

# Corporate Parenting Panel

## Agenda **22 October 2012**

**MONDAY 22 OCTOBER 2012, 10.00am**  
**COMMITTEE ROOM 1, SHIRE HALL, WARWICK**

### **1. General**

#### **(1) Apologies for Absence**

#### **(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**

Members are required to register their disclosable pecuniary interests within 28 days of their election of appointment to the Council. A member attending a meeting where a matter arises in which s/he has a disclosable pecuniary interest must (unless s/he has a dispensation):

- Declare the interest if s/he has not already registered it
- Not participate in any discussion or vote
- Must leave the meeting room until the matter has been dealt with (Standing Order 42)
- Give written notice of any unregistered interest to the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of the meeting

Non-pecuniary interests must still be declared in accordance with the new Code of Conduct. These should be declared at the commencement of the meeting.

#### **(3) Minutes of the Corporate Parenting Steering Group held on 8 May 2012**

#### **(4) Chair's Announcements**

### **2. Looked After Children – Action Plans**

A summary of the action plans relating to Looked After, Fostering and Adoption Services.

### **3. Report of the Adoption Service, 2011-12**

This report is to be received by the Executive on a 6-monthly basis.

#### **4. Performance Data**

Members are provided with the latest adoption scorecard, performance of the Virtual School for Children in Care, and an extract from the latest Children's Safeguarding dataset on LAC numbers/placements.

#### **5. Terms of Reference – *for information***

Members are provided with the terms of reference of the Corporate Parenting Panel, as agreed by Council on 10 July 2012

#### **Corporate Parenting Panel Membership**

**Councillors:** John Appleton, Peter Fowler, Bob Hicks, Clive Rickhards, Carolyn Robbins (Chair), Chris Williams

#### **Relevant Portfolio Holder**

Councillor Heather Timms – Children and Schools

#### **General enquiries**

Please contact:

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## **Notes Elected Member Corporate Parenting Steering Group – 8 May 2012**

### **Present**

Brenda Vincent  
Cllr Balaam  
Cllr Tandy  
Cllr Robbins  
Cllr Jackson  
Cllr Timms

### **Apologies**

Cllr Rickhards

### **Minutes and matters arising**

#### **(i) Corporate Parenting Board**

Noted that this issue has been referred to the Leaders Liaison Group – Cllr Timms will progress with Cllr Farnell

#### **(ii) Attachment Training**

Brenda reported that schools will commission this independently. We felt that this was important for those schools that have a number of looked after children on their role. It is not delivered by the Virtual School.

Agreed that it would be useful to know from the educational psychology service the percentage of schools that had had this input in the past 18 months.

#### **(iii) Pupil Premium**

Anne Hawker (Head teacher Virtual School) has reported that the impact of the pupil premium should be reflected in the pupil's performance. It is not always transparent on how schools are using this money and O&S might want to look at this in future.

#### **(iv) Review of Corporate Parenting Policy and Strategy**

Brenda advised that this is being refreshed and that she is looking to all stakeholders/partners completing a page regarding their commitment. Young people will need to be involved in signing off any new policy document. To be tabled for a future meeting.

### **2. Safeguarding Task and Finish Group**

Cllr Tandy raised that health issues are not addressed through O&S. Cllr Timms advised that she is a member of the shadow Health and Wellbeing Board and that this is a developing agenda and that there needs to be a 'voice' for children on the Board. Whilst children's health is represented it is uncertain as to whether this covers

mental health issue for looked after children and young people. LAC does however have a designated service – Journeys. It is unclear whether LAC are accessing emotional health services in schools. Both Brenda and Dr Desai (designated doctor) are on the Journeys Steering Group and Brenda is also a member of the CAMHS Commissioning Strategy Group.

### **3. Conference discussion – Improving Outcomes for Young People in Care**

The current coalition Government is maintaining the commitment to improving outcomes for looked after children and young people.

#### **Placement issues**

- Throughput of children through foster placements is high
- Insufficient placements to enable young people to have choice
- Independent Reviewing Officers are able to raise to monitor the care and plans for looked after children and escalate any concerns to Senior Managers
- Foster carers are required to give 28 days' notice to end a placement to enable time for a planned move
- Fostering/placement dataset is reviewed monthly
- Issue of placing sibling groups – we are monitored against this – need to recognised their individual needs
- Placement are made that do not involve school moves wherever possible
- Foster carers are expected to undertake core training within a 2 year period

#### **Adoption**

- The proposed concurrent scheme involves having adopters who are also approved as foster carers so that a young child can be placed sooner

#### **Bath Spa Project**

- School resources have been developed that would be useful to access
- Noted that Hampshire have a good apprenticeship scheme.
- Need to make sure that care leavers access grants and charities to support them in further and higher educational
- Local arrangements for supporting care leavers attending university are currently being developed

#### **In our shoes – Lead Member Role (Bristol)**

- Young people are involved in member training
- Web site still to be developed
- Young people have a direct link to the Portfolio Holder.

## Future actions

1. To meet with the Children in Care Council to discuss young people's involvement
2. Hear more about the Journey's Service

## Performance

The adoption scorecard was shared

Educational attainment – difficult to predict as the cohort of young people changes and looked after children include a high percentage with statement of educational needs. Update required from the Virtual School.

## Next meeting

**20 June 2.00 - 4.00**

## Brenda Vincent

**Response from Educational Psychology Service** Further to your request for information, I have listed below the schools that have received training. The training delivered in March 2011 and February 2012 was attended by 1/2 representatives from those schools listed. The training to Round Oak, Sibford, Temple Herdwyke and Thorns was to all staff in each of these schools. The training delivered is typically a full day's training. Both whole school training and invitations to central training usually arise following discussions about looked after children in their schools. In some cases invitations were given to foster carers attending the therapeutic parenting courses, which is why there were representative teachers from different authorities.

January 2011      IDS Autism Team (approx. 25 staff)

March 2011      St James Junior School (N)  
Newdigate Primary (N)  
Moons Moat School (Redditch)  
Mount Grace High (Leicestershire)  
Wellesbourne Primary (S)

April 2011      Round Oak School (C)

October 2011    Members of IDS Pre-school, VI, HI & complex needs teams (20 staff)

May 2011      Sibford School (Independent, Oxfordshire)

June 2011      Temple Herdwyke Primary (S)

January 2012    Thorns Infant (C)

February 2012   Mappleborough Green Primary (S)  
Bridgetown Primary (S)  
Coten End Primary (C)  
Chilvers Coton Infant (N)  
Virtual School  
Snitterfield Primary (S)  
Oakwood Primary (N)  
St Benedict's High (S)  
St Paul's Primary (C)  
Crackley Hall School (Independent)

