



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

# **CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

## **ADOPTION AND PERMANENCE ANNUAL REPORT**

**2006 – 2007**

# ADOPTION AND PERMANENCE ANNUAL REPORT 2006- 2007

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## **1. Introduction from the Fostering and Adoption County Manager.**

Cambridgeshire County Council have a statutory duty to produce an Annual report, which not only raises the profile of Adoption in Cambridgeshire but is also a means of ensuring that key information is available to anyone with an interest in Adoption.

It has been a very busy year for the Adoption and Permanence panel, which has sat on 21 occasions to hear 64 cases, which reflects the positive planning, made for children in Cambridgeshire. Full details of panel activity are reported in the body of this 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Adoption and Permanence Report for Cambridgeshire.

It is panel's role to consider the reports that come before them, examine in detail the information presented, scrutinise the process to ensure there is evidence that it has been fair, thorough in keeping with the legislation and then make recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker. I am pleased to welcome Richard Morris, Policy and Practice Standards Manager, who started sitting as Agency Adviser to the Adoption and Permanence Panel on 27 March 2007.

Panel have had the opportunity to read about some of the very good work that both the Adoption Social Workers and the Area Teams have undertaken with Children and prospective adopters. There has been a noticeable improvement in the speed in which children are matched with new parents, which is of great benefit to all.

Feedback from applicants attending Panel is very positive with comments of how welcome they felt at panel, how well listened to and that their views were taken into account by Panel Members.

Tracy Morton, Adoption Team Manager, has continued to drive standards up in Adoption and she has made a major contribution towards the recruitment, training and approval of adopters, as well as providing direction for child care social workers.

Adoption Support Plans are now key elements in all adoptive placements with some exhaustive multi agency plans being drawn for children. The work Milynda Moore, Adoption Support Manager, is undertaking in this area has been commended by BAAF.

Under the management of Claire Betteridge the Family Finding Team have successfully identified placements for older children, sibling groups and children from Black and Minority Ethnic Groups.

I hope that this reports highlights the positive work undertaken by Adoption Service by Practitioners, Managers and Panel Members within Cambridgeshire.

Jackie Coventry  
County Manager  
Cambridgeshire Fostering and Adoption Service

## **2. A Message from the Chair of Adoption and Permanence Panel.**

The Panel has the responsibility, under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005, of making recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker of the County Council, the Head of Children's Social Care, as to whether:

- A child should be placed for adoption
- Prospective adopters are suitable to adopt *and*
- A child should be placed for adoption with a particular adopter

In addition, the Panel also considers whether a child should be permanently fostered. The Panel has the role of bringing independent scrutiny and challenge to bear on the planning for children and the approval of prospective adopters.

This year has been a busy year for panel members with panel having met 21 times. Panel has the opportunity to see a wide range of work and to meet with social workers from across Cambridgeshire and occasionally from other agencies. Importantly though, Panel members also have the chance to meet prospective adopters who are invited to attend if they so wish when their approval as adopters or the placement of a particular child is being considered.

The work that Panel does is only one part of a very careful and rigorous process of trying to ensure that the futures of children who need the security and stability of adoption or permanent fostering are secured.

The role of a panel member is never an easy one but it is an essential task that is taken extremely seriously by all those involved. Panel members are extremely committed individuals and often go the extra mile to ensure their recommendations are based on the best available information. I wish to thank panel members for this commitment and co-operation throughout their time on panel and in particular over the past year of 2006- 2007.....

*Pam Duncan*

Pamela Duncan  
Independent Chair  
Cambridgeshire Adoption and Permanence Panel

### **3. The Commissioning Aims.**

The Office of Children and Young person's Services will:

**"Help all children and young people achieve their potential".**

We will do this by making sure that:

- Our services are of the highest quality
- Our services are inclusive and accessible
- We keep achievement levels rising
- We reduce inequalities
- We involve the people who use our services when making decisions which affect them

This shared vision has been developed for the service and reflects the 5 key outcomes of Every Child Matters:

- Be Healthy
- Be Safe
- Enjoy and Achieve
- Achieve Economic Well Being
- Make a Positive Contribution

**For Children who are looked after by Cambridgeshire County Council we will need to couple our efforts with the commissioning intentions for children and families: -**

- Where children and young people cannot live in their own family, but need care in a family setting, we will provide them with an appropriate fostering or adoption placement.
- For those children who require residential care, it will be high quality, offering specialist care.
- For those children who are disabled we will support them and their families to achieve their potential.
- For those children who are in need of protection we will action a protection plan to reduce the risk of harm or decide on an alternative arrangement.
- For those children in need we will plan for the best outcomes drawing on our partner agencies and family support services.

**These intentions are the business of everybody within the Council and we all have a contribution to make to develop communities that are safe, healthy, free from social exclusion and to sustain that environment so that it cultivates a robust local economy.**

#### **4. Background information on development and changes within the service.**

The postal address for the Adoption Team Manager and Adoption Service is

Scott House, 5 George Street, Huntingdon, Cambs. PE29 3AD.

**Tel:** 01480 372511 **Fax:** 01480 372583.

Adoption Social Workers are based county wide.

