



Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Time and Date

2.00 pm on Tuesday, 30th June, 2015

Place

Committee Room 2 - Council House

Public Business

1. **Apologies**
2. **Declarations of Interests**
3. **Minutes** (Pages 3 - 14)
 - (a) To agree the minutes of the meetings held on 7 and 13 April, 2015
 - (b) Matters Arising
4. **Children's Centres and Youth Service e Petition** (Pages 15 - 20)

Report of the Executive Director of People

To consider the above petition bearing 21 signatures. The Petition Organiser has been invited to attend the meeting for the consideration of this item.
5. **Delegation of Authority Policy for Looked After Children** (Pages 21 - 36)

Report of the Executive Director of People
6. **Adoption Service Annual Report 2014/15** (Pages 37 - 64)

Report of the Executive Director of People
7. **Role of the Principal Social Worker for Children's Services** (Pages 65 - 70)

Report of the Executive Director of People
8. **Outstanding Issues Report** (Pages 71 - 74)

Report of the Executive Director of Resources
9. **Any Other Business**

To consider any other items of business which the Cabinet Member decides to take as a matter of urgency because of the special circumstances involved.

Private Business

Nil

Chris West, Executive Director, Resources, Council House Coventry

Monday, 22 June 2015

Note: The person to contact about the agenda and documents for this meeting is Suzanne Bennett, Governance Services Tel: 024 7683 3072 Email: suzanne.bennett@coventry.gov.uk

Membership: Councillor: E Ruane (Cabinet Member)

By invitation Councillors H Noonan (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Please note: a hearing loop is available in the committee rooms

If you require a British Sign Language interpreter for this meeting
OR if you would like this information in another format or
language please contact us.

Suzanne Bennett

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Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member (Children and Young People) held at
1.00 pm on Tuesday, 7 April 2015

Present:

Cabinet Member: Councillor Ruane

Shadow Cabinet Member: Councillor Lepoidevin

Employees (by Directorate):

Chief Executives: J. Forde, N. Inglis, J. Moore

People: J. Aubury, A. Butler, K. Coughlan, C. Fooks, A. Harley, J. Moffat, A. Reynolds, K. Ritchee, J. Sembi

Resources: S. Bennett, G. Haynes, G. Holmes, R. Sugars

Public Business

32. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

33. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 March, 2015 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

34. Supported Accommodation for Young People Aged 16-24 Years - Multi-Agency Action Plan

Further to Minute 14/14, the Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of People which indicated that Supported Accommodation is commissioned by the City Council to provide accommodation and support to young people aged 16-24, including Care Leavers, young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, Children in Need, Looked After Children, young people at risk of or involved in offending and Teenage Parents who are pregnant or have children. New contracts for Supported Accommodation were implemented in December 2013 and introduced significant changes to how this type of service operates, including the introduction of a single point of access via the Council's Placements Team.

Providers are also required under the contract to contribute to positive outcomes for young people and their further economic well-being by encouraging and facilitating their health, well-being, social inclusion and participation in further educational, training or work opportunities. To help achieve these outcomes,

providers are expected to work collaboratively with the City Council and a range of other partner agencies and services, including Route 21, Placements Team, Children and Family First Service, mental health services, Integrated Youth Support Services, health professionals, housing and other services.

To facilitate greater multi-agency working between providers and other services, a multi-agency action plan, which was appended to the report, has been developed, which focusses on maintaining young people's placement stability by improving their lifestyle and behaviour, reducing evictions, encouraging them to live healthier lives, and supporting them to engage in education, employment and training.

The Cabinet Member questioned officers on the content of the report, particularly in relation to:-

- How progress is measured against the action plan and what evidence is provided to show this progress
- How the "Voice of a Child" is fed into this process
- How regularly the contracts are monitored and by whom.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People:-

- (1) Notes the contents of the action plan as appended to the report**
- (2) Requests that officers arrange an informal meeting for the Cabinet Member and Shadow Cabinet Member with a Supported Accommodation provider and other relevant parties, at their venue, to consider progress in delivery against the action plan.**
- (3) That any specifics relating to providers be considered by the Corporate Parenting Board.**

35. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Redesign Process Update

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of People which provided an update on the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) redesign process.

Five commissioning organisations from Coventry and Warwickshire have formed a "CAMHS Redesign Project" to develop a sustainable CAMHS model. National organisation and expert champions, Young Minds, have been commissioned to engage local stakeholders in the development of a new model. In their interim report, Young Minds have identified six key themes arising from the engagement work to date, including the benefits of a more joined up system and more mental health promotion (mirroring the "Future Minds" report – Department of Health and NHS England, March, 2015). Based on the key themes, Young Minds have developed an outcomes framework to convey a draft version of a potential future model. Young Minds are developing their initial findings through undertaking a

prioritisation process that considers their recommendations in the context of the resources available.

The Cabinet Member questioned officers on the content of the report, particularly in relation to:-

- The current level of demand for the service and data on drugs treatment for children
- Current and proposed targets for waiting times for treatments and the difference between “assessments” and “treatments”
- The timescale for the implementation of the new model
- Funding issues

The Cabinet Member noted that this issue would be considered by Scrutiny prior to the tendering process.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People:-

- (1) Notes the finding from the engagement work with stakeholders undertaken to date**
- (2) Supports the progression of the initial findings in the development of a final model to be developed and delivered within available resources**
- (3) Requests that information relating to the number of referrals to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, together with the expected number of referrals, be included in future reports on this issue**

36. Recommendations from the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) Task and Finish Group on Fostering

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of People which indicated that the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board established a task and finish group to look at in more detail the “offer” made to foster carers to support the on-going recruitment and retention of in-house foster carers.

The report detailed the work carried out by the task and finish group, who had considered the following areas:-

- Local context and background
- Feedback from foster carers
- Marketing and recruitment strategy
- Improving the “Offer” to foster carers – skills fee per child

- Council Tax rebate/reduction
- Non-financial support offer, including professional development
- Foster Friendly Employer Policy

The Cabinet Member was informed of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board's consideration of this matter at their meeting on 25 March, 2015 (their Minute 54/14 refers)

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People approves the following recommendations from the Education and Children's Scrutiny Board:-

- 1) That the proposed fee structure for a skills fee per child is implemented following consideration of feedback from foster carers. (This has already been agreed further to the Cabinet Member Children and Young People Minute 27/14 refers)
- 2) Review the end of year statement and advice provided to foster carers for fostering income and tax implications, to ensure foster carers can easily extract the relevant information for their annual tax returns.
- 3) That additional research and monitoring is done on:
 - a) the affect that any potential drop in income has on the number of staying put places offered to young people over 18,
 - b) the number of young people who would like to stay put and aren't able to as their carers don't offer staying put places,
 - c) the statutory requirements and associated funding implications of staying put places.
- 4) That a council tax rebate for Foster Carers in Coventry is not considered at this time.
- 5) That the Council pursue becoming a Fostering Friendly Employer, ensuring that this is additional to any other family friendly policy the Council may have.
- 6) That crèche and parking availability whilst training for Foster Carers should be investigated. Existing childcare provision should be the preferred option and 2 year old entitlement should also be considered.
- 7) To support the Foster Care Support Offer focused on a "team around the child" approach.
- 8) To strengthen the team around the child ethos and ensure everybody understands the value and responsibilities of each other's roles.

- 9) **To explore opportunities to influence national social work training programmes to support this culture shift.**
- 10) **That the “team around the child” approach is used to appraise social workers.**
- 11) **That the Education and Children’s Service Scrutiny Board consider the policy statement on delegations before it goes to the Cabinet Member, at their first meeting of the Municipal Year 2015/16.**
- 12) **That future reports include details relating to the recruitment and retention of foster carers.**

37. Under 18 Conceptions - Current Situation in Coventry

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Public Health which indicated that Coventry has worked hard to embed a downward trend in the under 16 and under 18 conception rates since the implementation of the national Teenage Pregnancy Strategy in 1998 which stated that Coventry should reduce its rate by 55% as it was much higher than other areas whose target was 50%.

The Coventry under 16 and under 18 conceptions rates continue to be higher than the National and West Midlands average. However, three years moving average data suggests that the City is sustaining a downward trend in the under 16 and under 18 conception rates. Three years moving average data is used to smooth out short-term fluctuations and highlight longer-term trends, particularly where small numbers are involved (as is the case with teenage conceptions).

Coventry had a much higher rate of teenage conceptions than many other local authorities in the West Midlands by 2008, but since then, has shown a decrease in rates, which has been faster than the decrease in national rates. Coventry City council and wider partners continue to maintain a focus on reducing the rate of teenage conceptions through provision and on-going review of services, but importantly, also through looking at how all children and young people, including those most vulnerable, can be supported to lead healthy and fulfilling lives.

The Cabinet Member questioned officers on the content of the report, particularly in relation to:-

- The number of outreach hours and services offered, particularly in Supported Accommodation, and accessibility to services
- The collection of data from schools
- Comparisons with other similar size Local Authority and the reasons why Coventry’s rate was higher to start with

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People:-

- (1) **Notes the review of the current data available regarding teenage pregnancy in Coventry and endorses the actions**

outlined in the summary of the report, aimed at continuing to reduce the teenage conception rate in Coventry

- (2) That officers be requested to investigate the possibility of commissioning or using available academic support to undertake research on the local factors contributing to Under 18 conception levels.**

38. Workforce Development for Children's Social Care: An Update

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of People that provided an update on the progress made against workforce development actions within the Children's Services Improvement Plan and which also provided an update on learning and development strategies and interventions which are planned and currently taking place across the Children's Social Care workforce.

Over the past 18 months, a range of learning and development programmes have been offered to the Children's Social Care workforce and the City Council needs to ensure that all learning and development interventions moving forward are linked to the Ofsted Improvement Plan, feedback from the supervision process, the performance management/appraisal process, observations of practice and internal quality assurance audit mechanisms. Workforce reform and development is a major element in improving outcomes for children, young people and families.

The Cabinet Member questioned officers on aspects of the report including:-

- How the appraisal system can identify staff who wish to pursue social care qualifications
- Opportunities to offer training at a regional level, in conjunction with other organisations

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People approves the approach currently being adopted by Workforce Services with regard to the learning and Development Strategy being adopted by the Children's Social Care workforce.

39. Outstanding Issues Report

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People noted a report of the Executive Director of Resources that identified those issues on which further reports had been requested and were outstanding, so that progress could be monitored.

40. Any Other Business

There were no other items of urgent public business.

41. **Coventry Children's Centres - Progress Update**

Further to Minute 21/14, the Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of People which outlined progress to date to address actions identified by the Cabinet Member at his meeting on 2 February, 2015, where the current status of Ofsted outcomes for Children's Centres and progress against actions to address recommendations in order for the Centres to achieve "Good" or "Outstanding" were discussed. It was expected that all Children's Centres would be inspected in 2015.