## Item 2

### Action Plans relating Looked After, Fostering and Adoption Services – October 2012

Plan	Action	Activities/Outcomes	Timescale	Comments
Safeguarding business Unit Plan 2012-2014	Safely Reduce the number of LAC	Evidenced based programmes commissioned Revision of the role of Children's Panels Use of Going Home toolkit	December 2012	Referred to as the 'Dartington' Project. This includes a 'Matching Needs and Services' exercise
Adoption Services Action Plan 20-12-2013	To continue to recruit adopters for those children deemed harder to place i.e. older children, sibling groups and children with disabilities.	Increase in the number of adoption placements made in timely manner	March 2013	Also in the Placement Commissioning Strategy for LAC 2011-2013 (Sufficiency Duty)
	To continue to facilitate and increase the amount of workshops/training available for approved adopters.	Adopters Training programme in place	March 2013	
	To review the Preparation Groups in line with the Guidance issued by the Department of Education, to ensure that adopters are fully prepared for adoption.	Practice complies with revised national Guidance	March 2013	
	To respond to and implement changes required arising the Adoption Action Plan.	Service complies with national regulatory requirements	Ongoing	
	To develop a support groups for adopters in the 'north' of the County.	All adopters have access to support group	March 2013	
	To work with Fostering Services in the development on concurrent planning scheme, whereby young	Reduce placement delays and improve adoption performance timescale	March 2013	

	babies are placed with foster carers who are then in a position to adopt them should this be the plan.			
Fostering Services Action Plan 2012-2013	To Increase the number of foster placements available by (i) streamlining the front end of the fostering recruitment processes (ii) increasing the numbers of preparation groups, (including weekend groups) (iii) directly booking in home visits to potential carers if the initial telephone contact is positive thereby reducing delay by not waiting for them to return a reply slip.	Improve fostering preparation and assessment performance  Reduce reliance on IFA placements	October 2012	
	Reviewing and updating the fostering recruitment material and expanding recruitment opportunities via websites, blogs, Google etc.	Increase the number of fostering enquiries using new technologies		
	Increasing the number of assessments completed within 6 months to 90% of assessments. (Current N.M.S. is 8 months).	Improve the number and range of internal fostering placements		
	The Framework Agreement ends in 2013. The Service with M.A.C. needs to review and secure a position within the Consortium which provides local placements	To reduce the unit cost of external fostering provision – to ensure that such arrangements do not adversely impact upon the internal provision		

	at a competitive price.			
	To review and improve processes to provide more permanent foster placements	To improve placement stability for looked after children and young people		Also in the Placement Commissioning Strategy for LAC 2011-2013 (Sufficiency Duty)
	To complete the review of foster carer Payments for Skills scheme to include the criteria for Skills Levels 1 and 2, consider payment arrangements for solo placements and to address the issue of long term savings.	To ensure that the scheme complies with new QFC requirements Increase placement options for young people with complex needs Streamline arrangements and ensure consistency regarding long term savings	November 2012  March 2013  January 2013	Also in the Placement Commissioning Strategy for LAC 2011-2013 (Sufficiency Duty)
	To decrease the number of children who experience 3 or more placement moves.	To enhance placement stability for LAC and bring performance in line with national average	March 2013	
	To recruit 30 fostering households over each 12 month period and complete 90% of the assessments within 6 months of application.			
Placement Commissioning Strategy for LAC 2011-2013 (Sufficiency Duty)	To review our current Kinship Strategy and support services, in line with new regulations and best practice.	Dedicated Kinship Care service established Increase in kinship placements	January 2012	Kinship Service set up
	To explore opportunities with Coventry City Council to make			



	the optimum of use of resources in recruiting, supporting and training adopters			
	To develop a protocol with health for accessing CAMHS services for children and young people placed out of county.			
	To explore the feasibility of having a Framework Agreement for residential care and educational placements required			
	To develop further supported hostel accommodation for care leavers as placement within any extended family arrangement appears unlikely for a significant number of young people known to Children's Services.			
	To develop and implement a strategy with housing providers and Supporting People to provide an equitable range of housing options for vulnerable young people.			
	To develop and implement supported lodgings arrangements for care leavers.			



**Warwickshire People Group,  
Safeguarding.**

# Adoption Services Annual Report 2011-2012

Adoption Services



## **ADOPTION SERVICES TEAM ACTIVITY REPORT**

**April 1<sup>st</sup> 2011 to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2012**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This report will provide detail of the work of the Adoption Services Team in the year 2011- 2012. It will detail the work of the Service in the last twelve months and highlight positives in practice alongside areas that require on-going development. The work of Warwickshire County Council as an adoption agency is governed by the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

### **2. The Adoption Service Team**

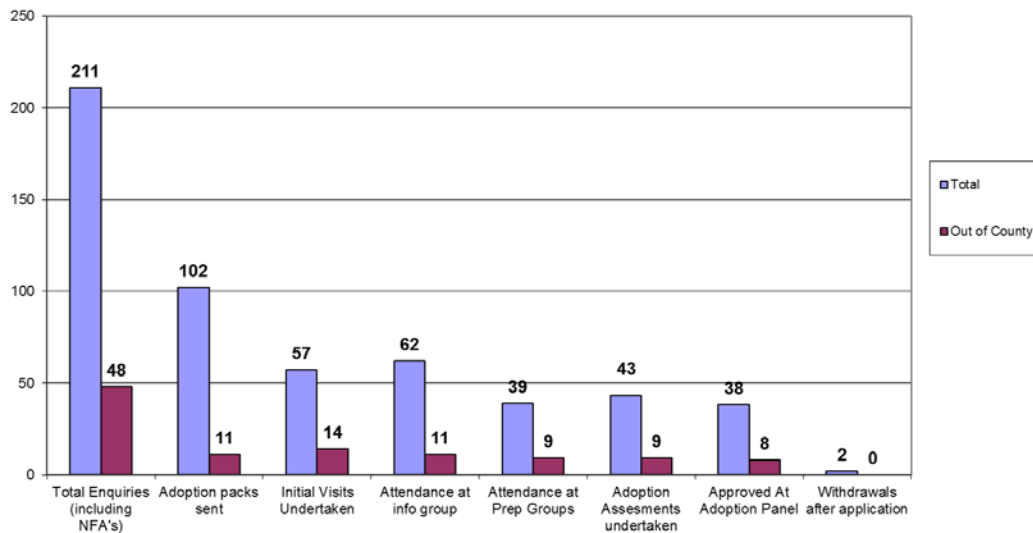
- 2.1 The Adoption Service Team has an establishment of eight FTE social workers and three Managers. The posts are filled by a combination of full time and part time social workers. One full time worker is currently on long term sick and one and half post are vacant with new workers due to start in July and August 2012. The management posts are filled by the Operations Manager (until November 2012) and two part time Practice Leaders. One Practice Leader is also the Adoption Support Service Advisor (ASSA) and the equivalent of one full time social work post is ring-fenced for providing adoption support.
- 2.2 The Service is supported by a dedicated clerical team.
- 2.3 The Adoption Services Team is based at Saltisford Office Park and works county wide, working closely with Children's Safeguarding Teams across the 5 districts. This requires a great deal of travelling time given the size of the county. Interagency placements also require high levels of travelling and 8 Warwickshire approved adopters were matched with children from other Local Authority areas during this period.
- 2.4 The core business of the Adoption Service Team is as follows
- An Adoption Duty System five days a week.
  - Recruitment, preparation and assessment of prospective adopters.
  - Completion of Non Agency Adoptions assessment and reports
  - Overseas Adoption Assessments and support post placement.
  - Family finding for all children with an Adoption Plan, (the majority during this period have been placed with Warwickshire adopters).

