

CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

ADOPTION AND PERMANENCE ANNUAL REPORT

2007 – 2008



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1. Introduction from the Fostering and Adoption County Manager.
2. A Message from the Adoption and Permanence Panel Chair.
3. The Commissioning Aims.
4. Background information on development and changes within the service
5. Adoption panel membership
6. Adoption service and panel workloads

Meetings

Children – Adoption
- Permanent Fostering

Adopters

Adoption Matches

Disrupted adoptions

Adoption orders

7. Adoption support services

Letterbox Service

Records

Adoption financial support

Other adoption Support Activities

8. Training

9. Inter-country Adoption

10. The Coming Year 2008-2009

Appendix A: glossary of terms

1. Introduction from the Fostering and Adoption County Manager.

It has been a very busy year for all of those involved in Adoption and Permanence, Panel sat on 23 occasions to hear **89** cases, which reflects the positive planning made for children in Cambridgeshire. Full details of Panel activity are reported in the body of this 17th Annual Adoption and Permanence Report for Cambridgeshire.

Pan Duncan resigned as Panel Chair at the end of March 2008 with Sarah Borthwick being appointed as her replacement in June 2008. A warm welcome is extended to Sarah.

Inspectors from OfSTED – the Office for Standards in Education inspected the Adoption service in November 2007 and found the overall quality of the service to be good, with the service being well managed at all levels and providing a variety of effective services to children, birth parents and adoptive families, according to inspectors. Particular reference was made to the wide range of experience, commitment and enthusiasm of staff. The below comments were made in respect of the matching of children with new families and Adoption Support Services:

“The matching of children to adoptive families is good; most children are placed locally and very few wait a long time for a suitable placement. The Adoption Panel is rigorous yet welcoming. “

“The agency has significantly developed its adoption support services in the last 18 months. Of particular note is the post of psychologist who provides support to the adoption service. This input is valued by social workers and adopters alike,” said inspectors.

I am pleased to be able to comment that during this year there has been some very good work undertaken by the Adoption Social Workers and the Area Teams which has contributed to improving outcomes for Cambridgeshire’s children.

Tracy Morton, (Adoption Team Manager), Ricky Cooper, (Adoption Support Team Manager) and Claire Betteridge, (Family Finding Team Manager) have continued to drive standards up in the service and they have made a major contribution towards the recruitment, training, approval of adopters, placement finding, support to families, as well as providing direction for child care social workers.

I hope that this report highlights the positive work undertaken by all of those involved in working in Adoption – 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.

I have served as Independent Chair of the panel for six and a half years. In that time Panel has the opportunity to see a wide range of work and to meet with social workers from across Cambridgeshire and sometimes from other agencies. Within the first year the Agency started to invite prospective adopters to attend if they so wished when their approval as adopters was being considered and subsequently also when the placement of a particular child is being considered. It is difficult now to think of how panels could possibly not invite applicants to attend as it has added so much to the process.

In my time as Chair I have had the privilege of meeting and working with a wide range of people: panel members, staff and applicants and I never cease to be impressed by the commitment of people to securing better outcomes for children. I have seen the quality of the work being done both in terms of assessment of children's needs and of prospective adopters steadily improve and I trust that will continue and that Panel will also continue to make its contribution to that process.

The role of a panel member is not 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 aim to ensure their recommendations are based on the best available information in order to secure the best outcomes for children. My thanks to the many panel members with whom I have worked since 2001 for their commitment and hard work.

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 in Huntingdon and Cambridge

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.

- Extend the work of the support service to include Special Guardians.

Staffing.

The Role of Adoption Agency Decision Maker continues to be held by Elaine Petch, Head of Children’s Social Care (OCYPS)

Jackie Coventry remains as the County Manager – Fostering and Adoption.

Jill Blose, Service Manager takes operational responsibility for Fostering
The Adoption Service is made up of two distinct units, The Adoption Team (managed by Tracy Morton) and the Adoption Support Team (managed by Ricky Cooper). The aforementioned teams work closely with colleagues from the Kinship and Family Finding Teams as appropriate.

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 - Appointed March 2006	Ricky Cooper – Team Manager and Adoption Support Services Advisor - appointed December 2007
Lucy Millington Senior Social Worker (Returned from Maternity Leave Nov 07)	Magdalena Reeves - Agency Social Worker
Kathy Bennett – Senior Social Worker	Rob Geen- Social Worker
Anna Griffin – Senior Social Worker	Maeta Mackenzie- Social Worker P/T
Claire Leonard - Social Worker	- Social Worker
Ruth Reynolds - Social Worker	
Catherine Rose – Social Worker (due to leave April 08)	Sarah James- Adoption Support Worker
Wendy Jewitt – Social Worker	Deborah Ward-Post-Box Coordinator-Business support
Jan Mosby - Independent Social Worker	Jenny May- Social Worker

Legislation.