The Cabinet Member questioned officers extensively on a number of issues, particularly in relation to:-

- The current position for each Centre on data registration rates; how those figures are collected and presented; how they will be assessed by Ofsted; progress on this matter since the last meeting; and when data collection and analysis would be completed and be up to date
- The reasons for undertaking and the outcomes of the mock inspections held at Tommies and Flutterbies Children's Centres
- How the Centres are seeking to integrate with health partners to share information and deliver efficient and effective services that avoid duplication and ensure swifter access to appropriate services for families.
- The role that health partners could play in Ofsted inspections
- Engagement with primary schools and head teachers and the need to refresh at head teachers meetings the importance of this engagement

The Cabinet Member indicated his concern that he was not assured by the progress on this matter since the last meeting.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, in noting with concern that not all the actions required at the last meeting on this matter held on 2 February, 2015 had been completed,:-

- (1) Requests that officers continue to work to develop the Children's Centre Service Area in order to move Centres to "Good" or "Outstanding" at future inspections**
- (2) Commissions, as a matter of urgency, the undertaking of mock inspections/ assessments of Ofsted readiness at every Children's Centre, these to be carried out in as short a timescale as possible, focusing on the findings of the last Ofsted Inspection for each of those Centres and on data registration**
- (3) Requests, as a matter of urgency, that the Head of Regulated Services (Looked After Children and Early Years) contacts the Chief Executives of both University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire and the Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership**

Trust, on behalf of the Cabinet Member, seeking a commitment that their employees fully participate in and attend Ofsted inspections.

42. Adoption Score Card Report

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of People which provided an update on progress made in respect of the Council's performance in relation to the Adoption Score Card as at February, 2015 and the on the recruitment of adopters.

A key priority for the Council is to improve the timeliness of the decision making for children who require adoption as well as the recruitment and approval of adopters for Coventry children. The recruitment and approval of adoptive families will be targeted at those who are able to meet the needs of older children and siblings from April, 2015. There has been an increase in the number of children adopted and since April 2013, there has been a significant narrowing of the gap between Coventry's performance with an average of 529 days and the national target (547) days in achieving adoption for children.

The Adoption Score Card had been considered by the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) (their Minute 52/14 refers).

The Cabinet Member questioned officers on issue contained in the report, particularly in relation to:-

- Budget forecasting
- Engagement with a wide range of faith communities to try and identify potential adoptive families

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People:-

- (1) Notes the improvement made in the timeliness of decision making for children requiring adoption and matching and placing of children with their adoptive families**
- (2) Approves the recommendation made by the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) to target and prioritise the recruitment of adopters to those who are able to meet the needs of older children and siblings**
- (3) Approves a review of the adoption allowances**
- (4) Agrees to further work being carried out within the service to address the fall out of the adoption grant**

(Meeting closed at 3.45 p.m.)

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member (Children and Young People) held at
11.00 am on Monday, 13 April 2015

Present:

Cabinet Member: Councillor Ruane

Shadow Cabinet Member: Councillor Lepoidevin

Employees (by Directorate):

People: D. Carter, Y. Corden

Resources: S. Bennett

Public Business

43. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

44. Coventry Strategic Objectives and Delivery Plan for Children and Young People Who Are Missing, at Risk of, or Experiencing Sexual Exploitation

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of People which indicated that Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a complex issue that requires through understanding of the impact on victims, how patterns of behaviour start and by whom it is perpetrated. There has been extensive national coverage of this issue with associated guidance and recommendations as a result of a number of enquiries and reviews in key areas of the country. Coventry agencies have come together and committed significant time and resources reflecting on this national learning and the findings and recommendations from such have been used to inform the development of a local delivery plan, which was appended to the report submitted, to address this issue.

The report indicated that the delivery plan is supported by clear strategic objectives and has been informed by facts and findings contained within a CSE problem profile produced by West Midlands Police.

A key aspect of the delivery plan is to not only ensure that a safe, responsive and effective service is provided to all children and young people who experience CSE, but to proactively identify children and young people that could be vulnerable to this and other types of harmful behaviour so that interventions that negate or minimise risk can be provided.

The delivery plan facilitates the coordinated activity and resources of multi-agencies working together in Coventry to prevent risk of harm to children and young people through targeted action against perpetrators and in locations across the City where this issue could take place. A significant area of work within the delivery plan is to enhance public awareness of CSE, in particular with parents

and carers and to ensure that young people are made aware of the issues around exploitation and that preventative services are in place.

The Cabinet Member questioned officers extensively about issues contained in the report and the delivery plan, particularly in relation to:-

- Governance arrangements in relation to the delivery of the plan and the role of the Local Children's Safeguarding Board
- Current data available in relation to CSE problem profile and the perpetrator profile in the City
- Work being undertaken by the newly established CSE team, including the development of a "screening tool" and the application of that tool by a range of agencies
- Planned awareness raising and training across the City Council and other agencies, together with details of City Council employees and Councillors who have received Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and CSE training

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People:-

- (1) Notes the content and approach by officers set out within the delivery plan attached as Appendix 1 (this plan still being in draft form as it is a "living document") and requires the following actions:-**
 - (i) That a letter be sent to school governing bodies drawing to their attention the use of the "screening tool" and that all primary and secondary Heads receive an update on this issue by September, 2015**
 - (ii) That the Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet Member be provided with all of the data now requested in relation to CSE in the City, together with information regarding staff and Councillors' DBS checks and CSE training**
 - (iii) That the delivery plan include a recommendation that all hackney carriage and private hire drivers are required to have DBS checks and CSE training as part of the conditions of their licences**
- (2) Refers the delivery plan to Scrutiny for progress monitoring and updates**
- (3) Receives an update on the delivery plan at the first Cabinet Member meeting in the new Municipal Year.**

45. **Any Other Business**

There were no items of urgent public business

(Meeting closed at 12.30 p.m.)

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Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

30th June 2015

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People - Councillor Ruane

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Executive Director for People

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title: Children's Centres and Youth Service e petition

Is this a key decision?

No, as the report doesn't contain any proposals that would significantly affect residents of the City.

Executive Summary:

An e-petition has been presented to the Council asking for the "Council to keep all Children Centres and Youth Service open; to maintain a high quality and fully accountable Public Service, without replacing employed professionals and well trained staff with volunteers." In accordance with the City Council's procedure for dealing with petitions, those issues relating to Children's Centres and Youth Centres are heard by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People:-

- 1) Notes the petition and requests that Officers write to the petition organisers to advise them of the Council's current position

List of Appendices included:

None

Other useful background papers:

None

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: Children's Centres and Youth Services Petitions

1. Background

- 1.1 An e-petition "Save our Children's Centres and Youth Services" was presented to the Council on 31st March 2015 with 21 signatures organised by the Coventry City Branch of UNISON asking:-

"We, the undersigned, oppose the City Councils "City Centre First" strategy as referenced in the current budget proposal that would see Council run Children's Centers and Youth Services reduced. We call upon the Council to keep all our Children Centers and Youth Service open: to maintain a high quality and fully accountable Public Service, without replacing employed professional and well trained staff with Volunteers."

- 1.2 The e petition relates to concern from UNISON regarding the level of service reductions that may need to be considered by Coventry City Council. This is following the Pre-budget Report (December 2014) and the Budget Report (February) which set out the City Centre First Savings Strategy, which includes Children's Centres and Youth Services. The budget was agreed by Members and included a £5million savings target for City Centre First by 17/18.
- 1.3 No decisions have been taken regarding the closure of any of the city's Children's Centres or Youth Services. Any future proposals to make changes to these services will be subject to public consultation and member decision.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 The Cabinet Member is recommended to request that Officers write to the petition organiser to advise them of the Council's current position and assure them that petitioners will be encouraged to participate in any future discussions in relation to Children's Centre and Youth services in Coventry.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 The proposals in the pre-budget and budget report (including City Centre First Saving Strategy) were subject to a public consultation. Proposals about the provision of Children's Centres and Youth services will be subject to an appropriate level of consultation to inform any future decisions.

4. Comments from Executive Director for Resources

- 4.1 Financial implications

There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

- 4.2 Legal implications

There are no legal implications as a result of this report.

5. Other implications

5.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

Not applicable.

5.2 How is risk being managed?

None

5.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

None

5.4 Equalities / EIA

None

5.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None.

5.6 Implications for partner organisations?

None

Report author:

Angie Parks, Head of Integrated Youth Support Services
 Amanda Reynolds, Service Manager, Early Years and Children's Centres

Directorate:

People

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 Angie.parks@coventry.gov.uk

Tel and email contact:

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Enquiries should be directed to the above person.

Contributor/ approver name	Title	Directorate or organisation	Date doc sent out	Date response received or approved
Contributors:				
Yolanda Corden	Assistant Director Children's Social Care and Early Intervention Services	People	4 th June 2015	16 th June 2015
Jivan Sembi	Head of Regulated Services	People	4 th June 2015	16 th June 2015
Suzanne Bennett	Governance Services Officer	Resources	4 th June 2015	16 th June 2015
Names of approvers for submission: (Officers and Members)				
Rachel Sugars	Finance Manager	Resources	4 th June 2015	16 th June 2015
Julie Newman	Senior Solicitor, Legal Services	Resources	4 th June 2015	16 th June 2015
Councillor Ruane	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People		4 th June 2015	16 th June 2015

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Public report
Cabinet Member

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

30th June 2015

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People - Councillor Ruane

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Executive Director for People

Ward(s) affected: All

Title: Delegation of Authority Policy for Looked After Children.

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

This report seeks approval of the Delegation of Authority Policy by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

Delegated authority is the term used when the responsibility for making day to day decisions about a child has been passed to the foster carer or residential care workers. This can include decisions around activities, haircuts and overnight stays amongst other things.

The Council has a legal duty to have a published policy setting out their approach to the delegation of authority to foster carers and residential workers caring for children the local authority is responsible for. The guidance stipulates that this policy should be signed by the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children.

In Coventry the Looked After Children Services and the Family Placement Service recognise that importance to improve practice around delegated authority in order to help young people to achieve and thrive in care. The policy for delegation of authority to carers has been revised in partnership with carers and residential care workers. Staff and carers will be trained in embedding the policy in the day to day practice over the next 3 months and thereafter as part of the workforce development plan.

The Department for Education issued statutory guidance in 2013 and this has been updated in 2015. This requires that each local authority to have a published policy setting out their approach to the delegation of authority to foster carers and residential care workers caring for children the local authority is responsible for. The guidance stipulates that this policy should be signed by the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member (for Children and Young People) is requested:-

- 1) To approve the delegation of authority policy appended to this report
- 2) To note that the policy will also be considered by the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)

List of Appendices included:

Appendix 1 - Delegation of authority policy.

Other useful background papers:

None

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

Yes on 2nd July 2015

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: Delegation of Authority Policy for Looked After Children.