The service is committed to providing a range of services to support all those affected by the adoption process e.g. birth families, children, prospective adopters, adopter's families and adopted adults.

As such the service engages in a range of activities and service delivery to include:

- Initial contact, visits, training, assessment, approval and matching of all applicants wishing to adopt.
- Links with the Child Care Social Work teams to identify the children needing placement, and the kind of placements they need.
- A family finding strategy for each child in discussion with Child Care social workers, health and education workers.
- The link to the National Adoption Register.
- Support to adopters through introductions, placement, legal adoption, and post adoption.
- A pro-active Adoption Support Service, including a confidential indirect and direct contact service between adoptive families and birth families.
- On going support groups, workshops, training programmes, family days and regular newsletters for adopters.
- Support of adoptive families experiencing difficulties pre and post adoption.
- Statutory counselling to adopted adults seeking access to their original birth records and intermediary services for those who go on to search for birth families.
- Providing and developing support services for adopted adults, their adoptive families and their birth families.
- Guidance and/or support to birth relatives wishing to make contact with their adopted adult relatives.
- Administration of the Adoption/ Permanency Panel.

## **Staffing.**

The Role of Adoption Agency Decision maker continues to be held by Elaine Petch, Head of Children's Social Care (OCYPS) and the County Manager – Fostering and Adoption remains as Jackie Coventry.

Jill Blose has recently joined Fostering and Adoption as Service Manager to take on the operational aspects of the service.

The Adoption Service is made up of two main parts, which includes the Adoption Team and the Adoption Support Team. Tracy Morton currently manages the Adoption Team and Milynda Moore heads up the Adoption Support Team. However they may call upon assistance from the rest of the service and in particular from the Kinship and Family Finding Teams.

There have been a number of changes to staff in the adoption service and the current staffing position is set out below.

| ADOPTION TEAM   | ADOPTION SUPPORT TEAM   |
|---|---|
| Tracy Morton – Team Manager -<br>Appointed March 2006                     | Milynda Moore – Acting Team<br>Manager and Adoption Support<br>Services Advisor - appointed May<br>2006 |
| Lucy Millington Senior Social Worker<br>(Maternity Leave as of 01/10/06 ) | Ann Tyson- Social Worker  |
| Chris Hill - Social Worker  | Rob Geen- Social Worker   |
| Anna Griffin - Social Worker  | Maeta Mackenzie- Social Worker P/T  |
| Claire Leonard - Social Worker  | Magdalena Reeves- Independent<br>Social Worker  |
| Ruth Reynolds - Social Worker   |   |
| Catherine Rose – Social Worker  | Sarah James- Adoption Support<br>Worker   |
| Wendy Jewitt – Social Worker  | Deborah Ward-Post-Box Coordinator-<br>Business support  |
| Vivienne Zielinski - Agency Social<br>Worker – P/T                        | Jenny May- Social Worker -  |

## **Legislation.**

Cambridgeshire Adoption Services continues to implement and consolidate the regulations and associated schedules of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 that came into force on 30 Dec 2005. The Act represents a comprehensive overhaul of Adoption legislation and has acted as a catalyst for examination of processes and practice across the service allowing the Adoption team and Adoption Support Team to build upon firm foundations laid in the past year.

## **5. Adoption panel membership.**

The Panel is required under the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 to have an Independent Chair and must have the following members:

- Two social workers
- At least three independent members of whom, where reasonably practicable, at least two should have personal experience of adoption (Cambridgeshire currently has an adopted person, a birth parent and an adoptive parent)
- An Elected Member
- A Medical Adviser
- CCC also has an educational Psychologist sitting at Panel.

Five members must be present for the Panel to be quorate and those present must include the Chair or Vice Chair, with at least one of each of the social workers and the independents.

The Panel is supported by the Agency Adviser and Panel Administrator and has access to legal advice.

Membership of the Adoption and Permanence Panel from 1 April 2006 to 31 March 2007. Many of its members had their positions confirmed on 30 12 06 at the introduction of the new regulations.

| Appointment Type              | Name                    | Date of Appointment  |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Panel Independent Chair       | Pam Duncan              | 30 12 05             |
| Vice Chair                    | Jill Blose              | 17 03 06             |
| Executive Committee           | Gail Kenny              | 30 12 05             |
| Panel Adviser                 | Jackie Coventry         | 15 11 04             |
| Legal Adviser                 | Hilary Gudgin           | N/A                  |
| Medical Adviser               | Dr Caroline d'Cates     | 30 12 05             |
| Adoptive Parent (Independent) | John Pook               | 30 12 05             |
| Birth Parent (Independent)    | Lesley Hamilton         | 30 12 05             |
| Social Work Representatives   | Mary Raper<br>Pru Maple | 16 10 06<br>01 10 06 |
| Adoptee (Independent)         | Louise Madison          | 30 12 05             |
| Education Psychologist        | Moira DeVille - Rogers  | 30 12 05             |
| Panel Administrator           | Pauline Snow            | N/A                  |

### **Adoption Panel Changes.**

- Jackie Coventry stepped down as Agency Adviser on 16 March 2007.
- Jill Blose stepped down as Vice Chair on 2 March 2007.

