

## **Addendum**

### **Family Finding events**

#### **Opening Minds**

These events are hosted for adopters and prospective adopters to see photo-profiles of waiting children and watch DVD footage. This encourages adopters to think more widely about what they can consider in a child joining their family. Many families feel drawn to particular children at these events and this increases the number of matches for Sunderland children.

Three of these events were held in 2013- listed below

On **25/3/13**. This was another very successful event and 15 children were featured. Adopters who attended gave very positive feedback and there are possible links for a number of the children featured.

On **13/8/13** 21 children were featured with DVDs and profiles and photoboard. 13 adoptive families attended (8 from Sunderland and the rest from other agencies). About half the children featured have adopters expressing an interest in them. These possible links will be followed up in the next month or so.

On **11/12/13**. This was a well-attended event and a record number of children (26) were featured. A number of adopters expressed interest in the children featured and the interest is being followed up.

#### **Adoption Parties (activity days)**

Following a successful pilot project in the Midlands run by BAAF (British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering), Sunderland decided to use some of the government Adoption grant money to set up adoption parties for Sunderland's looked after children who are waiting for adopters..

These events allow adopters to meet children waiting for adoptive families in a safe fun environment where children and their foster carers who attend too have been well prepared and everyone is well supported.

No other adoption agency in the NE has yet held an event so Sunderland is ahead of neighbouring authorities. The first day planned for other Local Authorities to hold an activity day is not until November 2014 and it will be run by BAAF. Sunderland did not want to wait so long as the children waiting need families now. Therefore the adoption and permanence teams decided to do the considerable amount of work to run an event in-house.

On 15/2/14 the service ran its first event. Held in the Sunderland aquatic centre for 25 children with lots of fun activities and a party atmosphere, it was very successful and the feedback from adopters and foster carers and children was extremely positive. The number of adoptive families who attended was over 20 and about half of these were from other agencies such as DFW adoption and Barnardos.

11 children have been matched at panel following the event which is a higher success rate than other forms of family finding. Some families are still being explored.

The adoption panels considering these matches since February, have been impressed by the impact meeting the child before-hand can have on the confidence and preparedness for the match of the adopters and the conclusion is that although this is still 'cutting edge' practice with longer term outcomes as yet uncertain, it is an extremely positive development, and is likely to help maintain Sunderland's position in the forefront of agencies able and willing to place older children for adoption.

An adopter who attended the day wrote up the experience and it was published in an adoption journal- Adoption Today in March.

The next adoption party is planned for mid July 2014.