Context (or background)

- 1.1 Delegated authority is the term used when the responsibility for making day to day decisions about a child has been passed to the foster carer or residential care workers. This can include decisions around activities, haircuts and overnight stays amongst other things. There is a general agreement that it is extremely important to improve practice around delegated authority in order to help young people to achieve and thrive in care.
- 1.2 The Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2015 amend the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 with respect to the review of the delegation of decision making about looked after children to their carers. The Department for Education issued statutory guidance supporting the changes in regulation in 2013. This requires each local authority to have a published policy setting out their approach to the delegation of authority to foster carers and residential workers caring for children the local authority is responsible for. The guidance stipulates that this policy should be signed by the Director of Children’s Services and the Lead Member for Children.
- 1.3 This policy (see appendix 1) has been revised to take account of Department for Education guidance and in particular the need to maximise, wherever possible, the authority for day-to-day decision making that is delegated to carers and residential homes, particularly where the placement is intended to be long term.
- 1.4 The key elements of the policy are:
 - Authority for day-to-day decision making about a looked after child should be delegated to the child’s carer(s), unless there is a valid reason not to do so.
 - A looked after child’s placement plan should record who has the authority to take particular decisions about the child. It should also record the reasons where any day-to-day decision is not delegated to the child’s carer.
 - Decisions about delegation of authority should take account of the looked after child’s views. Consideration should be given as to whether a looked after child is of sufficient age and understanding to take some decisions themselves.
 - Foster carers and residential child care workers are appropriately consulted and involved in decision making for children.
- 1.5 Managing the relationship between a looked after child’s parents (or other carers with parental responsibility), the local authority, the foster carer(s) or the registered manager of a children’s home is challenging, particularly as those providing the day-to-day care do not hold parental responsibility (unless the child is living at home). It is essential that wherever possible, the most appropriate person to take a decision about the child has the authority to do so, and that there is clarity about who has the authority to decide what.
- 1.6 This policy addresses the issue of timely decision making and diminishes the delays that looked after children experience in obtaining consent to everyday activities which can make them feel different from their peers and cause them embarrassment. Whatever the permanence plan, the carer should have delegated authority to take day-to-day parenting decisions which enables them to provide the best possible care for the child.

1.7 Decisions about delegation of authority must be made within the context of:

- the child's permanence plan which sets out the plan for achieving a permanent home for the child;
- the legal framework for parental responsibility (PR) in the Children Act 1989

Decisions about the care of a looked after child are likely to fall into three broad areas All decisions should always take account of the wishes and feelings of the child, their parent/s and their carer:

- I. Day-to-day parenting. All decisions this category are delegated to the child's carer (and/or the child if they can take any of these decisions themselves). Where day-to-day parenting decisions are not delegated to the carers, any exceptions and reasons for this should be set out in the child's placement plan within their care plan.
- II. Routine but longer term decisions, e.g. school choice. Decisions in this category will require skilled partnership work to involve the relevant people. The child's permanence plan will be an important factor in determining who should be involved in the decision.
- III. Significant events, e.g. surgery. Decisions in this category are likely to be more serious and far reaching. Where the child is voluntarily accommodated the child's birth parents or others with parental responsibility should make these decisions. Where the child is under a care order, decisions may be made by the birth parents or others with parental responsibility, which includes the local authority, depending on the decision and the circumstances.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

2.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Member (for Children and Young People) approves the proposed delegation policy.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

3.1 The policy has been developed in consultation with the foster carers, residential care workers and social workers.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

4.1 If approved, the policy would be effective immediately and training to raise awareness and support implementation is in place. This will be monitored through care planning meetings such as Placement Planning meetings and Looked After Reviews, management oversight and supervision.

5. Comments from Executive Director, Resources

5.1 Financial implications.

No financial implications

5.2 Legal implications

The child's parents do not lose Parental Responsibility (PR) when the child is looked after. Where the child is voluntarily accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 the local authority does not have PR. The local authority does have PR where there is a care order or emergency protection order. The foster carer never has PR.

Where a child is being voluntarily accommodated, the child's care plan, including delegation of authority to the local authority or child's carer, should (where the child is under 16), as far as is reasonably practicable, be agreed with the child's parents and anyone else who has PR. If the child is 16 or 17 the care plan should be agreed with them. A local authority cannot restrict a person's exercise of their PR, including their decisions about delegation, unless there is a care order or an emergency protection order in place.

Where a child is subject to a care order or emergency protection order, the local authority should, wherever possible and appropriate, consult parents and others with PR for the child. The views of parents and others with PR should be complied with unless it is not consistent with the child's welfare.

Where a parent is unable to engage in the discussions about delegation of authority for whatever reason, or refuses to do so, the local authority will need to take a view. If the local authority has a care order, then they can exercise their PR without the parent. Where the local authority does not have PR they can still do what is reasonable in the circumstances for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the child's welfare.

There are some decisions where the law prevents authority being delegated to a person without PR. These include applying for a passport (a child aged 16 or over who has the mental capacity to do so can apply for their own passport). Where there is a care order, the child cannot be removed from the UK for more than a month without written consent of everyone with PR or the leave of the Court (where the child is voluntarily accommodated the necessary consents must be obtained as for a child outside the care system). A local authority cannot decide that a child should be known by a different surname or be brought up in a religion other than the one they would have been brought up in had they not become looked after.

6. Other implications

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

Services to looked after children meet the objectives of the Council's plan in particular protecting and supporting our most vulnerable people through keeping children and adults safe from harm and giving our children the best start in life

The policy complies with the statutory requirements of legislation and supports the council's Corporate Parenting duties. The policy supports the local authority's duty to safeguard and promote the child's welfare in that, wherever possible, the most appropriate person is enabled to take a decision about the child has the authority to do so, and that there is clarity about who has the authority to decide what.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

Delegations of authority will be agreed through care planning processes and will be endorsed by managers in line with the policy. These will be reviewed through supervision and the care planning meetings by the "Team around the Child" e.g. Placement Planning meetings and the Looked After Reviews which will minimise and mitigate key risks that are identified.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

The local authority complies with the statutory requirements for ensuring there is a policy which enables the most appropriate person to have the clarity and authority to take a decisions about the child, where ever this possible within the contest of the legal frameworks for children looked after. This policy addresses the issue of timely decision making and diminishes the delays that looked after children experience in obtaining consent to everyday activities which can make them feel different from their peers and cause them embarrassment.

6.4 Equalities / EIA

The policy applies to all children who are looked after.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

Social workers work extensively across key partner agencies to support the interests of looked after children and ensure a coherent multi-agency approach. On-going partnerships will be required to ensure services are focused on meeting the Council's continuing statutory duties and priorities for looked after children.

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Neelesh Sutaria	Human Resources Manager	Resources	09.06.15	09.06.15

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POLICY ON DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY
FOSTER CARERS AND RESIDENTIAL CARE
WORKERS
DECISION MAKING FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Effective from: April 2015
Review date : April 2017

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

POLICY FOR DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY TO FOSTER CARERS AND RESIDENTIAL CARERS

1. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

- 1.1 This policy is to ensure that Coventry City Council complies with the statutory duty to ensure that decisions in respect of the care of children who are looked after are delegated as appropriate to carers and that there is a clear understanding / agreement in place regarding consents.
- 1.2 Delegated Authority refers to the arrangement for all or some of the responsibilities held by a person with 'Parental Responsibility' (PR) being met, in certain circumstances, by someone else who is caring for the child / young person for example foster carers, unless there is a valid reason not to do so.
- 1.3 Decisions on the delegation of authority will be made case by case taking into account the permanence plan for the child / young person and the legal framework for Parental Responsibility (PR) as defined in the Children Act 1989. It should seek to be a partnership agreement between person/s with parental responsibility, carers and the local authority and care providers.
- 1.4 Where there is a lack of clarity about decision making children can miss out on opportunities to be included in everyday activities. It is important for children and young people to feel integrated into their foster home or residential home.
- 1.5 All decisions about the delegation of authority should consider the views of the child / young person, taking account of their age and understanding

2.0 What is delegated authority about?

- *Normalising the experience of children and young people in foster care and residential care. (to minimise the impact on young people of feeling different due to complicated decision making)*
- *Inclusivity and treating foster carers / carers as part of the team around the child.*
- *Reducing the delay in decision-making.*
- *More productive and thoughtful thinking about who is best placed to do what.*
- *Discussion and forward planning regarding agreement and consent issues.*
- *Clarity and transparency.*
- *Better use of existing processes and roles.*

2.1 What it is not about

- *Blanket responses and approaches.*
- *Fashions and fads in foster care.*
- *Carers 'going it alone'.*
- *Excluding parents and encroaching on their rights.*
- *Excluding social workers.*
- *Carers being exposed or punished when things go wrong.*
- *Reducing attention to assessing risk.*

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK includes

- The Children Act 1989
- The Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005.
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (2010).
- The Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2015
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 4: Fostering Services (2010)
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013.
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards (2011).
- Delegation of authority: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (July 2013).

4.0 Parental Responsibility (PR) - Delegation in the context of the law on parental responsibility.

PR is defined as '***all the rights, duties and powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to that child and his property***'

4.1 The child's parents do not lose parental responsibility when the child is looked after by accommodation (Section 20 of the Children Act 1989).

A child's mother will always have Parental Responsibility .

A child's father will share PR with the mother if

- he was married to the mother at the time of the birth or they subsequently marry.
- via a court order
- by entering into an agreement with the mother to share PR.
- he jointly registers the child's birth with the mother (named on the birth certificate) for children born after 1 December 2013.

- 4.2 Where the child is voluntarily accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 the local authority does not have PR and therefore cannot restrict a person's exercise of their PR, including their decisions about delegation, unless there is a Care Order or an Emergency Protection Order in place.
- 4.3 The local authority does have PR where there is a Care Order or an Emergency Protection Order. PR is shared with parents for any child who is subject of a Care Order. The local authority however has the authority to restrict how parents may exercise their PR in respect of the child's care and is able to delegate authority to the carers of a child.
- 4.4 The foster carer never has Parental Responsibility.

5. **KEY PRINCIPLES – (informed by the Fostering Network)**

- Effective delegation of authority should minimise delays in decision-making and maximise the child's opportunity to enjoy their childhood and a full family life.
- In practice this means working out, as far as possible, the areas in which decisions can be delegated before the need to take them occurs.
- Young people's views and feelings should be taken into account when discussing the issues in relation to delegated authority.
- Parents must be supported and informed so they can play as full a part as possible in their children's lives.
- Parents should be given all the information they need to reach a decision about delegation of authority. They should be given full opportunity to discuss any concerns they have with the social worker and should be kept informed about decisions made about their child.
- Foster carers / carers should be enabled and supported to take everyday decisions about their looked after child where appropriate. In long-term placements this is even more important.
- Sharing information about day-to-day care and routines is essential but not enough in itself. Foster carers cannot care safely and make decisions without good quality information about the history of the child and the family. Social workers must ensure that foster carers receive this.
- A foster carer's span of responsibilities should take account of their wishes and feelings about undertaking the tasks involved.
- Decisions about delegation of authority should be based on good quality assessments of need and risk for the individual child and carer.
- Foster carers should be trained and supported to undertake appropriate risk assessments in areas in which they are authorised to make decisions.