01st April 2008 will see the introduction of the Public Law Outline which aims to improve both the timescales and conduct of care proceedings with children. This will inevitably have an impact on Children's Social Workers in the early stages of the adoption process over the next year of implementation.

Cambridgeshire Adoption Services continues to consolidate the regulations and associated schedules of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 that came into force on 30 Dec 2005. The Act represented 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 three years.

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 Education 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 2007 to 31 March 2008. Many of its members had their positions confirmed on 30 12 05 at the introduction of the new regulations.

Appointment Type	Name	Date of Appointment
Panel Independent Chair	Pam Duncan	30 12 05
Vice Chair	Kala Nobbs	17 03 06
Executive Committee	Gail Kenny	30 12 05
Panel Adviser	Richard Morris	27 02 07
Legal Adviser	Hilary Gudgin	N/A
Medical Adviser	Dr David Vickers	01 10 07

Adoptive Parent (Independent)	Ann Hislop	01 10 07
Birth Parent (Independent)	Lesley Hamilton	30 12 05
Social Work Representatives	Don Lynch	01 04 07
	Pru Maple	01 10 06
Adoptee (Independent)	Louise Madison	30 12 05
Education Psychologist	Moira DeVille - Rogers	30 12 05
Panel Administrator	Pauline Snow	N/A

- Jackie Coventry stepped down as Agency Adviser 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, became 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 a combined panel training in the past 12 months which featured effective panel training and sibling placements.

Both sessions were extremely informative and it gave panel members the opportunity to exchange ideas with practitioners, managers and members of the Fostering panel and Link Panel.

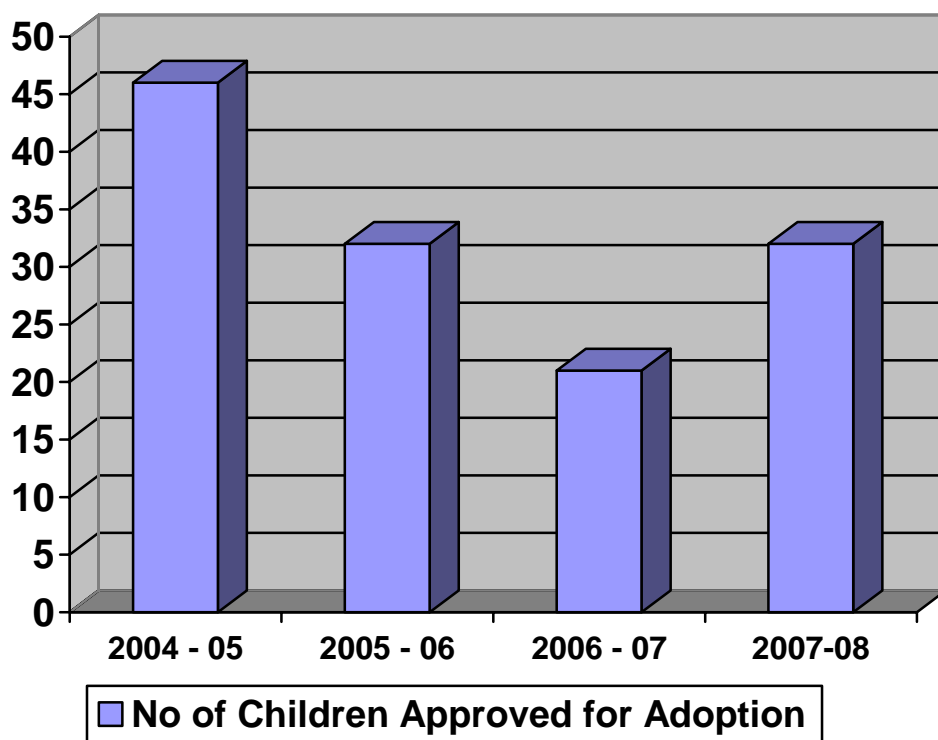
6. Adoption Service And Panel Workloads.

The Panel has met on 23 occasions during the period of April 1st 2007 to 31 March 2008 and have considered a grand total of 89 cases.