- Identification of children awaiting adoption in other Local Authority areas and facilitating interagency placements with Warwickshire adopters
- Advice to social worker on the preparation of a child for adoption.
- Placement matching and careful planning and review of the child's move to adopters.
- Providing reports for the Court.
- Post approval support through individual work, training groups, workshops and support groups.
- Birth Records Counselling for adopted adults.
- A Letterbox Scheme to facilitate exchanges of information between adoptive and birth families.
- Advice to social workers and carers on adoption issues.
- Ongoing development of the service, which reflects legal and regulatory guidelines and standards including the implications of the recent Adoption Action Plan.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of the service.
- Development work in partnership with other agencies.
- Provision of the Adoption Panel Advisor and support to the independently chaired Adoption Panel which approves adopters, make 'best interest' decisions in respect of children (up until 1.9.2012), and agree matches of specific children with specific adopters.
- An Adoption Support Service (as detailed in the report) for all adoptive families in Warwickshire.

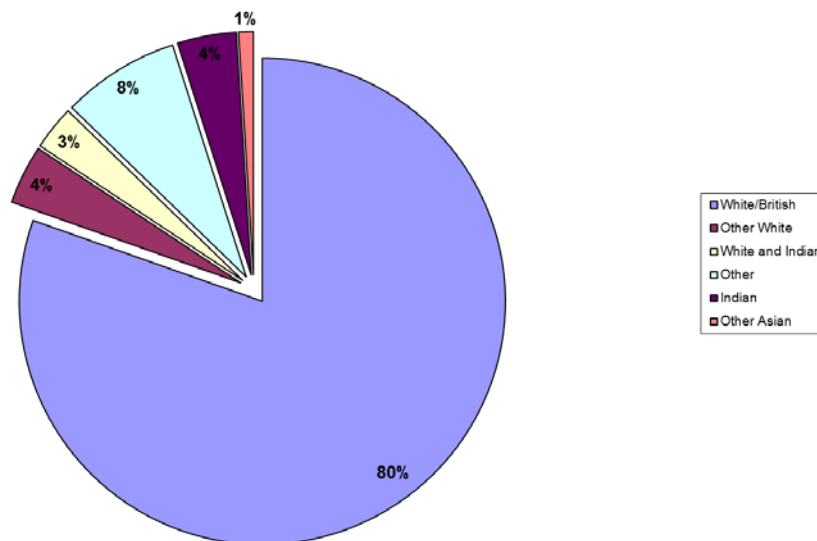
### **3. Recruitment, Adoption Preparation and Assessment**

- 3.1 In the last year the Service have dealt with 211 telephone and web enquiries. These covered a wide spectrum of adoption issues. This is an increase of 49 enquires from the previous year.
- 3.2 From this initial contact 102 Adoption Information Packs were sent, 62 households went on to attend our Adoption Information Meetings. The Team also held 4 sets of 3 day Adoption Preparation Groups that involved 39 households. Information Meetings and Preparation Groups are held on different days and at varying times including evenings and Saturdays in order to provide as much flexibility as possible.

Adoption Activity April 2011 - March 2012



Packs sent - Analysis of ethnicity April 2011 - March 2012



- 3.3 There has been an increase in the recruitment of prospective adopters, despite Warwickshire being 'targeted' by neighbouring authorities who have sought to recruit adopters from outside of their own area because of geographical/anonymity issues. Independent Adoption Agencies also have prominence across Warwickshire.
- 3.4 The Recruitment Strategy for the Service is reviewed annually and is based on the profile of the children in the care of Warwickshire that need to be placed for adoption. The current Recruitment Strategy details the priorities as applicants who are interested in sibling groups, older children and children with disabilities. The Service has continued

to advertise in local newspapers and display posters in public places. Specific recruitment adverts have been run for sibling groups of three children.

- 3.5 When the agency is unable to identify appropriate placements within Warwickshire, details of children are added to the West Midlands Family Finding data base and the National Adoption Register. In addition to this the details of children seeking placements are sent to all registered adoption agencies on a 3 monthly basis.
- 3.6 The Adoption Service Team is represented on Children's Panels which ensures that the Service can track and identify early in the planning process those children who are likely to need adoption. Being alerted to children who may need adopting shortly after they are accommodated, and certainly by the four month review enables the Service to take positive action to recruit families for potentially "hard-to-place" children and thus minimise delay for them.
- 3.7 Preparation Groups are held every 3 months and the waiting times for adopters' mean that most applicants can be offered places on either the next set of groups or the ones after that. Warwickshire County Council applies a rigorous and thorough assessment of adopters in order to safeguard and promote children's welfare. Priorities are set to ensure that the service recruits adopters for the types of children needing placements and priority will be given to prospective adopters who can meet the needs of children who are waiting for adoption. The longest that any applicant should wait to attend a group is approximately 5-6 months. This will need to be reduced to comply with the proposals contained within the Adoption Action Plan.
- 3.8 38 households were approved as potential adopters during April 2011 and March 2012, with only 1 family withdrawing from the assessment process. This was an increase of 12 from the year 2010/11.
  - 1 family was not recommended as suitable to adopt and this recommendation was endorsed by the agency decision maker.
  - 3 couples approved during this period were of Indian ethnicity, and one couple was of White British/Indian ethnicity. The remaining households were of White European origin. This is in line with the children who are waiting for adoption within Warwickshire where again the majority of children are of White British origin.
  - 5 of the households approved were recruited from out of county, and 2 overseas assessments were completed. This is a slight increase from the previous year however approved adopters continue to wait longer for a child from overseas.
- 3.9 The average time taken to complete assessments from receipt of the application form to Adoption Panel is months this is 8.2 months slightly increased from the previous year which was 7.2 months, however this is due to staff shortages and long term sickness of two workers with

their work having to be reallocated to remaining workers. The shortest assessment was 3 months (2<sup>nd</sup> time adopters) and the longest was 21 months, this was due to bereavement and the family moving home.

- 3.10 On the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012 there were 17 households approved and waiting for a placement. A further 25 were under assessment and a further 1 household was awaiting allocation. There were 10 households waiting for Preparation Groups and 11 for Information Meetings.