6. DELEGATED AUTHORITY – DECISION SUPPORT TOOL

- 6.1 The Decision Support Tool is intended to assist carers, parents and social workers, prospective adopters and young people to communicate with each other regarding delegated authority and to prepare for the initial planning meeting, planning meetings and reviews. This tool will be updated as required.
- 6.2 It does not replace or replicate the Placement Plan, which is the legal requirement for recording the person responsible for consents and decisions. It should however aid good practice and should be viewed as an annex to the Placement Plan.
- 6.3 The Decision Making Support Tool should take account of the legal context for looked after children and Coventry City Council's policies and procedures.
- 6.4 When in doubt legal advice may be sought.
- 6.5 **The Placement Plan** – *(the required content is set out in Schedule 2 of the Care Planning Regulations 2010 and 2015).*
Please see the online procedures regarding the placement plan and guidance at <http://proceduresonline.com/coventry/childcare>
- Is a living document that can change over time and should be reviewed regularly as it forms part of the child's overall care plan.
 - Covers all the areas necessary for the child / young person.
 - Is clear and identifies the roles / consents/ decisions and tasks required to ensure the needs of the child / young person are met.

7. COMMITMENTS

7.1 Coventry City Council:

- We will do all we can to help young people enjoy as normal a childhood and family life as possible.
- We will work with young people's parents, wherever possible, so they can make choices about delegation that support the best care for their child/ren. If appropriate we will invite parents to placement planning meetings.
- We will ensure that all staff (including young people's social workers) understand delegated authority, our local policy and their roles and responsibilities, and that Independent Reviewing Officers ensure that appropriate delegation happens and is supported.
- Decisions on delegation will be made on a case by case basis taking account of the needs of the child / young person and will consider potential risks for the child and foster carers.

- We will strive to be an organisation that is not risk averse, but which allows decisions to be taken at the right level.
- We will ensure that all appropriate day-to-day decisions are delegated to young people's carers, taking account of the child's permanence plan unless there is a good reason not to.
- We will encourage young people to take responsibility where appropriate, and will seek the views of the young person, taking account of their age and understanding.
- Where a decision must be taken by a social worker or manager we will endeavour to take the decision quickly, so young people do not miss out on opportunities.
- We will involve carers in care planning and longer term decisions (e.g. school choice), recognising the particularly significant role of foster carers who have made a long term commitment to the child.
- We will keep placement plans, including the delegation of authority, under review at each review of the young person's care plan.
- We will support and develop carers so they feel confident taking day-to-day decisions about the young people they care for and know where they can seek advice when they need it.
- We will promote our policy on delegated authority with the providers we place our children with and will honour our commitments whether a young person is placed in-house or with an independent provider.

7.2 What we expect from carers :

- To fully participate in care planning discussions;
- To take on authority for day-to-day decision-making competently and confidently; and
- To talk to your supervising social worker or manager about what development or support you might need (e.g. if you are new to fostering and/or have any concerns about day-to-day decisions being delegated to you).

7.3 What we expect from young people, carers and providers we place our young people with:

- We expect you to let us know if you think we are not meeting the commitments set out in this policy document or there are other ways you think we can improve how we delegate authority for making decisions.

8.0 IMPLEMENTATION

- The Head of Regulated Services will be the named officer to monitor the implementation of our delegated authority policy.
- We will communicate our delegated authority and any developments to our children in care council, Corporate Parenting Board and other relevant bodies;
- We will seek the views regularly of staff, carers, young people, and parents regarding delegated authority and how they experience it and how they think the practice could be improved.
- We will deliver training about delegation to carers and staff which will include such areas as why delegation is important; what the legislation and statutory guidance says; respecting the carers' roles and supporting carers to take appropriate levels of authority; working with birth families to help them delegate appropriately; deciding when a child is mature enough to take particular decisions themselves.
- We will ensure that recording and local care planning processes support effective delegation and are not a barrier to it (e.g. making sure placement plan templates have space to include all the information required about delegation).
- We will ensure that carers have written authority to give consent to medical treatment where this has been delegated to them;

Approved by:

Signed
Director of People

Signed.....
Cabinet Member: Children and Young People

Dated.....

Dated.....

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30 June 2015

Name of Cabinet Member:

Children and Young People – Councillor Ed Ruane

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Executive Director of People

Ward(s) affected:

None

Title:

Adoption Service Annual Report 2014/15

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

This report considers the activity and key performance data for Coventry Adoption Service during 2014 /15 and the updated statement of purpose for 2015.

Coventry Adoption service aims to provide a comprehensive adoption service including post order support which is consistent with best practice and national minimum standards.

In 2014/15, 70 children were adopted and 38 adopters approved.

Overall, the City Council paid support allowances for 132 children from 73 adoptive families

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People is recommended to :-

- 1. Accept the Adoption Service Annual report for 2014/15**
- 2. Approve the updated Statement of Purpose is approved as appended to this report**

List of Appendices included:

Appendix 1 Statement of Purpose

Other useful background papers:

None

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: Adoption Service Annual Report 2014/15

1. Context (or background)

1.1 The Adoption Service is responsible for the recruitment, assessment approval, training, preparation of adopters and matching of children and provision of support to adopters

1.2 Overall Performance for 2014/15

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Number of enquiries	163	128	136
Applications received	40	49	37
Adopters approved	28	47	38
Number of children adopted	40	52	70
Number of children placed with prospective adopters	25	68	53
Number of children awaiting match	25	38	6
Number of disruptions	1	1	3 (4 children)

1.3 Consistent with the national picture there is mismatch of adopters approval category where adopters are approved for either a single child or under the age of 2, and the profile of children awaiting adoption who are aged between the ages of 3 and 6 years or children with either 1 or 2 siblings. Adopters are advised of the time that may be taken for a child to be matched if they are approved for a child/ren less than 2 year of age.

1.4 The marketing campaign “Adopt and Foster for Coventry” has been refocused to recruit adopters who are able to meet the needs of older children and sibling groups. In the last 2 years the conversion rate has ranged from 36% to 27% compared with low performance in 2012/13 of 17%.

1.5 In addition to local recruitment, Coventry actively engages in a range of adopter led matching events which include National Adoption Exchange Days, local exchange meetings, West Midlands adoption events for children where there are no in house matches or the children have specific needs. In 2014/15 nine children were placed with 7 adopters approved by other local authorities and agencies.

1.5 All adoption agencies are required to ensure adopters are placed on the National Register if it is unlikely that they will be matched with a child from Coventry. Where carers cannot be not be matched with a child within three months of approval their details are routinely forwarded to the register.

1.6 In January 2015 Coventry subscribed to Adoption Link which is a web based search engine. Unlike the national register, Adoption Link allows adopters and social workers to search across the country for a child or adopters. This has revolutionised family finding and provided a highly effective tool for linking children with adopters. In addition, monthly exchange meetings have been organised within the Service to expedite the linking of children who are about to have a plan for adoption with adopters who are either approved or about to be approved. However on occasions there are no suitable adopters from within the awaiting adopters.

1.7 Timeliness of Decision making for Children

The 2014/15 adoption score card confirmed the significant improvements in both the timeliness and of decision making on children entering care and being matched and placed with their prospective adopter. This improvement has been achieved through case progression discipline in court, the pre-allocation of permanency worker for all children with possible plan of adoption and senior management oversight. As a result although the average time is higher than the national average, they are not yet meeting the floor targets set by the Department for Education. Coventry's performance is now more in line with our statistical neighbours and other West Midlands authorities. The service is in the best position to meet the targets in 2015/16.

Adoption Scorecard	1 year average			3 year average				
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2010/13	2011/14	2012/15	All England Average	DfE Target 2012/15
A1	821	610	525	884	733	652	628	487
A2	402	193	170	332	269	255	217	121
A3	63 (46%)	124 (73.4%)	95 (79%)	75 (41%)	100 (43%)	282 (66%)	51%	No Target Specified

A1 - Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted (days)

A2 - Average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family (days)

A3 - Children who wait less than 20 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family and this changed to 18 months in 2014/15. (no. & %)

- 1.8 There has been 4 disruption of children placed with prospective adopters this year. One of the 4 children has since been placed with other adopters and the other three now have a plan for permanence in fostering and are placed with their foster carers.

1.9 Post Order Support and Allowances

There were 14 families in receipt of support in 2014/15 prior to an adoption order and a further 4 adoptive families were in receipt of post order allowances. Overall, there were 132 children from 73 adoptive households in receipt of an allowance. Of the 73 adoptive households, 21 adoptive households received a bespoke allowance, 49 received an assessed allowance and 3 adoptive households received both.

In 2013/14 37% of the 52 children adopted received allowance, and this had dropped to 25% of the 70 children adopted this past year

Age groups of the children receiving financial support are:

23 children aged 0 to 4 years
47 children aged 5 to 10 years
40 children aged 11 to 15 years
17 children aged 16 to 18 years
5 children who are over 18 and are in full time education.

- 1.10 Adoption allowances are subject to an assessment for support services in line with the Adoption Support Services Regulations (2005) and a financial assessment is carried out where the Authority considers that financial support may be required for a child who is currently looked after. In addition, adopters may be provided other financial support for therapeutic interventions or practically, in terms of costs towards purchasing a car where large sibling groups are adopted.

The key change proposed to the scheme is to reimburse adopters for any mileage undertaken at £0.45p per mile as opposed to £0.20p. In particular this change is being proposed following complaints received from adopters who are aware that foster carers receive a higher rate.

- 1.12 The key priorities for the service in 2015/16 are as follows:

1. Complete implementation of new Adoption requirements (Children and Family Act 2014)
2. Continued improvement of the Adoption Scorecard performance to reach Department of Education targets
3. Continued focus on small number of children who are hard to place
4. Continued focus on improving quality of practice and support
5. Completion Life Story work in a timely manner
6. Continuous Improvement of Post Adoption Support with access to the Adoption Support Fund

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 It is a regulatory requirement that the executive receives reviews and approves the Statement of Purpose on an annual basis.

1. The Adoption Service Annual report for 2014/15 is accepted
2. That the updated Statement of Purpose is approved.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

None

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 Changes to financial changes will be effective from 1st of April 2015.

5. Comments from Executive Director of Resources

5.1 Financial Implications

- 5.1.1 Adoption Improvement grant (AIG) 2014/15. - Coventry received £321K for 2014/15 as part of the Government's drive to address the backlog of children awaiting adopters as well as supporting wider improvements in Adoption support services. This grant was fully utilised to ensure appropriate resources were available to meet the demand for adopters, developing new innovative ways of finding adoptive families improving support and reducing assessment times and developing capacity within the adoption teams. ***We will not receive this grant in 2015-16, although the service will be able to secure funds for post adoption order therapeutic support from the national Adoption Support Fund from May 2015.***
- 5.1.2 Adoption Support Budget 2014/15 – financial support for adopters
There was a total spend of £969K against a budget of £721K giving an overspend of £248K. This overspend is due to an increase in activity and unit cost.
- 5.1.3 Inter-Agency Budget 2014/15 – Purchase and sale of adoption placements Spend on the budget to fund adoption placements from other providers or local authorities to meet the specific needs of the children was £276K, giving an overspend against budget of £7K. Most children were placed with Coventry approved adopters. The service has also generated income from the placement of children by other local authorities with Coventry adopters of £136K.
- 5.1.4 Transport costs – reimbursement for adopters. Increasing the current transport reimbursement of 20p per mile to 45p per mile will cost an additional £4k. This will have to be met by equivalent cost reductions.