We would sincerely thank all these members for their commitment and positive contributions to the panel processes during their time in their appointed role.

Kala Knobbs became the Vice Chair on 16 March 2007.

Richard Morris, Policy and Practice Standards Manager became the Agency Adviser on 23 March 2007.

Don Lynch, Team Manager, Fenland and East Cambs Children's Team, will become a Social Work Representative.

### **Appraisal.**

All Panel Members have Annual appraisals which are undertaken by the panel Chair and the Agency Adviser. The Head of Social Care and Agency Adviser complete the Chairs appraisal.

### **Panel Training**

The panel has engaged in two main sessions of training in the past 12 months:

- Meeting Children's Needs – June 2006
- Adoption Support Plans led by BAAF – Nov 2006

Both sessions were extremely informative and it gave panel members the opportunity to exchange ideas with practitioners and managers across the children's operational group.

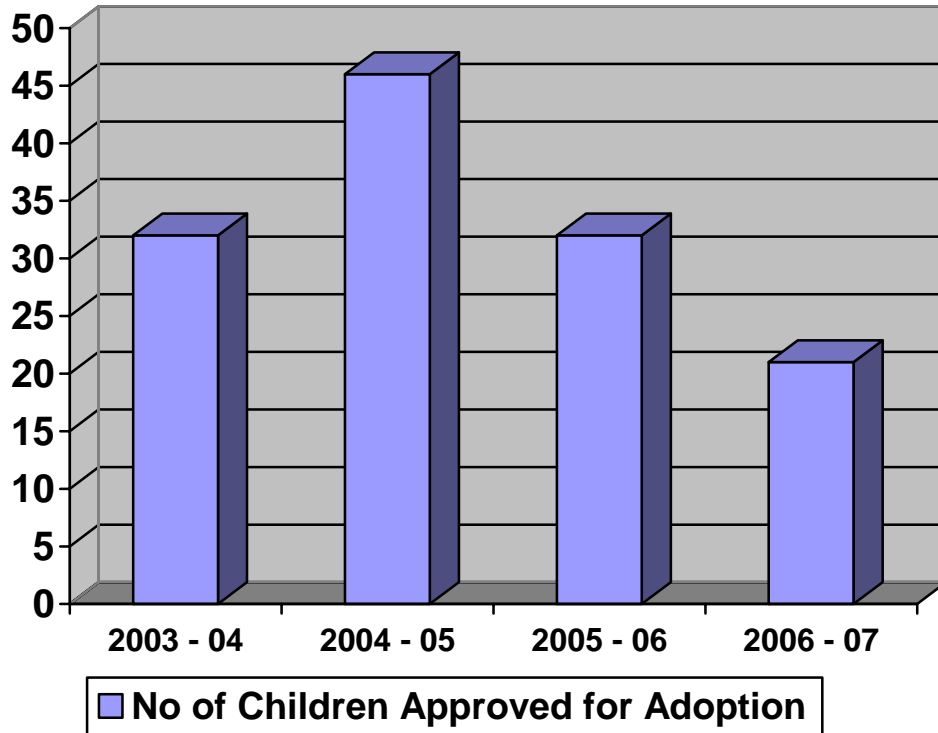
## **6. Adoption Service And Panel Workloads.**

The Panel has met on **21** occasions during the period of April 1<sup>st</sup> 2006 to 31 March 2007 and have considered a grand total of 64 cases.

| Year        | 2004-05 | 2005 –06 | 2006- 07 |
|-------------|---------|----------|----------|
| Panels Held | 21      | 21       | 21       |

**Children Approved For Adoption.**

21 Children have been approved for adoption in 2006 -07.



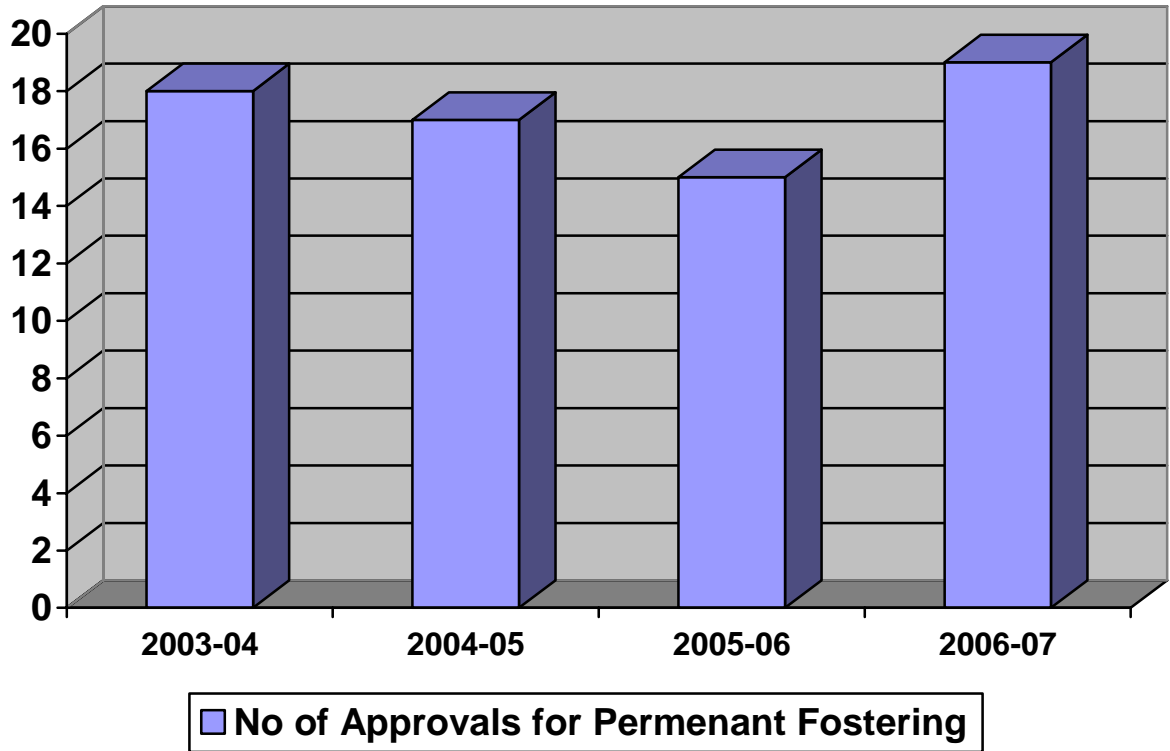
|                      |         |         |         |         |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Number of Approvals. | 32      | 46      | 32      | 21      |
| Year                 | 2003-04 | 2004-05 | 2005-06 | 2006-07 |