#### **4. Family Finding**

- 4.1 There were 31 Adoption Orders made in respect of Warwickshire children in the year April 2010 to March 2011. This was 6 more than the previous year.

- 4.2 Of the children adopted, 20 were single children, and 4 sibling groups of two and one sibling group of three. The ages of the children at adoption were:

0	2	8	13	1	1	1	4	0	1
Under 1 year	Under 2 years	Under 3 years	Under 4 years	Under 5 years	Under 6 years	Under 7 years	Under 8 years	Under 9 years	Under 10 years

- 4.3 1 child was of Indian/ British ethnicity, and the remaining children were of White European ethnicity.
- 4.4 In line with national trends the Service experiences difficulties in recruiting adopters for large sibling groups, and children with disabilities. The Adoption Recruitment Strategy continues to attempt to address this with specific advertising in local publications and newspapers and stands in local shopping centres and libraries.
- 4.5 These efforts have led to the Service being successful in placing a nine year old female child and four children aged between seven and eight years. We also successfully placed 2 children with disabilities.
- 4.6 The number of children placed within 12 months of their adoption decision was 79%, an increase on the 2010/11 figure. This is the result of internal processes such as regular attendance at Children's Panels, 'tracking and chasing', identifying children's needs sooner in the permanency planning process, effective joint working with children's social workers and their early attendance at the Placement Allocation Group.
- 4.7 A further 26 children are placed in adoptive homes with an adoption application pending and as of the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012. 27 children had an approved adoption plan, but were not yet placed in an adoptive home as on 31.3.12. For some of these children this was due to on-going

court issues that had resulted in the delay of Placement Orders being made.

- 4.8 When potential placements cannot be identified within Warwickshire's pool of approved adopters the next step is for social workers to refer their child to the West Midlands Consortium and the National Adoption Register. A social worker from the Adoption Team will accompany a child's social worker on all out of county visits to prospective adopters and will encourage the making of a DVD for prospective adopters to view.
- 4.9 If following these visits potential adopters are still not identified a family finding advisor will be allocated from the Adoption Services Team to spearhead any advertising required. In addition to featuring children in national adoption publications such as Be My Parent or Children Who Wait, the Team has designed a quarterly booklet featuring children and adopters who are awaiting placements and sent this out to all Local Authorities and Voluntary Adoption Agencies. We have received several enquiries from this.
- 4.10 If potential adopters are identified out of county the social worker from the Adoption Services Team will remain involved in an advisory capacity until the match is presented to the Adoption Panel. The Operations Manager of the Adoption Services Team assumes a quality assurance role in all out of county adoption placements, and pre placement support meetings are held to identify immediate and future placement support needs.
- 4.11 In 2011-2012 the service made 1 inter agency placement involving a Warwickshire child being placed within a neighbouring Authority, and a further 9 Warwickshire families were matched with 9 children from other Local Authority areas.
- 4.12 The over-riding difficulty with out of county placements continues to be the provision of appropriate support to the adoptive families especially when Children Adolescence Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are required.
- 4.12 The Service has continued to successfully facilitate a regular support group for adopters and children based in Warwick. In addition to this we host an annual picnic and Adoption Fun day in conjunction with Coventry Adoption Service; this is open to anyone who has adopted.
- 4.13 The Service continues to run a duty service on a daily basis which supports many adopters who are facing difficulties and need telephone support and guidance.



## **5. Training**

- 5.1 Social Workers within the Service continue to attend relevant training with three members of the Service undertaking training with Kim Golding and Dan Hughes regarding attachment. Managers within the Service have kept abreast of managerial courses offered through the Group. The Operations Manager has presented training to foster carers in respect of Moving Children onto Adoption and to social workers undertaking training regarding the court and legal process.
- 5.2 A Practice Leader from the Service met with first year student social workers at Coventry University to discuss adoption and adoption issues. This was well received and the Service has been asked to present this again this year. This was thought to be very beneficial to the Service in helping potential social workers understand where adoption fits with safeguarding children, and current issues facing adoption practice.
- 5.3 The service has also offered a placement to a second year social work student.

## **6. Non- agency adoptions**

- 6.1 18 Non agency adoption assessments were allocated during 2011-12. These continue to be intricate pieces of work.

## **7. Summary**

- 7.1 This period has seen improvements in the following
- An increase in the number of enquiries regarding adoption
  - Improving timescales for applicants attending Information Groups.
  - Improving timescales for applicants attending preparation groups
  - Timescales in matching children following the adoption 'best interest' decision being made.
  - The number of Adoption Orders granted

## **8. Plans for the Service**

- 8.1 The priorities for the Adoption Services Team during 2012-2013 are:
- To continue to recruit adopters for those children deemed harder to place i.e. older children, sibling groups and children with disabilities.
  - To continue to facilitate and increase the amount of workshops/training available for approved adopters.

- To review the Preparation Groups in line with the Guidance issued by the Department of Education, to ensure that adopters are fully prepared for adoption.
- To maintain effective partnership working with Children's Safeguarding Teams – ensuring that adoption plans are progressed appropriately and in timely manner.
- To contribute to the development of best practice across the West Midlands through membership of the West Midlands Consortium.
- To develop a support groups for adopters in the 'north' of the County.
- To respond to and implement changes required arising the Adoption Action Plan.
- To work with Fostering Services in the development on concurrent planning scheme, whereby young babies are placed with foster carers who are then in a position to adopt them should this be the plan.

# **Adoption Support Services Annual Review**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This report is to review the Adoption Support Work undertaken during the period April 2011 to March 2012.
- 1.2 The Adoption Services Team have one part time Practice Leader/ASSA, whose hours have increased from 18.5 to 25 hours in April 2012. 37 hours are ring fenced for adoption support work; these hours are divided between two part time social workers. A further 15 hours post will commence in August 2012. 1 letterbox coordinator works 15 hours a week. When the need arises other members of staff will also carry out adoption support duties.
- 1.3 As the nominated ASSA for Warwickshire I have been unable to attend the quarterly ASSA meetings during this period due to other work commitments.

## **2. Adoption Support**

- 2.1 162 adoption support referrals have been receive regarding the following issues.
  - Life story work
  - Educational concerns
  - Disruptive/volatile/threatening behaviour
  - Requesting the child to be accommodated
  - Support and advice
  - Counselling request
- 2.2 Support has been provided by providing 'one to one' session with adoptive parents, time limited work with children, attendance at training groups, or by signposting or making referrals to other services i.e Journeys.
- 2.3 Difficulties have been encountered in coordinating joint home visits with some Children's Safeguarding Teams. This is presently being monitored.
- 2.4 The Adoption Support social workers have attended CAF meetings as consultants/advisors.

