

Councillors' Briefing Note No. 155

Service: Children & Families

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Title WILTSHIRE ADOPTION CAMPAIGN 2013

Background

1. Wiltshire Council will be running a campaign to encourage more people to volunteer to become adopters.
2. The campaign will run from August 2013 until January 2014, and will use bus sides and digital media.
3. There will be three bursts of publicity: for the launch in August, again during National Adoption Week and finally in January.
4. The number of children waiting to be adopted in Wiltshire has risen from 8 to 11 (37%) in the last year, reflecting a national trend. Nationally there are over 4,000 children waiting to be adopted across the country. The number of people approved as adopters in Wiltshire last year was 32.
5. If suitable matches cannot be found in Wiltshire, many adopters will be matched with children from outside Wiltshire. Any interviews will need to reflect this, to answer the question why the campaign is necessary when the number of children in the county waiting to be adopted is low and the number of parents waiting to adopt already exceeds the number of children by a wide margin.

Public Relations Campaign

6. A PR campaign will also run to support the advertising. This will consist of press releases being issued at each of the three stages of the campaign. The press releases will target local weekly papers, parish magazines, local radio stations, community websites and TV.
7. In the first stage of the campaign (August), a press releases will be issued at the launch of the campaign, and a second a few weeks later with profiles of children (with names changed) waiting to be adopted.
8. The second stage of the campaign will be based around National Adoption Week in November and will also be accompanied by a press release. This press release would aim to include a case study of someone from Wiltshire who has successfully an adopted a child or children. An approach will be made to Wiltshire Life and others about carrying the story.
9. A Council spokesperson may be required for radio interviews. Ideally this will include live interviews into BBC Radio Wiltshire's breakfast or drive time programmes.
10. The final stage of the campaign, in January 2014, will be supported by a press release quoting figures for the number of people coming forward as adopters and possibly include a case study of someone who has successfully completed the Adopter Recruitment process.
11. Each stage of the PR campaign will be followed up by direct contact with media outlets to encourage them to run with the story and to find out any additional information they may need.
12. Amongst the children waiting to be adopted there are sibling groups, older children, children with disabilities and children from ethnic minority backgrounds. Interviews need to reflect that there are children waiting to be adopted from a wide set of backgrounds and circumstances.

Q&A

Why is the Council running this campaign?

Following various high-profile cases the number of children being taken into care has increased. This is reflected across the country, where over 4,000 children are waiting to be adopted. An additional 600 adopters are needed each year to keep up with the increasing number of children waiting to be adopted.

Does Wiltshire have a particular problem?

The number of children awaiting adoption in Wiltshire is lower than many local authorities, and the County has a good track record in attracting adopters, but we need to do more to help reduce the number of children waiting to be adopted both locally and nationally.

Currently there is a need within Wiltshire for adopters who could parent sibling groups of 2+ children aged 3-7. In addition there is a need for adopters who could meet the needs of children with complex health needs or a disability. Some of the sibling groups have a child with a disability.

What is the Government's stance on Adoption?

The Government began their reforms to the adoption system in 2010. Central to the Coalition's reform programme is a belief in the importance of recruiting more adoptive families and reducing the amount of time a child waits to be adopted. This can be seen in, changes to recruitment and assessment, the increased use of 'fostering for adoption', changes to the way in which children are matched with adoptive families, a greater amount of support for adopters and greater accountability of local authorities in regard to the number of children placed for adoption and the time this takes.

How long does it take to adopt a child?

We aim to meet or exceed to Government's target of six months.

Who can and can't adopt?

There are few limitations on the type of person who can be considered as adopters. We assess people on merit, not on age, marital status, income or sexuality. It doesn't matter if you own or rent your home, work full-time or not at all – what is important is whether you can offer a child or a group of siblings a caring and loving environment in which to grow up and thrive.

Does the child have a say in the process?

The voice of the child and their wishes and feelings are fully taken into account throughout the adoption process. The child's welfare, safety and needs are paramount. For the child's welfare it is often necessary for them to be adopted away from the area where their birth parents live. If there is no suitable match available in the Wiltshire we will search regionally or nationally for a suitable match.

What is Wiltshire Council doing to encourage people to adopt older children/ children with disabilities/sibling groups?

By encouraging as many potential adopters as possible from as wide a range of backgrounds we are more likely to find people who would like to adopt children with different circumstances.

The needs of disabled children will be recognised and promoted when decisions are made.