessed significant domestic violence and G was injured, aged 11 months, in one incident. The home conditions were extremely poor. The children were removed from the care of their parents having been taken into police protection in August 2015 and have remained in the same foster placement. A Placement Order was granted in April 2016.

Adopters

The event was attended by adopters from the following agencies - WISH, Salford, Manchester, Bolton and Lancashire, in total approximately 50 prospective adopters attended. Three prospective adopters from Lancashire attended.

Outcomes

During the evening the Family Finder from Lancashire who attended had many discussions with the adopters who attended the event. The families who attended found it useful to meet with our staff and actually see profile of children who are waiting.

From the event, discussions were held with the family finder with regard to three of our children; however, unfortunately none of these discussions led to further exploration or matches.

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