Year	2005 –06	2006- 07	2007-08
Panels Held	21	21	23

Children Approved For Adoption.

32 Children have been approved for adoption in 2007 -08.



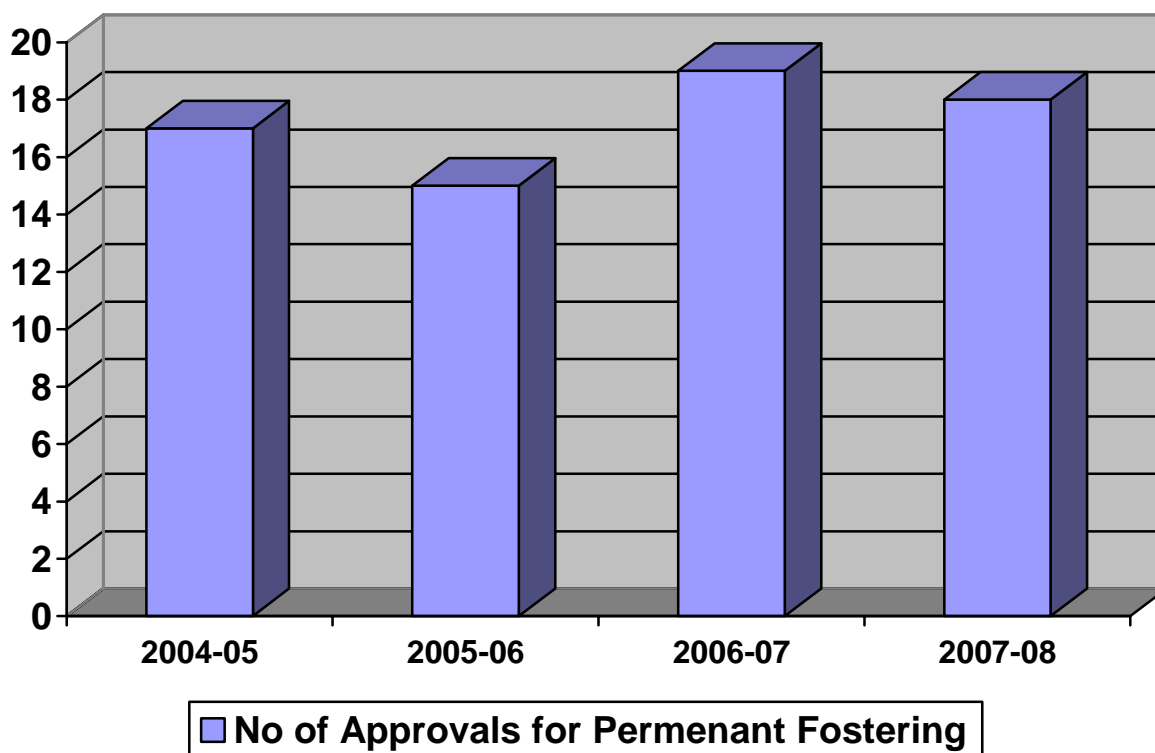
Number of Approvals.	46	32	21	32
Year	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08

Children Approved For Adoption by Area 2007 – 08.

By Area	Fenland and East Cambs	Cambridge City and South	Huntingdonshire
Number of Approvals	10	18	6

Children Approved for Permanent Fostering.

18 Children have been approved for permanent fostering in 2007 - 08

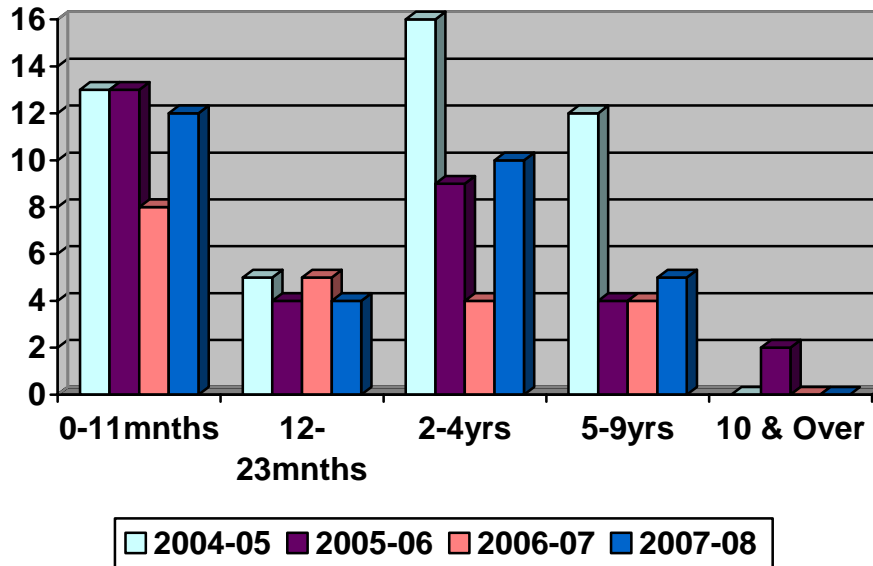


Number of Approvals.	17	15	19	18
Year	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007 - 08

