

Committee: **Corporate Parenting Panel**

Date: **19 October 2007**

Title of Report: **Progress Report of East Sussex Adoption and Permanence Service, April-September 2007**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Purpose of Report: **To outline the performance of the Adoption and Permanence Service between April and September 2007**

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**Recommendation:**

**The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to note the contents of the report and the progress of the service**

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**1. Financial Appraisal**

1.1 There are no increased costs arising from the contents and recommendations of this report.

**2. Supporting Information**

2.1 The Progress Report of the East Sussex Adoption and Permanence Service is attached as Appendix 1. The Panel is recommended to note the contents of the report and the progress of the service.

MATT DUNKLEY  
Director of Children's Services

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Local members: All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

**Progress Report of East Sussex Adoption and Permanence Service  
April-September 2007**

## 1 Supporting Information

1. Number of Children Adopted	15
2. Number of Adoption Matches (children)	12
3. Number of Permanent Fostering Matches (children)	6
4. Number of Special Guardianship matches (children)	5
5. Number of East Sussex Adoptive Matches (children)	12
6. Number of Consortium Adoptive Matches (children)	0
7. Number of Inter-Agency Matches (children): Permanence: Adoption:	0 0
8. Number of Prospective Adopters Approved (households)	10 + 1 (Inter Country)
9. Number of Permanent Carers Approved (households)	5 + 2 (Spec. Guardians)
10. Number of Children Approved for Adoption	19
11. Number of Children Approved for Permanence	8
12. Number of Children Approved for Special Guardianship	7
12. Number of Approved Adopters waiting to be Matched	22
13. Number of Disruptions presented to Panel	2

1.1 The service has successfully recruited to one f/t social work post but continues to carry 0.8 of a social worker post vacant.

## 2. Recruitment

2.1 The recruitment strategy during the past six months has continued to prioritise the recruitment of adopters for older children, sibling groups and black and minority ethnic (BME) children. There has been a joint adoption and fostering recruitment event at Airborne, when 12 adoption information packs were distributed and the BME recruitment planning group has continued to liaise with key community organisations to take forward the BME strategy.

2.2 Between 1 April and 30 September 2006, 77 information packs have been requested in response to enquiries about adoption in East Sussex, and a further 28 potential adoptive families have attended information evenings. There have been three information evenings, followed by three motivation to adopt days. This is an important educative process for adopters outlining the realities of modern adoption. Of those who attend information sessions, it is usual that two-thirds of the original cohort progress to an initial visit, and then a third of the cohort go forward to a

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motivation to adopt day (MTA). This has resulted in the approval of 10 adopters and 1 inter-country adopter during this period.

### **3. Pool of Prospective Adopters**

3.1 The service continues to attract a steady flow of adopters and the pool of available adoptive carers now stands at 22 currently waiting.

3.2 The service has placed 12 children within East Sussex in the last six months and has not used consortium or agency placements.

### **4. Permanence**

4.1 The permanence project co-ordinator is now an integral part of the permanence project team, but still continues to take a lead responsibility for the tracking system. This focuses on all looked after children of 11 years and under, highlighting their care planning and timescales.

4.2 The permanence project continues to operate as a fully integrated service and promotes the permanence agenda as a viable option for looked after children who need long term care, and for whom adoption is unsuitable. It is operating at full capacity assessing, approving and supervising all permanent carers in the service. There have been 8 children presented to Panel to be approved for permanent foster care during this period, 5 permanence carers were approved, 2 special guardians approved and 6 matches for permanent fostering and 5 for special guardianship.

4.3 There are currently 2 vacancies for permanent foster placements and 26 children awaiting permanent placements. Panel bookings identify that between 10 October 2007 and June 2008 2 new permanent carers will be presented for approval, 7 children will be presented for a match, 4 children will be presented to be approved for permanence and 14 for adoption.

4.4 A significant number of these children are difficult to place due to the complexity of their needs. Consequently, they have been allocated a family finding worker and concerted efforts are being made to identify a suitable permanent placement.

### **5. Disruption**

5.1 Regrettably there have been a number of permanent disruptions during the past 6 months - 6 in total. However, this must be set against the national context which outlines the heightened risk of disruption for older children with complex histories.