5.2 Legal Implications

- 5.2.1 National Minimum Standards stipulate that the executive side of the local authority, receive written reports on the management, outcomes and financial state of the agency every 6 months; Monitor the management and outcomes of the services in order to satisfy themselves that the agency is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or service users; satisfy themselves that the agency is complying with the conditions of registration.
- 5.2.2 Regulations require that each local authority compiles a Statement of Purpose that must be kept under review. National minimum standards stipulate that the review must be at least undertaken annually.

6. Other implications

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

The Adoption Service contributes to the wellbeing of children through arranging for a permanent placement for a child whose own family is unable to provide care. It supports a key element of Corporate Parenting – that of securing appropriate family placements for Looked After Children, as an effective means of giving them the best life chances possible.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

The timeliness of adoption and securing permanence in a timely fashion is being managed through robust case tracking for children in proceedings and for those with an adoption plan. The service reports progress on Adoption Performance to the Improvement Board, Corporate parenting Board, Cabinet Member, Scrutiny Board and the People Directorate Management team.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

The Adoption Service contributes to Children's Social Care Services performance (within the People Directorate) against key Indicators that are closely scrutinised both internally and externally on an on going basis.

6.4 Equalities / EIA

Equalities / EIA: An Equality Impact Needs Assessment has been undertaken by the service in 2012 as part of the fundamental service review undertaken at that time.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

Social workers work extensively across key partner agencies to support the interests of looked after children and ensure a coherent multi-agency approach. On-going partnerships will be required to ensure services are focused on meeting the Council's continuing statutory duties and priorities for looked after children to achieve permanence.

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Neelesh Sutaria	Human Resources Manager	Resources	15.06.05	16.06.15

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Appendix 1 – Statement of Purpose

COVENTRY CITY ADOPTION SERVICE

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

March 2015
(updated)

Coventry Adoption Statement of Purpose

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Pursuant to the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003, as amended by the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2005 every adoption agency has to produce a Statement of Purpose and is required to review the Statement of Purpose.
- 1.2 The Statement of Purpose of the Agency is formally approved by the Cabinet Member responsible for the People Directorate and is available on the Coventry City Council Website to anyone seeking a copy.

2. The Statement of Purpose covers the following matters

- 2.1 The aims, values and principles of Coventry Adoption Services
- 2.2 The functions of the Adoption Services, including the service users, and activities of the agency
- 2.3 The name, qualification and experience of the manager of the service
- 2.4 Information about the organisation and staffing of the service
- 2.5 Systems to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and quality of the services provided
- 2.6 Procedures for recruiting, preparing, assessing, approving and supporting adopters.
- 2.7 Information about the complaints procedure
- 2.8 The address and telephone number of Ofsted and the Children's Commissioner

3. The Aim of Coventry's Adoption Services

- 3.1 To provide a comprehensive adoption and post-adoption service, including the provision of Adoption Support Services to all parties affected by the adoption process consistent with best practice and national standards and requirements.
- 3.2 To provide services which are appropriate and tailored to the particular needs of service users and people affected by adoption, in particular potential service users are welcomed without prejudice and given clear information on the services provided by the agency.
- 3.3 Consistent with Coventry City Council's duty towards children who are Looked After, where adoption is the plan, to ensure that they are placed with families who can offer them safe and effective care for the duration of their childhood. In particular, the Adoption Service seeks to safeguard and promote the physical, mental and emotional welfare of people affected by adoption who wish to use its services

Coventry Adoption Statement of Purpose

3.4 To find adoptive homes for all children looked after in Coventry who require a permanent family through adoption.

3.5 Where children cannot be placed within the agency's own resources the Service will seek to make arrangements with other Adoption Agencies to secure placements for children.

4. Values of the Adoption Service

4.1 The Service;

- Believes that children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family which can meet their needs during childhood and beyond
- Affirms that where possible it is best that children are brought up by their own birth family
- Ensures the child's welfare, safety and needs are the paramount considerations and at the centre of the adoption process
- Considers the child's wishes and feelings and takes them into account at all stages.
- Seeks to avoid delays in adoption to minimise impact on the health and development of children
- Responds promptly to the requests of and work with people affected by adoption, being respectful of their ethnic origin, religion, culture, language, sexuality, gender and disability, and their experience and understanding of adoption.
- Takes account of and values children's ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, and language when decisions are made
- Aims to ensure the particular needs of disabled children are fully recognised and taken into account when decisions are made.
- Values and respects the role of adoptive parents in offering a permanent family to a child who cannot live with their birth family.
- Understands that adoption has lifelong implications for all involved and requires lifelong commitment from many different organisations, professions and individuals.
- Works with others to meet the needs for services of those affected by adoption
- Where the service provision involves an adopted adult and their birth relatives it is the wishes and feelings of the adopted adult that take precedence.
- Works in partnership with local government, other statutory agencies and voluntary adoption agencies to ensure that these standards are delivered and that the needs of service users are met effectively

5. Principles of the Adoption Service

5.1 The principles on which the service is based include;

- Respect for the confidentiality of all those involved.
- Children's needs are placed first in all decision-making and actions.
- Services will not discriminate against groups or individuals.
- Services will be delivered effectively, efficiently and with the avoidance of delay.
- There is a commitment to monitor and review services.

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- There is a commitment to involve users in the ongoing review and development of the service. The service consults service users on decisions in relation to their service provision, seeking and welcoming feedback, using this feedback in its management and development of the service.
- The Agency, as a function of Coventry City Council, has written policies and procedures in place for working with service users with physical, sensory and learning impairments and for whom English is not the first language. There is a commitment to ensure that communications take due account of physical, sensory and learning impairments, communication difficulties and language of children, birth parents/guardians, prospective/adoptive parents and staff.
- Arrangements are made through appropriate interpreters for those who are unable to understand a document to have it read, translated or explained to them.

6. Who Receives Adoption Services

6.1 Adoption Services are provided to;

- Children who are to be adopted.
- Birth parents or guardians.
- Prospective and approved adopters and adoptive siblings including advice to those who are seeking to adopt from overseas.
- Children and their adoptive parents who require Adoption Support Services.
- Adopted adults and members of their birth families.
- Step-parents wishing to adopt.
- Private adoption applicants.

7. Overview of the Work of the Adoption Service

- To provide a child/children/young person with a permanent family by adoption, which will meet the child's need for stability, security, love and a resource into their adulthood and beyond
- Recruitment, assessment, training, preparation and support of a range of prospective adoptive parents to meet the placement needs of Coventry children.
- Assistance to locality social workers in counselling pregnant women who wish to place their baby for adoption.
- Making available counselling and support either within the service or by external referral for all birth families with an adoption plan for their children.
- Ensuring children are supported throughout the adoption process, appropriately engaged, involved, prepared and offered counselling commensurate with their age and understanding.
- Schedule 2 counselling for adopted adults and advice regarding Intermediary Services.
- Assessment, preparation, training and support for people who wish to adopt a child from abroad whether in-house or via referral to other agencies.

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- Providing advice and consultation to locality workers working with a child and family where adoption is the plan.
- Preparing reports for Adoption Panel and courts on aspects of adoption work.
- Preparing reports and attending other Local Authority Adoption Panels and courts regarding aspects of adoption work.
- Preparing reports and attending other Local Authority Adoption Panels where a match has been recommended for a Coventry approved family.
- Offering of an Adoption Support Service after placement and after an order has been made in accordance with Adoption Support Regulations 2005.
- Participation in the West Midlands Regional Family Placement Consortium including the exchange of approved applicants to facilitate the placement of children.
- Joint working and partnership arrangements with other local authorities/agencies to maximise the aims of Coventry Adoption Service.

8. The Name, Qualifications and Experience of the Manager

8.1 Responsible Manager of the Adoption service:

Elizabeth Gosling
Integrated Service Manager Family Placements
People Directorate
Adoption Service
Civic Centre 1
Earl Street
Coventry
CV1 5RS
Tel no: 02476 831873 Fax 02476 294660

8.2 Professional qualifications: Bachelor of Applied Science (Social Work) -
Curtin University
Masters of Science (Child Welfare) – Bristol University

8.3 Experience: Qualified as a social worker in 1979, have experience in both non statutory as a residential social worker and the statutory sector specializing in working with children looked after or on the edge of care and securing permanency by way of adoption. This includes 15 years' experience at Service Manager, Head of Service.

8.4 Responsible Manager from 6th October 2014

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9. Structure of the Adoption Service

9.1 Looked After Service Teams are responsible for the arrangements for children and undertake all case management including discussion with birth family members where adoption is the plan for the child. Independent counselling and support of birth parents is available in line with the Adoption Regulations. Children's Case management is initiated within the Neighbourhood Teams with the practice of joint working with the 'Looked After' Service to progress adoption plans once rehabilitation is ruled out.

9.2 The Adoption Service has 3 teams, Assessment, Support and Permanence/Family Finding who work as an integrated service within the Family Placements Service. The Assessment Team is responsible for recruiting foster carers and adopters. This team works with adoption enquirers to determine initial eligibility, delivers preparation training, and helps those who confirm their interest in adoption to complete their application undertaking pre approval assessment and training and booking Panel. The Support Team provides the ongoing support of adopters and foster carers. They make arrangements for adoptive placements and support new families through to adoption. The Permanence/Family Finding Team holds case responsibility for children with Placement Orders and undertakes family-finding for these children. This team also has responsibility for producing Life Story Books and Later in Life letters for children who are placed for adoption as well as making referrals for birth parent counseling.

9.3 Currently the Teams are each led by 2 Team Managers responsible to the named Manager of the Adoption Service who has overall responsibility. Managers are responsible for supervising the work of the teams' social workers, all of whom are qualified. The majority of social workers are Senior Caseworkers who satisfy the requirements within the Preparation of Adoption Reports Regulations 2005 (which includes 3 years post qualification experience in child care social work, including direct experience of adoption work). Staff who have not yet achieved that level of qualification are supervised by a staff member who has met the requirement. The service is augmented by 3 Children & Family Support Workers.

9.4 The staff involved in the service have a wide range of experience of working in the field of child-care and family placement, including international experience. Staff are representative of the diverse backgrounds in Coventry, including White British, African Caribbean and Asian heritage.