Children Approved for Permanent Fostering by Area 2007 – 08.

By Area	Fenland and East Cambs	Cambridge City and South	Huntingdonshire
Number of Approvals	7	8	3

Age of children approved for adoption.



	0-11mths	12-23mths	2-4 yrs	5-9yrs	10 & Over
2004 – 05	13	5	16	12	0
2005 – 06	13	4	9	4	2
2006 - 07	8	5	4	4	0
2007 - 08	13	4	11	4	0

Gender of children approved for adoption.

	2004 – 05		2005 – 06		2006 – 07		2007 - 08	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
0-11mths	7	6	9	3	1	7	5	7
12-23mths	4	1	3	1	1	4	3	1
2-4 yrs	10	6	4	8	2	2	8	2
5-9yrs	5	7	1	3	2	2	4	1
10 & over	0	0	0	2	0	0	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 seven children approved for adoption of an ethnicity other than White British.

- 1 Child West Indian/White British
- 1 Child Black Caribbean/ White British.
- 1 Child East Asian/ White British.
- 1 child Greek/ New Zealander
- 1 Child Bangladeshi
- 1 Child Middle Eastern/ White British
- 1 Child Nigerian
- 1 Child Traveller

Sibling Groups approved for adoption.

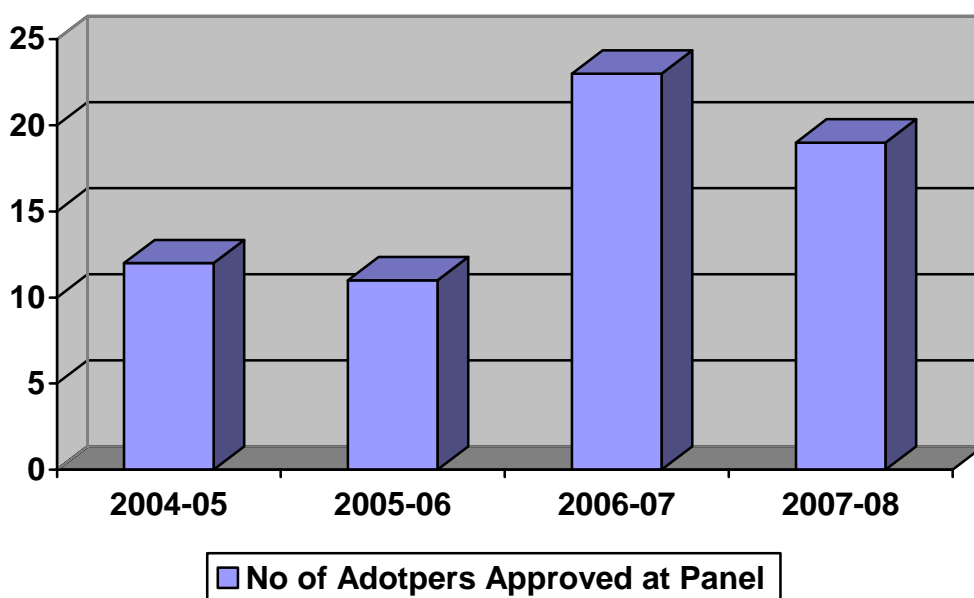
2002 – 03	2003 – 04	2004 – 05	2005 – 06	2006 - 07	2007-08
4	6	11	6	3	5

Adopters.

Number Of Enquiries Made Of The Agency.

There have been **261** enquiries from members of the public and adoption information packs have been despatched to these enquirers. 78 households of those in receipt of packs subsequently attended information sessions. There were **11** 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.



2004 – 05	2005 – 06	2006 - 07	2007 -08
12	11	23	19

Ethnicity.

Of the **19** households (Joint and Single Applicants) approved in the past twelve months 5 have been of an ethnicity other than white United Kingdom. Of these **5** two applicants originated from Italy, one from France, one from Iran and the other one as white US Americans. 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 continue to be 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. There is a specific shortfall when it comes to applicants from a traveller background.