5.2 A recent BAAF publication: 'Dealing with Disruption', Argent and Coleman 2006, comments that: 'It is generally accepted that a 20 per cent disruption rate is a rough average. The older the child at the time of placement, the higher the chance of the placement breaking down. Other risk factors include the following:

- that the child was previously 'institutionalised';
- that the child had a history of behavioural/emotional difficulties;
- that the child had a history of abuse/neglect; and
- that the child was placed separately from his or her brothers and sisters".

([www.dfes.gov.uk/adoption/introduction/faq.shtml](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/adoption/introduction/faq.shtml)).

5.3 Clearly, there will be lessons to be learnt from the disruption meetings, which are currently being arranged.

### **6. Special Guardianship**

6.1 Special Guardianship continues to be a popular option for a small minority of children requiring permanent placements, particularly those who are able to remain within the extended family network. In the last six months 2 special guardianship matches have been presented to Panel and 2 special guardian orders were agreed within the court arena.

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## **7. Adoption Support**

- Partnership working with the education adviser has been strengthened during the last six months; this has now been extended to include the LAC CAMHS manager.
- A successful conference was held in June, designed to consider the holistic needs of looked after and adopted children in the education context. Delegates included over 80 teachers and 30 adoptive families.
- The East Sussex adoption support services adviser (ASSA) is a member of the LAC CAMHS steering group, out of which a pan Sussex conference was held to consider the evidence for the most effective treatment for LAC and adopted children.
- Eleven new requests for adoption support have been received since April 2007. This is in addition to the provision already in place for the 35 families already in receipt of support.
- The service has commissioned a range of therapeutic support packages to enhance placement stability and prevent disruption. All packages are reviewed in accordance with the legislation.
- The contact element of adoption support continues to grow, and the complexity of these contacts needs skilled and sensitive handling. There are currently sixty direct contacts and four hundred and seventy-four letterbox contacts.
- The service level agreements with the Post Adoption Centre and Adoption UK provide local counselling support groups and workshops for service users in East Sussex.

## **Work With Adopted Adults**

- During this period twenty Schedule Two interviews have been offered. Each has a maximum of three follow-up meetings to share information from the adoption records.
- As the Appropriate Adoption Agency, the service has prepared forty-three adoption files held by East Sussex County Council in order for them to be shared with the adopted adult. Of these forty-three, twenty-nine were requests from outside agencies on behalf of adopted adults whose adoptions were arranged by East Sussex County Council.
- There have also been nine enquiries under Section 98 of the Adoption Act from birth relatives for a service.

## **8. Adoption and Permanence Panel**

8.1 The East Sussex Adoption and Permanence Panels continue to meet regularly with a steady level of activity. The membership has remained stable. Since April 2007, 6 children have attended Panel, including 2 babies under 1 year old. This continues to be a positive experience for both Panel members and the children themselves.

8.2 The annual Panel training will focus on Special Guardianship and Permanence this year. This will be closely followed by the annual Panel evaluation, in November, which will enable all Panel members to give and receive feedback.

## **9. Management Priorities for 2007/2008**

9.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to note the performance and achievements of the East Sussex adoption and permanence service since April 2007 and to endorse the key management priorities outlined in the adoption and permanence service plan for 2007/2008:

- To meet all adoption and permanence targets in the Children's Services plan 2007/2008, particularly in relation to the net increase and range of permanent carers and adopters.
  - To increase the type and range of adoption and permanence placements to meet the assessed needs of looked after children, especially children from black and minority ethnic groups.
  - To extend the range of adoption support services to improve placement stability and successful outcomes for children, as well as reducing placement disruption.
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- To increase the involvement of young people, adopters and permanence carers in service planning and delivery.
  - To ensure that issues of diversity and equality are integrated into service planning and delivery.
  - To identify the most cost effective and efficient option for mediation and services to adopted adults.
  - To consolidate work within the Department and with partner agencies to improve education and health outcomes for adopted children and those placed in long term permanent foster care.
  - To implement the revised financial support scheme to adopters.
  - To maximise Best Value and manage the service within allocated resources.
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