**Children Approved For Adoption by Area 2006 – 07.**

|                     |                        |                          |                 |
|---------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| By Area             | Fenland and East Cambs | Cambridge City and South | Huntingdonshire |
| Number of Approvals | 9                      | 7                        | 5               |

**Children Approved for Permanent Fostering.**

19 Children have been approved for permanent fostering in 2006 - 07

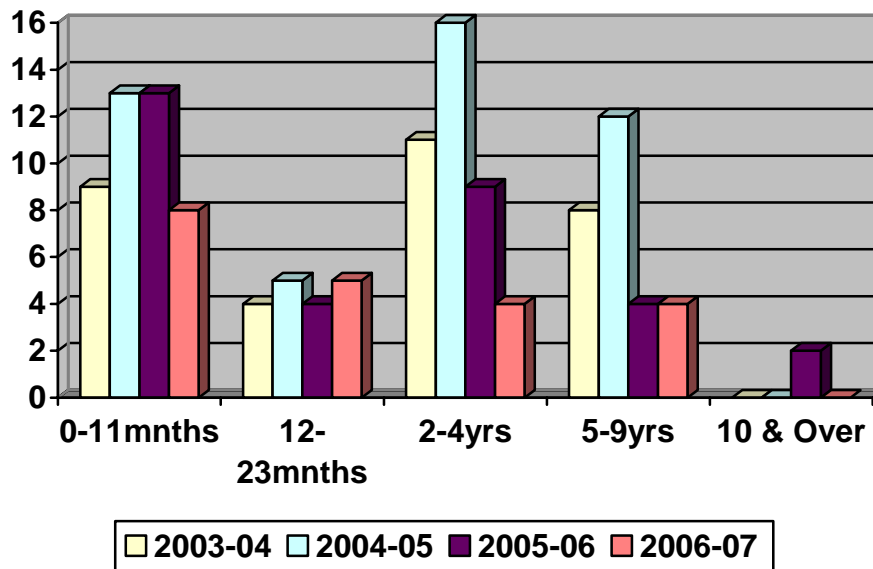


|                             |                |                |                |                |
|-----------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Number of Approvals.</b> | <b>18</b>      | <b>17</b>      | <b>15</b>      | <b>19</b>      |
| <b>Year</b>                 | <b>2003-04</b> | <b>2004-05</b> | <b>2005-06</b> | <b>2006-07</b> |

**Children Approved for Permanent Fostering by Area 2006 – 07.**

| <b>By Area</b>             | <b>Fenland and East Cambs</b> | <b>Cambridge City and South</b> | <b>Huntingdonshire</b> |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Number of Approvals</b> | <b>8</b>                      | <b>8</b>                        | <b>3</b>               |

**Age of children approved for adoption.**



|           | 0-11mths | 12-23mths | 2-4 yrs | 5-9yrs | 10 & Over |
|-----------|----------|-----------|---------|--------|-----------|
| 2003 – 04 | 9        | 4         | 11      | 8      | 0         |
| 2004 – 05 | 13       | 5         | 16      | 12     | 0         |
| 2005 – 06 | 13       | 4         | 9       | 4      | 2         |
| 2006 - 07 | 8        | 5         | 4       | 4      | 0         |

**Gender of children approved for adoption.**

|           | 2003-04 |   | 2004 – 05 |   | 2005 – 06 |   | 2006 – 2007 |   |
|-----------|---------|---|-----------|---|-----------|---|-------------|---|
|           | F       | M | F         | M | F         | M | F           | M |
| 0-11mths  | 6       | 3 | 7         | 6 | 9         | 3 | 1           | 7 |
| 12-23mths | 4       | 1 | 4         | 1 | 3         | 1 | 1           | 4 |
| 2-4 yrs   | 7       | 3 | 10        | 6 | 4         | 8 | 2           | 2 |
| 5-9yrs    | 3       | 5 | 5         | 7 | 1         | 3 | 2           | 2 |
| 10 & over | 0       | 0 | 0         | 0 | 0         | 2 | 0           | 0 |

**Ethnicity of children approved for adoption.**

Cambridgeshire has a fast developing multi ethnic community and children being presented to Adoption and Permanence panel are becoming reflective of that community. There have been three children with dual heritage recommended for adoption and a further two children from black ethnic descent.