## **3. Adoptive Parents Attachment Group**

- 3.1 The adoptive parents' 18 week 'fostering attachment' training group has been completed during this period. The course material is based on Clinical Psychologist's, Kim Golding's work. This year's the course was run in partnership with Journeys (Mind /Relate), Coventry Adoption

Team and Warwickshire Adoption Team. Adopters reside in both Authorities. 7 Warwickshire Adopters attended this training and now attend a monthly support group.

- 3.2 The Adoption Services Team recognises that an 18 week course is a huge commitment for adopters and therefore the training material has been condensed in order to offer a 3 evening course. Two groups have been run this year and attended by 25 adopters.
- 3.3 The 18 week 'fostering attachments' course is to be run again in the Autumn 2012 and at this stage clarification is being sought on which agencies/ authorities will co - run the programme. The 3 evening attachment course to be run during July 2012 with future dates being confirmed for the rest of the year thereafter.

#### **4. Attachment Support Group**

- 4.1 On the completion of the 'fostering attachment' group, adopters are invited to join the once a month support group. 4 groups presently run. The groups provide a forum for adopters to meet without their children, share how their month has been, time to "off load" in a safe environment, reflect on how they have dealt with situations, feel supported and valued. The groups also discuss agreed topics, i.e. managing difficult behaviour, transition into school. 23 parents actively use these groups, some members travelling over an hour in order to attend.
- 4.2 This support groups serve an invaluable role and they are to be reviewed and consideration given to whether they can be amalgamated.

#### **5. Letterbox Exchange Scheme**

- 5.1 A Letterbox Coordinator, works Tuesday and Thursdays a total of 15 hours a week. The Letterbox Coordinator is responsible for the 240 active children's letterbox exchanges, which equates to approx 1500 exchanges a year. Within the year the coordinator has made/received 658 calls or emails, 652 letters sent and 490 contacts.
- 5.2 Sensitivity and support is constantly required to manage emotionally charged parents and adopter's demands.

#### **6. Section 98 – Birth Records Counselling**

- 6.1 54 referrals have been received for Birth Records Counselling an increase of 19 (54%) from the previous period 2010-2011. As a result there is currently a 3 month waiting list for this service.
- 6.2 Feedback from adopted adults continues to be extremely positive. The information received, sensitivity and time provided by the Service is valued by the service user.

Feedback:

*"I cannot praise Linda high enough. I felt incredibly supported, safe and given lots of time"*

*"The sensitivity, skill and professionalism shown in revealing my file, and the follow up made me feel anything but standard."*

*"Excellent service"*

*"Really helpful and supportive from start to finish"*

6.3 A new Information Pack has been collated for all those receiving this service.

6.4 It is hoped that waiting times will reduce once a new member of staff joins the Service in August.

## **7. Other agencies referrals**

7.1 38 referrals were received from other Local Authorities and agencies requesting information from adoption archived files. This work is entered onto Care First and with assistance from the Wedgnock Resources Management Office and County Records files are being identified and located swiftly.

## **8. Independent Service for Birth Parents and Relatives**

8.1 In partnership, Warwickshire and Coventry have recently commissioned Birth Connections (St Francis) to provide an Independent Service for birth parents and relatives. Funding is for 7 hours a week. There are currently 10 birth relatives receiving a service and 10 are showing on the database as either being on the waiting list (8) or on hold (2). This is predominately due to the increasing number of referrals as more children have adoption plans in Warwickshire.

8.2 Quarterly meetings are arranged with the Birth Connections to review the work undertaken and address any outstanding issues. Consideration is currently being given to increasing the contracted in hours in view of waiting list.

## **9. Support Groups and Family Days**

9.1 The Leamington Support Group has moved venue which has resulted an increase in numbers attending. The North Group is due to be re-launched and will only be run during half terms and holidays. The Support Groups have no fixed agenda and members welcome the opportunity to make new, and maintain, friendships.

- 9.2 The annual picnic at Coombe Abbey in August was extremely successful despite the awful weather. In partnership with Coventry, the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Fun Day was held in November 2011 at Tile Hill School, Coventry. 247 people attended the event previously.

Feedback from children:

*"Very good day family day out, best ever"*

*"Had great fun, 7<sup>th</sup> year coming, great day"*

*"Today's been fun"*

*"I think that your fun days are great and I enjoy them"*

*"I think your activities are great"*

## **10. Coventry and Warwickshire Training Group.**

- 10.1 In partnership with Coventry, Warwickshire Adoption Services commissioned "Transitions during school" by Eileen Kell, Educational psychologist. 18 families attended the course held in June.

Coventry Adoption Services have recently experienced departmental changes and therefore inter agency working has been put on hold until this has settled.

## **11. Warwickshire training**

- 11.1 The following training has been provided to adoptive parents and their families

- ½ day "Building a bond with your child through play" a successful course based on theraplay techniques. The course will be re-run in the Autumn

- 11.2 The following training is planned

- ½ day workshop for friends and family members of prospective adopters and adopters. "Adoption and supporting the adoptive family"
- 1/2 day workshop for new adopters on 'introductions' This is planned September for 2012

## **12. Adopter Mentoring Scheme**

- 12.1 In partnership with Relate an Adopter's Mentoring Scheme provides a low level peer group support for adopters in the early days of introductions and placement. The scheme now has 8 mentors and

has supported 19 new adoptive families in the past year.

- 12.2 The scheme proves to be extremely successful and mentee's are accessing the service for as long as they need it, (roughly a year). The disadvantage of this is that it causes difficulty in allocating new cases.
- 12.3 The Mentors are volunteers and attend six weekly supervision. They determine how many mentees they support depending on their availability.
- 12.4 The recruitment of new mentors will be started circulated in November / December and mentor training will be planned for January 2013.

### **13. Summary**

- 13.1 Warwickshire Adoption Services has a named Adoption Support Service Advisor in post that carries out the duties laid down in the Adoption Support Regulations 2005. A number of services in the area of adoption support are provided by the Adoption Services Team and these have a direct and positive impact on adopters and their families. The Adoptive Parents Attachment Group has enabled adoptive parents to have an understanding of how a child's formative relationships and experiences can have an impact on their later relationships and how they can bring this experience with them into the adoptive family; they have also learned techniques to help deal with some of the resulting behaviours.
- 13.2 162 referrals were logged as adoption support with an additional 658 phone calls regarding letterbox arrangements.
- 13.3 All newly matched prospective adopters are offered the Adopter's Mentoring Service and feedback is excellent and welcomed and valued by new adoptive families. The mentors have now increased to 8.
- 13.4 The Letterbox Exchange remains the largest part of post adoption work, with over 240 children receiving one or more letters a year.
- 13.5 Support groups and activity days continue to expand and are well attended by both parents and children. Working in partnership with Coventry has enabled a range of training events to be offered.
- 13.6 It is important to highlight that all of the work identified in this report has been undertaken by a Practice Leader ( 25 hours ) 2 adoption support social workers ( each 18.5 hours) and the Letterbox Coordinator ( 15 hours). An additional 15 hour social worker post will be added to the service from August 2012

**Louise Hathaway**  
**Adoption Practice Leader /ASSA**  
**July 2012**

## **Warwickshire Adoption Panel, Annual Review April 2011– March 2012**

### **1. Membership**

Adoption Agencies Statutory Guidance [AAR 3] updated 2011 requires that each agency must maintain a list of persons whom it considers suitable to be a member of an Adoption Panel. The Panel's business can only be conducted if at least 5 members are present, including the chair or vice chair and a social worker with at least three years relevant post qualifying experience.