Adoption Matches.

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

	2005 – 06	2006 - 07	2007 - 08
< 12 mnths	4	5	7
12 – 23 mnths	6	7	4
2 – 4 yrs	10	7	6
5 – 9 yrs	5	2	2
> 10 yrs	1	0	0
Total	26	21	19

Children Waiting.

12 out of 14 children have been placed with adopters within twelve months of the panel recommendation that adoption should be sought for the children therefore **85.7%** success was achieved in this area.

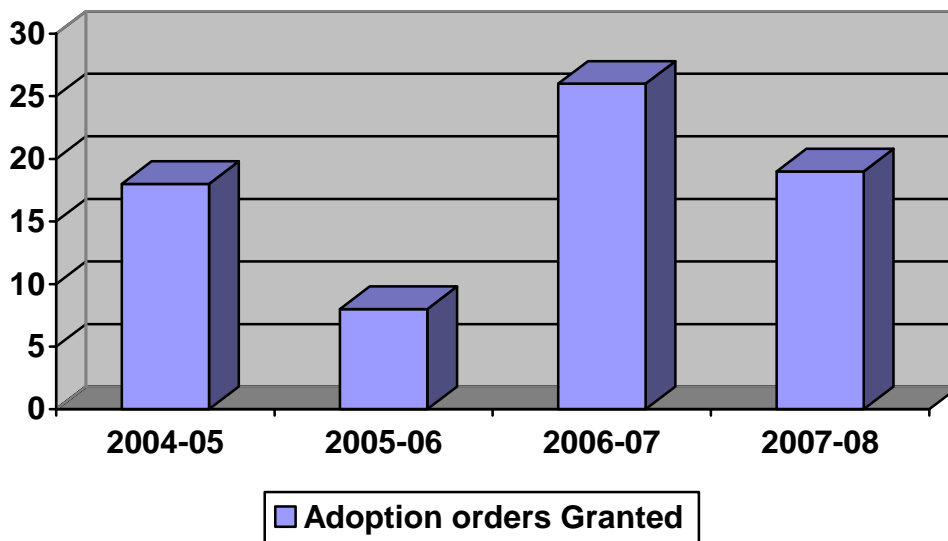
11 children were placed with adopters recruited by Cambridgeshire (78.5%) whilst 3 children needed to be placed with out of county adopters due to security or special needs.

Disrupted Adoptions Pre-Adoption Order.

There has been 1 disruption pre – order recorded in the past 12 months and the reasons for this has been scrutinised so as to improve placement knowledge and placement success.

Adoption Orders.

19 Adoption Orders were granted between 01/04/07 to 31/03/08. Although the raw data appears to show a slight decrease in the number of orders granted it must be remembered that there is a run on effect and last years performance contained proportionately higher adoption orders being made from placements of the previous year. There are also a high number of placements made in the latter end of this reporting year which will appear in next years figures. This year has in fact seen a 15.5% increase in adoption orders being granted when directly compared to the overall performance of the previous three years.



Year	2004 -05	2005 - 06	2006-07	2007 - 08
Adoption Orders	18	8	26	19

7. Adoption Support Services.

Letterbox Service

There are **433** contact exchanges in respect of post box and letter exchanges.

Birth Records

The Adoption support service has provided counselling to **88** 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 12th November