1 child Greek Cypriot/ White Eastern European  
 1 child Black Eastern African/ White European.  
 1 child Middle East/ White European.  
 2 children White European with Black Afro-Caribbean grandparent.

In addition there have been two children approved for permanent fostering with dual heritage, Black American/white European, and one child who is Black West African.

**Sibling Groups approved for adoption.**

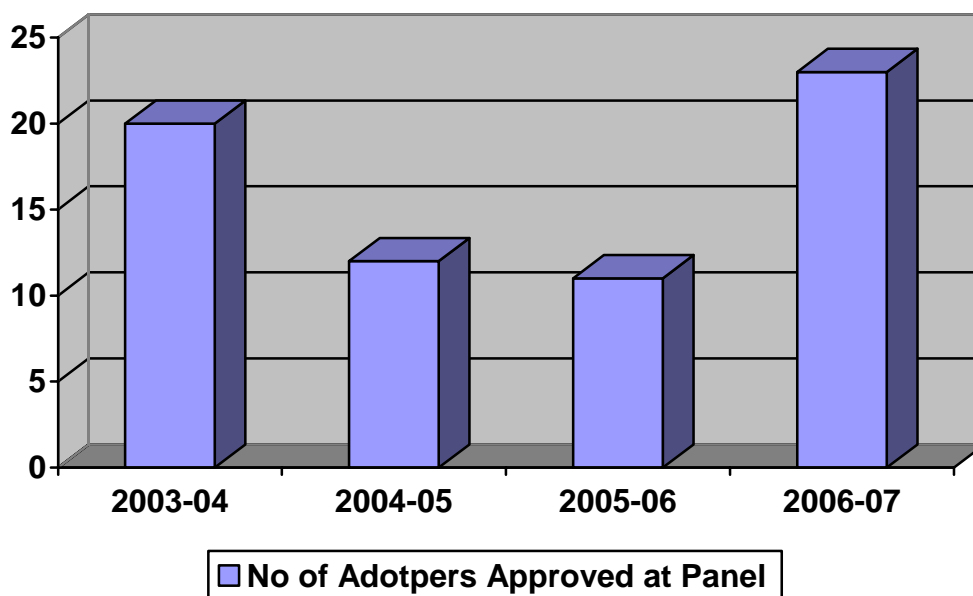
| <b>2001 - 02</b> | <b>2002 – 03</b> | <b>2003 – 04</b> | <b>2004 – 05</b> | <b>2005 – 06</b> | <b>2006 - 07</b> |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>2</b>         | <b>4</b>         | <b>6</b>         | <b>11</b>        | <b>6</b>         | <b>3</b>         |

## Adopters.

### Number Of Enquiries Made Of The Agency.

There have been **213** enquiries from members of the public and adoption information packs have been despatched to these enquirers. **78** of those in receipt of packs subsequently attended information sessions. There were 8 information sessions held across the county. Cambridgeshire already compete highly on the national returns for this area and it is envisaged that better marketing and follow up strategies will further assist in raising the success rates.

### Number Of Adopters Approved At Panel.



| 2003 – 04 | 2004 – 05 | 2005 – 06 | 2006 - 07 |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 20        | 12        | 11        | 23        |

### Number of adopters approved by Area.

| Area      | Fenland and East Cambs | Cambridge City and South | Huntingdonshire | Out of Area |
|-----------|------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Approvals | 12                     | 5                        | 5               | 1           |

## Ethnicity.

Of the **23** adopters (Joint and Single Applicants) approved in the past twelve months only **3** have been of an ethnicity other than white United Kingdom. Of these **3** only one applicant originates from a Middle Eastern ethnicity, the others were from inside Europe. A number of applicants choose to define their ethnicity by country of origin within the United Kingdom. It could be concluded that the approved adopters are not fully representative of the current local community and there will be a short fall in diversity mix when considering the match of adoptive children.

### **Adoption Matches.**

When a child's plan for adoption has been approved, the adoption service will respond promptly to identify adopters for that child.

|                      | <b>2004 - 05</b> | <b>2005 – 06</b> | <b>2006 - 07</b> |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>&lt; 12 mnths</b> | <b>9</b>         | <b>4</b>         | <b>5</b>         |
| <b>12 – 23 mnths</b> | <b>6</b>         | <b>6</b>         | <b>7</b>         |
| <b>2 – 4 yrs</b>     | <b>9</b>         | <b>10</b>        | <b>7</b>         |
| <b>5 – 9 yrs</b>     | <b>6</b>         | <b>5</b>         | <b>2</b>         |
| <b>&gt; 10 yrs</b>   | <b>0</b>         | <b>1</b>         | <b>0</b>         |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>30</b>        | <b>26</b>        | <b>21</b>        |

### **Children Waiting.**

**19** out of **21** children have been placed with adopters within twelve months of the panel recommendation that adoption should be sought for the children therefore **90.4%** success was achieved in this area.