In summary, as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012, panel membership is constituted as follows: -

- **Rose Ruddick:** Independent Chair, Social Worker with background in family court welfare, independent evaluation and youth justice
- **Maria Barnes:** Vice - Chair, Assistant Head of Children's Services
- **Peter Follett:** Independent Member, Adoptive Parent
- **Dr Lucy Coker:** Medical Adviser
- **Maggie King:** Independent Member, previously an adoption social worker
- **Margaret Luthert:** Independent Member, Adoptive Parent
- **Kit Leck:** Independent Member, Drug and Alcohol Strategy Manager
- **Dawn Preece:** Independent Member, Educational Psychologist
- **Chris Williams:** Elected County Councillor, Adoptive Parent
- **Jo Davies;** Children's Services Operations Manager

In addition to this core group Panel is able to draw on 4 additional pool members.

Panel continues to benefit from members with personal adoption experience.

#### **Non-Voting Panel Advisers:**

- **Sharon Shaw:** Adoption Panel Adviser, Operations Manager (Adoption Services)
- **Sarah Trundley:** Legal Adviser to Panel, Senior Solicitor
- **Sylvia Harvey:** Secretary to Adoption Panel, Team Administrator (Fostering and Adoption Team)

The current Panel has an excellent mix of skills and experience, and all Panel members have a strong commitment to improving Adoption Services in Warwickshire.

As always, Sylvia Harvey's secretarial support to Panel is excellent.



## 2. Summary of Adoption Panel Activity

- The Adoption Panel met on 22 occasions,
- The work of the Adoption Panel has increased during this period, and considered 117 items compared with 104 items of business in 2010/11, 85 items of business in 2009/10, 83 items of business in 2008/9, and 100 items of business in 2007/8 and 108 in 2006/7.

Panel considered

- 42 recommendations for children to be adopted (sibling groups counted as one business item)
- 30 recommendations for children to be matched with prospective adopters (involving 35 children)
- 37 recommendations for approval of adoptive parents
- Change of plans for children (involving 14 children)
- 3 resignations of approved adopters
- 3 change of approval categories
- 0 disruption reports

**Adoption Panel activities and trends are summarised below**

Year	No of children approved for adoption	No of matches	No of families approved to adopt
2005 – 6	39	23	35
2006 – 7	33	30	23
2007 – 8	38	26	29
2008 - 9	33	19	31 + 1 overseas
2009-10	34	22	24 + 1 overseas
2010-11	36	21	28
2011-12	62	30	35 + 2 overseas

## 3. Children Approved for Adoption

62 children had an adoption plan approved during this period however 3 children have had a change of plan noted, the majority of whom were approved for adoption in the previous year. All 3 children remained with foster carers

Of these children with an approved plan;

- 27 are single children
- 15 sibling groups of 2 children
- 2 sibling groups of 3 children
- 29 are male

- 33 are female
- 60 are White European
- 1 dual heritage , White/Asian
- 1 black African Caribbean

#### Ages of children

- 15 - under 1 year
- 13 - under 2 years
- 25 - 2–5 years
- 15 - 5+ years

#### 4. Children matched with Adopters

The Adoption Panel considered 25 matches including 30 children. Of these matches, 1 involved an out of county placements involving a single placement.

##### i. Ages of children matched

Age	0	Under 1	Under 2	Under 3	Under 4	Under 5	Under 6	Under 7	Under 8	9
		15	13	12	7	6	5	4	0	0

- 3 children were matched with foster carers
- 1 child was matched with a single carer

##### ii. Ethnicity of children matched

28 White/UK  
1 White/Indian  
1 Black African Caribbean

##### iii. Sibling Groups

5 sibling groups of 2 children placed together

#### 5. Approval of Prospective Adopters

Of the 37 households approved as adopters for Warwickshire

- 3 were foster carers
- 1 was a single applicant
- 2 were 2<sup>nd</sup> time adopters

## **6. Training and Development Events**

During the year Panel welcomed a number of new social workers and social work student observers, the chair and adviser providing an opportunity for informal discussions and feedback at the end of the morning.

Panel continues to benefit from opportunities at the end of meetings to reflect together on emerging areas for procedure and/or practice development and for being updated on new research and policy developments.

Panel members attended half day development training regarding the use of social media sites.

## **7. Appraisals and Feedback**

During 2011/12 the Chair and Advisor conducted annual appraisals with each Panel member. The Decision Maker and Panel Advisor also completed the Panel Chair's annual appraisal, which included drawing on feedback from Panel members. This provides the opportunity for Panel members to receive feedback about their contributions in Panel, but also for the chair and advisor to look at the functioning of the Panel as a whole and to look for on-going development opportunities.

Arrangements are also in place to ensure on-going feedback from professionals and prospective adopters to Panel. Everyone who attends Panel is provided with an evaluation form. If there are comments on the form about a particular Panel member's contribution, this will be followed through by the panel advisor. Comments received this year have been extremely positive.

## **8. Practice developments during the year**

- The number of Adoption Panels has increased during the year, to meet the increased demand for Panel time. Warwickshire have Panel members who are committed to attending Panel, and always come prepared. It has been necessary to increase Panels from once a month to twice a month to manage the work demands and this has been managed by developing a pool of Panel members who can support the core group of Panel members. It is acknowledge that Panel attendance has needed a huge commitment from its members.
- Panel continues to find ways of stressing its commitment to ensuring that children's own feelings and views are represented and heard. Panel does this through regular 'challenging' of social workers and Panel itself around practice and expectations. Panel has observed a number of times that social workers attending Panel often share much more about the child/ren's feelings and wishes than is represented in the written reports. A new Child Permanency Report has been developed to ensure that children's needs are detailed and considered.

- Panel is keen to keep abreast of on-going developments within Adoption Services. Articles from BAAF, newspapers etc. are shared with Panel members and if time allows they are discussed. The Panel is keen to participate in any training regarding the changes to the Adoption Service following the Nearey Report and arising from the Adoption Action Plan.
- Panel chair in discussion with Panel members establishes early on the extent to which Panel needs to explore the strength of evidence to support the adoption plans for the child. This enables Panel members to focus on the relevant areas of the report.
- Panel minutes now record any actions requested regarding amendments, or additions to the paperwork. This is extremely helpful when children and adopters return to Panel for matching.