10. Staffing of the Adoption Service

10.1 The Adoption Service consists of the following staff

The Head of Service LAC

The Responsible Manager who is the Integrated Service Manager, Family Placements Service

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The Assessment Team
(Who also cover Fostering) consists of:

2 FTE Team Managers
2 FTE Senior Practitioners
13 FTE Social Worker posts
.6 FTE Children and Families
Support Worker

Support Team
(Who also cover Fostering) consists of:

2 FTE Team Managers
2 FTE Senior Practitioner
posts
8 FTE Social Worker posts
1.5 Child and Family Support
Workers
1 part time Birth Records Social Worker

Permanence and
Family Finding Team
consists of:

2 FTE Team Managers
1 FTE Senior Practitioner
14 FTE Social Worker posts
1 FTE Child and Family Support Worker

Access to part of Joint Business Support Hub:

Agency Advisor – Gail Helfet who is responsible for providing Professional Advice to the Adoption Panel and Agency Adoption Support Services Advice. Gail has over 30 years experience in the field of adoption and holds a BA Soc.Sci (social work) and CQSW qualification. Gail has undertaken specialist training in Adoption and Attachment with family Futures

11. Monitoring Arrangements to ensure effectiveness and quality

11.1 Arrangements are in place to ensure that the service provided by the Adoption Service is effective and that the quality of the service is of an appropriate standard. These include the following;

- The Statement of Purpose and Annual Report are considered by the Cabinet Member for Social Care each year and are subject to Cabinet Scrutiny
- A summary of progress against adoption targets is contained within the quarterly report of the Directorate and considered by Cabinet each quarter

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- Managers provide monthly performance information in respect of their team
- Adoption Service targets are reported on within the Quality Improvement Framework for the Directorate
- All staff have regular supervision provided within the framework of a supervision agreement
- There is an annual performance appraisal system in place
- Information about children and prospective adoptive families is recorded on LCS, Liquid-Logic Childrens System – commonly known as Protocol and the Teams' LAC tracking system.
- An annual report covering the activity and performance of the Adoption Service is presented each year to Senior Managers and Elected Members.
- Prospective adopters are interviewed at the end of the preparation groups to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the training and provide information for the home study assessment
- Prospective adoptive parents are invited to give written feedback after the training sessions to enable the trainers to evaluate the effectiveness of the course
- Prospective and approved adopters are asked for written feedback at all stages of service provision
- Managers from the Placement Service meet with relevant managers in the Neighbourhood and Looked After Service to progress children's plans for adoption
- A fortnightly review meeting is held following every Adoption Panel to track the progress of approved adopters, children waiting adoption, proposed matches and children linked with new adopters. The database is updated regularly and a copy is made available to relevant staff including the Service Manager for monitoring purposes. Prospective adopters who do not have placements are identified through this process and made available where appropriate to other agencies seeking adoptive parents
- The policy and procedures of the Adoption Agency are in line with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures, "Working together to Safeguard children" and "What to do if you're worried a child is being abused". These procedures include a written child protection policy that includes the management and reporting of child protection issues. All staff and service users have access to the agencies child protection policy, upon request
- Service Level Agreements with other Agencies are reviewed at a minimum annually

12. Procedures for recruiting, preparing, assessing, approving and supporting adopters.

Recruitment and Preparation to Adopt

12.1 The main consideration of the Adoption Service is to provide adoptive families for children that will allow them to grow up in a secure and positive environment and reach their potential in all aspects of their lives.

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- 12.2 The needs of children requiring adoptive placements are complex and diverse. In order to meet these needs the Adoption Service will work flexibly and be willing to consider options that offer the potential to provide a suitable adoptive home for a child.
- 12.3 The Adoption Service accepts applications to become adopters from people of all backgrounds, cultures, sexuality, marital status and religion. Accordingly promotional material for recruitment states clearly that people who are interested in becoming adoptive parents will be welcomed without prejudice, will be given clear written information about the preparation, assessment and approval procedure and that they will be treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process.
- 12.4 The agency does not discriminate against people on the grounds of weight, smoking, health or other lifestyle issues but adopts a common sense approach that considers the specific needs of children and applicants likely ability to meet those needs through a child's developing years. All prospective applicants have a medical and on occasion medical opinion may advise applicant's they are not fit to proceed.
- 12.5 The agency has a system in place to prioritise prospective adopters who are most likely to meet the needs of children waiting for adoptive parents, publishes the priority statement with its information pack and reviews it regularly in the light of changing patterns of need. Where those enquiring are unlikely to meet the needs of local children needing adoption they are referred to other agencies.
- 12.6 A copy of the written eligibility criteria, information on becoming an adoptive parent and what is expected of adopters is provided on request.
- 12.7 Information is given about children who need families locally at the initial visit and there are preparation groups and information provided to help prospective adopters decide whether to proceed further.
- 12.8 Those wishing to adopt from another country are referred to PACT - an independent adoption agency who have specialised in international adoption.
- 12.9 The Adoption Service continually seeks to improve its service and actively seeks user experience feedback from enquirers at different stages through the recruitment, preparation and assessment process.
- 12.10 The Adoption Service will provide training, preparation and support to its adopters. Applicants are given information about the preparation and support services available to adopters, and given the opportunity to talk to others who have adopted children.

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- 12.11 Enquirers are sent an Adoption Information Pack within 5 days of their enquiry, giving comprehensive information on the adoption process, criteria for preparation, acceptance, prioritisation, and information on the range of children seeking adoption placements. Enquirers are invited to confirm their interest in adoption by returning a form to the Recruitment Team who will then undertake a local authority check. Those who fail to reply are followed up by letter.
- 12.12 Home Visits are made to all who confirm their interest to give enquirers additional information and to offer preliminary advice as to the eligibility of applicants to adopt. Enquirers who seem likely to be able to offer an adoption placement are invited to submit an application form and attend training. When this is received Agency checks and references are taken up.
- 12.13 Pre Adoption Training Courses are held 6 times per year, ensuring that potential applicants do not have to wait too long for a place on the course. The course is designed to offer applicants an opportunity to explore adoption and its implications in a non-threatening way and to decide whether or not adoption is for them from an informed perspective.
- 12.14 Adoption Training Courses include the experience of adopters as well as inputs from a range of professionals. Potential applicants are invited to reflect on their own learning and a brief interview is held at the end of the course to summarise the key learning points.

Assessment and Approval

- 12.15 Assessments are completed using the BAAF Prospective Adopter's Report. Applicants are considered in terms of their capacity to look after children in a safe and responsible way that meets their development needs. Assessors seek evidence throughout the assessment process to focus on the issues they are likely to encounter and identify the competencies and strengths they have or will need to develop.
- 12.16 Where the prospective adopters are already foster carers of the child they wish to adopt, they are invited to participate in the same preparation groups as other prospective adopters or are provided with alternative training.
- 12.17 Status, health and enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, personal references and enquiries are undertaken about prospective adopters. Enhanced CRB checks are undertaken on members of their household aged 18 or over and an explanation is given to prospective adopters as to why the checks are undertaken.

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- 12.18 In addition, where applicants have worked with children or are employed in the caring professions references are taken up from those employers. A current employer reference is required for all applicants. Where applicants have been in a previous relationship where children have been born efforts are made to contact the previous partner, except where this is contra-indicated on safety grounds, to establish their view of the applicant.
- 12.19 Birth children of the applicants are also contacted where practical to establish their view of the applicants desire to extend their family through adoption. The assessor interviews at least two personal referees and one family member. Written accounts of the referee's views of the applicant are obtained and presented to Adoption Panel. The agency has a checklist of issues to be addressed by assessors interviewing referees.
- 12.20 Following completion of the Adopter's Report, including a brief account of training and preparation undertaken, reports of referee visits (confidential unless referee wishes the reference to be shared with adopters), and all other relevant reports these are sent to members of the Adoption Panel in the week preceding the Panel. The application also includes a questionnaire to advise Panel if adoptive parents are prepared to agree to notify the adoption agency if their adopted child dies during childhood or soon afterwards, the applicant/s views on contact and their willingness to pass on information to the birth parents if they wish to have it.
- 12.21 Applicants are invited to attend if they wish to present their views to Panel. There is an explanatory leaflet available to applicants explaining the Panel process and another leaflet introduces Panel members. Panel meets on every second Wednesday. There is a private room available for applicants waiting to speak with Panel.
- 12.22 Panel Members will have had the opportunity to consider the written reports in advance of Panel and identified any salient issues. (The Adoption Decision Maker is also sent a copy of the papers to enable these to be read prior to the minute from Panel being sent.)
- 12.23 The Chair of Panel will briefly introduce the application and identify key strengths in the application. The Medical Advisor is invited to comment on the applicant/s' health background and any necessary points affecting the application are clarified. Any relevant legal issues are raised with the Legal Adviser.
- 12.24 Panel members are then invited to comment on the application and the Chair formulates these comments into issues to address either to the assessor or to the applicant/s. The applicant/s and the assessor are then invited to join the Panel. Applicants are welcomed and then any agreed questions are put to them. The applicant/s are invited to ask any questions of Panel before leaving with their Assessing Social Worker to allow Panel to conclude their discussions and make a recommendation.

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- 12.25 The applicants are invited back into Panel to hear the recommendation of Panel following Panel discussion and this will be confirmed in writing once the Agency Decision Maker has considered the matter.
- 12.26 Following Panel the minute of the meeting is completed by the Adoption Administrator and is circulated to the Members of the Panel for approval. The minutes are then given to the Agency Decision Maker. The Agency Decision Maker reflects on the papers and Panel recommendation and then returns his decision to the named Manager of the Adoption Service for transmission to applicants within 7 working days of the Agency Decision maker receiving the final panel minutes.
- 12.27 Approved Adopters are allocated a named Support Social Worker to give them on-going support and guidance throughout their adoption journey from placement through to adoption and beyond.
- 12.28 Approved adopters who are waiting for a placement match are reviewed each year by the Adoption Service. If the review suggests a change is required in their approval a report is presented to Panel. Adopters are invited to comment on any report and have a right to be heard by Panel, as with their initial report. Any subsequent change recommended by Panel is subject to the same process of confirmation by the Agency Decision Maker as their original recommendation.

13 Matching adopters and children and Placement

- 13.1 The Recruitment Team prepares an annual plan containing the agency's strategies to recruit sufficient adopters to meet the needs of the range of children waiting for adoption locally.
- 13.2 The Family Finding Team, whose principle task is overseeing home-finding for children, receives information on all children with adoption plans, advises the Assessment Team of emerging trends and needs, seeks authority for specific child advertising, maintains the links with the National and Local Consortium Adoption Registers and takes a principle role in arranging for possible links between adopters and children waiting.
- 13.3 Children are matched with adopters who best meet their assessed needs. Wherever possible this will be with a family which
- (a) Reflects their ethnic origin, cultural background, religion and language; and
 - (b) Allows them to live with brothers and sisters unless this will not meet their individually assessed needs.
- 13.4 Where the child cannot be matched with a family which reflects their ethnic origin, cultural background, religion and language, every effort is made to find an alternative suitable family within a realistic timescale to ensure the child is not left waiting indefinitely in the care system. Where children cannot live with a family as set out in (a) and (b) above, the children's social worker will explain and record this, having regard to their age and understanding.