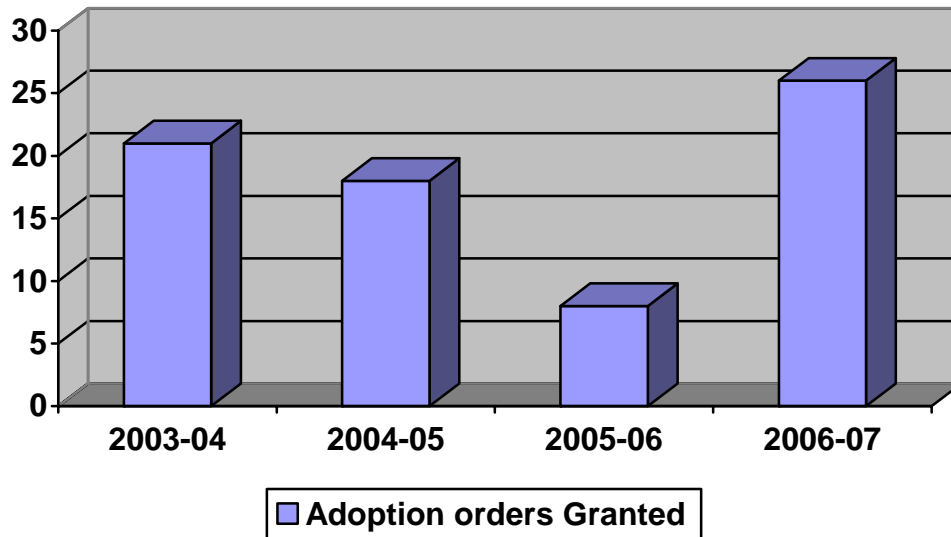
**15** children were placed with adopters recruited by Cambridgeshire (**71.4%**) whilst **6** children needed to be placed with out of county adopters due to security or special needs.

### **Disrupted Adoptions Pre-Adoption Order.**

There have been two disruptions pre – order recorded in the past 12 months and the reasons for these are being scrutinised so as to improve placement knowledge and placement success.

## Adoption Orders.

26 Adoption Orders were granted between 01/04/06 to 31/03/07. Members and Senior management Team have been fully appraised on two occasions as to the nature of these figures.



| Year            | 2003 - 04 | 2004 -05 | 2005 - 06 | 2006-07 |
|-----------------|-----------|----------|-----------|---------|
| Adoption Orders | 21        | 18       | 8         | 26      |

## 7. Adoption Support Services.

### Letterbox Service

There are **262** current cases in respect of post box and letter exchanges. On average there are 95 exchanges per month.

### Birth Records

The Adoption support service has provided counselling to **81** individuals prior to accessing their birth records.

On reaching the age of 18, adopted people have a right to obtain a copy of their original birth certificate. If the Adoption Order was granted before 12<sup>th</sup> November 1975 they must receive counselling before the information will be given to them.

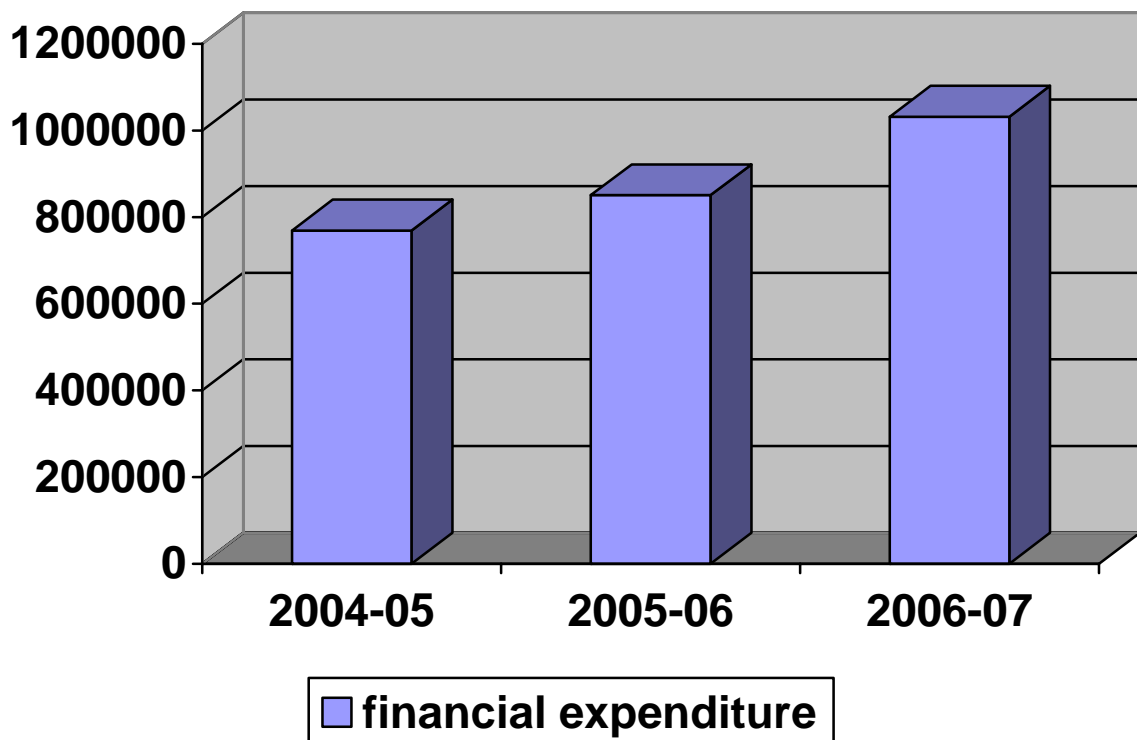
People adopted after that date may have the information when they reach 18 with counselling being optional. If they were adopted before 30<sup>th</sup> December 2005, the application for this information is made direct to the Registrar General if they are adopted on or after 30<sup>th</sup> December 2005; disclosure by the Registrar General will be made via the appropriate adoption agency unless the High Court orders that it is not to be disclosed.

