

# Children and Young People Committee

AD011

## Inquiry into Adoption

### Prospective parents:

- How effectively are prospective parents supported throughout the, adoption process, particularly through the assessment and approval, process?

We were placed with an adoption social worker who supported us through the whole process. It was good to have that continuity and to really get to know our social worker so that we were comfortable to raise any concerns, issues as we went through the process. We felt that our social worker adopted her approach according to our level of engagement. We were highly engaged and threw ourselves into our homework etc. However if other prospective adoptive parents were not so engaged/comfortable with written/reading homework we assume they would receive a different level of support and the social worker would have adapted their approach accordingly. The homework which was set was practical and thought provoking it helped us as a couple to work through our feelings towards adoption and prepared us for challenging decisions which we had to make in terms of adoption but also challenging behaviours that we felt we could or couldn't cope with.

- What action is needed to encourage prospective parents to pursue adoption as a route?

It would be good if seasoned adoptive parents were recruited to help support information evenings. Perhaps they could give a talk alongside the social workers. As adoptive parents we would be willing to support such activities. More publicity and good news stories in the media to encourage adoptive parents to come forward.

### Adoptive parents and families:

- In terms of the support provided for adoptive families, what has been most important in helping to secure the permanence of adoptions and to help ensure the success of the placement?

We were lucky to have had such a good foster parent. Transitions to permanent adoption can really depend on the quality of the foster parent and how open they are to helping move the children on to adoption. Training for foster parents can help the children thrive and ensure that they are not moved around too much prior to permanent adoption. Our girls' foster parent really helped us to become competent parents we were very nervous and she helped us to do all the right things to ensure that the transition was as smooth as possible. We had a brief meeting with our foster parent before going into to the handover session and this also helped to break the ice for both parties.

It was also useful having our social worker available by telephone or email to ask any questions. We found our social worker to be very responsive. Knowing how busy and stretched social services invariably are we never felt that we were hanging around for an answer.

- What improvements could be made to the support given to adoptive parents?

We are currently not aware of any post adoption support groups. Luckily we are not finding our placement difficult. Our girls have settled in very well however we know that older children can be more challenging and for these adoptive parents a post adoption support group would be useful where parents could share their experiences learn from others and just feel that they have further support going forward.

Statutory Adoption Pay is not quite equal to statutory maternity pay. The first 6 weeks of maternity pay appears to be more. Government should review this.

**Adopted children:**

- Do the current arrangements for adoption adequately reflect the rights of the child?

We believe so although we have not considered this area so fully as our children were very young and so unable to express their wishes and rights.

- How effective is the support given to adopted children post adoption, particularly for children who have complex needs?

We are unable to answer this question as thus far our children have not been found to have complex needs.

We do have concerns about how we begin to tell our children about their backgrounds as they get older and we are awaiting a life story book and later life letter to help us with this process. We understand that we should be able to access support from social services if and when this is needed and as the time comes to share this information with our children.

**Professionals working with adopted children/ families:**

- What action is needed to ensure that delays in the adoption process can be kept to a minimum?

The only delay we experienced was upon registering our interest. We did wait 6 months until a social worker was allocated to us. However once a worker was allocated to us we experienced no undue delay. Maybe social worker recruitment and retention needs to be considered. Perhaps some research into what could make the profession more satisfying, safe etc in order to retain social workers. As prospective adopters once the assessment process was underway we felt the timescales were adequate for us to fully understand the commitment we were making. The delays may be being experienced in relation to the removal of children and the legal side of things. We do not have a deep enough understanding to be able to comment on this nor did we have any experience that these delays impacted on us unduly.

- What action is needed to increase the number of successful outcomes once children are considered for adoption?

A strong foster parent network with good training and support for foster carers

Smooth transitions from foster placement to adoption placement

Post adoption support groups for parents

- How effective has the Welsh Government been at monitoring adoptions and tracking the progress for the child and parents?

Unable to comment on this question

- Do you have any specific examples of good practice in the delivery of adoption services, and/or examples of where action is needed to remove barriers to adoption?

#### Good practice

We received a very good service from Bridgend. We believe we have given examples of good practice we received in our previous answers in summary however they are :

1 social worker who saw our assessment process through from start to finish

Good interactive preparation exercises

Interesting and thought provoking homework to help us prepare as a couple

Excellent foster care with high emphasis on children's routines which made transition from foster placement to adoption very smooth

Introduction meetings with foster carer to break the ice

Post adoption family fun day

Adoption preparation training with adoptive parents speaking alongside trainer.

#### Action needed to remove barriers to adoption

Social worker resources – recruitment and retention review to increase number of social workers and improve retention and thereby ensure consistent social worker input to cases

Review statutory adoption pay to bring in line with statutory maternity pay i.e. the first six weeks

Increase awareness in media to encourage adopters to come forward

Review legal process for removal of children to ensure approach is as timely as it can be