## **9. Future Developments**

- Panel is keen to make the most of all opportunities during the next year to train / develop alongside wider social work staff and stakeholders, finding this a valuable experience. They particularly recognise the importance of this with the many changes that the adoption service is facing.
- Panel members will need to work with the Registered Manager to ensure that the new Regulations and Guidance are implemented, in particular the changes that will be made to adoption as the Adoption Action Plan becomes implemented. The focus is on reducing delay across the spectrum of adoption related activity
- To review the information required by the Adoption Panel when considering the matching recommendation.
- To provide feedback to the agency every six months on the quality of the reports presented to Panel.
- To give consideration to having prospective adopters attend the Adoption Panel when the matching decision is being made

Rose Ruddick Independent Chair  
Sharon Shaw Operations Manager

## Performance Data

- Adoption scorecard
- Virtual School for Children in Care  
Exam outcomes from Summer 2012
- Children's Safeguarding dataset – *To follow*  
LAC numbers/placements etc.

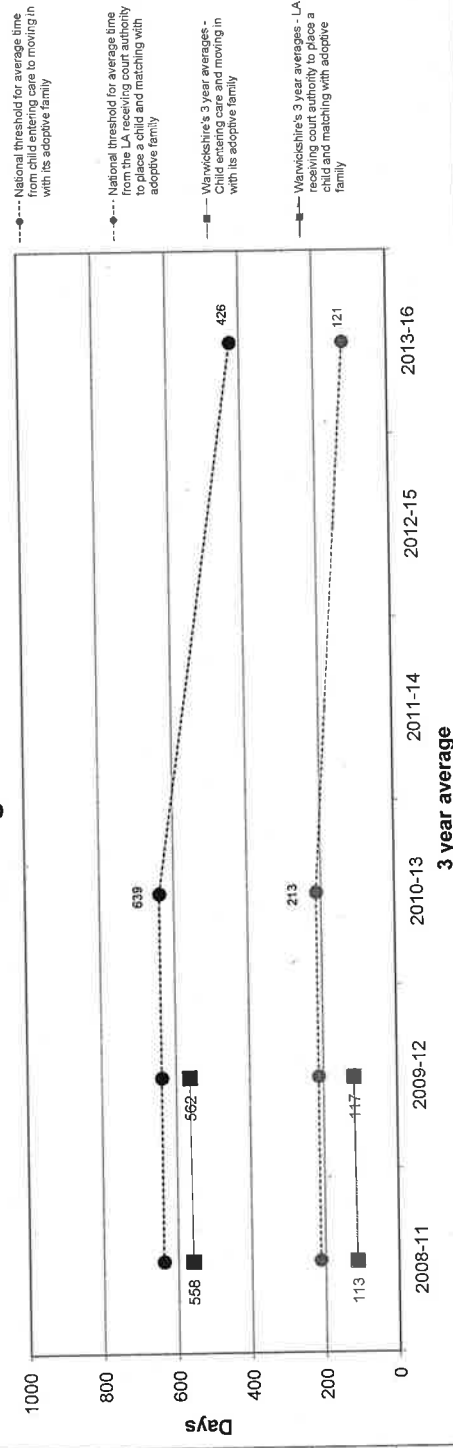
# Adoption Scorecard

Warwickshire

## Children

	Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted (days)	Average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family (days)	Children who wait less than 21 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (number and %)
LA's 3 year average (2009-12)	562	117	90 (65%)
Trend - Improvement from 2011 to 2012	Average time in 2012 was longer	Average time in 2012 was longer	N/A
England 3 year average (2009-12)	636	195	10,180 (56%)
Distance from 2010-13 performance threshold	Threshold met	Threshold met	N/A

## Average Time Indicators



## Related Information

Adoptions from care (number adopted and % leaving care who are adopted)	Number and % of children for whom the permanence decision has changed away from adoption	Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family. Where times for children who are adopted by their foster family are stopped at the date the child moved in with the foster family (days)	Adoptions of children from ethnic minority backgrounds (number adopted and % of BME children leaving care who are adopted)	Adoptions of children aged five or over (number adopted and % of children aged 5 or over leaving care who are adopted)	Average length of care proceedings locally (weeks)	Number of children awaiting adoption (as at 31 March 2012)	Number of approved prospective adopters (as at 31 March 2012)
85 (11%)	5 (4%)	512	x (x%)	25 (5%)	57	30	Data not available
9,740 (12%)	1,360 (7%)	546	1,490 (6%)	2,520 (4%)	53	5,750	Data not available

## Prospective Adopters

Indicators to be agreed	Indicators to be agreed	Indicators to be agreed
Data not available until 2013		

## Virtual School for Children in Care

**Exam outcomes Summer 2012 as of 5th September 2012**

**Results to be verified**

### Profile of year 11 cohort 2011 – 12 supported by the Virtual School

The year 11 cohort, supported by the Virtual School in 2011 – 12 was 87, 74 of whom were students in the care of Warwickshire.

### Of the 74 in the care of Warwickshire

- 21 had statements of special educational need and a further 26 were on the special needs register at school – 54%
- 16 students were unaccompanied asylum seekers
- 51 students came into the care of Warwickshire continuously prior to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011
- 6 students came into care between April and August 2011
- 9 students came into care between September and December 2011
- 7 students came into care after January 1<sup>st</sup> 2012

	No of students	into care before 31/03/11	Into care between 1/4/11 and 31/8/11	into care between 1/9/11 and 31/12/11	into care after 1/1/12	UAS	SEN statements	on SEN register
Warks students in Warks schools	48	33	4	7	4	9	13	18
Warks students out of area (OOA)	26	18	2	2	2	7	8	8
Other LAC educated in Warks schools(OLA)	13	na	na	na	na	na	na	na
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>							

**GCSE or equivalent outcomes for year 11 cohort as described above**

	5 A*-C inc E/M	5A*-C	5A*-G	1A*-C	1 A*-G	any qual
Warks students in Warks Schools	9	17	28	30	36	42
Warks students OOA	0	5	14	12	15	18
OLA	3	6	6	9	8	9
<b>Total of 87</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>79</b>