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- 13.5 In matching children with approved adopters, the agency seeks to ensure that it takes into account the views and feelings of the child as far as these can be ascertained based on age and understanding, the child's care plan and recent written assessments of the child and the birth family, potential adoptive parents and their children.
- 13.6 There is a clear process for matching children with potential adopters. Children's Social Workers complete BAAF Children's Permanence Report along with a Checklist of Needs and a profile of the child. This is used to inform the family-finding process. Suitable matches are identified and passed to the social worker to consider. The Social Worker, Family Finder and/or the Prospective Adopters support Worker will visit the Prospective adopters to explore further.
- 13.7 If the prospective adopters express interest in going forward then an Adoption Placement Report is prepared and considered by Adoption Panel along with the relevant Child's Placement Report, the Adopter's Report, the relevant minutes of any Adoption Panel that has considered the child or applicant and an assessment of post-adoption support needs. The Panel recommendations are conveyed to the Agency Decision maker for a formal decision.
- 13.8 Adopters are invited to prepare a folder of information for the child about themselves and their home and when applicable, their children, family and pets.
- 13.9 A planning meeting is held, chaired by a Team Manager, to consider, in detail, the transition of the child from the foster placement to the new adoptive home. Planning meetings are attended by the appropriate representatives from the Children's Neighbourhood or Looked After Service, the Adoption Team, the prospective adopters and the foster carers. There is an agreed format for the Adoption Planning meeting which is completed and signed by all parties (Adoption Placement Plan).
- 13.10 Prospective adopters support - All successful applicants are allocated an adoption support worker whose task it is to support the adopters through the waiting period, consider any potential matches and discuss appropriate matches with applicants prior to formal matching meetings.
- 13.11 Opportunities are taken to use the waiting period to assist adopters continue to prepare for the placement of a child. Where necessary the adopters will be helped to increase their childcare experience. Additional training is offered as necessary. There is an Adopters' Support Group that applicants are invited to attend. All waiting and approved adopters receive a regular newsletter from the Adoption Team.
- 13.12 Following placement, support, in the form of paid travel expenses, a means tested settling in allowance and additional financial help may be agreed subject to certain criteria to assist adopters.

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- 13.13 The Agency operates a means tested Financial Support Adoption Scheme to assist adopters of limited means and those where the children are likely to cause greater than normal expense. Where the adopters are foster carers there is a transitional period during which adopters may receive an enhanced financial support adoption allowance.
- 13.14 The adoption support worker will continue to support the adopters before and during the placement of a child to ensure they are well prepared in advance of the child coming to live with them. Adopters are fully involved in planning meetings around the introductions of the child and care is taken over the timing of the introductions and a number of review meetings built in to ensure that the placement is progressing in a satisfactory way and to give all parties, including the adopters an opportunity to withdraw if they are not confident about the success of the placement. Adopters confirm in writing their acceptance of the placement before the child is placed.
- 13.15 The Adoption Agency has arrangements in place to offer information, support and advice to prospective adopters who receive a proposed match with a child from an overseas authority.
- 13.16 Throughout the preparation, assessment, and support stages of adoption the agency emphasises to parents the importance of keeping safe any information provided by birth families and encourages them to provide this to the adopted child at appropriate stages of their development.
- 13.17 The initial screening, preparation/training, assessment and home study are designed to assist adopters to understand and combat the effects of racism and any other form of discrimination.
- 13.18 At all stages in the adoption process the agency seeks to ensure that the adoptive parents are assisted to understand the need for the child to develop and maintain a positive self-identity and their role in assisting the child to reflect on and understand her/his history, in an age appropriate way, and to keep appropriate memorabilia.
- 13.19 Where there are difficulties in the placement or the adoption disrupts the adopters' support worker and the child's social worker will provide information and support to the adopters and to the child. Where there is an adoption breakdown a disruption meeting is held involving all parties to assist in understanding the issues and identify any learning in moving forward.
- 13.20 The purpose of this meeting is not to apportion blame but to understand the relevant factors and assist all parties to come to terms with the facts and to move on, and most importantly to inform the process of finding a new more appropriate placement for the child.

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13.21 Where the disruption occurs during the introduction period then the meeting is chaired by a Team Manager from the Adoption Service. Where the adoption disrupts post placement an independent consultant is employed to chair the meeting. A short report from the Disruption Meeting is presented to the Adoption Panel to assist the Panel in its own learning.

13.22 In line with the Adoption Support Regulations and Guidance the Adoption Service revises and updates its procedures and practices to take account of new regulations. In particular adopters and others affected by regulations who are entitled to a review of their support needs, including a review of their financial support, may access the Adoption Support section of the Adoption Team to initiate a review. The Agency Advisor undertakes the role of designated Adoption Support Services Advisor.

13.23 The range of Adoption Support Services to be offered includes access to the full range of statutory and non statutory services offered by the local authority and partner agencies to children and families in Coventry, within the same framework of eligibility as other children and families. In addition the agency will provide, following assessment, and in line with the criteria in the Regulations and Guidance the following services:

- Financial support (ASR 3.1.a)
- Support groups / Activity Days for adoptive parents and adoptive children (ASR 3.1.6)
- Support for contact arrangements between adoptive children and their birth relatives or with other people with whom they share significant relationships (ASR 3.1.c)
- Therapeutic services (ASR 3.1.d)
- Services to ensure the success of the adoptive placement or adoption, including respite care (ASR 3.1.e)
- Counselling, advice and information (S2(6) (a) of the 2002 Act)
- Assistance where disruption of an adoptive placement or threatened disruption is in danger of occurring. Organising and running meetings to discuss disruptions (ASR 3.1.f)

14 Birth Parents and Birth Families

14.1 The Agency recognises that birth parents are entitled to services that recognise the lifelong implications of adoption. The Agency seeks to ensure they are treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process.

14.2 Children's Social Workers are committed to a partnership approach towards planning with birth parents over children's futures and wherever possible birth parents are fully involved in planning for the child's future placement. Parents are consulted over the plan for adoption, the type of family to be considered, issues around contact, religious preferences, and any other matters of importance to the birth parent.

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- 14.3 The views of the birth parents on adoption and contact are obtained by the Permanency Social Worker for the child and included in the BAAF Child's Permanence Report presented to Panel.
- 14.4 The child's Permanency Social Worker is required to seek to obtain clear and appropriate information from the birth parents and birth families about themselves and life before the child's adoption to assist the child to maintain his heritage. This will include information about the child's birth and early life, the birth family's view about adoption and contact and provide up-to-date information about themselves and their situation. This information is contained within the BAAF Child's Permanence Report and in a "later life" letter prepared by the worker for the adopters. A copy is also included in the child's adoption file.
- 14.5 Children's Permanency Social Workers are expected to share information about the content of the Child's Permanence Report with the birth parents and to record their view on the contents of the report.
- 14.6 When adoption is considered as the plan for a child, or where the agency considers that "twin tracking" is required because of doubt over the birth parent's ability to achieve the changes required to parent a child safely, Regulations require that an opportunity for independent counselling and support is to be offered to birth parents. The agency has made arrangements for the referral to an Independent Service for birth families where counseling and support is required and agreed.
- 14.7 Post adoption contact arrangements, including letterbox contact between birth families, adopted children and their new families, are facilitated by the Adoption Support Team.

15 Adoption Panel

- 15.1 The function of Coventry's Adoption Panel is to make quality and appropriate recommendations about the suitability of prospective adopters, and their continuing suitability, and the matching of children and approved adopters. The Panel seeks to promote the welfare of children at all times. Where disruptions occur, the Panel receive a report and discuss this to see what lessons may need to be learned.

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- 15.2 The Policies, procedures and functions of the Panel are contained within the Department's Procedures Manual. Copies of these are given to every Panel member.
- 15.3 Membership of the Adoption Panel is in line with the National Minimum Standard, Regulations and Guidance.
- 15.4 There is an annual training day organised for Panel members and may include members of the Adoption Team. Panel members are able to attend individual courses when felt to be beneficial to their role on Panel. New Panel members receive a full induction and all Panel members are appraised annually.

16 Agency decisions

- 16.1 The Adoption Agency's decision will be made without delay after taking into account the recommendation of the Adoption Panel and promotes and safeguards the welfare of the child.
- 16.2 The Decision Maker will take into account all the information surrounding the case and the Panel's recommendation before making a considered and professional decision. The agency decision will be made within 7 working days of the Agency Decision Maker receiving the final Panel minutes.
- 16.3 Immediately following the Adoption Panel the recommendations of the Panel are passed on orally to the parents or guardian of the child and prospective/approved adopters, as appropriate by the relevant social worker or adoption link worker. The formal decisions of the Panel are conveyed orally to the child by the child's social worker in an age appropriate way and in writing by the Decision Maker to the parents and to the adopters if birth parents do not wish to be informed a case note explanation is placed on file.

17 Work with Children

- 17.1 There is a Children's Guide to adoption that is suitable for all children for whom adoption is the plan. This is given to the child as soon as that decision has been taken. It includes a summary of what happens at each stage (including at court), and how long each stage is likely to take.
- 17.2 The children's guide contains information on how a child can secure access to an independent advocate, how to make a complaint and how to contact Ofsted, along with a shortened version of the Statement of Purpose. Where necessary, arrangements can be made for the Guide to be reproduced in a variety of formats suitable for the needs of specific children.
- 17.3 Children's social workers prepare children for adoption by direct counselling, life story work and work around their wishes and feelings.

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- 17.4 Clear and appropriate information is obtained for the child from the prospective adopters about themselves and their home and when applicable, their children, family and pets.
- 17.5 At all stages in the adoption process the wishes and feelings of the child are considered by the child's social worker, properly represented at planning meetings, and taken fully into account during all stages of the adoption process.

18 Information about the Complaints Procedure, and Independent Review Mechanism

- 18.1 Prospective adopters are advised of the Department's complaints procedure and given information on how to make a complaint. They are also given information about the Council's representations procedure and the Independent Review Mechanism.
- 18.2 There is a leaflet available explaining the Independent Review Mechanism and this is made available to all applicants whose application is recommended for refusal.
- 18.3 The Department operates a system known as the 3 "C's", -"Comments Compliments, Complaints"
- 18.4 There is a Children's Complaints Officer who oversees the operation of the Complaints system and arranges for them to be investigated. The name and address of the Children's Complaints Officer is;

David Wilson
Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate,
Room 250
Civic Centre 1,
Little Park Street,
Coventry
CV1 5RS
Telephone: 024 7683 3462;
Fax: 024 7683 2451

What happens following a Complaint

- 18.5 The complaint is registered and action taken to investigate any concerns. The Children's Complaints Officer will monitor the outcome. In most instances, complaints will be followed up by the manager with direct responsibility for the service. This is because local managers are usually best placed to sort things out quickly, and in most cases a speedy resolution is the most appropriate response.
- 18.6 If the complaint is very complicated, involves a number of service areas or has not been resolved at a local level, a more senior Manager or an independent investigator may investigate it.

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18.7 If the complaint is about a registered service, an Inspector from Ofsted may investigate it.

Timescales and outcomes

18.8 Complainants should be contacted by letter or phone, within 3 working days of the complaint being received to let the complainant know what is happening, who is dealing with the complaint and how to contact them. Complaints will be dealt with as quickly as possible, ideally within 10 working days.