### **Adoption Financial Support.**

There have been 4 Financial Support packages approved and processed for families in relation to 8 children in 2006/07. On 31 October 2003 Financial Adoption Support replaced Adoption Allowance. Adoption Financial Support can be paid as an ongoing allowance but there is also flexibility to pay a single lump sum or several lump sums.

There is a high proportion of children with financial support agreed which relates to the significant psychological or physical difficulties (current or potential) of children being placed for adoption. It also indicates the increased recognition of the importance of financial support to the maintenance of adoptive placements.

The financial breakdown shown here for the past three years is a combination of allowances for Special Guardianship Orders, Residence Allowance, Adoption Financial Support and enhancement payments. From 1 April 2007 these fields will be separated and recorded and therefore reported separately.



|            |             |            |
|------------|-------------|------------|
| 2004- 2005 | 2005 – 2006 | 2006-2007  |
| £768,997   | £850,409    | £1,031,836 |

### **Other Adoption Support Activities**

Since April 2006 the Adoption Support Team has provided assistance to **216** applicants in addition to **262** post box exchanges.

The Fostering And Adoption Psychologist service is utilised throughout Adoption support and will continue to be developed to improve success for high need teenage young people in post adoption families.

Much of the post adoption support for families was delivered on behalf of the Local Authority by 'After Adoption' until Feb 28 2007. Following an audit of After Adoption by the County Manager and the Adoption Support Manager it was felt that this service was not value for money and could be more efficiently delivered in house. Adoption Support Groups are therefore in the process of being implemented by Cambridgeshire.

An area of development for the coming year is the support offered to Birth Parents and better use of adoption support needs and plans for both potential adopters and for adoptees.

## **8. Training.**

The service has redeveloped its training team and subsequently training offered to carers and prospective adopters has significantly improved.

Since the development of the service in 2006, the training team within Fostering and Adoption have the lead responsibility for developing this training in conjunction with the management team and adoption social workers. The newly formatted course started in September 2006 with a view to providing 3 Adoption Preparation Courses per year. However, due to the current high level of applications the course will be run to meet demand.

The course incorporates specialists in their field eg: psychologist, drugs worker, adoption social workers, adopters and adoption support workers as well as new DVD and video resources.

The course continues to be developed aiming to provide a course workbook consistent with the course and with exercises.

From September 2006 to the end of March 2007 there have been **12** households that have completed this training, who have been a combination of single carers and couples, second time adopters, couples with children and childless couples.

## **9. Inter- Country Adoption.**

The voluntary adoption agency, Parents and children together (PACT) have continued to carry out inter- country adoption work on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council. They have received 20 enquiries on our behalf and conducted 11 Initial Assessments.

In the year 2006 –07 5 families have been approved for inter-country adoption with 2 placements being made. There are therefore a number of applicants approved (11) but waiting from this year and the last for placement of a child.

## **10. Complaints, Appeals And Representations.**

There has been one case referred to the Independent review mechanism during 2006 - 07. This case is due to be heard in May 2007.

Where the Agency considers that prospective adopters are not suitable to adopt, the applicants will be advised in writing of the panel's reasons for proposing that they not be approved. The prospective adopters have 40 working days in which to appeal and state their representations against the proposal. Representations should be made to: Elaine Petch, Agency Decision Maker.

Alternatively an application for review may be made to the Independent Review Panel, 54 Coventry Rd, Birmingham, B10 0RK, Tel 0121 466 8086.

Complaints and comments regarding service delivery or any other aspect of the Adoption service should be addressed in the first instance to Jackie Coventry, County Manager- Fostering and Adoption, Scott House, 5 George Street, Huntingdon, Cambs. Alternatively all members of the public have access to the County Council Complaints procedure.

## **11. The Coming Year 2007 – 2008.**

The past year has seen many improvements in the processes and systems involved with adoption. This will lay solid foundations for further improvements to be made in respect of quality and efficiency of the service. A major challenge for the year will be that of a successful inspection due in November 2007. Although it is recognised that any inspection will attract action points it is felt that the service should and will meet the National Standards.