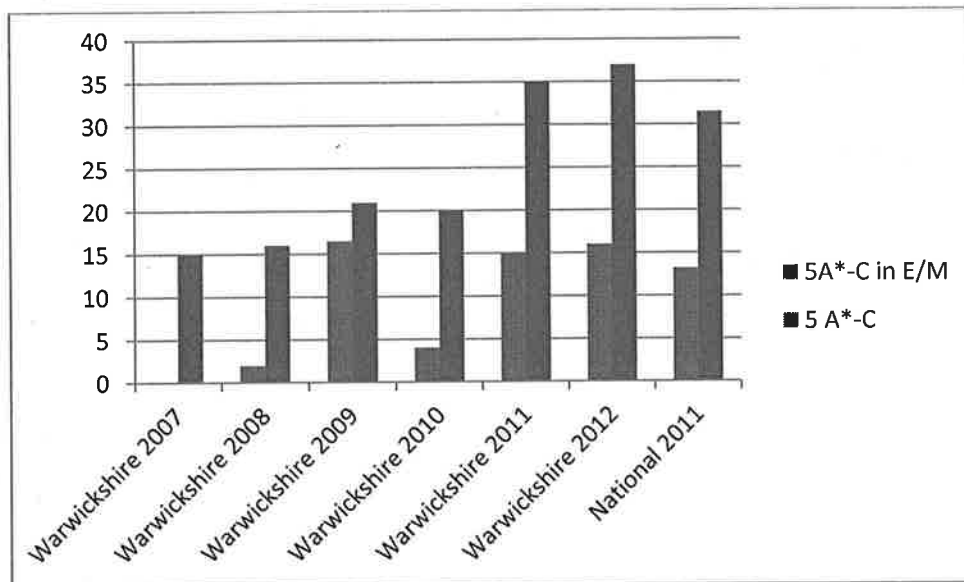
### Outcomes for the statistical cohort (used to measure performance nationally)

This is the cohort of students who have been in continuous care for 12 months or more on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012 . This is the cohort used to measure outcomes nationally.

- 33 students were educated in Warwickshire schools
- 18 were educated out of area
- 15 students had statements of special educational need (29%) and a further 18 were on the special needs register in schools (35%) – 65 % identified as having a special educational needs by schools
- 12 students were unaccompanied asylum seekers (UAS)
- There were 6 students who did not achieve any external qualification – 3 were unaccompanied asylum seekers, placed out of year, 2 were in alternative provision and one students had significant learning difficulties and therefore qualifications were not appropriate at this time

Statistical group of 51	SEN statements	SEN register	UAS	5A*-C inc E/M	5 A*-C	5A*-G	1A*_C	1A*-G	any qual.
Warks students in Warks school	9	14	7	8	14	19	21	25	30
Warwickshire students OOA	6	4	5	0	5	12	10	13	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>% of 51</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>88</b>

### GCSE attainment 2012 compared with previous years



- These results will need to be verified but are based on information received by schools by 5<sup>th</sup> September 2012.



## Year 6 results 2012

42 in cohort

8 from other authorities

Of the 34 Warwickshire pupils:

11 (32%) have statements of special educational needs

A further 4 are on school action plus

### Attainment

Level 4+ English 68%

Level 4 + maths 62%

Level 4 English and Maths 62%

**Statistical cohort is 27 (those continuously in care for one year prior to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012)**

9 have statements of special educational need

A further 4 are on school action plus

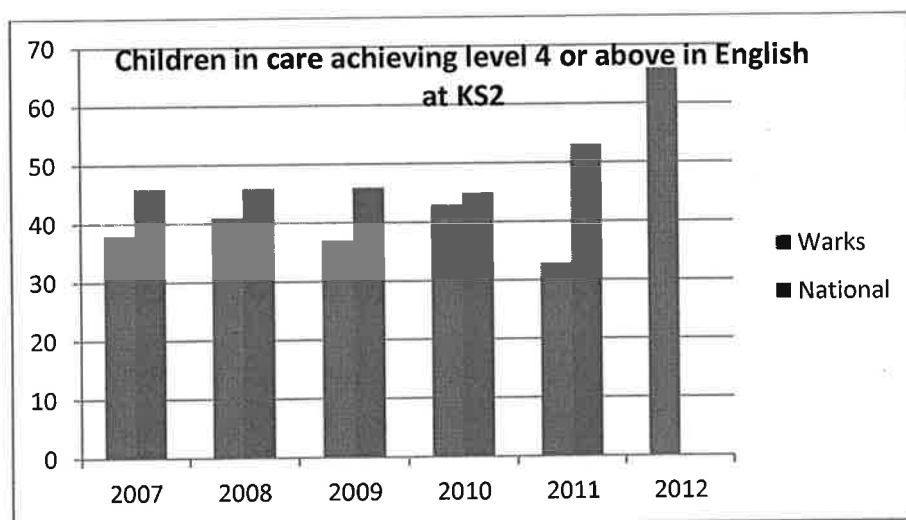
### Attainment

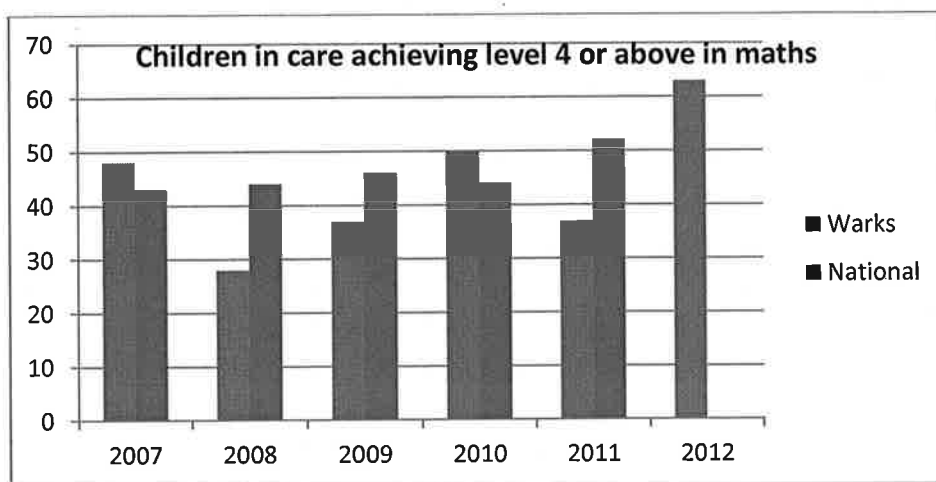
Level 4+ English 66%

Level 4+ maths 63%

Level 4+ English and maths 63%

**Note** Those pupils who did not achieve level 4 or above in English or did not achieve level 4 in mathematics, were all either statemented or were on SEN register.





**Anne Hawker**

**18 September 2012**

## **Terms of Reference**

### **Overall Purpose**

To secure elected member and cross organisation support and commitment for delivering improved services and better outcomes for looked after children, young people and care leavers.

### **Aims and Objectives**

1. To raise the profile of looked after children, young people and their carers and act as 'champions' for their needs and rights.
2. To raise the profile of Corporate Parenting across the County Council, district councils and partners, including schools.
3. To advise on the strategic direction of services for looked after children and young people and to agree the Corporate Parenting priorities on an annual basis.
4. To monitor the delivery of the Pledge commitments to looked after children, young people and care leavers.
5. To listen to the views of children and young people in care, care leavers and their carers and commit to involving them in the review and development of services.
6. To recognise and celebrate the achievements of looked after children, young people, care leavers and their carers.
7. To report annually to Cabinet on its activity.