18.9 Occasionally it is not possible to resolve complaints within the period. This may be due to the complexity of the complaint and the number of people who need to be interviewed. If this is the case, then the person dealing with the complaint will keep the complainant informed.

18.10 When work on the complaint is complete, the complainant will be informed of the outcome. If the complaint has required a formal investigation, the outcome will be reported fully and in writing. This will include the action taken to investigate the complaint, how any conclusions have been drawn and details of any action that has been or will be taken to rectify problems or make improvements.

18.11 However, if the investigation has involved the use of Human Resources procedures, there will be details that cannot be shared as they must remain confidential. Similarly, if the complaint has been on behalf of someone else, their personal information is protected by the Data Protection Act and so the level of detailed information provided will be limited. Anyone not satisfied with the way Coventry Adoption Service has investigated a complaint can contact the Children's Complaints Officer to ask for further investigation.

Further Complaints

18.12 If a complaint was subject to a formal investigation and the complainant is not satisfied with the process, there is an option of writing to the Executive Director of the People Directorate to request an independent review of the process.

18.13 The complaint will be reviewed by a Panel chaired by an independent person. Details of how to do this will be included in the complaint outcome letter.

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19 Independent Review Mechanism

19.1 Adopters are given a leaflet in respect of the Independent Review Mechanism. They are made aware of their capacity to make presentations to the agency, or apply to the Independent Review Mechanism for a review of the adoption agency's qualifying determination (which is that it considers a prospective adopter not suitable to adopt a child). Adopters are also given information about the Complaints Procedure.

20 The address and telephone number of OFSTED

20.1 Ofsted regulates social care services in England, such as children's homes, residential family centres and fostering and adoption services. All Adoption Agencies must meet national minimum standards and the associated regulations, set by the Government, in order to qualify for registration.

20.2 From time to time parents, and others with an interest in children's social care, have concerns about the quality of these care services. When considering complaints, Ofsted do not act as a complaint adjudicator. They do not decide if complaints are upheld, partially upheld or are unsubstantiated. Instead they will investigate concerns to make sure that the social care provider continues to meet the national minimum standards and associated regulations and remains suitable for registration.

20.3 You can make a complaint by letter (see address below) or email (enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk) or by telephone (0300 123 1231) or in person.
Ofsted National Business Unit
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

21 The address of The Children's Commissioner

21.1 The Children's Commissioner, currently Anne Longfield, has a legal duty to promote and protect the rights of all children in England with a particular focus on children and young people with difficulties or challenges in their lives, and in particular those living away from home, in or leaving care, or receiving social care services.

The Office of the Children's Commissioner
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT
Tel: 020 7783 8330
Email: info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk



Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

30 June 2015

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People – Councillor Ruane

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Executive Director of People

Ward(s) affected:

None

Title: Role of the Principal Social Worker for Children's Services

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

Professor Eileen Munro's Review of Child Protection: Final Report, A Child-centred System (2011) recommended that *'Local authorities should designate a Principal Child and Family Social Worker, who is a senior manager with lead responsibility for practice in the local authority and who can report the views and experiences of the front-line to all levels of management'*. (Recommendation 14: page 14, 2011).

Following this recommendation, two Chief Social Workers were appointed at central government level in July 2014. They stated that Principal Social Workers were *'effective system changers... challenging the status quo and leading change to improve the lives of children, adults and families.'* This report outlines the role of the Principal Social Worker, who was appointed in December 2014 and who has a vital role in developing, co-ordinating and representing the views and experiences of front-line social workers to the Executive Director People.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People is requested to note the introduction of the Principal Social Worker role and the key changes that have taken place since the Principal Social Worker took up her duties in December 2014 and to make any recommendations in relation to this role.

List of Appendices included:

None

Other useful background papers:

Munro, E. (2011) *The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report: A Child-centred System*, Norwich: The Stationary Office.

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: The Role of the Principal Social Worker – Children’s Services

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 Professor Eileen Munro’s review of child protection in England recommended that local authorities should designate a Principal Child and Family Social Worker who is a senior manager with lead responsibility for practice.
- 1.2 The Principal Social Worker (PSW) has a vital role in developing, co-ordinating and representing the views of front-line social workers to the Executive Director People. A PSW was appointed by the City Council on 1st December 2014.
- 1.3 There are a number of duties attached to the role of the PSW. This report picks out the main themes and provides snapshots of developments so far.
- 1.4 The overall responsibility of the PSW is to provide leadership and professional support to social workers and be responsible for the development and promotion of best social work practice. The PSW works directly with front-line social workers and the Workforce Development Team to ensure that strategies and programmes for learning and development are in place to support and deliver quality social work practice. Some of this delivery is undertaken by the PSW. Since taking up the post in December 2014, the PSW has instigated monthly workshops for all senior practitioners across the service. The workshops cover a wide range of social work topics and the senior practitioners are encouraged to share this learning with colleagues in their clusters and teams. This approach has resulted in greater clarity and understanding of the role of the senior practitioner and provided them with space within the service to model good practice and engage in co-working with less experienced social workers. The PSW also organises and facilitates monthly lunchtime seminars, which are reflective spaces for practitioners across the service to discuss practice issues. Recently, a reflective tool was introduced, called the ‘journal club’. Practitioners who engaged in these workshops were invited to read a piece of research by Research in Practice on ‘That Difficult Age: Developing a more effective response to risks in adolescence’. They had to apply the research findings to a case study and in small groups identify how they would use this learning within their service areas, individually or as a team. A number of learning needs for the group emerged as part of this reflective workshop and these have been picked up and acted upon by the PSW and the service managers.
- 1.5 Another key aspect of the role is to support the development of a career pathway for social workers in line with the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF), initiated by the Social Work Reform Board and now the responsibility of the College of Social Work, and the Knowledge and Skills Statement (KSS), introduced last year by the Department for Education. Since being in post the PSW has developed an in-house Assessed and Supported Year in Employment Programme. The Programme will result in quicker identification of good or poor practice and provide the service with robust data about Newly Qualified Social Workers’ practice and the support and supervision they receive from their line managers. After successful completion of the ASYE Programme, social workers undertake four workshops as part of the Early Professional Development (EPD) Programme to prepare them for moving from a grade 6 social work post to a grade 7 experienced social worker post. The reinstatement of the EPD Programme is an essential element in assisting with the retention of experienced practitioners. A progression panel, chaired by the PSW, decides whether a practitioner has met the requirements of the PCF at experienced social worker level.

- 1.6 An essential element of the role is to support the development of policies, procedures and practice guidance relating to social work practice. The PSW has recently reviewed and updated the recording and supervision policies to make them more accessible and reflective. The PSW has been part of a Research in Practice change project, involving 12 local authorities, on embedding reflective supervision, sharing reflective supervision tools and considering the best ways of recording reflective practice. This project is currently being written up by Research in Practice and will be disseminated to a large number of local authorities. Reflective supervision is crucial in ensuring that practitioners are supported to engage in good social work practice, including seeing and listening to children and young people, and in identifying poor performance at an early stage. To assist team managers and senior practitioners to utilise evidence-based research and reading, the PSW (together with the PSW-adults) is currently in the process of developing a web-based resource library with help from staff in the Resources Directorate.
- 1.7 The role also requires the PSW to act as a 'critical friend' to higher management in Children's Services and provide independent constructive challenge. The PSW has regular meetings with the Executive Director, Assistant Director and Heads of Service to identify any difficulties and propose possible solutions. This direct relationship with higher management is very important in providing some assurance to practitioners that their views are being listened and responded to.
- 1.8 The PSW's working relationship with the Voice of Care group has been extremely valuable. The City Council has implemented a dedicated 'voice of the child' case note on Protocol (the IT recording system used by social work practitioners) and there are a number of plans to involve young people and children in workshops, training and the assessment of Newly Qualified Social Workers' portfolios.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 The Cabinet Member is requested to note the introduction of the Principal Social Worker role and the key changes that have taken place since the Principal Social Worker took up her duties in December 2014 and to make any recommendations in relation to this role.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 Not applicable

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 There are no decisions to be implemented as a direct result of this report.

5. Comments from Executive Director of Resources

- 5.1 Financial implications

The Principal Social Worker post has been funded from the additional £10M budget for Children's Social Care in 2015/16.

- 5.2 Legal implications

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6. Other implications

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

The Principal Social Worker has a key role in the Children's Improvement Board Plan to improve the quality and consistency of social work practice within the City, thus ensuring that children and young people are safeguarded and able to achieve positive outcomes.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

Not applicable

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

Improving the quality and consistency of social work practice; assisting Workforce Development to develop a career pathway; supporting the retention of social workers; working with the Principal Social Worker (Adults) on shared issues; being a critical friend to higher management.

6.4 Equalities / EIA

A key component of the Principal Social Worker role is ensuring that social work practice addresses inequalities in relation to social divisions (age, class, disability, ethnicity, gender, race, sexuality).

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

Not applicable

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

The Principal Social Worker has links with a number of partner organisations to assist in the development of social work education and practice in ways that are responsive to the needs of the service, for example, NSPCC, Coventry University and University of Warwick.

Report author(s):

Name and job title:

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Directorate:

People

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Enquiries should be directed to the above person.

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Other members				
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Director: Brian Walsh	Executive Director	People	11/6/15	11/6/15
Yolanda Corden	Interim Assistant Director	People	11/6/15	11/6/15
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Members: Councillor Ed Ruane	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People		11/6/15	11/6/15

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30 June, 2015

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People – Councillor Ruane

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Executive Director of Resources

Ward(s) affected:

None

Title:

Outstanding Issues Report

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

The City Council has adopted an Outstanding Minutes System, linked to the Forward Plan, to ensure that follow up reports can be monitored and reported to Members. The attached appendix sets out a table detailing the issues on which further reports have been requested by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People so he is aware of them and can monitor progress.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People is requested to consider the list of outstanding issues and to ask the Member of the Strategic Management Board or appropriate officer to explain the current position on those which should have been discharged at this meeting or an earlier meeting.

List of Appendices included:

Table of Outstanding Issues.

Other useful background papers:

None

Has it or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it, or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report author(s):

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Contributors:				
Other members	Not applicable			
Names of approvers: (officers and members)				
Finance: Name	Not applicable			
Legal: Name	Not applicable			

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	Subject	Date for Further Consideration	Responsible Officer	Proposed Amendment to Date for Consideration	Reason for Request to Delay Submission of Report
*1	<p>Delivery Plan for Children and Young People Who Are Missing, at Risk or Experiencing Sexual Exploitation</p> <p>To receive an update on the Delivery Plan</p> <p>(Cabinet Member for Children and Young People – 13 April, 2015 Minute 44/14 refers)</p>	June 2015	Executive Director of People		
2	<p>Proposed Revised Model for Those Requiring Supported Accommodation who have High Levels Needs</p> <p>Report requested as part of the consideration of the report on Supported Accommodation for Young People 16-24</p> <p>(Cabinet Member for Children and Young People – 20 January, 2015)</p>	Appropriate time prior to the commencement of the tendering process	Executive Director of People		

*Report on this issue is included on the agenda

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