The Fostering and Adoption Service has been concerned about the past effectiveness of its advertising and Marketing Strategy. The County Manager for Fostering and Adoption with her Management Team are currently exploring this area

alongside external Consultants who have had successes in rebranding the Fostering and Adoption Service in other Local Authorities.

Signed .....

Date.....

Richard Morris  
Policy and Practice Standards Manager

Signed .....

Date.....

Jackie Coventry  
County Manager – Fostering and Adoption

Signed .....

Date.....

Elaine Petch  
Agency Decision Maker, Head Of Social Care - OCYPS



# **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

## **Accommodated**

The local authority has agreed to “Look After” a child. The local authority has no legal rights over the child whose parent(s) with parental responsibility must agree the arrangements and can change his/her mind and resume the care of the child.

## **Adoption**

By adoption a child legally becomes a member of a new family. All parental rights and responsibilities pass to the adoptive parents.

Adoption is appropriate for a child if the birth parents are unable or unwilling to meet the child’s needs adequately throughout childhood and there is no other member of the child’s family or network able and willing to care for the child.

## **Adoption Agency**

The work of the local authority in relation to adoption is carried out in its capacity as an adoption agency.

When a child’s birth family cannot provide him/her with a secure, stable and permanent home which meets his/her needs the child is entitled to have adoption considered for him/her in a timely way. The agency must have a strategy to recruit sufficient adopters to meet the needs of the range of children needing adoption. They must respond promptly and give information to people enquiring about adoption (prospective adopters), carry out assessments in a timely manner, and give information and support to adoptive parents. Every effort must be made to ensure that birth families understand the adoption process and its legal implications and are given support, which recognises the lifelong implications of adoption. Similarly support which recognises the lifelong nature of adoption must be available to adopted people (children and adults) and their adoptive parents and siblings.

## **Adoption Order**

An order made by a court when a child has been living with the prospective adopters for a minimum period of 3 months. It is only when the Adoption Order is made that the adoptive parents acquire full parental responsibility for the child and the local authority and/or birth parents cease to have parental responsibility.

## **Adoption Support Services / Adoption Financial Support**

Adopted people, adoptive and birth families are entitled to a range of adoption support services from the local authority and from other partner agencies such as Health. Some of these are universal services available to any family. Other

services may include support groups, training, support for contact arrangements with birth relatives, therapeutic services, financial support, counselling and advice and any other services to ensure the success of the placement.

Adoption Financial Support may be paid as one or several lump sums or as a regular ongoing payment. All adopters receive a “settling in grant” when children are placed but other payments depend on the needs of the child and the financial circumstances of the adoptive family (means tested). These payments mean that sibling groups or children with particular behavioural or medical problems, whose care costs more than that of other children, are able to have the security of an adoptive placement.

### **Birth Counselling and Birth Family initiated Contact**

On reaching the age of 18, adopted people have a right to obtain a copy of their original birth certificate. If the Adoption Order was granted before 12<sup>th</sup> November 1975 they must receive counselling before the information will be given to them. People adopted after that date may have the information when they reach 18 with counselling being optional. If they were adopted before 30<sup>th</sup> December 2005, the application for this information is made direct to the Registrar General if they are adopted on or after 30<sup>th</sup> December 2005; disclosure by the Registrar General will be made via the appropriate adoption agency unless the High Court orders that it is not to be disclosed.

Birth family members sometimes wish to re-establish contact with an adopted adult. They have a legal right to a service (although early adoptions from before 1975 may need to be prioritised). Birth family members are never given identifying information without the consent of the adopted person but the agency can make an approach to the adopted person on their behalf.

### **Care Order**

A court can only make a Care Order if it is satisfied that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm. A Care Order gives the local authority parental responsibility for a child. This parental responsibility is shared with the birth parent but the local authority can override the parent’s wishes if necessary.

### **Disruption**

A disruption occurs when a child or young person placed for adoption or long-term permanent care has to leave their carers before the age of independence and usually moves to a foster home.

### **Kinship Assessment**

A social work assessment is undertaken on a member(s) of a child’s extended family or network to see if they are able to provide a safe and secure and family home.

The kinship carers can apply to the court for Residence Order or Special Guardianship Order. This means that the child lives with the relative but parental responsibility is shared between the carers and the child's parents.

### **Looked After Child**

A child who is "looked after" (cared for) either by the local authority with the agreement of parents or because the child is subject of a Care Order.

### **Parallel Planning**

When there is not certainty that a child who has become looked after will be able to return to his/her family within an appropriate timescale, a parallel plan is pursued. This means that a parallel plan for adoption or permanent fostering is pursued at the same time as active work continues to attempt to rehabilitate the child to his/her family. In this way delay is reduced for the child as if the conclusion is reached that rehabilitation cannot be recommended, then the work has been done for a plan for adoption or permanent fostering to be brought immediately to the panel for consideration.

### **Permanent Fostering**

For some children who cannot return to their birth family, adoption is not appropriate. This is usually because, typically with an older child (8 years or more), the child identifies very strongly with his or her birth family and would not want to become part of an adoptive family. For such children a life long commitment to them is sought from a foster family. Parental responsibility is shared between the local authority and the birth parents or by the birth parents only.