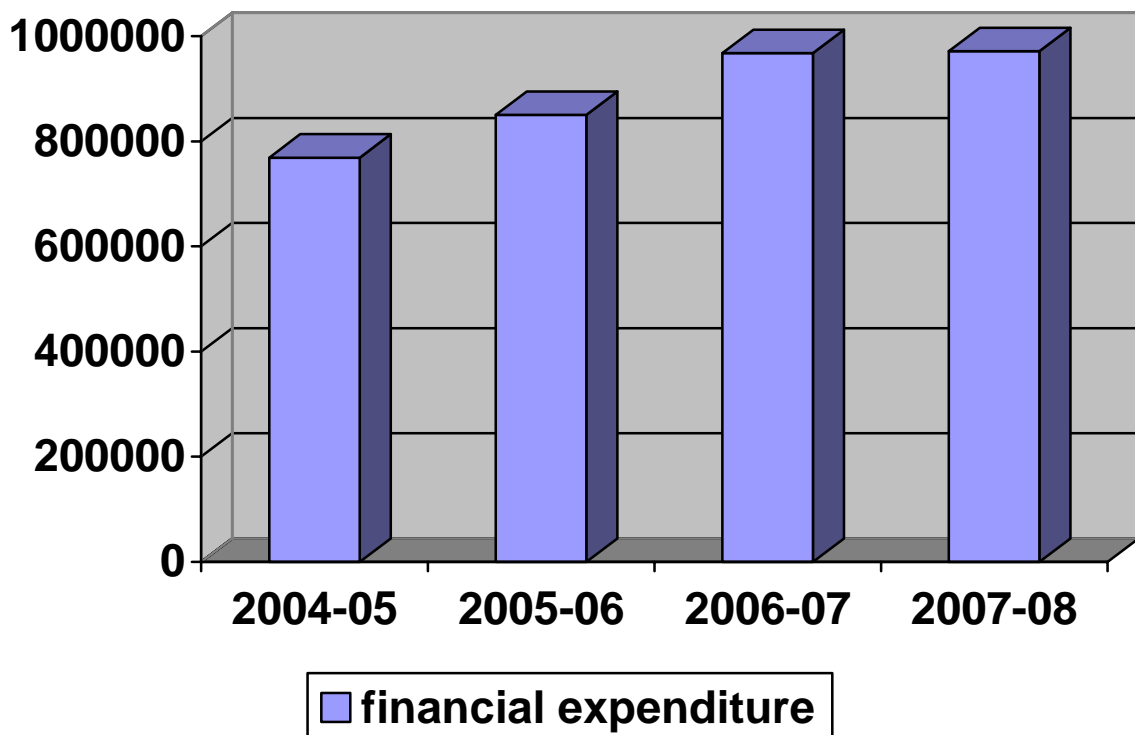
1975 they must receive counselling before the information will be given to them. People adopted after that date may have the information when they reach 18 with counselling being optional. If they were adopted before 30th December 2005, the application for this information is made direct to the Registrar General if they are adopted on or after 30th 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.

On 31 October 2003 Financial Adoption Support replaced Adoption Allowance. Financial Adoption 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.



2004- 2005	2005 – 2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
£768,997	£850,409	£967,896.94	£971,630

Other Adoption Support Activities

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. A fuller report on this area of support is available from the Adoption Psychology Service.

8. Training.

The Adoption Preparation Training continues to run over a period of 4 days – 2 x weekdays and 2 x Saturdays.

All adopters are allocated an Adoption Social Worker by the end of the course and the report on their preparation is sent direct to them for comment and their social worker for inclusion in the assessment report.

The course leaders are 1 x trainer and 1 x adoption social worker.

Visiting presenters to the course are:

- 2 x adopters,
- Psychologist,
- Drug worker,
- Policy and Practice Standards Manager
- Post Box co-ordinator
- Adoption Support Worker / Manager

**From April 2007 to March 2008 – 23 applicants being assessed
3 second time applicants**

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 40 enquiries on our behalf and conducted Initial Assessments on 12 of those enquiries.

At the end of the year of 2007-08 9 families have been approved but are waiting for inter-country adoptive placements with 2 placements being made. There are therefore a number of applicants approved but waiting from this year and previous for placement of a child. There are a further 3 assessments in progress.

10. Complaints, Appeals And Representations.

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 2008 – 2009.

To improve the quality and standards of care further the Adoption service take account of the following:


- Further improvements in case files giving clear documented evidence about decision making in sibling placements and that changes of such plans are dealt with in a timely manner (National Minimum Standard 2)
- Further develop the health and safety questionnaire (National Minimum Standard 4)
- Further develop the use of life appreciation days, particularly when making placements of older children (National Minimum Standard 5)
- ensure that there is evidence of telephone verification of references on the employment file and take up two references on internal applicants (National Minimum Standard 19)
- ensure that CPRs are of a consistently good quality and include the wishes and feelings of birth parents (National Minimum Standard 7)
- develop consistent systems to refer birth parents to the independent service (National Minimum Standard 7)
- Improve life story work and that the life story book is undertaken and provided in a timely way (National Minimum Standard 8)



Signed

Date.....30 04 2008

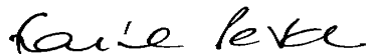
Richard Morris
Policy and Practice Standards Manager



Signed

Date.....21 07 08.....

Jackie Coventry
County Manager – Fostering and Adoption



Signed

Date.....21 07 08

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 12th 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 30th December 2005, the application for this information is made direct to the Registrar General if they are adopted on or after 30th 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.